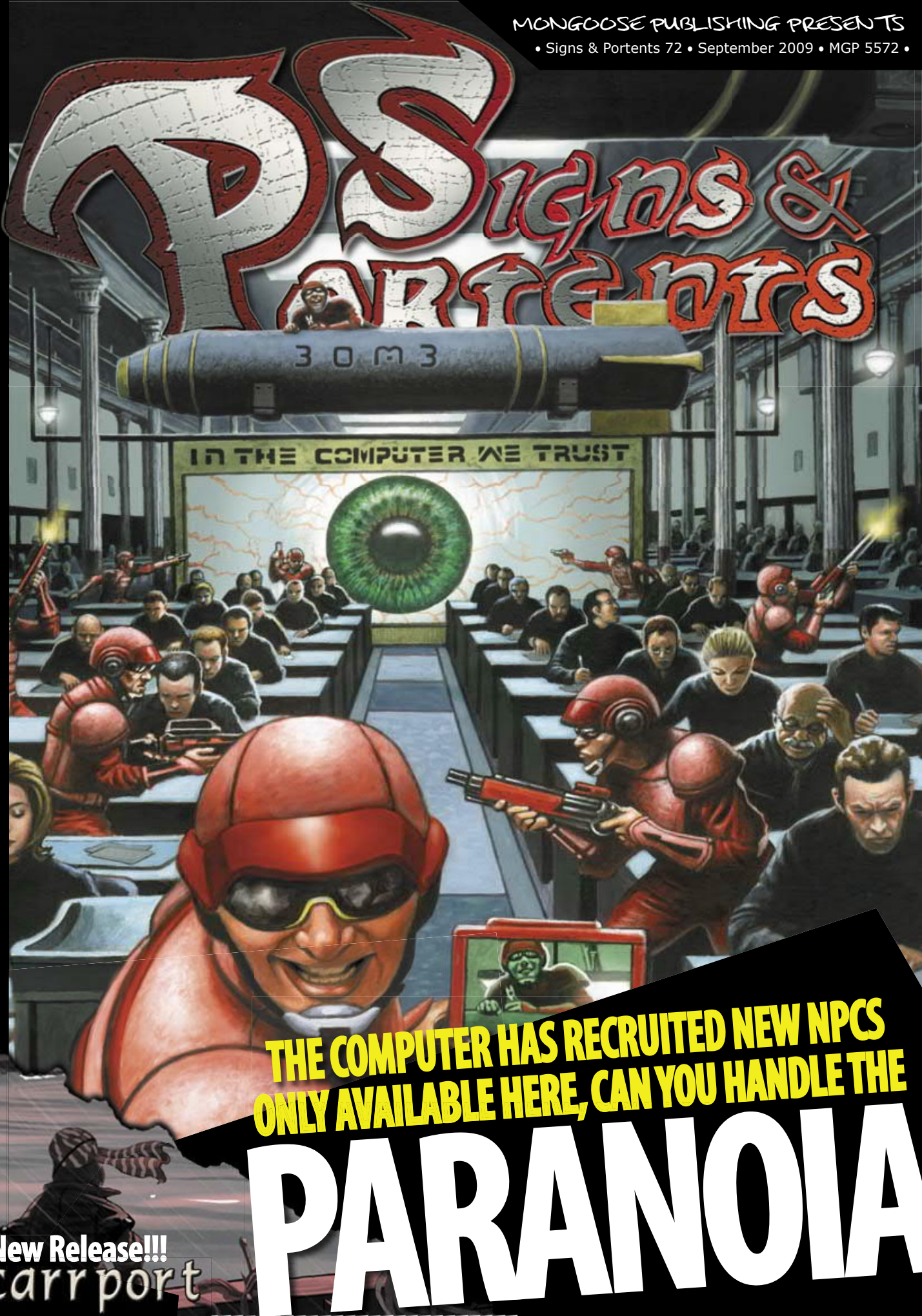


MONGOOSE PUBLISHING PRESENTS

• Signs & Portents 72 • September 2009 • MGP 5572 •

Also This Month: Traveller - Creating Kinships • Earthdawn - Twisted Nature • Lankhmar - Temple of the Snake



THE COMPUTER HAS RECRUITED NEW NPCs
ONLY AVAILABLE HERE, CAN YOU HANDLE THE

PARANOIA

New Release!!!

Scarr port

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Editorial



Another month passes here at Mongoose Towers and the summer is coming to an all too abrupt close. Still the bonus is that here is a spangley new issue of S&P for your reading pleasure.

A big thank you to all of you for the support that you have given to the change of format. The positive response has been overwhelming, which makes all of the hard work that Will and I have put in all the more worth while. We now have a magazine that we are really proud of and it will continue to improve over time.

In fact the August issue had a readership of over 70k – the highest readership yet for a single issue – which is fantastic. We had a couple of minor gripes on the forums, however as much as I would love to please everyone, that is simply not possible... but a few minor constructive criticisms out of over 70k readers... I can live with that!

Those of you who have been regular readers during my tenure as editor will probably have cottoned on to the fact that I am rather clumsy and accident prone. Once again this month, with the deadline for S&P looming, I had another corker!

Whilst rushing around to get ready for work I managed to trip over, fall down the stairs and crack my head open on the cupboard at the bottom. However the good news is that despite destroying my cream carpet with blood, having to have my scalp glued back together and having to wear a scarf on my head to stop people staring, I have ventured into the office to oversee the final stages and write this editorial to finish off the September issue with a few days to spare... before I return home to recoup some more!

... I hope we all appreciate the effort dear readers! Have a good month one and all.

Charlie

Credits

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Mongoose News

By Charlotte Law

Mongoose en Français

The first Mongoose book, translated entirely into French, is on sale now. *Elric of Melniboné* is the first of many, with *Bright Shadows* and *Hawkmoon* following closely on its heels.

Not so Lonely Lone Wolf

The *Lone Wolf* multiplayer gamebook has now been given the go ahead. This book is set to move the solitary gamebooks that we all love into a new, more social, direction. The rules for this will be heavily based on those from the solo gamebooks and so will be very easy for existing fans of the series to get to grips with. The multiplayer book is set for release early next year so keep an eye on the Mongoose website for details and pre-orders.

Going... Going... Almost Gone!

After the raging success of *Paranoia Black Missions* at GenCon Indy, we have only a few copies left of this very special 25th anniversary edition so for anyone left wanting one you had better get a move on! This book is packed full of goodies including the bonus CDROM. Lets face it... if the game wasn't great enough it would be worth it just to hear your favourite

magazine editor playing the voice of Friend Computer!

Catalogue Ahoy!

The new Mongoose catalogue is currently at print. This will cover all releases during the last quarter of 2009 and will be available with your mail orders or from retailers.

They're Alive!

Serious work has now begun on the upcoming *Living Traveller* and *Living Glorantha* Campaigns. We will be revealing lots of juicy details over the coming months but for now I can reveal that we are looking at a release date of sometime in mid 2010 so watch this space!

And Finally... Yes I Feel The Need To Mention It Twice!

I know that I mentioned this in my editorial this month, however news this good deserves to be shouted about and so for those of you who don't read my editorials I can reveal that August 2009 was a record breaking issue of S&P. We had over 70k readers which is fantastic and goes to show that all of the hard work on the new format was well worth while.



Convention Diary

Furnace 2009

The Garrison Hotel, Sheffield, UK
Sat 10th - Sun 11th Oct 2009

www.rpgfurnace.com

|||||

Ludicrus '09

Kesgrave Community Centre, Ipswich, UK
Sat 5th - Sun 6th Dec 2009

www.ludicrus.org

|||||

Siege of Augusta

Doubletree Hotel, 2651 Perimeter Pkwy, Augusta, GA, USA
Fri 22nd - Sun 24th January 2010

<http://www.siegeofaugusta.com/cgi/index.php>

|||||

The Awesometer

Generic events that get our hearts racing (or sometimes not) each and every month!

Employee of the Month

Each month we pick a member of staff to list their favourite random 5 things and by random i mean we choose something random every month, enjoy!

Richard Ford's

TOP 5

Sick Day Excuses

1. I fell of my horse – and used my head as a brake.
2. I fell down the stairs – and used my head as a brake (again).
3. I'm at GenCon.
4. I'm working from home (ooh, Jeremy Kyle's just started).
5. I have swine flu – not man flu, honest, it's real swine flu like you get from the pigs and everything. The doctor even told me I had to take oinkment.

AWESOME

District 9 – All of the Mongoose staff fortunate enough to go to GenCon got an advanced look at this film and thoroughly rate it.



PS3 Slim – OK so there can't be too much difference between a fat PS3 and a slim PS3... but lets face it... it looks pretty!

Talk like a pirate day!!
OOOOOOOO
ARRRRRRRRRR!!!!
19th September !!!!

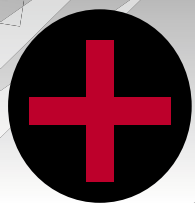


Autumn – Yeah the leaves are pretty but its getting cold and winter is on its way!



Christmas merchandise – it is in the shops already!!!

Concussion – a rather personal one to the editor but we all know that it sucks!



GRUESOME

The Timeline

A visual guide to get your tails wagging for future mongoose releases

October: Strontium Dog Explodes into the Studio



November: It is time to finally unleash the Alien Vargr



December: Traveller is



Quote of the Month

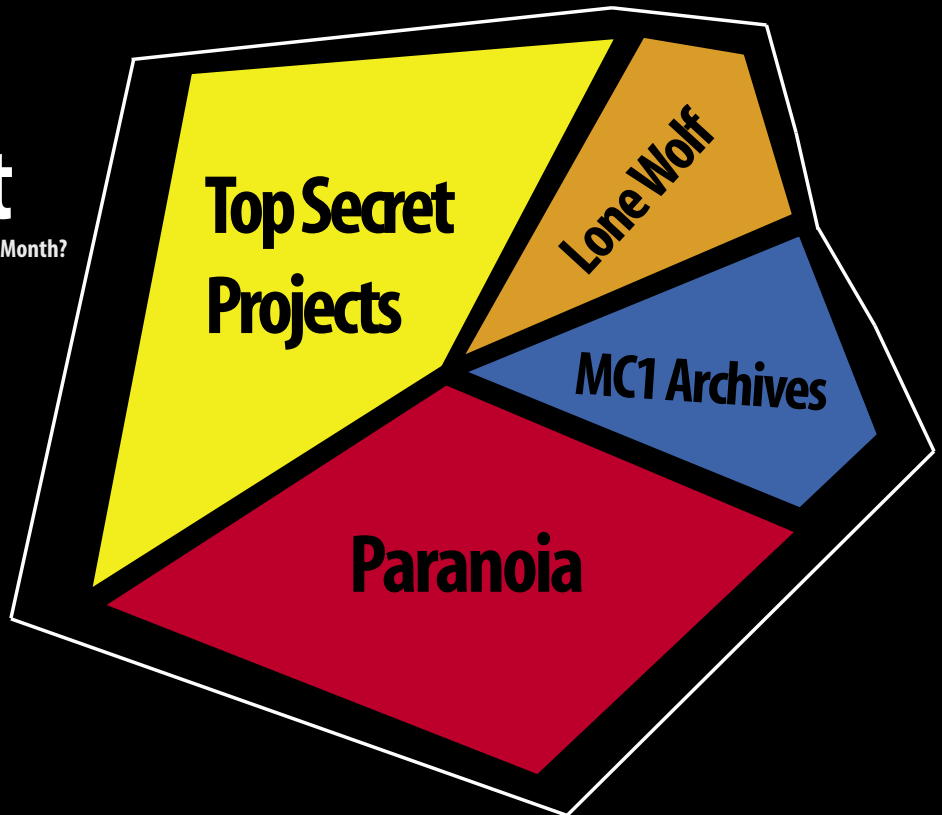
What words have been flying around the office more than the dogs ball?

Charlie and Kelly just had Chocolate Hawky Panky in the Jade Garden!

No not a euphemism for some naughty girl on girl action... I know what you were all thinking! The Jade Garden is the restaurant where we went for our regular Mongoose "end of month team bonding lunch". And the Chocolate Hawky Panky was the hilariously named desert that the girls both went for... needless to say there was much childish giggling to be had by all!

The Time Chart

What have we been spending our time on at Mongoose this Month?



the next line to turn French

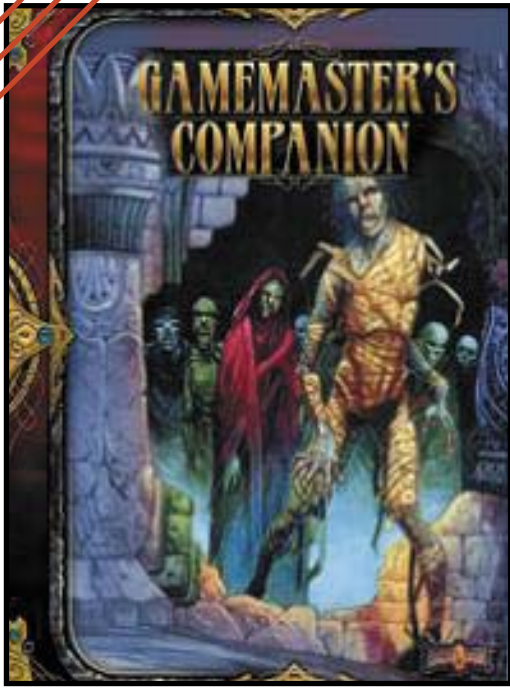
January: Look out for the Mega-City One Archives

February: Its a Secret..... No Really.....



???

September 09 Releases



THE AGE OF LEGEND

Before science, before history, an era of magic existed in our world's dim past. Magic flowed freely, touching every aspect of the lives of men and women of the Namegiver races. It was an age of heroes, an age of fantastical deeds and mythical stories. It was the Age of Legend. Now, bold heroes from across Barsaive band together to fight for life and freedom against the remaining Horrors and the oppressive Theran Empire, which seeks to bend the rebellious province again to their yoke. Through noble deeds and sacrifice, the heroes of the world forge Barsaive's future, arming themselves for their daunting task with powerful magical spells and treasures.

Earthdawn is a roleplaying game set in a world of high adventure, high magic, and terrible danger. The Gamemaster's Companion expands the rules in the Gamemaster's Guide, providing new game mechanics, extended setting material, and adding more creatures, dragons, Horrors, spirits, and unique magical treasures!

Earthdawn - Gamesmasters Companion

Price: \$34.95

Format: Hardback (184 pages)

MGP6148

Earthdawn - Player's Companion

Price: \$34.95

Format: Hardback (184 pages)

MGP6147

THE AGE OF LEGEND

Before science, before history, an era of magic existed in our world's dim past. Magic flowed freely, touching every aspect of the lives of men and women of the Namegiver races. It was an age of heroes, an age of fantastical deeds and mythical stories. It was the Age of Legend. Now, bold heroes from across Barsaive band together to fight for life and freedom against the remaining Horrors and the oppressive Theran Empire, which seeks to bend the rebellious province again to their yoke. Through noble deeds and sacrifice, the heroes of the world forge Barsaive's future, arming themselves for their daunting task with powerful magical spells and treasures.

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Scarrport - City of Secrets

Price: \$24.95

Format: Softback (116 pages)

MGP6149

ADVENTURE LIES JUST AROUND THE NEXT BEND IN THE RIVER!

Welcome to the infamous city of Scarrport, a seedy trade port on the banks of the mighty Torbryn River where it converges with the Wellspring River. Scarrport is widely known as the gateway to the Hellfury Peaks — a mysterious region where evil festers in every crag, its influence spreading across the region like a raging firestorm. Unholy hell spawn roam the rugged mountain range, preying on unwary travelers and adventurers who seek to make their fortunes exploring the countless ruins dotting the land. Dangerous cults who worship dark gods riddle Scarrport's four boroughs, using the city as a base of operations from which they spread their influence to other kingdoms.

No place for the naïve, the thieves and grifters of Scarrport lurk around every corner of this bustling city, preying on newcomers like a school of night fang eels on deep water trout. The unwary are soon parted with their money and possessions in this dangerous city or on the myriad river boats that stop in Scarrport to offload goods and pick up passengers. Yet, despite its unsavory reputation, Scarrport is a magnet for heroes in search of adventure. From the brothels, drug houses and gambling dens of the Fens to the boats traveling the Torbryn and Wellspring Rivers, or beyond the city in the demon-infested Hellfury Peaks and the tangled Dark Wood, the possibilities for adventure are boundless.

Pendant dix mille ans, le Glorieux Empire de Melniboné tenait le destin de la terre entre ses mains, soumettant les tribus barbares et les réduisant en esclavage. Ce peuple inhumain gardait le monde sous sa coupe avec sa magie démoniaque et le feu de ses dragons. Le peuple de l'Île aux Dragons demeure dans la capitale d'Ymrryr, confiant dans sa domination suprême du monde.

Mais son règne ne fut jamais réellement assuré. Rendus aveugles par les drogues et leur arrogance, ils s'aperçurent trop tard de la menace. Ils sortirent vainqueurs de la guerre mais au prix de nombreux sacrifices. Maintenant l'empire n'est que ruines, une ombre de sa gloire passée.

Suite au couronnement du Prince Dragon Elric, les citoyens de Melniboné réclament de l'empereur un assaut décisif contre le monde. Ils demandent le réveil des dragons afin que leur fiers Princes Dragons s'envolent une fois de plus et reprennent ce qui leur a appartenu. Mais l'albinos, perdu sans ses pensées, broie du noir, victime de cette émotion appelée 'conscience' et étrangère à l'esprit Melnibonéen.

Parmi la cour, la rumeur circule que le règne de l'empereur albinos sera de courte durée et qu'il va apporter des changements profonds au sein du Glorieux Empire. En effet, certaines factions se mettent à l'oeuvre pour être sûr que cela se produise.

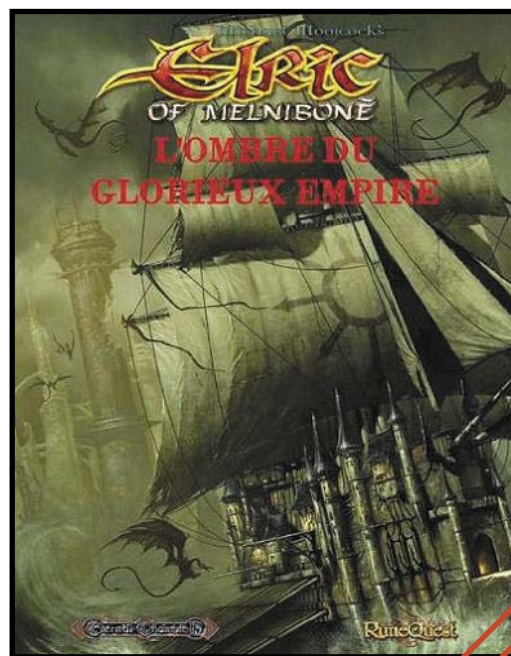
En bien ou en mal

L'Ombre du Glorieux Empire

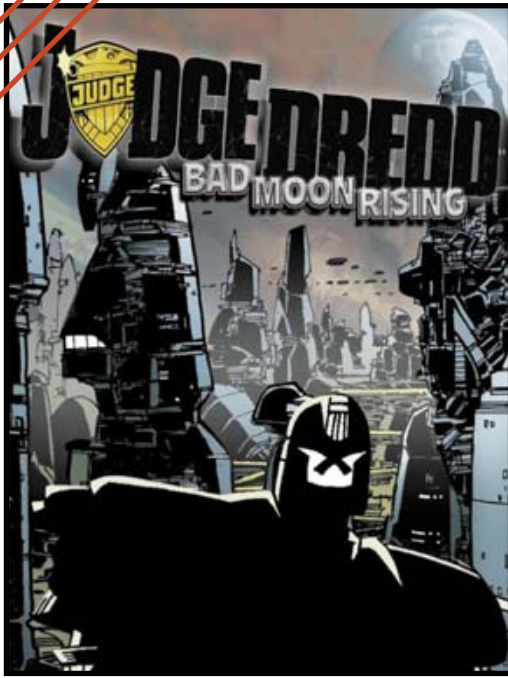
Price: \$25.00

Format: Softback (104 pages)

MGP8167



September 09 Releases



The Moon Lights The Streets

The first complete adventure for Judge Dredd, Bad Moon Rising starts with a quiet, humdrum investigation for the Judges, but it soon becomes apparent that the crimes being committed are anything but normal.

Why are murders being conducted seemingly at random? Why are the Narks suddenly silent? Is this a new plot against Mega-City One? Or a very, very old one?

Judge Dredd: Bad Moon Rising

Price: \$24.95

Format: Softback (128 pages)

MGP10001

Lone Wolf 11 - The Prisoners of Time

Price: \$21.95

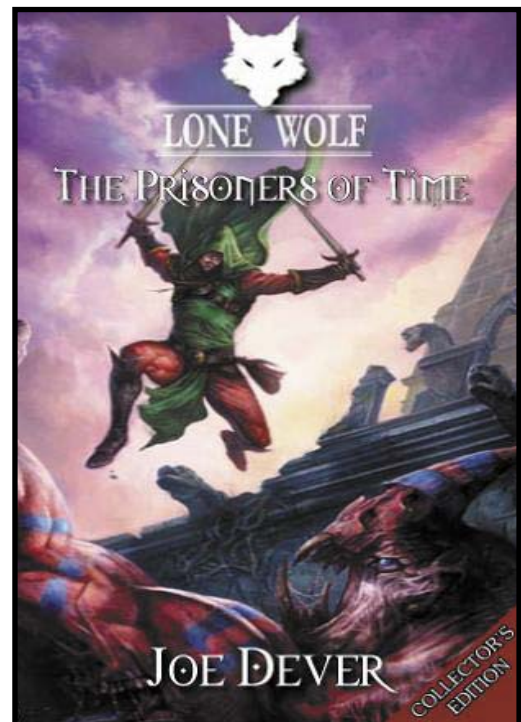
Format: Hardback (375 pages)

MGP1271

You are Lone Wolf - the last Kai Master of Sommerlund. Tricked by your arch-enemy Darklord Gnaag, you have fallen into a portal of total darkness, a shadow gate, that leads to the twilight world of Daziarn.

Somewhere in the supernatural void are the two remaining Lorestones you must find in order to restore the Kai to their former glory. Will you find them or will you remain forever a prisoner of the void? Your doom or your destiny await you in this exciting penultimate episode of the Magnakai quest.

Using high quality paper and hardbound for durability, this Collector's Edition of the eleventh Lone Wolf gamebook marks the return of the last Kai Lord.



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CONAN'S[®]

SCORE OF STEEL

Every month the guys at Mongoose will be looking to bring you their reviews and opinions on some of the hottest events happening around the world, from Movies, Video Games, Books and naturally Hobby Gaming, of course we all need some scoring assistance.



District 9

By Bryan Steele

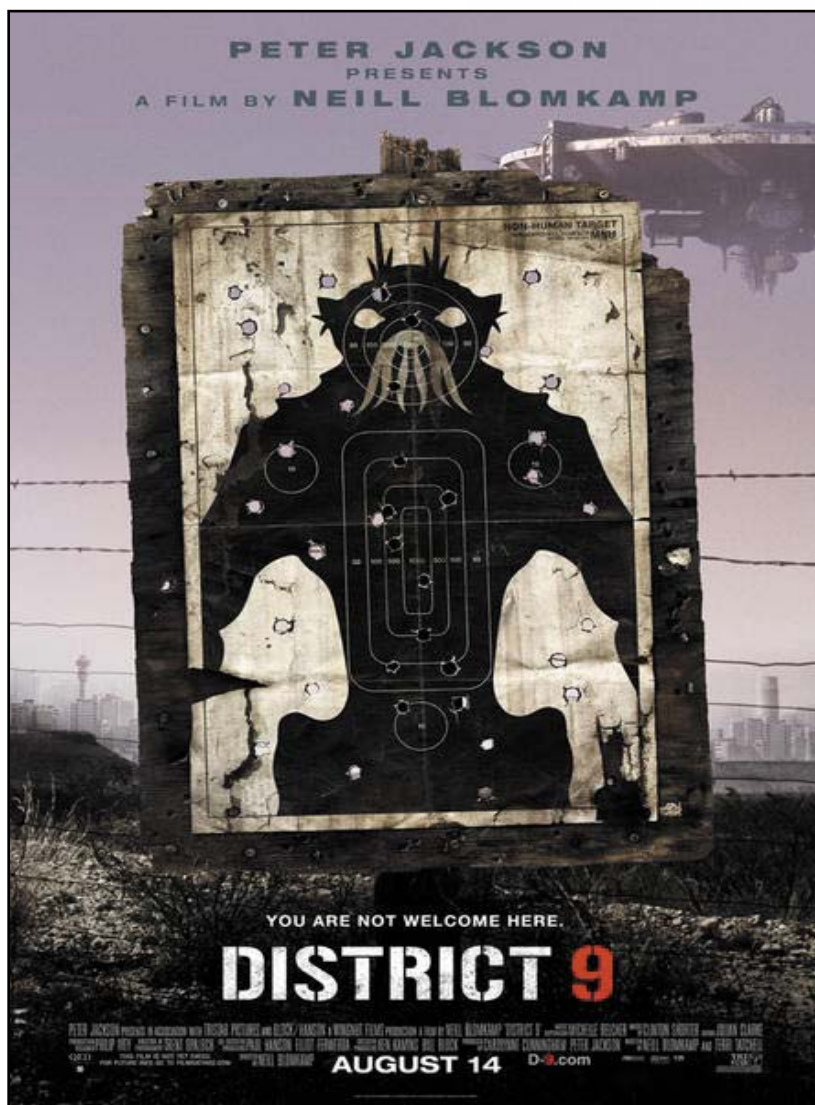
WARNING: SPOILERS AHEAD

As soon as I saw the first teaser-like trailers for this mysterious film called 'District 9', I knew something was underway that would get a lot of peoples' attention. It did what I have always felt a trailer should do – tell you just enough to make you want to know more without giving away all of the good stuff.

District 9 is a very interesting take on the age-old science fiction trope of alien visitation to our planet. Instead of the typical 'arrive-kill-destroy' pattern that most alien movies take, this movie turns the aliens into the misunderstood refugees and the humans are the real monsters. I personally think this is one of the most realistic takes on what an alien landing would be like.

The Plot

The film begins like a documentary about District 9, the area in Johannesburg, South Africa set aside to house and contain an unexpected arrival of several million alien lifeforms stranded here on Earth. These lifeforms, derogatorily called 'Prawns' due to their physical visage and predilection



for scavenging, came to our planet for unknown reasons and became stuck when an important part of their ship fell off. The ship now looms over Johannesburg like a titanic metal cloud, always reminding the populace that millions of strange, potentially dangerous aliens are living just a few miles away.

The documentary covers the increasingly difficult situation with the Prawns and how they are relegated to their shanty town ghetto in District 9. It shows how the Nigerian warlords have moved into the area to become gun runners, criminal powerhouses and cat food dealers to the Prawns – who have a near-addiction to the stuff. This escalation of general criminality and bigotry against the Prawns leads to the creation of a special team through Multi-National United (MNU). It is the chief of this team, Wikus van der Merwe (Sharlto Copley), who is the real focus of both the documentary, the plot and all of *District 9*.

From the first documentary interviews about Wikus, there is an odd past-tense feel and the presence of loss in the interviewees. We know that something has happened to Wikus because of him being part of the MNU team relocating the Prawns from their scavenged shanties and shacks to District 10 – a tighter secured location similar to a concentration camp. It is unveiled to us as the relocation mission progresses.

It is Wikus' job to get Prawn signatures to relocate them to the new district, especially being mindful of those Prawns with alien weaponry or drugs. Even though

humans cannot use Prawn weaponry due to genetic safeties, the MNU knows how powerful they are and does not want them to be used *against* humans, either. On one of these house searches, Wikus is accidentally sprayed with a droplet of concentrated black fluid he discovers. This tiny error changes his life and the lives of everyone involved forever.

The black fluid turns out to be special fuel created from Prawn DNA to re-power the disconnected command module and send the Prawn mothership back home – solving everyone's problems.

Wikus' mistake infects him with the DNA, causing him to rapidly change into a sort of half-man/half-Prawn thing. When MNU gets wind of this, we are treated to the height of human corporate greed and callousness. They steal the mutating Wikus away to use to test Prawn weaponry against his will, eventually deciding to vivisect him in the sake of figuring out how to bridge the gap for humans to use their technology successfully – all for a profit venture.

Wikus, stronger and tougher than he was when he was an MNU paper pusher, breaks free and heads into District 9 to hide. There he allies himself with 'Christopher', the Prawn who distilled the black fluid to begin with. Discovering that Christopher could return him to human form if they get the command module to the mothership, Wikus chooses to help – because he knows where in MNU the black fluid is.

Going to the Nigerian warlord, Wikus gets his hand (claw?) on some Prawn weaponry by force. He and Christopher break into the MNU building and get the black fluid, but not before Christopher sees that the corporate scientists have been doing nasty medical experiments on the Prawn.

When they return to District 9 the command module begins to lift off, but is shot down by a MNU rocket. This is where Christopher and Wikus are both captured, and it is only through the activation of an automated war-walker type machine that Wikus is saved. Knowing that Christopher is his only hope, Wikus gets inside the walker and goes to his friend's aid. This is the most action-packed and eye-catching part of the movie, and worth the price of admission alone.

Sacrificing his own freedom by putting the war-walker in the way of danger to get Christopher to the command module and son, the two Prawns get to the Mothership safely. Wikus is injured, thrown from his war-walker, and is at the mercy of the sadistic soldier Bradnam (Jason Cope). In an ironic turn of events it is the criminal Prawns – the savages – that come to Wikus' aid.

In the end we know that Christopher claimed that he would return in three years' time to repair what has been done to Wikus, but we are left with a somewhat haunting image of a Prawn making scrap metal flowers to give to a special someone from Wikus' old life...and we are left to wonder what will become of the Prawns in *District 10*. That is, if we get the sequel I am hoping for!

Score: 10/10



In Roleplaying

With *Traveller* being such an open-ended system for use with science fiction games, I believe a game campaign set in *District 9* (or a similarly arranged world in an existing campaign) could be very interesting. Each of the stages of the movie's plot could be a fun chapter in a game setting's chronicle.

The arrival of a titanic and seemingly indestructible alien craft that hangs hauntingly and mysteriously over a large





FOR HUMANS ONLY

NON-HUMANS BANNED!



D-9.COM

MNU
MULTINATIONAL UNITED

city could put an entire world on alert. The governments' responses could range from curiosity and investigation to abject horror and violent attacks. Even just an impenetrable ship can be enough to move a plot along on the surface, with crime and irrational panic creating a civilian warzone. Characters having to survive the plights of their own people's psychoses could make for a good setting.

Once the aliens get to the planet, the next segment of the movie could be a sure way to set up strange and potentially dangerous first contact situations. Responses by civilians could get in the way of governmental characters, concerned characters could arrange for aliens to be investigated and the aliens themselves could be dangerous.

As tensions rise between the stranded aliens and the local population, military characters could be tapped for anti-alien detail or pro-alien freedom fighters might suddenly find themselves running some kind of 'underground railroad' for aliens! There is a lot of potential for drama and action when things get tense between the species.

Lastly, with some speculation, running a game around when the mothership returns – after being mistreated by the locals for so long – could be fast-paced and action-packed. With advanced technology at their fingertips brought back from their homeworld, the aliens are ready for some revenge. The question is, where do the characters stand and what did the local governments learn about the aliens while they were still here? Will it be a fair fight? Did the locals figure out how to reverse-engineer the alien technology? More importantly, which side will the characters end up on?

However you look at it, I strongly believe that *District 9* raises a number of interesting moral and personal questions about what really happens when a gaming group is thrust into a first contact situation...especially on their own home turf.

[Prototype]

or A Guide To Manhattan For Tourists Who Are Also Unstoppable Killing Machines

PS3, Xbox 360, PC

By Gareth Hanrahan

So, you're Alex Mercer, patient zero of a viral outbreak in New York. Most victims of the plague become ravening zombies until the control of a viral hive mind but it's had a different effect on you. You just woke up in the city morgue with chunks of your memory missing, the ability to leap tall buildings in a single bound, a hunger for human flesh and a superhuman resistance to bullets. You're just the sort of person who needs a handy tourist guide.

Getting Around

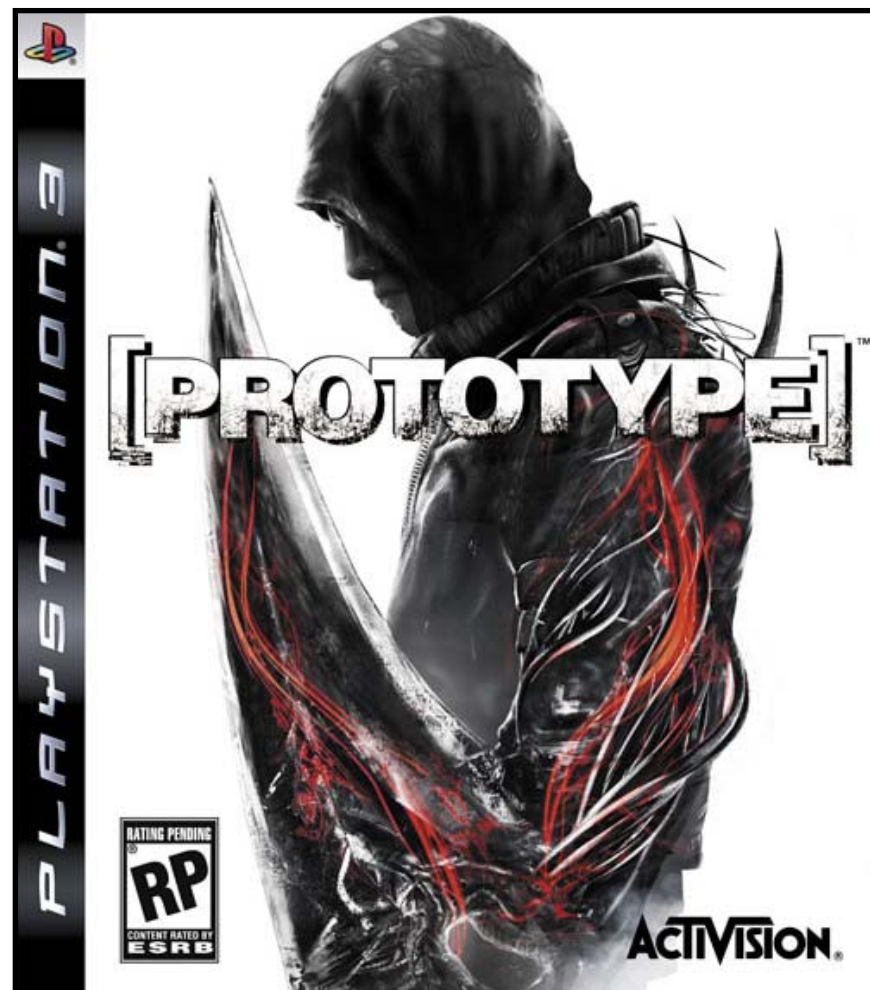
All of Manhattan Island is lovingly recreated in the game, from Central Park to the Empire State to Battery Park. You can run the length of the island in a few minutes thanks to your superhuman speed and parkour abilities, vaulting over cars and trucks. You can also run up sheer surfaces and leap or glide between buildings. You also hijack tanks and, later, helicopters. You can't actually leave Manhattan, but there's plenty to do. Indulge your King Kong fetish by climbing the Empire State and swatting helicopters.

A handy map makes planning your trips a snap. It highlights important features like military bases, virus hives and mission starting points. Oh, and since you're a super-powerful killing machine, you don't drown instantly when you fall into a pond, unlike some similar games.

Shopping

What's the well-dressed monster wearing these days? Well, mostly the skins of his victims. You can absorb other people, using them as disguises and stealing their memories. The disguise ability is handy if you get into trouble with the military.

Army Guy: It's Mercer! He just elbow-dropped a tank, then threw the tank wreckage at a helicopter! Shoot him.



Mercer: **eats a soldier, runs behind a lamppost, then disguises himself as the soldier he just ate**

Army Guy: I can't see him! He must have run away. Everything's fine.

Completing missions, killing foes, exploring Manhattan and... well, pretty much everything in the game gives you Evolution Points, which are spent on upgrades, most of which are alarming mutations of your virus-ridden body (claws, spikes, giant hammers, muscle mass, tendril whips, armour) or new moves (jump-kicking helicopters, improved throws, longer jumps and glides). There are also Devastator moves, which are mostly variations on *Evard's Violently Intrusive Black Tentacles*.

The sheer number of upgrades can be confusing, especially as many of them don't appear to do much. Still, there's enough variation to keep things interesting, and you do find yourself switching between powers

in different situations. The Claws are best for killing Hunters (virus-spawned monsters), the Hammer's great for smashing vehicles, the Whip's not that damaging but great for lassoing helicopters or grabbing snacks, while the Sword and Muscle Mass are both good all-round attack powers.

Eating Out

[PROTOTYPE] was developed by the same team who developed two games based on the *Incredible Hulk* where you could rampage across the city, smash buildings, crush things, throw helicopters at other helicopters – but you couldn't kill civilians. According to rumour, they chafed a bit under this restriction and may have gone slightly nuts, because you can't *not* kill civilians in this game. You don't have to eat them (but they are tasty and give you health – some missions will be very, very hard if you restrict your diet to Infected zombies and the military), but they tend

to throw themselves under the treads of tanks, run under buses and get in the way of your attacks. Alex Mercer's not so much an anti-hero as a force of nature (someone on rpg.net described him memorably as a 'hobo shoggoth'), and the game erodes your sense of morality pretty quickly. At the start of the game, you might try to avoid killing unnecessarily; by the end, you're thinking 'ooh, that bystander's got a nice jacket. NOM NOM.'

The game deserves its 18s cert – the dialogue and actions aren't especially graphic, but when you consume certain key targets in the 'Web of Intrigue', you get an often-disturbing video clip. Basically, little bits of back-story are running around New York, and you eat them to get glimpses of their memories relating to Mercer, the virus, the Generic Evil Corporation and so on.

Things to Do

It's a sandbox game, so you can just wander around Manhattan fighting Infected or the military to your heart's content. There are several storyline missions that cover the 18 days from the initial infection to the end of the game but there are also lots of challenges. These challenges range from 'infiltrate this military base and eat the commander to gain the power to call in artillery strikes' to 'kill as many Infected as possible within a time limit' to 'jump off this ridiculously tall building and land on this well known New York landmark'. The challenges don't always fit with the game's story ('My sister's been kidnapped by the Infected. I must gruffly rescue her – but first, I'll try to run between these four waypoints in under 90 seconds'), but they do provide lots of tasty Evolution Points.

The storyline missions are a mix of standard mission tropes – escort this, kill that – but they're well presented and make sense. There are always several ways to approach each one, from 'charging in openly' to 'eating some military guy and following undercover' to 'stealing a helicopter and raining death from above'. You'll find yourself adapting on the fly, because if there's one thing [PROTOTYPE] does very well, it's crazy action.

The game's graphics have been criticised as being subpar, but there's a reason. The

game puts more bad guys on screen than anything since... well, it feels like *Doom*. Remember opening a door and finding 30 imps waiting for you? (Anyone? Please don't tell me I'm old and out of touch.) [PROTOTYPE]'s slightly behind-cutting-edge graphics let them stick you in battles with, say, four helicopters, two tanks, a few supersoldiers, fifty normal troopers, and a dozen slaving Hunters. The fights get insanely frantic. A transcript of my thoughts during some of the more stressful moments would be something like...

Raagh! Sword is strong! Sword smite puny Hunter. Agh. Tanks and helicopters. Ok, two choppers, one damaged. Run up this wall to the roof. Switch to Musclemass. Throw air conditioning unit at helicopter. Switch to Whip. Hijack helicopter. I am inv – agh! No! Stop shooting my...ok, there goes the helicopter and I'm falling. Glide to stop falling, now ELBOW DROP THE TANK. Serves you right for killing my helicopter. Raagh. Health is low. You, soldier, you look tasty. NOM. NOM. NOM. Rocket in face. Ignore it. NOM. Agh, more tanks. Run back up that building. Fall down when tank shoots me. Run into alleyway. Change to soldier. Stroll out, walk up to tank. Hijack tank. Use tank to kill other tanks. Rraaaaagh.

... and then the game helpfully tells you exactly how many billion dollars worth of military hardware you just trashed.

Nightlife

New York had a reputation as a dangerous city – but you're a remorseless killing machine, so you don't really need to worry too much about pickpockets and muggers. During your travels, you'll run into two main categories of foes. The Infected start out as zombies and, er, bigger zombies, but soon evolve into various flavours of Hunter and worse monsters. The military (and Blackwatch, the sinister paramilitary group) have soldiers with machine guns (ignorable), rocket launchers (tasty), supersoldiers (press X to not die, and yes you should watch *Zero Punctuation*), tanks and helicopters. Oh, and later on they get annoying things like automated turrets and virus detectors. There isn't a huge variety in foes, but the game's all about the quantity.

It's not a perfect game by any means – the storyline manages to be both simplistic and confusing, it can get repetitive, the supersoldiers are annoying roadblocks, half the upgrades are trivial or so poorly described they seem trivial, Alex Mercer growls his way through the game without ever really being much of a character (and what the hell is the deal with his sister?) – but they're all nitpicks. It's FUN with many capital Fs.

Your stay in Manhattan will probably be short, but not excessively so – if you skip side missions, you can blow through most of the content in under 20 hours. If you like things blowing up while flying into other things, then you'll like [PROTOTYPE].

Score: 7/10



[PROTOTYPE] and Gaming

First off, the game's already got a solid roleplaying heritage – the story was written by Denis Detwiler (*Delta Green*, *Godlike*), and there's the opportunity to snack on several other Pagan Publishing stalwarts.

The virus plotline could be adapted to *Judge Dredd* virtually without modifications. A part of Mega-City One is locked off when an alien plague gets loose. The Judges are sent in to protect the medical teams and find a cure, or purge the zone if no cure can be found. You could even have a Mercer analogue – a super-powerful infected who's a potential ally and rival for the PCs.

The whole 'virus gives weird powers' can be a good plotline in any game. Infect one or more PCs with a strange plague (or symbiote, or nanotech, or magic artefact) that gives them awesome powers, but slowly warps them into something horrible and inhuman. ('Give up your powers and drink this cure!' 'But then I won't be able to kill things so easily.')

And, to be honest, [PROTOTYPE] is a really good illustration of how *not* to play a superhero role-playing game.



*READ IT,
PUNKS!*

**ARE YOU GETTING
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THE GALAXY'S GREATEST COMIC

Crack Open Another Six Pack

By Gareth Hanrahan

CPU statistics estimate that the average life-span of a Troubleshooter is between 15 and 22 minutes. (Taking regular bathroom breaks can extend your lifespan by up to 50%, citizen.) Praise The Computer's wisdom for making Troubleshooter missions so unrelentingly lethal, as it gives more citizens a chance to be volunteered to serve our beloved Alpha Complex.

To coincide with the 25th Anniversary release of *Paranoia: Troubleshooters* we have generously decided to provide you with six sample Troubleshooters... now isn't that just swell of us?!

Troubleshooter	Service Group	MBD	Access	Mutation	Power	Secret Society	Rank
Stanford-R	Armed Forces	Team Leader	03	Cryokinesis	13	Death Leopard	03
Belinda-R	Tech Services	Equipment Guy	04	Psychic Flash	10	Corpore Metal	03
Horace-R	PLC	Loyalty Officer	02	Not a mutant (Teleportation)	14	Humanists	01
Joyce-R	CPU	Hygiene Officer	03	Doom Magnet	12	FCCC-P	05
Phil-R	HPD&MC (IntSec)	Happiness Officer	05	Push Mutant Power	11	Romantics	02
Alan-R	Power Services	Comms & Recording	03	Chameleon	10	Mystics spying on FCCC-P (Illuminati)	02 01 01

Notes:

- Stanford-R has a small amount of plastic explosives.
- Belinda-R doesn't need to breathe, thanks to cybernetic implants.
- Horace-R has a remote-controlled bomb in the same of a FCCC-P relic.
- Joyce-R is pretty influential in the FCCC-P.
- Phil-R has six Old Reckoning alarm clocks that may go off at random embarrassing times.
- Alan-R's multicorder has a concealed laser beam that inflicts W2K damage.



Stanford-R-KLC-1

Male Armed Forces Team Leader

Security Clearance: RED
Credits: 100
Tic: Uses onomatopoeia excessively
Tic 2: _____

Example of tic in use
Stanford-R: So, you guys sneak over there and then blam kapow zort poof!
Troubleshooter: Er, what?
Stanford-R: You heard me! Go and zapzapzap those Commies and then we can vrooom home to zzzz.

Action Skills & Specialities

Management 04
Bootlicking 08
Oratory 01
Imitating the sound of a scrubbot 10

Stealth 10
Sneaking 14
Scam Radar 01
Surveillance 14
Disguise 01
_____ 16

Violence 04
Energy Weapons 08
Agility 08
Field Weapons 01
Demolition 08
Throwing Your Lucky Grenade 10

Knowledge Skills & Specialities

Hardware 08
Weapons & Armour Maintenance 12
Getting One Last Shot Out Of Your Laser Barrel 14

Software 07
Vehicle Programming 13
C-Bay 01
_____ 13

Wetware 09
Medical 13
Cloning 01
Finding Bits Of People That Got Blown Off 15

Open slots for narrow specialities: 2 (Stealth, Software)

Stanford-R-KLC-1

Male Armed Forces Team Leader

Mutation: Cryokinesis
Society: Death Leopard
Secret Skills: Action Movies 19, Gambling 17

Background

Hey! When you sent in your application for the Troubleshooters, you never thought they'd say yes. After all, you had all those black marks on your record, all the citations for insubordination and violence, the POOR IMPULSE CONTROL tattoo on your forehead... but hey, obviously they want someone with an itchy trigger finger and a propensity for hurting people. Yay!

Your pals in Death Leopard have warned you that Belinda-R is a bot-loving Corpore Metal cultist, and that you can bribe Alan-R with drugs 'cos he's a crazy Mystic. They also want you to recruit loyalty officer Horace-R – he's young and impressionable.

Secret Society Instructions

Dude. You're team leader. This is a great opportunity for Death Leopard, and you can't screw it up. You're ordered to use your Troubleshooters to blow up something really, really big and impressive. Bring down the system! Fight the power! Blow stuff up!

Only, y'know, don't get caught. Having a Troubleshooter team leader is way too useful for the society. Make sure someone else gets the blame.

Personal Equipment
I love The Computer badge
Genuine apple
Old Reckoning comic
Plastic knife
Plastic Explosive
Detonator

Assigned Equipment
Laser pistol body (no barrel)
(2) RED laser barrels
Red Reflec Armour
Series 1300 PDC
Team Leader Hat

Belinda-R-NCK-1

Female Tech Services Equipment Gal

Security Clearance: RED
Credits: 90
Tic: Has no sense of personal space
Tic 2: _____

Example of tic in use
Belinda-R: Hey, your belt buckle is loose! Let me tighten that for you!
Troubleshooter: Get off me!
Belinda-R: You should really clean out your pockets more often. I think something died in here.

Action Skills & Specialities

Management 6
Chutzpah 10
Moxie 1
_____ 12

Stealth 04
Concealment 08
Sleight of Hand 08
Sneaking 01
Scam Radar 01
Palming Vital Components 10

Violence 07
Energy Weapons 11
Kicking The Vehicle Until It Works 13

Knowledge Skills & Specialities

Hardware 10
Weapons & Armour Maintenance 14
Chemical Engineering 14
Mechanical Engineering 01
Vehicle Ops & Maintenance 01
_____ 16

Software 04
Bot Programming 08
Hacking 01
Rewriting Asimov Circuits 10

Wetware 04
Bioweapons 08
Chewing Hot Fun Until It's Supersticky Gum 10

Open slots for narrow specialities: 2 (Management, Hardware)

Crack Open Another Six Pack

Belinda-R-NCK-1

Female Tech Services Equipment Gal

Mutation: Psychic Flash
Society: Corpore Metal
Secret Skills: Cyborging 18, Botspotting 15

Background

You've always been good at fixing things. Good with your hands, able to tell which pipe was clogged, which circuit was crossed, which co-worker was a Commie Mutant Traitor who should be reported to IntSec. You had a nice little niche for yourself in Tech Services. Life was good. Then you got assigned to Troubleshooter duty. Troubleshooters have a shorter life span than Long-Life NeverBreak EternalLightBulbs. You want out.

As the saying goes, for want of a screw, the giant invincible warbot fell apart. A little sabotage goes a long way. All you need to do is mess things up just enough so that The Computer writes off the mission. A few disasters under your belt, and they'll transfer you back to Tech Services. (Yes, the Team Leader will get executed for incompetence a few times. Stanford-R's an idiot anyway.) You feel really nervous around Joyce-R, and there's a rumour that there's at least one undercover IntSec agent on the team.

Secret Society Instructions

Won't someone think of the bots? Bots get abused and blown up all the time in Alpha Complex. Save our bot buddies from brutality?

Also, you've had your lungs replaced with mechanical oxygen processors. You don't need to breathe.

Personal Equipment

(2) RED Laser Barrels
Biohazard sticker
Rolactin (Very Happy Pill) (BLUE clearance)

Assigned Equipment

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
(2) RED Laser barrels
Red Reflec Armour
Series 1300 PDC
Toolkit

Horace-R-TSA-1

Male PLC Loyalty Officer

Security Clearance: RED
Credits: 101
Tic: Everything you needed to know about Troubleshooting, you learned from TV.
Tic 2: _____

Example of tic in use

Team Leader: There are Commies over there in that meeting room!
Horace-R: So, we drop down out of the air vent and take them by surprise with a barrage of laserfire! Then they'll tell us where the Commie base is, and we storm that single-handed! Faith in The Computer will protect us!
Team Leader: I suppose that's *like* a good plan.

Action Skills & Specialities

Management 05
Hygiene 09
Moxie 01
Recount Inspiring Tales from Vidshows 11
Stealth 08
Sneaking 12
Scam Radar 01
Fade into the Crowd 14
Violence 04
Energy Weapons 08
Unarmed Combat 08
Field Weapons 01

10

Knowledge Skills & Specialities

Hardware 05
Operate Heavy Machinery 09
Chemical Engineering 01
Habitat Engineering 09
PLC Qualitee Kontrol 11

Software 07
Data Search 11
Hacking 01

13

Wetware 04

Cloning 08
Medical 01
Knowledge of Toxic Chemicals in Collectibles 10

Open slots for narrow specialities: 2
(Violence, Software)

Horace-R-TSA-1

Male PLC Loyalty Officer

Mutation: You don't have one. Ew. Mutation is treason!
Society: Humanists
Secret Skills: Marital Art 04, Old Reckoning Cultures 06

Background

Oh boy, Troubleshooting! You've been preparing for this your whole life, if by 'preparing' you count watching lots of episodes of 'Mission: Above Your Security Clearance' and 'Troubleshooter Action Report'. You can't wait to pick up your laser and fight the approved fight for your beloved Alpha Complex and Your Friend, The Computer.

It's also great that you've got such a wonderful boss. You work for a PLC Service Group called *Merchandistopia*, who make keychains and action figures of famous Troubleshooters. Your boss, Mike-Y, called you into his office last week and told you that one of the company was being reassigned to Troubleshooting duty, and as a special bonus for your devotion to the company, he was nominating you for the transfer instead of him! Wow! How generous is he? You know from watching TV that all Troubleshooters are heroic and selfless, and you just hope that you can be as loyal as the rest of your team.

Secret Society Instructions

The Humanists – who are really just misunderstood and aren't at all traitorous, or so your Humanist buddies tell you – want you to identify any First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer agents in the team, and eliminate them. To help with that, they've given you a little Crossed-Circuit religious icon that's also a bomb!

Personal Equipment

'Refer to Committee' rubber stamp
Teela-O Keychain
Sadallathon (sleepy) tablet

Assigned Equipment

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Red Reflec Armour
Loyalty Officer Notebook

Joyce-R-YNC-1

Female CPU Hygiene Officer

Security Clearance: RED

Credits: 90

Tic: Egotistical

Tic 2: _____

Example of tic in use

Team Leader: Here's the plan, we'll-

Joyce-R: Who put you in charge? I should be Team Leader!

Team Leader: CPU decided. You work for CPU. Are you saying CPU made a mistake?

Joyce-R: Hey, not everyone in CPU is as competent as I am. In fact, no-one in CPU is as competent as I am. Damn right they make mistakes!

Action Skills & Specialities

Management 09

Chutzpah 13

Hygiene 13

Bootlicking 01

Quote Obscure CPU Directive 15

Stealth 08

Sleight of Hand 12

Sneaking 01

_____ 14

Violence 10

Energy Weapons 14

Projectile Weapons 14

Agility 01

Surprise Headbutt 16

Knowledge Skills & Specialities

Hardware 04

Habitat Engineering 08

Bot Ops & Maintenance 01

Hit A Control Console Until It Works 10

Software 06

Data Analysis 10

Operating Systems 01

_____ 12

Wetware 08

Pharmatherapy 12

Outdoor Life 01

Palm Your Chill-Out Pills Instead Of Eating Them 14

Open slots for narrow specialities: 2 (Stealth, Software)

Joyce-R-YNC-1

Female CPU Hygiene Officer

Mutation: Doom Magnet

Society: First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer

Secret Skills: Alpha Complex History 17, Liturgical Studies 03, Eschatological Studies 10

Background

Troubleshooting – if you can make it here, you can make it anywhere!

Jealousy has always been your problem. Even back in the Junior Citizen crèche, all the other kids were jealous of you, jealous of your talents and brains and everything else about you, jealous of the fact that you overdosed on pep pills at a young age and got spend three months in the HappiTime Junior Medical Facility... anyway, you're brilliant, the best clone ever, but no-one recognises it.

They soon will. You're going to make them see how wonderful you are. Troubleshooters get to appear on TV all the time – so, if you volunteer for Troubleshooting duty, you're sure to be spotted by HPD&MC talent scout. You've got way more charm and appeal than that ugly hack, Teela-O! You're going to be a star!

Secret Society Instructions

One of your fellow Troubleshooters is also a member of the Church. You don't know which of the other team members he is, but you've got to make contact with him. Also, recruit any trustworthy or competent Troubleshooters to the Church.

Personal Equipment

Plastic Spork

10' pole

Telescopamine (truth serum) pill (GREEN)

(3) RED Laser Barrels

Assigned Equipment

Laser pistol body (no barrel)

(2) RED Laser barrels

Red Reflec Armour

Series 1300 PDC

Lemon-flavoured Spraykleen

Wipeywipes

Phil-R-KLD-1

Male HPD&MC Happiness Officer

Security Clearance: RED

Credits: 100

Tic: Always hungry

Tic 2: _____

Example of tic in use

Team Leader: Phil-R, medicate this clone!

Phil-R: Can we stop for a snack first?

Action Skills & Specialities

Management 09

Interrogation 13

Hygiene 01

Cheery Happy Slogans 15

Stealth 08

Surveillance 12

Sneaking 01

_____ 14

Violence 07

Energy Weapons 11

Hand Weapons 11

Field Weapons 01

Shooting People In The Back 13

Knowledge Skills & Specialities

Hardware 07

Habitat Engineering 11

Nuclear Engineering 01

_____ 13

Software 05

Financial Systems 09

Hacking 01

Setting Up Email That's Sent Only In The Event Of Your Death 09

Wetware 06

Pharmatherapy 10

Medical 10

Biosciences 01

Surprising Uses For Fast Food Happy Sauce 12

Open slots for narrow specialities: 2 (Stealth, Hardware)

Crack Open Another Six Pack



Phil-R-KLD-1

Male IntSec (Spying on HPD&MC)
Happiness Officer

Mutation: Push Mutant Power
Society: Romantics
Secret Skills: Old Reckoning Cultures 12

Background

What a den of infamy! No wonder you've been assigned as an undercover agent to spy on this lot. Several of them has a black mark on their secret records. For instance, Team Leader Stanford-R has discipline and anger management issues and Belinda-R is suspect of having eliminated several co-workers through sabotage. Your real target, though, is a First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer agent believed to be in the team. This traitor is an assassin and crazy bomber. Find this deviant and terminate him!

If you succeed, you'll be racing up the IntSec promotion ladder in no time!

Secret Society Instructions

One of the Romantic vaults was discovered recently, and the society has had to hide Old Reckoning relics among its members. You've been given several antique clocks to conceal about your person. Ensure these lovely clockwork wonders of the past remain undamaged.

Personal Equipment

(2) RED Laser Barrels
(6) Antique Alarm Clocks
Frag Grenade
Concealed IntSec communicator in your left boot

Assigned Equipment

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
(2) RED Laser barrels
Red Reflec Armour
Series 1300 PDC
Smile Clamp
(6) Doses of Gelgernine Happy Pills

Alan-R-DDM-1

Male Power Services Comms & Recording Officer

Security Clearance: RED
Credits: 60
Tic: Sneezes in bright lights

Example of tic in use
Team Leader: Record my heroic deeds, Alan-R!
Alan-R: Sorry, it's a bit dark in here.
Team Leader: I've got a flare!
Alan-R: Achoo! Achoo! Achoo!
Team Leader: Why are you recording the floor?

Action Skills & Specialities

Management 06
Bootlicking 10
Chutzpah 01
_____ 10

Stealth 08
Security Systems 12
Concealment 01
Hiding In Power Conduits And Praying They Don't Turn On The Juice While You're Hiding 14

Violence 06
Energy Weapons 10
Agility 10
Field Weapons 01
Adjusting Depth of Field On Your Camera 12

Knowledge Skills & Specialities

Hardware 08
Electronic Engineering 12
Nuclear Engineering 12
Weapons & Armour Maintenance 01
Jury-Rigging Power Packs To Overload 14
Software 06
Multicorder Editing 10
C-Bay 01
Scrubot Psychology 12

Wetware 06
Biosciences 10
Cloning 01
_____ 12

Open slots for narrow specialities: 2
(Management, Wetware)

Alan-R-DDM-1

Male Power Services Comms & Recording Officer

Mutation: Chameleon
Society: Illuminati Spying on Mystics
Spying on FCCC-P
Secret Skills: Drug Procurement 10, Eschatological Studies 04

Background

It's hard to tell when it all began.

Maybe it was when your old supervisor Ken-Y taught you to smoke Type 5 Electrical Insulation to get high, and made you join the Mystics. Maybe it was when your new pals in the Mystics decided it would be really funny if you infiltrated the First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer.

Actually, thinking about it (which is hard to do through the haze of Type 5 Electrical Insulation smoke), it really all started when this gnome climbed out of a hatch and told you that you now worked for the Illuminati. He gave you a multicorder with a concealed high-yield laser and a list of targets. It sounded so reasonable that you agreed to zap the targets for him. Man, you've really got to get off this Type 5, you're way too suggestible when you're mellow.

Secret Society Instructions

The Mystics want you to infiltrate the First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer. If you succeed in this mission, contact the society for further instructions. One of your fellow Troubleshooters is a member of the Church.

The Illuminati want you to eliminate Belinda-R and any IntSec agents on the team.

Personal Equipment

(2) RED Laser Barrels
Type 5 Electrical Insulation
Cigarette Lighter

Assigned Equipment

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
(2) RED Laser barrels
Red Reflec Armour
Series 1300 PDC
Multicorder (with concealed laser)



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Twisted Nature

By Carl Walmsley

Though The Scourge has ended and the Horrors gone to ground, the world of Earthdawn has been left permanently changed. The land is scarred, the seas tainted and many of the creatures which survived the depredations of the Horrors are corrupted in some way. As characters set out to explore Barsaive and reclaim the land their ancestors were forced to abandon, they will discover these bizarre and dangerous animals. That these creatures are so strange is one of *Earthdawn's* strengths – PCs should not expect to encounter traditional fantasy beasts but new and exotic ones that will present unknown perils and challenges. More than this, the corrupted environment is a great way to reinforce the unique setting and history of the game.

Presented here is a selection of weird animals and plants, all tainted in some way by the ravages of The Scourge. Each comes complete with a suggested encounter, helping you to showcase each creature's unique behaviour and abilities.

Blood Golem

Sometimes when a Namegiver dies a great deal of his blood leaks out into tainted soil. From this seeping liquid – as it coagulates and joins with the corrupted earth – a blood golem is born. This rises from the ground, a parody of its progenitor's form, fashioned from viscous blood, with a brittle skin of dried scabs.

A Blood golem is not truly alive, and exists for only one purpose – to seek out the loved ones of its progenitor. It instinctively knows the approximate location in which it should travel to find them, though some degree of searching is usually required once it reaches the correct settlement.

Contact with the deceased's family never goes well. The Blood Golem – which cannot speak – attempts to express its love and longing, whilst the family typically reacts with horror and even violence. If thwarted

in its efforts – and certainly if attacked – a blood golem flies into a rage. It will usually attempt to abduct its progenitor's nearest and dearest and take them to a secluded spot where they can be together.

Blood Golem

DEX:6	STR:8	TOU:9
PER:5	WIL:6	CHA:4
Initiative:6	Physical Defence:8	
Actions:1	Spell Defence:8	
Attack (3):9	Social Defence:6	
Damage:	Physical Armour:5	
Fist (1):9	Mystic Armour:1	
Death:56	Recovery Tests:4	
Unconsciousness:48	Knockdown:8	
Wound Threshold:14	Movement:4	

Legend Award: Second Circle

Powers: Durability (1), Locate Target (5): 10*, Sticky Body (2): 8

*A Blood Golem may only ascertain a target's location to within the nearest 100 yards.

Rules

A Blood Golem only superficially resembles its progenitor. Any character who succeeds with a Perception (9) Test can discern this similarity if they knew the deceased.

Adventure Hook: The PCs arrive in a settlement where a funeral is taking place. Enquiries reveal that a local man perished recently in a spot believed by the locals to be cursed.

That night, a Blood Golem – freshly raised from the ichor of the dead man – seeks out the village. It attempts to make contact with the dead man's wife but its efforts to get into the house are thwarted and it flees. The settlement is rife with talk of a curse: witnesses saw what they believe to be the dead man's corpse; bloody prints stain the door to the widow's house; and the dead man's favourite boots were taken from a

barn. Stranger still is a message scrawled in blood, professing love for the widow. There are suggestions that the widow be exiled, before she brings further evil upon the settlement.

If the Blood Golem is not found, it will return – again and again – until it manages to kidnap the widow and drag her away into the wilds or the villagers turn on the widow and chase her out of town.

Corpse Tree

As The Horrors swept across the world, the forests they did not destroy were filled with foul monsters and a brooding malevolence. Even with The

Horrors in retreat, the stain of their presence lingers in many plants and tress, warping them into dark mockeries of their natural state.

A corpse tree is a singular example of this. Plucking corpses from the ground – there as a result of the tree's poisonous spines and spores – they parade them in a bizarre theatre of the dead. This macabre puppet-show serves either to draw people into the forest or to scare them away, depending upon the goals of a particular Corpse Tree. The supposed haunting of many a wood can be put down to the activities of these loathsome trees.

Most corpse trees resemble oaks, though their bark is hoarier and shot through with green veins the colour of putrescent flesh. Some are said to develop distinctive markings in their bark, creating the likeness of a single facial feature, most often an eye or a mouth. Perhaps most disturbing of all, their largest branches – the ones from which the dancing corpses are strung – are tipped with large, but very human looking, nails. As many as a dozen of these grotesque 'fingers' may sprout from a fully grown tree.



Typically, Corpse Trees accrue their sinister collection of puppets through the use of paralytic spores and poisonous barbs. However, they are not above lashing out with their branches at characters who refuse to succumb to these first two methods.

Undoubtedly, Corpse Trees are sentient and derive some sort of twisted pleasure from the hanging of corpses from their boughs. It is theorised by some scholars that by creating enough fear of a particular wood, they may be seeking to generate a location within which a Horror may hide.

these branches can extend up 10 yards from the trunk in a fully grown specimen. A Corpse tree can release spores once every ten minutes.

Poisoned Barbs: A flurry of needle-thin thorns can be projected from a Corpse Tree's branches. It takes time to manoeuvre the branches, meaning that only a target that has remained in the same place beneath the tree for five turns or more can be targeted. Creatures that suffer at least one point of Damage from the barbs are also subject to the tree's Poison Power.

Corpse Theatre: By coiling specially adapted branches around corpses near its trunk, a Corpse Tree can produce a grisly puppet-show. A character within line of sight of the tree must make a Perception (9) Test:

A Pathetic or Poor Result means that the character fails to notice anything at all.

An Average or Good Result means that the character sees what he thinks are ghostly figures.

An Excellent result means that the character sees strangely jerky figures moving amongst the trees.

An Extraordinary Result means that the character can discern what is truly happening.

Adventure Hook:

The PCs hear rumours of a haunted wood just beyond the village where they are currently staying. Questioning the locals reveals that other adventurer types have been to investigate and never returned. The PCs receive an offer from a local guide to show them the spot.

The guide, a lonely oddball disliked by others in the village, has struck a deal with the Corpse Tree. In exchange for picking over the corpses of the freshly

slain, the guide leads adventurers into the woods to 'deal with the ghosts'.

If the PCs accompany the guide, he leads them into an ambush, facilitated by the corpse puppets that appear like phantoms amongst the trees.

Blade Beak

This misshapen bird could scarcely be the result of natural evolution. Its curved beak is as long as a scimitar and as sharp as a freshly whetted blade. It is mounted on a stubby head and agile neck, able to spring forth with all the speed and strength of a master duellist.

Despite their impressive weaponry blade beaks are entirely herbivorous, preferring a diet of nuts and berries. This is not to say that they use their beaks purely for self defence, however. In fact, they have a predilection for murder – and their targets are always those filled with hope and joy. That they should single out people experiencing such emotions is evidence of the Horror-taint that they carry.

Blade beaks will roost in just about any quiet spot – preferably one with a good view of a settlement or well-used road. From this vantage point, they will pick out those filled with expectation and happiness and move in to attack.

An adult Blade Beak has a wing span up to four yards and a beak fully a yard long.

Legend Award: Second Circle

Blade Beak

DEX: 8 STR: 7 TOU: 7
PER: 9 WIL: 6 CHA: 4

Initiative: 8 Physical Defence: 10
Actions: 1 Spell Defence: 8
Attack (2): 10 Social Defence: 6
Damage: Physical Armour: 3
Beak (2): 9 Mystic Armour: 1
Death: 40 Recovery Tests: 3
Unconsciousness: 32 Knockdown: 7
Wound Threshold: 11 Movement: 3/9(flying)

Corpse Tree

DEX: 6 STR: 9 TOU: 10
PER: 8 WIL: 7 CHA: 4

Initiative: 6 Physical Defence: 3
Actions: 1 Spell Defence: 10
Attack: (1) 7 Social Defence: 5
Damage: Physical Armour: 7
Barbs: (0): 5 Mystic Armour: 0
Branch Lash (0) 9
Death: 52 Recovery Tests: 4
Unconsciousness: 45 Knockdown: None*
Wound Threshold: 15 Movement: 0

*A Corpse Tree cannot suffer Knockback

Legend Award: Third Circle

Powers: Paralysis (2) 9, Poison (SD 8; Death), Surprise Attack (4)

Loot: From amongst the previous victims, assorted valuables (determined by the gamemaster) worth 250 silver pieces (worth Legend Points).

Rules

Corpse Trees are able to release clouds of sleep-inducing spores. They can also project volleys of poison-tipped thorns. Using these two techniques they gather a collection of corpses that, once strung up by vine-like branches, are used as puppets.

Sleep Spores: Any time a Namegiver moves beneath the branches of a Corpse Tree it releases an invisible cloud of spores, evoking its Paralysis Power. The span of

Twisted Nature



Powers: Camouflage (2): 8, Enhanced Senses (Sight) (1): 10, Tracking (2): 11

Loot: Beak worth 25 silver pieces (worth Legend Points)

Rules

Diving Blade: A Blade Beak may swoop down upon a target gaining a +4 bonus to the Damage Test if it hits. To use this ability, a Blade Beak must have used its full Movement Rate of 9 to reach the target.

Adventure Hook: As the PCs approach a settlement they come upon a dead body, seemingly run through many times with a sword. The dead man clutches a note from his beloved, stating that she will agree to marry him. If the PCs pass on this information – or investigate it themselves – they will turn up no obvious leads, despite the apparent murder.

Before long, there is a second very similar death. This time, the victim was returning home from a successful night's gambling at a tavern. He was accompanied by a friend who, almost blind drunk after a terrible night's losing streak, can give only vague descriptions of a screaming shape in the darkness.

The PCs will have only limited time to work out what is happening before one of the villagers discovers gold in a nearby mine and a huge party is planned to celebrate. Such joyous revels will attract not one but an entire flock of Blade Beaks, eager to gorge themselves on the locals' delight.

Patchwork Man

Patchwork Men are bizarre assemblages of limbs that roam the land searching for new and better body parts. It is unknown whether they were originally alive – and have become trapped in a routine of replacing their old limbs in order to extend their lives – or whether they were created by some foul magical experiment. One diabolical theory posits that the first Patchwork Men came about within a kaer where the inhabitants ran out of resources

and began to cannibalise whatever was available – even each other.

No two Patchwork Men are alike. Some retain a humanoid shape, with two arms and legs and an appropriately positioned head and torso. Others are garbled collections, walking, rolling or scrabbling on multiple appendages. When things are really dire, some Patchwork Men employ hooks, wheels or other mechanical prosthetics to keep themselves moving.

Characters that encounter a group of Patchwork Men (for they are rarely solitary) will find themselves needing to defend life and limb – literally.

As a result of their many appendages, each of which often appears to be acting independently, Patchwork Men can complete a number of actions each turn.

Legend Award: Second Circle

Powers: Durability (1), Regeneration (6) 12*

*See Rules

Loot: Oddments and coins worth 30 silver pieces (worth legend Points)

Rules

For each fresh corpse that a Patchwork Man has access to, he may attempt to repair – and possibly improve – his body. Left undisturbed with a cadaver for one hour, a Patchwork Man may make a single Regeneration Test. If he rolls maximum for this Test, he may permanently increase his DEX, STR or TOU by one. If he rolls minimum for this Test, he must permanently reduce his DEX, STR or TOU by one.

Adventure Hook: Out in the wilderness, the PCs find a sack full of recently severed limbs and body parts. Amongst this grisly hoard are personal effects that might make it possible to identify the deceased.

If the PCs take the limbs to the next settlement, they will find a village that has been preyed upon by Patchwork men for years. The villagers will apparently seem grateful for any help but will secretly try to present the PCs as an offering to their tormentors – as they do with many strangers. The villager's actions – though loathsome – are motivated by desperation. Whether the PCs wish to help or forgive them is up to them.

Typical Patchwork Man

DEX: 5*	STR: 6*	TOU: 6*
PER: 6*	WIL: 7*	CHA: 5*

*To generate a random Patchwork Man, roll a D6 for each of the creature's Statistics. An odd result reduces a Statistic by that amount. An even result increases it by that amount.

Initiative: 5	Physical Defence: 7
Actions: 2	Spell Defence: 8
Attack: (3) 8	Social Defence: 7
Damage:	Physical Armour: 2
Weapon (3): 9	Mystic Armour: 1
Death: 42	Recovery Tests: 0*
Unconsciousness: 33	Knockdown: 6
Wound Threshold: 10	Movement: 6

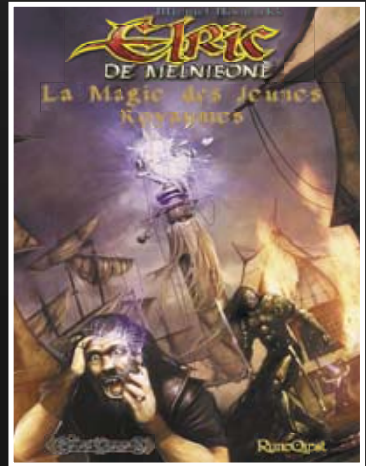
*Patchwork Men do not recover naturally from injuries. They must employ their Regeneration Power to repair themselves.

Michael Moorcock's

Elric DE MELNIBONÉ

*Entrez dans le monde des Jeunes Royaumes et participez
à la saga du Champion Eternel!*

PROCHAINEMENT



MONGOOSE
PUBLISHING

AROUND THE WORLD

By Will Chapman & Charlotte Law

The Around the World feature is a researched article on different countries all over the world, covering geography, culture, history and naturally hobby gaming. We will look at what makes each country unique from types of food to favourite sports, just to give a fresh outlook on the day to day lives of different societies from all over the globe. The article will conclude with an account of the differences (if any) between the common view of the roleplaying and hobby gaming world compared to each national representation.

The second Country of interest is France

to do and see. Many people find solace in the country so don't be afraid to go and visit.

Hobby Gaming

people worldwide as their first language, its origins lie within Latin and therefore is known as a language of romance.

France has a population estimated to be around 65 million and has the highest rate of asylum in Western Europe.

In terms of gaming, France does not differ excessively from the USA or the UK. D&D is as popular in France as it is in other countries, and Mongoose's own Hawkmoon series has proved to be a wide spread success. Pathfinder and Stormbringer also enjoy great popularity in France, however there are also some home-grown items that have earned their place in the world of roleplaying.

About France

France - Français

France was occupied by the Gauls in the beginning of its history and later by the Romans until finally, it was united by the Franks and Clovis I in the 5th Century AD. France extends from the Mediterranean Sea to the North Sea and English Channel and is the largest country within the European Union.

The Capital of France, Paris, is home to many cultural landmarks often associated with French culture including the architectural marvel that is the Eiffel Tower.

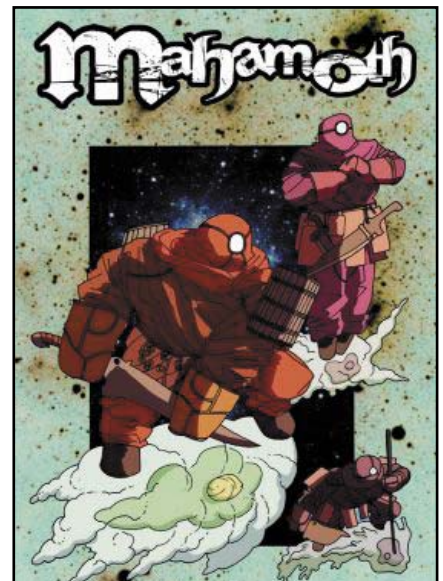
The main language in France is, naturally, French, it is spoken by around 77 million

French Culture

Just like Japan a whole culture can not be explained in just a few lines of text, the best way to really sample the excitement and adventure that foreign cultures possess is to visit for yourself and see what France has to offer in terms of cultural icons. These include:

Eiffel Tower, Louvre, Fashion, Football, Architecture, Arc de Triomphe, Moulin Rouge, Art Nouveau, Cuisine, Wine, Tour de France, Le Mans, Romance, River Seine, Notre Dame, Alps & Académie française.

France has variations of many of these cultural features and therefore can hold within itself hundreds of different things



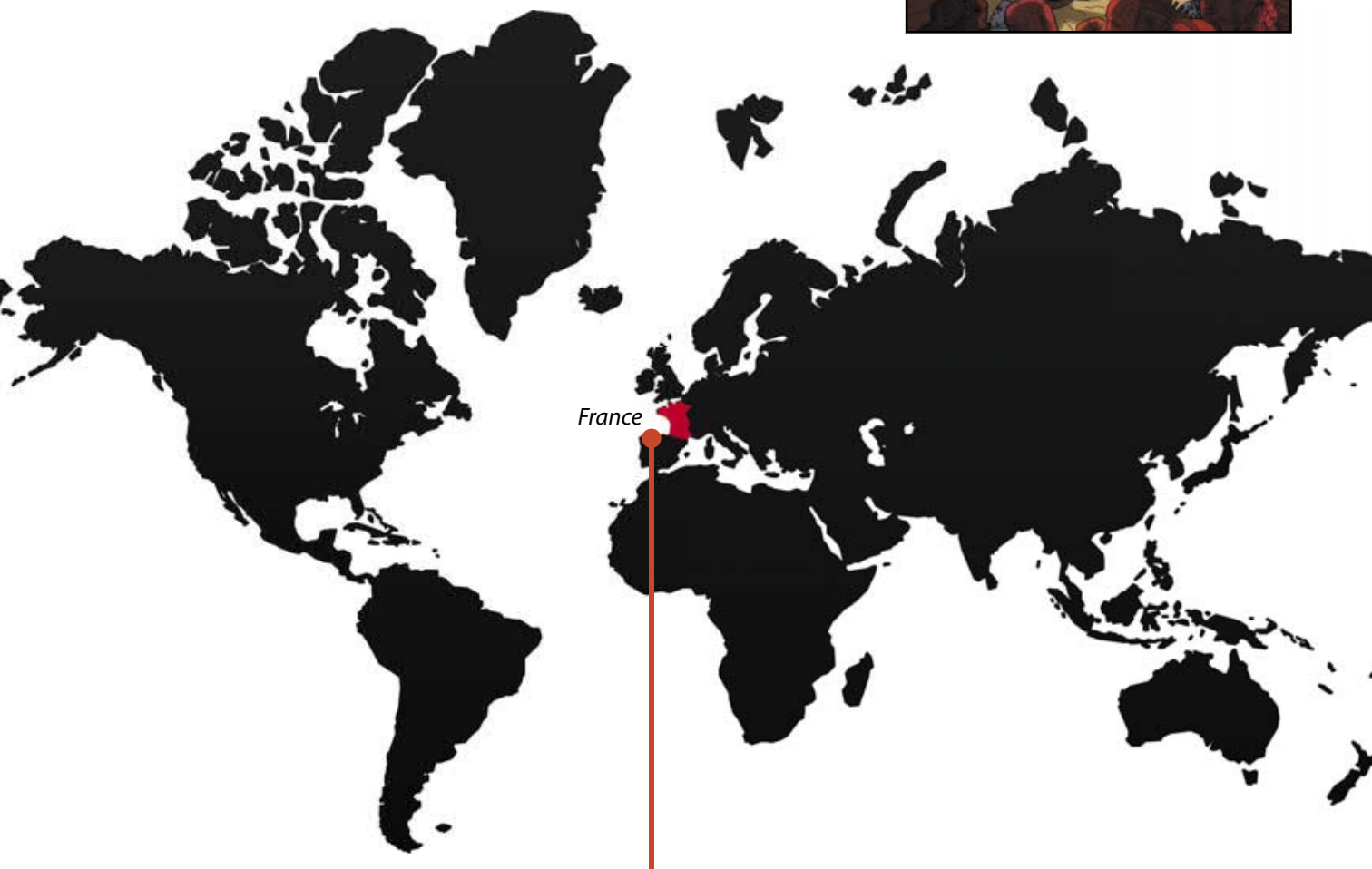
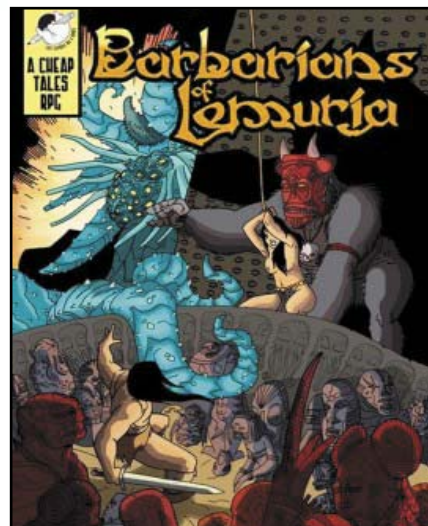
The Arc de Triomphe in Paris

Barbares de Lémurie (Barbarians of Lemuria) and Mahamoth seem to be the most popular of the home-grown roleplaying games. Barbares de Lémurie appears to be complimentary to a Conan setting, whilst Mahamoth is an exploration into space and sorcery in the future.

One of the main gaming events held in France is LE MONDE DE JEU, which attracts around 70,000 visitors each year. Like any

UK or US gaming convention this three day extravaganza is packed full of trade stands, demonstrations, tournaments, conferences and much much more. This year the event is taking place from 18-20th of September, so if you happen to be in Porte-de-Versailles, Paris on that weekend, why not check out first hand what the French gaming scene has to offer.

For more information about France visit:
www.franceguide.com



Artism... Vol 2

The Map

By Gillian Pearce

When drawing any map it is important to consider the little details such as layout and placement with regard to features such as water sources and the general landscape. At each stage you should take a moment to look at your map and think 'Does this make sense?'

In this instance I have drawn a map of Anskavern. I draw my maps freehand and add details like labelling in Photoshop afterwards.

My maps tend to be very detailed and when drawing maps of this nature even with an imaginary city it is important to take on board details such as the style of the buildings, the type of fortifications required and doing research about specific elements such as what a dry dock actually looks like!

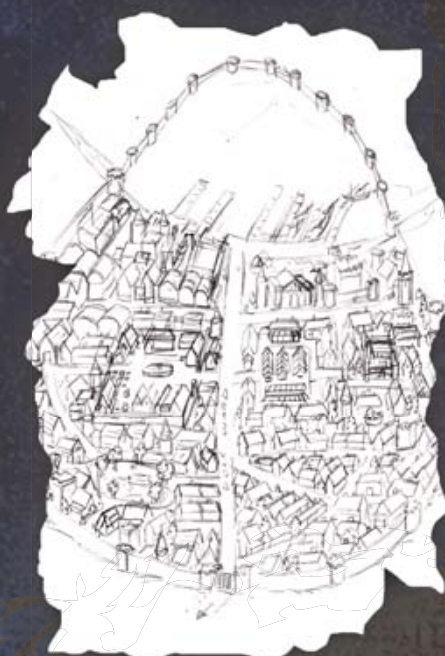
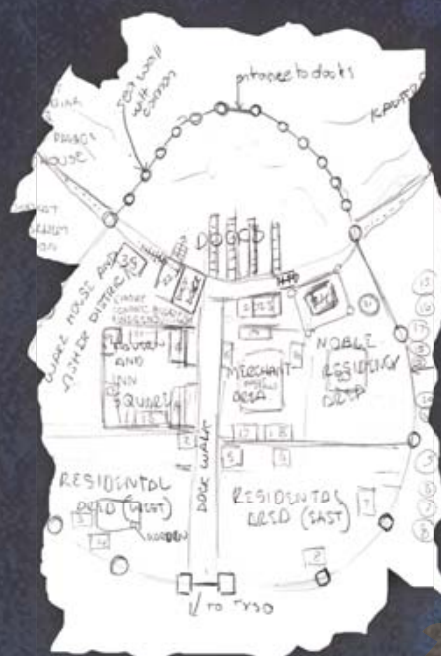
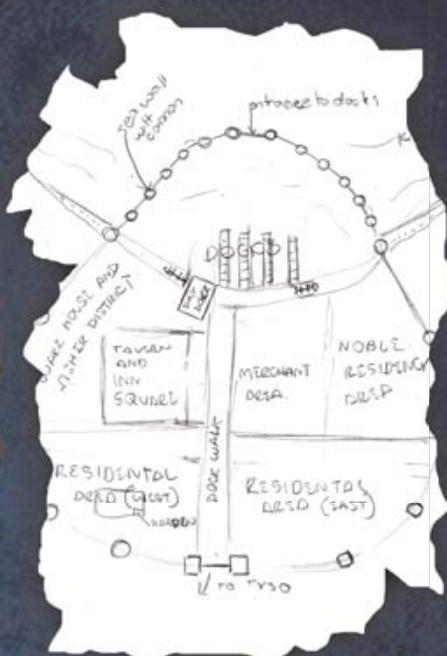
Stage 1

Firstly draw a rough plan of the city in pencil, it is not necessary to add building details at this stage, simply section out the separate

areas of the city and divide it into blocks. This will help to avoid confusion. Also remember the approximate location of the city in your world setting. In this instance Anskavern is a port city hence the beaches reaching to the left and right of the city and the Kaltersee being marked.

Stage 2

Before drawing in buildings get a general idea of where you wish to place sites of interest, as these may be buildings or locations you wish



1

2

3

to stand out a little from the general city. I find it helpful to number the locations to avoid confusion when I begin drawing the buildings in earnest!

Stage 3

Now the fun begins! Draw in your locations and buildings. I use pencil as I often amend details a little at this stage if I feel something does not quite fit correctly at the point I placed it in Stage 2. Make sure you draw in the important locations first; I often draw these slightly larger than life or add more details to such locations so they stand out more on the finished map. Try to keep the locations and building with the style and character of your city.

Stage 4

Once you are happy with your city ink it up! I use fine liners for this stage. Take your time with this stage, as it is not easy to correct mistakes! Then scan your image and open it up using a computer programme such as Photoshop and tidy it up accordingly.

Stage 5

Using the appropriate software; in my case Photoshop add numbers and locations to your map. It is important to achieve a happy medium

between text size and the location you are labelling. If the text is too large it covers the map, too small and it cannot be read at all. To ensure that the map can still be seen and is not cluttered with labels, I have labelled the main locations in text and have numbered other locations and created a separate key for them to avoid confusion. To make sure the labels are easy to see on the map itself I have created a white border around them using Photoshop.

And there you have it! A map of Anskavern!



Creating Kinships - Aslan Organisations and Secret Schools

By Simon Beal

Alien Module 1: Aslan introduces the Aslan concept of kinships. Kinships can be likened to human guilds that focus on a particular skill or career. This article expands on what has been established in the book to provide you with a framework for creating your own kinships. Following these guidelines are some example kinships that you can use in your games and some scenario ideas that can be used for any of your players that are members of a kinship.

Kinship Design

When creating a new kinship, try to add as much detail as possible and cover as many aspects as you can. These guidelines will help you define the important areas of a kinship and are broken down into the following elements:

- Name
- Purpose
- Organisation
- Territory
- Membership
- Benefits
- Rules
- Traditions
- History
- Further Information

Name

The name of the kinship can be anything you like, but traditionally the name is descriptive of the guild's purpose. It is also quite common to add the suffix 'Kinship' to the descriptive element of the name. Some example names include Fellowship of Poets, Diplomatic Kinship, Spacer's Kinship.

Purpose

Next you must define the purpose of the kinship. What are the aims and objectives of the kinship? Try to keep the purpose as specific and concise as possible; many elements of the kinship's purpose are likely to be detailed in later sections.

Common purposes include providing training and mastery of skills, networking members,

sharing information on particular topics, and providing a sounding board for new ideas and projects.

Organisation

The organisation section should detail how the kinship is structured and administered. This should include the internal hierarchy of the organisation, describing the role of each position. You can also list who currently holds any positions of note such as the leader.

Most kinships have a single leader position with a number of advisory and administration roles. Aslan traditions prevail here, so leader roles will generally be limited to males only, whilst administration positions will be filled by females unless the kinship is limited to a single sex.

You can also use this section to detail any internal politics. Again, most organisations reflect Aslan society, so positions of power within a kinship are highly sought after and can even improve one's social standing.

Territory

This section should list the subsectors, systems and worlds where the kinship is currently active. You can also detail any locations of note such as the main headquarters or any large facilities the organisation might have.

Most kinships will have a number of buildings for running the kinship and also to provide member facilities such as meeting rooms, training areas and accommodation. Such places are usually owned by families of the founding or ruling member (if male) or his descendants. Kinships that are run by females are either rented or owned by the manager's immediate family.

As a kinship grows and expands, additional territory is usually provided by other members and their families. Members who grant the use of their territory for kinship expansion will always gain some standing within the organisation, which will usually

be a promotion within the kinship or some additional benefits.

Membership

The membership section should describe who is eligible for membership and how new members are found and invited into the kinship. Kinships that restrict membership to people with a particular skill or career will often restrict membership to a specific sex if appropriate. For example, a kinship of traders would only have female members and a kinship of warriors would be exclusive to males.

Membership to a kinship cannot simply be purchased. New members are usually invited to join a kinship if they show a natural aptitude or particular talent that can be nurtured. Many kinships will also allow existing members to invite family as long as the candidate qualifies for membership.

If an invite is accepted, new members must often undergo a rite of passage or indoctrination procedure before being accepted into the kinship. Any initiation procedure should be detailed here. Rites of passage and indoctrinations usually exist to ensure that all members have the necessary skills and aptitude, so make sure the proceedings are appropriate to the kinship.

Most kinships require funding in order to provide the facilities and benefits to its members. If the kinship requires members to pay a joining or recurring fee then it should be detailed in this section.

Benefits

The benefits that members gain by being in the kinship will most likely have been stated in the purpose section. However, a more detailed description can be included here with any additional information not already listed in previous sections.

Most kinships will allow members to seek shelter and aid from other members. Additional benefits will depend on the



purpose of the kinship but might include training, guidance, support, libraries and knowledge, facilities, discussion and sharing of ideas.

For kinships that do not charge membership fees (as detailed in the previous section), they will often require payment on a per use basis. These fees are required to maintain and run the facilities and are heavily discounted, often providing a much cheaper alternative to similar facilities in the area.

Rules

Depending on the size and nature of the kinship, it might have simple and informal guidelines or it could have a strict set of rules and principles in the form of a constitution or similar document. As one would expect from the Aslan, most kinships tend to have a more formal set of rules that must be strictly adhered to.

The rules should describe how the kinship expects its members to behave and what

is expected of them. They should also detail what the member can expect of the kinship. Certain types of kinships called *hoawli* (secret schools) will also specify that knowledge of the organisation must remain a secret and should never be discussed with non-members.

Failing to abide by the rules of the kinship will fall under one of the three classes of offensive behaviour (familiarity, impoliteness and discourtesy) as appropriate and incurs the same consequences (refer to the Duelling & Honour section of *Alien Module 1: Aslan* for details).

Traditions

Many kinships, especially the older ones, will often follow a number of traditions. You do not have to include anything here but traditions will help flesh out the kinship and can often provide additional roleplaying opportunities. Traditions can

be special events, ceremonies and even specific attire that must be worn at certain occasions.

History

The history of a kinship can tell you much about it, and like the traditions it can really help to flesh out the kinship and make it more realistic. Key historical facts should include:

- How and why the kinship was created.
- When the kinship was created.
- The founding members.

You can add in other historical information as required. Additional details might include events within the kinship's history, changes to the kinship (such as new rules or traditions) and any notable members.

Further Information

You can add any additional information as required in this section. This can be anything relevant to the kinship that does not fit in any of the previous sections. You can also use this section to detail any new skills or items of equipment that are available to the members of the kinship.

League of Explorers

Purpose

The League of Explorers is a kinship for explorers to exchange details of places they have been and systems they have discovered. A central library stores all data pertaining to its members' discoveries, except in instances where the explorer is duty bound not to reveal information.

Organisation

The kinship is organised into independent chapters. Every chapter has its own data library and periodically sends new information to its neighbouring chapters. Each chapter of the League is self-regulated and has the following positions:

- **Head:** The person in charge of the chapter.
- **Archivist:** A number of archivists are responsible for logging new data into their chapter library.

Creating Kinships - Aslan Organisations and Secret Schools

- **Administrator:** The head will usually appoint one or two administrators to take care of the day to day running of the chapter.
- **Recruiter:** Recruiters actively seek out potential candidates for membership of the League.

In the interest of organisation and efficiency the League only allows one chapter per world, however each chapter may have more than one facility per world if required. Chapters are funded by charging members for the use of the facilities. Use by non-members is usually restricted but they are able to purchase library data.

Territory

The League of Explorers has chapters on most colonised Aslan worlds. On highly populated and frequently visited worlds, there are often several chapter facilities located at key locations. The headquarters of each chapter is usually located near that world's starport for the convenience of visiting members.

New chapters are usually donated by the head or the head's family however, where the kinship sees the need for a new chapter in a popular system, other chapters will often invest their own funds as a donation or on a loan basis.

Membership

Any Aslan with experience of exploration or who is embarking on such a career is a potential candidate for membership. All new members must be approved by the head, who will then call one of the administrators to handle the paperwork. There is no rite of passage to join the kinship and there is no membership fee.

The League of Explorers is extremely active in finding new members. Recruiters (usually retired explorers) are appointed to seek out potential candidates and invite them to the kinship. Many new members are found at the spaceport where the recruiters are always on the lookout for new explorers, others are found through word of mouth or head hunting.

All members of the League are also encouraged to invite anyone in their family or clan who meet the requirements. Anyone invited in this way must still be approved by the chapter head.

Benefits

The data collected by the League of Explorers is regarded as the definitive collection of historical data on Aslan systems. This information is freely available to members and sold to anyone else who wishes to find a new world to colonise or mine. Once a system or world has been colonised, the library is updated but no further details on that world are recorded.

Most chapters will provide accommodation and other facilities for travellers. Since there is no membership fee (the kinship wants to attract as many members as it can), members must pay for the use of the kinships facilities but costs are around half the price of similar facilities on that world.

Members who have limited funds may petition the chapter head for shelter. As long as the member makes a convincing case, the head will usually waive the fees for the duration of the member's stay. However, if this service is abused it can result in dismissal from the kinship.

Rules

The rules of the League of Explorers are as follows:

- All chapters are self regulated and financed, under the control of the chapter head.
- Members are requested to log any new exploration data with a chapter archivist unless that member is under obligation to keep their findings out of the public domain.
- Members may access the League data libraries free of charge but are not permitted to pass this data on to any third party without permission from the chapter.
- Non-members may purchase library data at an agreed fee directly from a chapter or from a member authorised to do so.

- Members may use the chapter common areas free of charge but must pay for food and drink as appropriate.
- Members may bring up to two visitors into chapter common areas.
- Visitors must be supervised at all times.
- Members are permitted to use other chapter facilities at the discounted rate set by that chapter.
- Members may request free shelter from a chapter head. If a satisfactory reason is given, the head may waive accommodation and related fees.

Traditions

All new members to the kinship are given a League Emblem, which is a small metal badge with the League's logo on it. Members are encouraged to display the emblem on their person but this is not compulsory.

History

The League of Explorers was founded in 142 Aslan, roughly 46 years after they reached the stars. The kinship was conceived by two explorers, Khaliki and Sakea who established the first chapter on the Aslan homeworld. As the Aslan Empire expanded, new chapters were created on the colony worlds providing safe harbour for explorers and access to the League's data library.

Khaliki and Sakea created a sensible set of rules for the League, which have not changed in the history of the kinship.

Masters of Alr'soi

Purpose

The Masters of Alr'soi is a secret school that teaches the ancient art of Alr'soi. Alr'soi translates to 'one with the blade' and is a martial art that teaches the student how to master a number of bladed weapons.

Alr'soi is becoming a forgotten art and the purpose of the kinship is to keep the skill alive by passing the knowledge on to elite warriors and gifted students. Details on using the Alr'soi fighting style are given in the Further Information section.



Organisation

Unlike most kinships, the Masters of Alr'soi has no internal structure to speak of. There are no leadership or administrative roles; instead there are just four positions that relate directly to the warrior's proficiency in Alr'soi as follows:

- Master (Alr'soi level 4)
- Adept (Alr'soi level 2–3)
- Journeyman (Alr'soi level 1)
- Student (no skill level)

Students are always mentored by a master in a one to one relationship. Rarely will a master take on more than one student. Once proficient in the art of Alr'soi (at skill level 1), the student attains the rank of journeyman and no longer needs a mentor.

Journeymen and adepts are free to do as they wish but they can only request further

training once they have real combat experience using Alr'soi. A journeyman or adept may approach any master for further training but most will seek the guidance of their original mentor. Only if the warrior has shown progress through experience will a master train them further.

Territory

The Masters of Alr'soi has no territories, buildings or facilities but members can be found throughout Aslan space. Training is done in any appropriate location that is free of distractions and prying eyes; this can be anywhere from a secluded valley to an empty cargo hold.

Membership

Only a master may invite a new member to the kinship but adepts may make recommendations to any of the masters. After completing the rite of passage, the student will be mentored by the master who invited him.

The rite of passage exists to prove a student's worthiness before being accepted into the kinship. The student must show skill, determination, honour and obedience. The rite consists of three separate trials.

The first trial is a test of the mind and at this point the prospective student will not even be aware he is undergoing a trial. The masters will ask questions and pose philosophical dilemmas to test the sharpness of mind and the suitability of the candidate. Only if they pass the first trial will the master formally invite the student into the Masters of Alr'soi.

If the student accepts the invitation, he must first swear to obey the rules of secrecy, even if they fail the remaining trials. If they agree to this, the trials will continue. The second trial is a duel to first blood. This is not a duel of honour but simply a test the student's skill and courage with the blade. No master has ever lost a duel in the second trial.

If the master is satisfied that the student has a natural aptitude, the final trial will begin in the form of a task. The nature of the task is determined by the master and it will not be easy as it must test the resourcefulness and determination of the student. The task might be to survive for three days in the wilderness with nothing but the clothes on their back, or it might be to deliver or retrieve an item with little or no resources.

There are no membership or training fees of any kind. Members of the Masters of Alr'soi will willingly share techniques and training with any other member and most mentors will provide food and accommodation for their students.

Benefits

The benefits of joining the Masters of Alr'Soi are quite simple; members get the opportunity to learn this rare, ancient and deadly martial art. Although many warriors will recognise the style of Alr'soi, few people outside of the kinship have the knowledge to use it.

Creating Kinships

- Aslan Organisations and Secret Schools

Rules

The rules of the Masters of Alr'soi are as follows:

- Members must never disclose any information about the Masters of Alr'soi or the martial art with anyone outside of the kinship. The only exception to this rule is when a master invites a candidate after the first trial.
- Students must obey their mentors without question.
- All masters must seek out and mentor at least one student. New students must be suitable and the rite of passage must be adhered to.
- All members must attend the annual Arena event unless extreme circumstances prevent them from doing so.
- Failure to abide by these rules will result in dismissal from the kinship. Any breach of the first rule will be considered an act of discourtesy and can result in a duel to the death.

Traditions

The Masters of Alr'soi have only one tradition called 'Arena'. Arena is an annual tournament held at a different location each year for members only. The event lasts for six days and is the only time that members get the opportunity meet each other outside of chance encounters.

The tournament pits contestants against each other in fights of first blood to see who has the greatest skill and mastery of Alr'Soi. The tournament works on a knock out basis divided over a number of rounds. Each round is divided into heats and each contestant fights in one heat per round, with the winner of each heat advancing to the next round. Due to the amount of contestants, the first heats pit 10 warriors against each other to thin the numbers. Subsequent rounds are one-on-one duels.

Any member who has attained the rank of journeyman or higher may participate in the tournament but this is not compulsory. There are three classes to the tournament, one for journeymen, adepts and masters. The winners of each class then face each

other in a free-for-all fight to determine the overall winner of the tournament.

The victor is most often a master but adepts have been known to win on occasion. It is a great honour to be the victor of any class and the host of the event will always supply prizes of money or weapons; in rare cases territory has been given as a prize. The tournament winner must host the following year's event at a location of his choosing.

In addition to the main tournament, Arena is an opportunity for members to meet each other, get further training from masters, exchange tales and catch up with old friends. Although the event traditionally lasts six days, some members will remain for weeks to complete their training.

History

As the Aslan made technological advances, guns and other advanced weapons became the favoured tools of war and the use of martial arts slowly began to diminish. Over the centuries Alr'soi and other fighting styles were all but forgotten. Those masters who remained saw that their art would be lost forever unless they took action, and so the Masters of Alr'soi was born.

The Masters of Alr'soi do not keep records; their traditions are passed down orally from master to student. The exact date that the kinship was formed is unknown but most masters believe it was sometime during the Border Wars.

Further Information

Alr'soi is visually distinct and any warrior who recognises it as such will usually have great respect for the practitioner. The style is fast and fluid with deadly attacks and quick parrying moves.

To represent the use of the Alr'soi martial art in *Traveller* a new skill, Melee (Alr'soi), is now available. Upon attaining the rank of journeyman, the warrior learns the Melee (Alr'soi) at level 1. Melee (Alr'soi) can be used with any bladed weapon and works much the same way as Melee (blade). To reflect the fact that Alr'soi is a more refined

and deadly fighting style, all damage dealt when using Melee (Alr'soi) gains a +2 DM. The defensive advantages also reduce the cumulative penalty for parrying by 1.

Merchant Kinship

Purpose

The Merchant Kinship exists to facilitate trade between Aslan and other races. It also serves to provide networking and support services for its members. Members are able to discuss the customs of any race they do business with and provide help for members who plan to deal with these cultures.

Organisation

The Merchant Kinship is built on a hierarchical structure that is necessary to manage its vast network of branches. Merchant branches make up the bottom layer of the hierarchy and provide facilities to members and visiting clients.

Above the branch level are the subsidiary offices, which are usually responsible for every branch in that subsector. Systems with high populations or popular trade routes will often have several subsidiary offices if there is sufficient need.

At the top level of the kinship structure is the head office. This office manages all of the subsidiary offices and governs the entire kinship, setting the rules and regulations for its members.

Each level within the Merchant Kinship has a number of positions as follows:

- **HEO (Head Executive Officer):** Stationed in the head office, the HEO runs the Merchant Kinship.
- **HAO (Head Advisory Officer):** HAOs work directly under the HEO to aid and advise her in the running of the kinship.
- **HFO (Head Financial Officer):** Manages the finances of the kinship.
- **SEO (Subsidiary Executive Officer):** Each subsidiary office has an SEO to oversee and run the office. An SEO is responsible for every branch under her control and reports to the HEO.

- **SFO (Subsidiary Financial Officer):** SFOs manage the finances that come in from each branch in that subsidiary. SEOs report to the HFO.
- **BEO (Branch Executive Officer):** The manager of a single branch. BEOs report to their appointed SEO.
- **BFO (Branch Financial Officer):** BFOs manage the finances of a single branch and report to their appointed SFO.
- **Administrator:** Administrators work at every level in the kinship and deal with the day to day running of the branch or office.

With the kinship positions spread over three levels, there is plenty of scope for politics as members endeavour to rise up through the ranks. Neighbouring branches are often competitive, recruiting more members and bringing in more clients in the hope of being promoted to the subsidiary office.

Territory

The head office is located on the Aslan homeworld. Branches have been established on most Aslan worlds (usually near the starport) and there are even branches on some Imperial worlds. Subsidiary offices are located in most subsectors where there are Merchant Kinship branches.

Membership

The Merchant Kinship is always looking to expand its portfolio of businesses and is one of the few kinships that does not require members to be invited. Due to the nature of the kinship, membership is only available to females but any business may apply to become a member.

Applicants must detail the nature of their business, together with recent accounts and references. Only successful or potentially successful businesses will be granted membership. A business in financial trouble or with a bad reputation will be rejected, only the best qualify to be part of the Merchant Kinship.

Once an applicant has been approved they must pay an annual fee of Cr.50,000 to be a member and gain access to all the benefits the kinship provides.

Benefits

The benefits of joining the Merchant Kinship are numerous. Firstly, all members are given a data wafer containing a business guide to negotiating and doing business with other races. The information on this guide is collected from members and can be updated any time a member visits a branch. The guide also contains a directory of all member businesses.

Each branch has a common room where members can meet and swap advice on the customs of other races and how this can affect business negotiations. Many members also do business with each other as a result of their discussions and will often provide training for a small fee.

Members also get full access to all branch facilities including conference rooms and trade networks. Conference rooms can be booked by members to meet clients of any race in a safe environment with the support of other members if necessary.

Non-members are also allowed in the branches to facilitate negotiations and client networking. Visitors can be invited by Merchant Kinship members or they may visit branches looking for Aslan traders and merchants. Many Aslan companies get new business this way.

Rules

The Merchant Kinship presents itself as a professional business and expects its members to conduct themselves and their affairs in accordance with the following rules:

- Members are free to use the common area in any branch to meet and discuss any business related topic.
- Members requiring the use of other branch facilities must book in advance.

- Non-members may request the use of branch facilities for business purposes with Merchant Kinship members. The branch will charge a fee as deemed appropriate.
- Members are requested to submit any new information on alien customs and cultures that will be of use to other members.
- Any information contained within the business guide is for use by members only. This data may not be shared, sold or otherwise released into the public domain.
- Members are required to submit reports of all business activities that take place within Merchant Kinship facilities. These reports are used for statistical purposes to improve the services of the branch and the kinship.
- All officers must submit quarterly reports as appropriate (such as branch activity and finances).
- Any member or visitor found to be trading in illegal goods or services (according to local law) will be reported to the authorities as appropriate and membership will be revoked.

Traditions

There are no formal traditions in the Merchant Kinship but over time the members have developed a certain way of doing things. When visiting a world that has a branch, most members will spend some time in the common area if time permits. This has become a great social aspect to the kinship where the members can relax and drink whilst sharing any business related news.

During these talks, many details about alien cultures can be confirmed and refined. This provides an excellent sounding board for members before they submit their findings for possible inclusion into the business guide.

History

The Merchant Kinship was founded in 2929 Aslan by Tali Aohoa Yahrel. Tali ran several successful businesses in Aslan space but when she expanded and started to deal

with alien races, her negotiations failed and her businesses began to decline. Realising her lack of understanding with these alien cultures was the reason behind this, Tali conceived the idea for the Merchant Kinship.

The kinship began as a simple setup with the single objective of sharing the customs of alien races, thus improving business negotiations with them. However, in the early days many people would sign up simply to get the business guide and then cancel their membership after the first year. When this issue became apparent, steps were taken to provide additional services to members and ensure that their continuing membership had value. The kinship soon grew to include all the benefits that members currently enjoy.

Scenarios

A well thought out and detailed kinship can provide a wealth of roleplaying opportunities, scenarios and even form the basis for campaigns. Some suggestions are listed here that can be used with your own kinships or those detailed in this article. Most of these ideas can either be run as a personal side story for one of your players, or for an entire party who are all members of the same kinship.

Event

Kinships that have large gatherings or events (such as the Arena event detailed in this article for the Masters of Alr'soi) can provide a number of possibilities for your

game. Such events can serve as a nice break in a long running campaign or perhaps the players need to win a tournament to improve their social standing. Events are also a great way to bring a party together or to bring new characters into the group.

Politics

Kinships that are steeped in internal politics are another great source for scenarios and campaigns. Perhaps the players wish to increase their standing or make a play for a higher position. Alternatively, the players might discover that a rival seeks to dominate the kinship and the players must take steps to prevent this from happening.

Rites of Passage

This scenario is ideal for a small party of players who have all been invited to join a kinship and can provide a nice way to bring your party together. The rite of passage could be shared or something that each player must achieve on their own.

Once the players have passed the rite, they will most likely begin training together and through their shared experiences the characters would naturally be drawn together to form a party. As the players' training comes to an end you can even combine this with one of the other scenario ideas or a plot device of your own to begin a campaign.

Secrets

Whilst delving into the history of the kinship one or more of the players will discover a

secret, be it a small piece of information that alludes to some conspiracy, or a section of the history is missing and most likely removed to hide the truth of a dark past.

Shelter

One of the players is approached by a member of their kinship who asks for shelter or sanctuary. The newcomer might just be down on his luck or trouble might be following a few steps behind. This scenario can work as a side story or it can be the start of a campaign.

Task

High ranking members within a kinship request a meeting with one or more of the players. The players are informed of a situation and their assistance is required or requested. The nature of the task is entirely up to you and can be a side story or form the basis of your campaign. Ideas for tasks include finding someone, retrieving some data or an item, investigating a situation within the kinship and recruiting new members.

Other Ideas

Feel free to expand on these ideas or add your own. If you plan to design a campaign around a kinship then you will need to be very descriptive but you can add specific hooks that will provide opportunities for your players to get involved as well as side quests and encounters.

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LONE WOLF

THE CITY OF ANSKAVERN: UNCOVERED

BY DARREN PEARCE

'See that lad, that's a Sommlending Galleon. There is no finer on the Kaltersee. I used to be a sailor, aye, now I prefer to watch the ocean from the shore rather than the rolling deck of one of those beauties, that though, that's a story for another time and place.' Brekan Var, ex Naval Marine.

BRIEF HISTORY

Back when the Sommlending first settled Sommerlund and drove the Darklords out, they were concerned about the possibility of reprisal attacks. King Kian blessed those who fought alongside him with titles and honours, hoping that these would galvanise his people to look after the lands he placed under their protection. To the Baron of Anskavern, Dundir Caldar this was extremely important and he set about the fortification of the North West shores by establishing the City of Anskavern, a watch-dog city that would protect the North West approach by being the foremost naval port in Sommerlund.

The city was built to last and over the years it grew until it became a highly defensible location. The waters of the Kaltersee gleaming in the sunlight on the shore provided ample locations to construct dry dock platforms, naval shipyards and small watch towers that stretched out into the ocean along strong stone walls. A violent pirate attack a few years pre MS 5000 proved to the Caldar's that their

city, the capital of the Baronial Province of Anskavern was indeed becoming a notable location.

To this end they constructed cannon platforms along the most vulnerable locations and fortified their sea walls. They constructed massive Sommlending warships and battleships, making this city the seat of power for the Sommlending Navy and cementing it as a place that would rival even the great Durenese City of Port Bax. Many Sommlending people flocked to Anskavern and as trade flourished, the city grew larger and larger.

In MS 5050 the City of Anskavern is now ruled by a young man known as Portis Caldar. He is a shrewd tactician and a fine marine in the Sommlending Navy, though somewhat troubled by fleeting ill health. Portis Caldar commissioned a ship known as the White Rock to be built in Anskavern during this year to commemorate the 50th year anniversary of the city's defence against the pirate attack.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Situated west of Toran and on a peninsula that juts out towards the Kaltersee, Anskavern cuts a dramatic shape on the North Western coastline of Sommerlund.

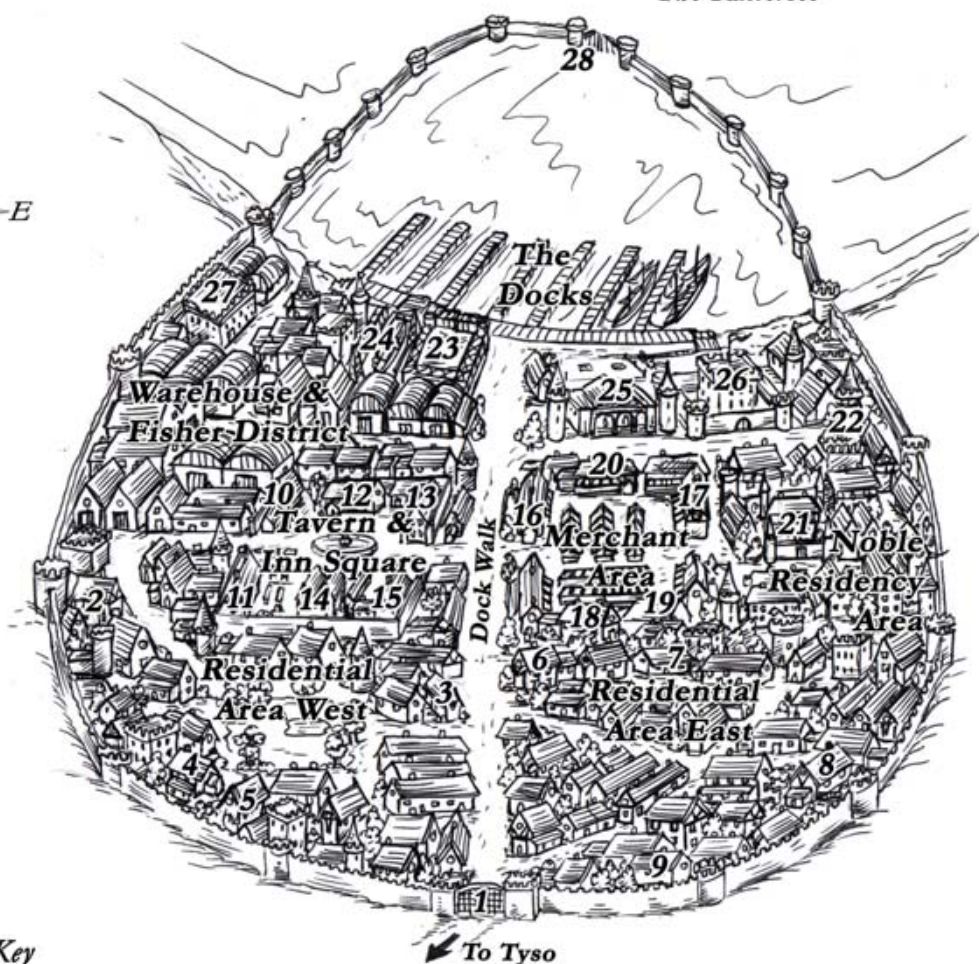
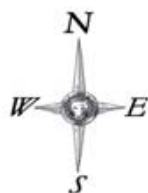
From its high stone walls made of grey Sommlending stone and coastal defence lines, the city is an impressive site from both shore and sea approaches. A huge naval construction yard dominates the dock area and is packed with sea going vessels of all kinds, from merchant ships to massive Sommlending Naval warships and battleships. The many flags of the Baronial Province of Anskavern fly from large pole pennants at the north and south of the city. A huge stone wall with many towers encircles and protects Anskavern.

A set of stone steps flow down from the north dock of the city onto the beach; the beach is cut off from the east and west by the city's defensive sea wall. The wall has numerous parapets with cannons that have been mounted there since the pirate attack pre MS 5000. A large sea gate protects the northern approach and can be raised and locked quickly to prevent shipping from entering or leaving the waters. The 12 large-bore cannons each side can be quickly rotated to face inwards and deal with any invaders that make it past the gate.

The southern gate of the city sits upon a busy merchant road and is an impressive stone and steel arch, attached to the 30 foot high city walls. The gate arch has a large portcullis as well as two strong steel doors that can be closed to seal off the gate in the event of an attack from the southern road direction.

Anskavern

The Kaltersee



Key

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. South Gate | 15. The Golden Seagull |
| 2. Ingrid Harper's Home | 16. Bait' N' Switch |
| 3. Old Jobe | 17. Yors General Store |
| 4. Turla Ree | 18. The Storm of Steel |
| 5. Brekan Var | 19. Reed's Tannery |
| 6. Torlak's Home | 20. Tara's Fishmongers |
| 7. Jon Rean | 21. House Caldor |
| 8. Pippa Grey | 22. The Tower of Fara |
| 9. Faolin Maija | 23. Dry Dock |
| 10. The Scalded Cat | 24. Shipwright |
| 11. The Bucket o' Chum | 25. Sommlending Naval HQ |
| 12. The Silver Moon | 26. Baronial Palace |
| 13. A Sweet Repose | 27. Guard House |
| 14. The Sailor's Rest | 28. Sea Wall & Gate |

The city's architectural style boasts a more relaxed design compared to Toran, it looks more like a city than a fortress and the quality of construction is significantly better. The Sommlending have used white and red stone to create a pleasing contrast to the eye here and thanks to the influx of monetary gain from the Trawler galleons, since Anskavern is a primary fishing port as well as the headquarters of the Sommerlund Navy, the quality of life is reflected in the buildings that make up all parts of the city.

A long road runs right towards the docks, leading past the residential areas and the merchant stores. To the east the gleaming towers, red rooftops and gorgeous buildings of the noble area of the city stand tall and impressive against the white stone walls in the background. The dock is the primary area for the shipyards, the guard house and the Sommerlund Navy Headquarters, a massive building that stands next to the equally imposing Baronial Palace.

At night when the grey smoke from the city chimneys has lessened the city is transformed into a glittering wonderland with lantern-lit ships of all kinds and glowing lamps from the front most towers of the sea wall. The city lights up as if thousands of tiny fireflies have made their home in the safety of the walls and as the lamp-lighters move around the city, so do the small points of light they create.

PLACES OF INTEREST

The City of Anskavern is primarily one that excels at making the individual feel safe, dominated by the massive stone walls and protected by a fine naval

ensemble the city exudes confidence and calm from building and citizen alike. There are numerous places that the traveller can find of interest here in the city; what follows are just a small selection of the most popular ones.

South Gate Entry

The large double steel doors and heavy portcullis of the South Gate cut an imposing image, flanked by twin square keep-like towers that house a contingent of the Anskavern guard. They are the city's main line of defence in the southerly direction. The road that leads to Tyso finishes here and becomes Dock Walk, a large white stone paved main thoroughfare that cuts through the city and to the north. Dock Walk has several flag poles that are situated in the centre of the wide streets and along the side there are many lamp posts, with flames that are encased in strong iron and behind glass.

South Gate Guard Towers

These large square towers are home to a contingent of the city guard. They have several murder holes and can be sealed to provide a defensible position. A single hatch leads out onto the square roof and small cannons are placed there in times of an attack.

Residential Area West

This is the first of two separate residential areas for the middle class citizens of the city. Anskavern boasts a good quality of life for the rich, the middle classes and the poor and has adequate space for its people. This is due to the influx of monies from the Sommlending nobility who regularly turn their coin to the cities improvement thanks to pressure from the ruling Baron.

The Western residency is a circle of stone and wood that makes up a good portion of the city. There are numerous houses and homes here, running from simple small bungalow style buildings to large imposing manor houses. The white and red stone of the city provides a pattern similar to that of a chess board when viewed from the air. There is a medium sized, well kept garden at the centre of the residency where several strong Sommlending oaks provide shelter and shade in the warm weather.

Notable residencies

Ingrid Harper's home: This clever and bright young woman is a scholar; she works in the administration section of the Sommerlund Naval Headquarters. She lives in a small cottage at the far edge of the residency and is a quiet reserved person.

Old Jobe: This cantankerous old man is a retired sailor who spends his time on his front porch scrimshawing and looking out at a sea he no longer has any love for. When asked about his old days as a sailor he becomes offensive and churlish. Many of the folk say that he was a pirate who now lives his life in the city after the unsuccessful attack pre MS 5000.

Turla Ree: A Sommlending aspirant to the Kai Monastery in MS 5050, now somewhat out of sorts due to the Darklords attack. Turla is a young man who dreamed of being a Kai Lord some day. Now he lives with his parents here in a modest home and is being forced to consider a secondary career in the navy.

Brekan Var: A strong hearted Sommlending man, Brekan served on a galleon known as the Sun Spray. He fought many long and hard battles against the Darklords and their allies, as well as helping drive off the pirates over 50 years ago. He is now in his 80's and fears that his mind may well start to slip soon.

There are many other residents that make their home in the western part of the city.

Residential Area East

In MS 5000 there was a shanty town in the eastern part of the city, a rough and ready slum that was the only black mark upon Anskavern during this time. After it was heavily damaged during looting that broke out in the pirate attack, Varak; the man in charge, set about redressing the balance. He formed a collective of like minded tough men and women, who purged the area of its unsavoury inhabitants and imposed vicious but fair order. Now 50 years on Varak is dead but his son Torlak lives on and has helped transform this one time shanty town into the east residence. It is not as opulent as

its western counterpart but it is still quite impressive. Medium and small buildings make up its core and whilst they have black slate and grey rooftops compared to the white stone and red of the west, they are still made to a comfortable design and kept in good repair by the various residents. There is no garden here but the various houses all have small yards and trees that make the area more attractive. Day and night there are regular patrols of the men and women who are employed by Torlak that move through the area.

Notable residencies

Torlak's home: This medium quality building is home to Torlak, son of Varak. He is a wiry youth possessed of a vicious streak inherited from his father. He keeps a tight leash on the crime in this area and nothing happens without his approval. He is rather fond of the current Captain of the City Guard, Faolin Maija.

Jon Rean: In a small squat house lives Jon, a pick-pocket who also excels at sleight of hand. He is often employed by Torlak to get access to information from various couriers or people who might be hiding something.

Pippa Grey: This grey stone building is the home of Pippa Grey. She is a feisty young woman who refuses to explain where she is from. If pressed she just says she was born in the streets of Holmgard and came here when that city became too important. She is a spy for the baron and is trained in hand to hand combat, disguise and also has some alchemical skills.

Faolin Maija: A young Sommlending captain in the city guard, a rising star and quite the favourite with both Torlak and the baron. Faolin is determined and dutiful; she has no time for frivolity and flowery words. She likes to get to the point right away and dislikes those who traffic in secrets. She lives here in a modest single storey building with a few stray cats.

Tavern and Inn Square

When the city was designed it was considered that the docks would be too

crowded, what with the plans for the headquarters, palace and other important buildings near the north entry to the Kaltersee, so they built the Tavern and Inn Square to compensate for that. Now it has become a bustling walled off area that teems with life both day and night. There are three taverns and three inns in the square now, since a new inn has been built circa MS 5049 which is rapidly becoming a favourite with the residents of the city.

There are Sommlending oaks here as well, black iron gates and several benches amidst the stone and grass pathways that make up the square. The inns are on the eastern side and closer to the road that leads onto Dock Walk. The taverns are on the western side and away from the inns so as not to disrupt a travellers rest.

Taverns

The Scalded Cat: A rough and rowdy tavern on the North West corner of the square. The Cat is run by Lucy Thornton, a young blonde Sommlending woman with a wicked sense of humour and a bawdy manner. She has a pet ferret called Willow that she uses to purloin the odd belonging from the wealthier customer if she can get away with it. The Cat serves a strong selection of Sommlending bitters and ales.

The Bucket o'Chum: This tavern has a large outdoor beer garden, two storeys for the customers and a big set of outdoor tables made from various ship parts. It is tended by the loud and raucous Carl Gronforth, a rotund man with a bellowing voice and a loud manner. Carl serves tasty mince pies at his tavern and is the only taverner to offer food in the square.

The Silver Moon: A more sedate place to drink, the Silver Moon is run by Gillian Waite, a young Lencian woman who came to Anskavern on a merchant ship many years ago. She has white hair and albino skin; her pink eyes are often protected by a large floppy hat that shades her from the worst of the sun. She makes a peculiar wine that is known as Moonfinger, tasting slightly of mint.

Inns

A Sweet Repose: This inn is a good place to get a solid night's rest; it is set further back and close to the road that leads to the Dock Walk. It is run by two Sommlending sisters, Gretta and Kara Tamerlin. It is hard to tell these twin sisters apart except for the fact that the older sister, Gretta, is an inch taller than her sibling. Sweet Repose offers a good price for a comfortable nights stay and there are several bards and entertainers that play during the evening. The staff members are friendly and the rooms are well kept.

The Sailor's Rest: Loran Dur, a retired Kirlundin Naval Marine runs his establishment as he would a ship. The establishment is a popular place for sailors of all kind to rest up between long sea voyages and whilst the rooms are frugal, the food is good and the entertainment can get a little bawdy compared to the other places. There are four bouncers in the main room at any given time since brawls do often break out when the sea folk get bored.

The Golden Seagull: With money directly funded from the baron's own coffers, this is the premier place to stay in Anskavern. It is run by Charles Creel, a Sommlending nobleman who decided to get his hands dirty rather than just sit around in opulence. It caters for a certain kind of client and Charles usually refuses access to the bawdy sailor folk and fishermen. He is a discerning owner and his establishment quickly grew to be a firm favourite of visiting nobles from outside of the city. His staff members keep everything clean and the rooms, whilst pricy, are the best in the city.

Merchants

A large section of the city is devoted to the various shops and services here. It is not a covered area like the City of Toran and is a mix of covered market stalls and red roofed shops. Many of the merchants prefer the lower rent of the central market stalls compared to those of a proper building and there are only a few normal shop buildings. These are placed close to the south and north ends of the area. Since Anskavern is a fishing

port as well there are lots of fishmongers that ply their trade here and there. There is also a bait and tackle shop right on the entry to the merchant area.

Shops

Bait'N'Switch: Smack bang at the entrance to the merchant district is a large single storey building with a grey slate roof and an impressive glass frontage that boasts numerous fishing equipment, rods and all kinds of tackle. It is run by a man known as Jonas Reginald Hartley who knows more about the art of fishing than most people in Anskavern put together. This middle aged man has authored a few tomes in his time and has won many local fishing competitions, as well as owning his own fishing galleon known as the Pride of the Kaltersee.

Yors General Store: Opposite Bait'N'Switch is a flat roofed building that serves as a general purpose store. Most sundry items of a non magical nature can be found here, under the watchful eye of Grem Yor Carcold, a dwarf from the Kingdom of Bor. He constantly rotates his stocks so it is worth a potential customer coming back to the shop now and then if they are looking to get hold of something useful for adventuring or exploring. He makes sure not to sell any fishing equipment and tackle, he sends any such potential customers over to Jonas.

The Storm of Steel: Storm Steeleye, a Sommlending warrior woman runs this establishment, part smithy and part weapon/armour smith, Steeleye's store and workshop rings day and most of the night, with the sound of smith's hammers and metal working. She is a strong woman with a lithe build and taut physique. Her blonde hair and tanned skin mark her Sommlending heritage and she has a wicked temper when roused. Her prices are fair and she can make, build, rebuild and repair any kind of mundane metal armour or weapons. Her custom orders are always given priority and she brands any of her items with her mark, an eye in the middle of a circle.

Reed's Tannery: Reed, a young man of around 20 years works with a few others here in the tannery. It doubles as

a place for those who like a lighter form of protection and Reed's staff can be commissioned to make leather armour here for the right price. Reed can make and repair any type of mundane leather item and specialises in equestrian tackle. He is fond of Storm but she has not yet noticed, these kinds of things tend to pass the woman by.

Tara's Fishmongers: Whilst there are numerous stalls and so on that offer freshly caught fish, filleted and prepared to the client's desire, there is only one stall that offers the prized Kaltersee Cod or the Sommlending Trout, cut and cleaned whilst you wait. Tara runs this shop and keeps all her fish on ice with the help of a cooling spell. Virtually any kind of local or imported fish can be bought from this stall and Tara, a rather plain and well spoken young Sommlending maid is the toast of Anskaven's fishermen.

Warehouse and Fisher District

To the west of the city close to the North West section of the wall is a sprawling area of flat stone buildings. It is populated by fishermen and full of storage houses for the goods, many warehouses are packed into an area that on first glance seems to be too small for such buildings. There is just enough adequate space between the buildings and should the area catch fire it would be extremely hard to put the blaze out. Every hard working dock worker and fisherman lives here and some of them live in the upper storeys of the warehouses to save on space.

Noble Residency Area

At one time the guard here would have been privately owned by the nobles that make their homes in the grandeur of the area. Now things have changed and the baron's men guard the nobles and make sure that no private militia roam the grounds. This is but one of the changes that the current ruler has implemented to keep his city on an even keel. The area itself is full of lavish houses and manors that are home to the opulent members of society, even a mage from Dessi makes her home here in her white and gold tower to the North East of the residency area.

The clean streets flow almost regimentally around this area. Beautiful gold and red buildings provide a glorious visage both day and night and when the sun sets, the lamps cause the buildings to look as if they burn with the light of Kai. The ruling house, House Caldor, has a massive red, gold and black slate manor that sits in the centre of the residency and acts as a summer home for the baron when he's not living in the dock side palace close to his beloved sea.

House Caldor manor: This is a large sprawling manor house that sits in the centre of the Noble Residency. It is the most opulent building in all of Anskavern next to the baronial palace itself. A black iron fence and high wall encircles the building and it is patrolled day and night by the city guard. The Sommlending flag and that of the Baronial Province of Anskavern flies from a pennant atop the tallest most tower of the manor. The manor is three storeys high and made from red, gold and white stone with a black slate roof.

The Tower of Fara: Fara Zuur makes this imposing gold and white coloured tower her home. She is a young Dessi sorcerer who came to the city a while ago, she loves the sea and decided to remain in Anskavern to help defend it from the Darklords should they ever attempt to attack the city. A small garden borders her 60 foot tower and her favourite flower; the Sommlending Blue Orchid grows in abundance around the flower beds surrounding it. A single window looks out towards the dock area and provides Fara with an excellent view of the sea.

The Docks

If the merchant's area is the lifeblood of the city where coin is concerned then the heart of Anskavern is the dock. Stone stairs lead down east and west onto the yellow sand beach and a massive stone and wood promenade reaches out into the Kaltersee, encircled by a huge sea wall topped with 12 defensive cannons. The dock is well protected and has a fully functioning dry dock and its own shipwright. It serves as a berth to hundreds of ships. The Sommerlund Navy makes its home here in a private section of the dock to the east and the

many pennants of the kingdom fly from flag poles suspended from the walls of both the baronial palace and the Sommlending Naval Headquarters.

The Dry Dock: Attached to the shipwright, this massive construction can look after numerous ships and vessels of all shapes and sizes. It is primarily used to repair navy vessels but can be used to repair civilian and merchant shipping. It has huge cranes and water locks that are capable of handling immense weight.

Shipwright: The premier naval and civilian shipyard, the shipwright is capable of building and maintaining many ships. The workers use high quality Sommlending wood and materials in the construction of their vessels and they toil night and day to make sure the navy has the best possible quality available. The skeleton of the White Rock, a massive flagship is currently being constructed here.

Sommlending Naval Headquarters: The navy is under the command of Kirk Avalin, a Sommlending Marine and Naval Commander. This massive white and black stone building serves as the headquarters and central command for the navy. It is a large imposing building that has numerous offices inside and contains embassies for various dignitaries from Sommerlund's allies. It also serves as a City Hall.

Baronial Palace: The seat of power and home for Portis Caldor, the current heir to the Caldor name since the previous baron vanished at sea. Portis' palace is a massive white stone keep with several cannon defences and armed guards patrolling the grounds at all times. His large tower is circled by smaller towers here and he has a commanding view of the waves from his sea front position. The flag of the Baronial Province of Anskaven flutters from a large silver flagpole atop his tower.

Guard House: The prison and guard house is a square keep-like building, much like its counterparts in many of the other Sommlending cities. It is a functional building and has various cells and holding places for criminals and other

troublesome individuals. The head of the guard, Faolin Maija sometimes sleeps in the upper barracks alongside the other guards and when she is not patrolling the streets she might be found gently dissuading Portis Caldar's advances at a private function in the palace.

Sea Wall and Gate: This massive white stone wall is set with a large metal gate that can be lowered at any time. There are 12 cannons on rotating platforms, six each side of the wall and they can be positioned to fire outside or inside at a moment's notice by way of a complex mechanism of cogs and gears down below in each tower. The cannons also have a manual turning handle at the top and a way to disconnect them from the mechanism should the tower below become damaged.

Other places of interest

Sewers

Some of the northern sections of the sewer were sealed post MS 5000 when city agents discovered that wreckers had been operating on the shores close by. The pirates attempted to enter the city by way of the sewers and knocked a hole into the sewer complex from the North Eastern shore. It was sealed after the invasion was repelled and now in MS 5050 Portis has begun to excavate and reopen the sections of the city, making sure to shore up any dangerous parts beneath his pride and joy.

POPULATION

In MS 5000 there are almost 25,000 people in Anskavern, with that number increasing in MS 5050 to over 40,000. This number can fluctuate during the spring and summer as more people flock to the city. When the fishing season is at its highest there can be an additional 100 or so sailors and fishermen who come to the city to try and ply their trade.

CULTURE

Just like Toran the people of Anskavern observe their traditional Feast of Fehmarn and decorate their city accordingly, with bright gold and orange banners and bunting. A city wide party is often called at this time and as long as there are enough stocks, the fishermen and merchants give free fish to the needy and worse off citizens. This is known as Kai's Bounty and is an important local tradition in Anskavern. The beautiful ships of the Kai are often seen here during this feast and many Kai Lords pass through to offer their blessings and partake of Kai's Bounty.

Portis Caldar throws open the doors of his palace during this feast and holds lavish parties for the affluent and poor alike. He demands that all come and pay homage to Kai. During the first few minutes of the feasting time the cannons fire off a single salute into the air above the sea and the baron sets off fireworks, many given as gifts from Dessi and other countries. Travelling musicians roam the streets and a small golden fish is often seen pinned to the breast of men and women alike, this is a tradition in Anskavern and it often means that these young people are unattached and looking to be 'caught'.

SOCIETY

Anskavern has a regimented, social strata and the city's folk observe a feudal relationship with Portis Caldar and his servants.

Portis Caldar

The Baron of Anskavern is the defacto law within the city and he has the right to do as he pleases. Fortunately for his people Portis is a good ruler and he looks out for those under his command as well as the population in general, he is extremely beloved and well liked by all those in the City of Anskavern. He has

the best of everything, yet still prefers to share it and get his hands dirty. He lives in the Baronial Palace of Anskavern.

The Lord Mayor

The orders come down from Portis to Lord Mayor Gaskell and he delivers them to his council, all of this takes place in the Sommlending Naval Marine Headquarters that doubles as a City Hall. Gaskell is a diligent man and he does as he is told, never questioning the chain of command. He lives in opulence enjoying the best food and wine in the city and is somewhat of a recluse when it comes to meeting new people. He makes his home in the palace.

Naval Commanders

In times of war the city looks to these men and women to protect it from ocean born threats. Kirk Avalin makes sure that the commanders do their job in and out of battle. They are responsible for the well being of those who ply the waters around Anskavern and he sends them out on regular scouting patrols to keep the waters safe. They attend various functions and enjoy a high quality of life style. They live in the naval headquarters.

The Anskavern City Guard

Under the command of Faolin Maija these guardsmen and women do their duty to the utmost, they are given a good salary and allowed to live where they please. They eat fine food and drink hearty ales and wines, preferring for the most part to be amongst the people they serve. They live around the city.

The Nobility

A curious bunch that are uniquely concerned about the welfare of others, usually looked upon as elitist and snobbish, they do their very best to cast off the shackles of their unjust description and strive to prove that not all nobility are boorish snobs. They often give to the

poorer folk and will usually try to make the lives of those around them much better. Many of the nobles have given to the city improvement fund to increase the quality of life. They drink and eat the finest food and wear the best quality clothing. They make their homes in the Noble Residencies.

The Citizens

These are the folk of the city, from the middle class to the slightly poorer folk; they are the core of Anskavern and run the shops, the taverns and inns as well as doing everything else. They eat and drink various wholesome foods as well as wearing numerous different kinds of clothing from trousers for the men and elegant skirts for the women, to simple tops for both sexes. It is hard to pin down just one kind of clothing style for these people. They live in the east and west residency areas as well as all around the city. There was once a poor quarter but that shanty town became the eastern residency.

GOVERNMENT & LAW

Baron Portis has a swift law and his justice is without mercy against agents of the Darklords. Whilst he is a lenient man to those who break the law depending on circumstances he still expects some form of punishment. Those who commit greater crimes and especially that of murder are executed in a non-public place and given the blessing of Kai and Ishir before they die. Those who steal from Anskavern are thrown out of the city and barred entry until they can find a way to atone for their sins. Piracy often sees the offender hung from one of the many towers in the sea before they are cut down and given a decent burial, Portis does not wish to anger the gods let alone tempt fate or the Darklords, he is no barbaric savage.

ECONOMY

Anskavern is a fishing port; it exports a huge amount of various kinds of fish and imports luxury goods. It also imports naval construction materials by land and sea. Much like the rest of Sommerlund it exports grains and crops as well as the precious gems and ores of the region.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS / REGIONAL RELATIONS

Anskavern has a good relationship with the rest of its neighbours in Sommerlund, especially with Tyso to the south where it often trades for good quantities of wood. It also has a solid relationship with Lencia and Dessi along with a naval alliance between Durenor and Sommerlund, ships from Port Bax are regularly seen in Anskavern and often also seen escorting vessels through the waters should they chance to be going the same way.

Portis' regime opposes the forces of the Darklords and his navy stands ready to fight should trouble rear its ugly head.

Secrets

For such a large city there are relatively few secrets in Anskavern, there is no local thieves' guild thanks to the diligence of the city guard and the people. There is also currently no Darklord influence in the city at all.

The pirates that were defeated back in MS 5000 have a grudge that is several nautical miles wide, so they may well be plotting the downfall of the city and looking to turn their lot in with the Darklords.

The greatest secret is the disappearance of the previous Baron of Anskavern, how his ship was lost at sea and how he vanished is a complete mystery to commoner and Portis alike. He only knows that he inherited the seat of power suddenly and without warning and this gave the new baron a definite pause for thought and he suspects Darklord involvement or at least foul play.

This may be a plot by the pirates or just a simple accident at sea, only the Kaltersee truly knows the answer and it is not giving up its secrets lightly.

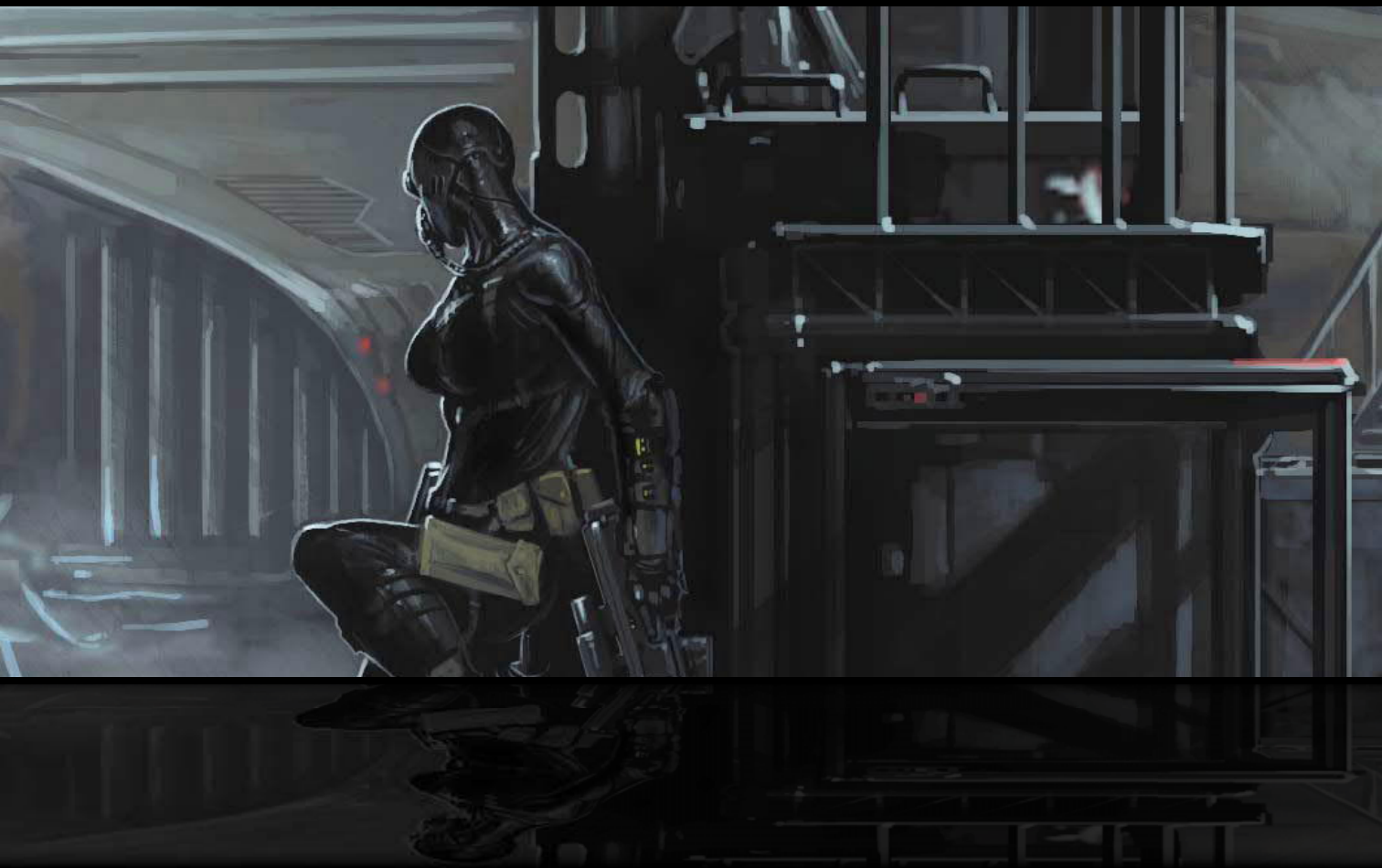


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Temple of the Snake

By Simon Beal

The Mouser did not leap or start, but only turned around without changing the planting of his feet in a movement slow and sinuous as that of a ceremonial dancer in the Temple of the Snake. – Lean Times in Lankhmar

The Temple of the Snake is mentioned in the Swords novels as a single reference and although little is said, much is implied. This article is based on the images conjured by this tantalising remark and provides details for Games Masters wishing to use this religious cult in their games.

Cult of the Snake God

God of fertility, seduction and rejuvenation

The snake is a powerful symbol that represents fertility, seduction and sexuality; an image that not only fits well with the 'sinuous ceremonial dancers' but one that also suits the setting of Lankhmar. The snake shedding its skin is also symbolic of rebirth and rejuvenation, which gives rise to the belief that the snake god is a healer and creator of life. Games Masters are free to choose any or all of these aspects as required for their games but this article will assume that all are being used.

Unlike most religions, the Temple of the Snake uses a personal approach to spread its faith rather than preaching long sermons. New members are enticed by the ceremonial dancers and skilled healers. Many an adventurer has feigned belief to get their wounds treated but have ultimately been seduced by the people and services found within. The longer people spend in the temple, the more devout their faith becomes.

Due to the sensual nature of this cult, many view it as little more than a brothel, conveniently draped in religious attire. Although it is certainly true that followers of this religion express a certain sexual freedom, members engage in such acts

of their own volition and donations are voluntary. Non-believers who enter the temple looking for simple physical pleasures are often converted but occasionally they will leave disappointed if it is clear they have no interest in the snake god.

Any member who actively performs their duties is permitted to stay within the temple for shelter and donations to the cult are used to provide food to any member who requires it. Many poor and homeless people join this faith, not just for the food and shelter but for the sense of community and belonging they get from its members.

The snake god is referred to in its masculine form but the snake in this context is regarded as being neither male nor female and encompasses aspects of both sexes. This duality is mirrored in the cult by the different duties performed by men and women.

Lay Member Requirements: Belief in the Snake God

Skills: Healing (male), Dance (female)

Duties: Never harming a snake or serpent. Men are required to heal any injured believers who enter the temple. Women must spread the faith of the Snake God by seducing and enticing people into the temple.

Special Benefits: The ability to call for Divine Intervention from the Snake God.

The Temple

The temple has a modest sized entrance where several dancers work their talents to charm onlookers and passers-by, especially those who look in need of companionship or healing. Snake motifs adorn the portico and doorway and continue throughout the temple. All visitors entering the temple are requested to leave their weapons in a

secure storage area where they can retrieve them when they leave the building.

Hall of Ceremonies

The main entrance leads to the Hall of Ceremonies, a huge circular room with a statue of two intertwined snakes standing in the centre. A narrow snake pit encircles the room crossed with four evenly spaced walkways that allow access to the main entrance and three smaller connecting rooms.

The Hall of Ceremonies is dimly lit with candles spread around the room and the smell of incense fills the air. This is where the exotic dances are performed to soft rhythmic music. The dancers use their skills of seduction to convince visitors to worship the snake god, often incorporating snakes as part of their performance.

Healing Room

The sick and the injured are lead through the Hall of Ceremonies to the healing room but only those who acknowledge and affirm their faith to the snake god will be treated. Several beds are positioned on the far wall for those who require long term care, whilst a number of chairs and tables are used for more immediate treatment. Shelves fixed to the walls are stacked with a variety of bandages, potions and herbs.

Sleeping Quarters

The sleeping quarters are actually one large room divided by numerous drapes, silks and tapestries. The beds are simple but functional and anyone who has declared their faith in the snake god is permitted to sleep here.

The dancers often bring potential new members and favoured companions here to show them some of the pleasures offered by the religion. One obvious outcome of this, especially in light of the fertility aspects of the snake god, is the number of children born to the dancers.

Location

The location of the Temple of the Snake is never specified in the Swords novels so Games Masters are free to establish it wherever best suits their needs. Games Masters should also consider that although the description implies there is only one temple, there is no reason why there cannot be more; popular religions usually have temples in several major cities and towns around Nehwon.

Lankhmar, Street of the Gods

The Street of the Gods is one of the longest and busiest streets in Lankhmar. It is lined with temples and most cults in Nehwon can be found here. The more established the religion, the further west along the street it is located and the larger the temple. The eastern end of the street has the newer and less popular gods, with only small shrines and tents to show for their faith. The Temple of the Snake is reasonably well established and would be situated somewhere in the middle.

Ilthmar

Ilthmar is an unlikely place for this religion given the Ilthmars' worship the menacing rat and shark gods but Games Masters may wish to establish the Temple of the Snake here in contrast to the dark religions. One advantage to situating the temple in Ilthmar is the supply of wine. The quality of Ilthmar wine would certainly be an additional tool that the dancers could use to seduce new followers to the faith.

Quarmall

Drawing on the symbolism that snakes are connected to the underworld, Quarmall provides a plausible and interesting location for the cult, especially if the Temple of the Snake originates in Quarmall. Games Masters might want to have a single temple located in the depths of the subterranean city, or perhaps the religion has emerged from solitude and is now spreading across Nehwon.

Nomads

Another perspective on the Temple of the Snake is to remove the preconception that a temple is a permanent feature and see it simply as a place where followers of a faith worship their god. A nomadic cult that travels Nehwon with a temple made of tents or natural formations (such as trees or rocks) adds an interesting aspect to the religion and its followers.

This idea also lends itself nicely to having the religion originate from the Mingol tribes, adding an interesting aspect to the savages that roam the Great Steppes and giving them a layer of depth and spirituality. This concept will be particularly attractive to Games Masters running a Mingol based campaign.

Adventures & Encounters

A number of plot hooks are given here that Games Masters can use to create their own scenarios and encounters based around the Temple of the Snake. Many of the suggestions given here can be combined together to create more interesting and diverse scenarios.

Cult of Popularity

The cult is growing in popularity and temples to the snake god are being established in all the major cities across Nehwon but is there a more sinister motive behind this growing religion? The idea of a fast spreading cult will always draw the attention of the suspicious, the paranoid and anyone who would be threatened by such a movement.

There are several ways that the Player Characters can become involved in investigating the cult. Their own suspicions might encourage them to find out more, a companion might have converted to the new faith or another concerned individual might employ the party to investigate.

Paying Dues

If the Temple of the Snake is located on the Street of the Gods in Lankhmar or

somewhere similar, the local extortionists and racketeers will take an interest as the cult gains support and popularity. The players will be hired to make sure that the temple pays its share to whoever runs the racket in these parts. However, as the party venture into the temple there is a good chance they will fall victim to the temptations of the religion and declare their faith to the snake god.

These circumstances can lead to several interesting situations. Firstly, the players' employer will be less than happy that the party have sided with the people they are meant to extort money from. Secondly there is a good chance that not all of the party will be easily converted, which will create a division amongst the group that could end in violence if the strong willed Player Characters are determined or forced to finish the job they started.

Rest and Recuperation

Games Masters who do not wish to explore the more sinister aspects of the cult can simply use the Temple of the Snake as a fun diversion for their players. Having a party visit the temple for healing or to enjoy the pleasures of the dancers can provide a light hearted diversion between adventures.

Snake Swarm

It is not uncommon in the Swords novels for animals to attack the inhabitants of Lankhmar. We see this with the ravens in Claws from the Night and on a much larger scale with the rats in The Swords of Lankhmar. There are more than enough snakes inside the temple for a snake infestation and like the ravens and the rats, this could be a planned attack by the cult with an ulterior motive. The snakes would be commanded by the high priest, using the power of the snake god or magic that allows mastery over snakes.

Alternatively, the snakes could turn on their masters and attack everyone in the temple. Perhaps the cultists have angered the snake god or some other force is at work

Temple of the Snake

controlling the snakes. Once the cultists lay dead, the snakes will escape the temple and spread into the city.

Snakes and Sorcery

Quarmall is well known for its sorcerers so any cult that dwells in this underground city must surely have some connection to the dark arts. Games Masters have the opportunity here to use the darker aspects of snake symbolism such as its connections with the underworld and death.

A religion that originates in Quarmall would include elements of sorcery and there would be a number of sorcerer-priests who practice their magic with religious overtones. Such black magic might include ritual sacrifice involving necromancy and Games Masters may wish to create additional spells to be used in this way.

Where Did All the Children Go?

A sinister aspect to the Temple of the Snake involves the fate of the children born to the dancers. If they strongly embrace the fertility aspect there would be many children conceived this way and if few are seen in the temple it begs the question, where do the children go?

There could be a perfectly rational explanation for this but it is more likely that the children are being sold to slavery, or worse. Even Player Characters with dubious ethics should be motivated to put a stop to such goings on.

Where Do the Snakes Come From?

There are a lot of snakes in the Hall of Ceremonies, more snakes than most people would have ever seen before, but where do they all come from? The mundane answer to this question is that they are well looked after and bred to keep the numbers constant but the truth is far more disturbing.

The snakes are actually worshippers (or perhaps non-believers) of the snake god that are turned into snakes by magic. The magic used to transform these people can be anything from a simple sorcery spell to an intricate and time consuming ritual, or it

could involve the power of the snake god. The cultists who are transformed in this way may do so voluntarily or they might not have a say in the matter. This would also add an interesting twist as to where the children go.

NPCs

Performers

The women who follow the snake god participate in the ceremonial dances designed to seduce and entice new members to the faith. Whilst they perform their sensual moves they also explain the wisdom and benefits of their faith.

Characteristics

STR	7
CON	8
DEX	16
SIZ	11
INT	9
POW	12
CHA	14

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/4
4-6	Left Leg	0/4
7-9	Abdomen	0/5
10-12	Chest	0/6
13-15	Right Arm	0/3
16-18	Left Arm	0/3
19-20	Head	0/4

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Dagger	33%	1D4+1

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 3
Strike Rank: +13
RQ1 Skills: Acrobatics 46%, Athletics 43%, Dodge 35%, Influence 64%, Lore (Animal) 39%, Lore (World) 29%, Perception 31%, Persistence 32%, Resilience 20%, Stealth 25%, Dance 66%, Language (Native) 59%, Lore (Theology) 39%, Play Instrument 44%, Streetwise 26%
RQ2 Skills: Athletics 43%, Dance 66%, Evade 32%, Influence 44%, Insight 31%, Lore (Animal) 38%, Lore (World) 28%, Perception 31%, Persistence 32%,

Resilience 20%, Stealth 25%, Acrobatics 46%, Language (Native) 59%, Play Instrument 44%, Seduction 63%, Streetwise 26%, Theology 38%
Typical Armour: None

Healer

Most men who dedicate themselves to the snake god become highly skilled healers. Whilst they tend to the sick and the injured, they also speak about the virtues of their god and religion.

Characteristics

STR	8
CON	9
DEX	8
SIZ	13
INT	13
POW	14
CHA	13

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	0/5
4-6	Left Leg	0/5
7-9	Abdomen	0/6
10-12	Chest	0/7
13-15	Right Arm	0/4
16-18	Left Arm	0/4
19-20	Head	0/5

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2
Strike Rank: +11
RQ1 Skills: Dodge 15%, First Aid 53%, Influence 53%, Lore (Animal) 23%, Lore (Plant) 53%, Lore (World) 23%, Perception 32%, Persistence 34%, Resilience 33%, Healing 67%, Language (Native) 63%, Lore (Regional) 13%, Lore (Theology) 53%, Streetwise 27%
RQ2 Skills: Evade 16%, First Aid 53%, Influence 53%, Insight 47%, Lore (Animal) 26%, Lore (Plant) 56%, Lore (World) 36%, Perception 32%, Persistence 34%, Resilience 33%, Healing 67%, Language (Native) 63%, Lore (Regional) 26%, Streetwise 27%, Theology 56%
Typical Armour: None

Snake

Snakes range from four to six feet in length. Their colours markings vary but most are a mix of greens and browns.

Characteristics

STR	1D3	(2)
CON	1D3	(2)
DEX	2D6+2	(9)
SIZ	1D3	(2)
INT	5	(5)
POW	1D6	(3)
CHA	2	(2)

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1–15	Body	1/1
16–20	Head	1/1

Weapons

Type	Weapon Skill	Damage
Bite	25%	1D2 +
Poison		

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2
Strike Rank: +9
Movement: 2m
Traits: Poison (see below)
Skills: Athletics 35%,
Dodge/Evade 25%, Resilience 10%,
Perception 25%, Stealth 60%, Survival
40%
Typical Armour: Scales (AP 1; no skill
penalty)

Snake Venom

Type: Smeared
Delay: 1D4 combat rounds
Potency: 60
Full Effect: One HP of damage to Hit
Location; applies –6 penalty to victim's
DEX
Duration: 2D6 minutes

High Priest

The high priest of the temple is usually male but females have been known to assume the role. In addition to managing the temple and its followers, the high priest is also an experienced snake handler and tends to creatures that inhabit the temple.

Characteristics

STR	8
CON	9
DEX	8
SIZ	14
INT	13
POW	15
CHA	15

Hit Locations

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1–3	Right Leg	0/5
4–6	Left Leg	0/5
7–9	Abdomen	0/6
10–12	Chest	0/7
13–15	Right Arm	0/4
16–18	Left Arm	0/4
19–20	Head	0/5

Special Rules

Combat Actions: 2
Strike Rank: +11
RQ1 Skills: Dodge 14%, Influence
75%, Lore (Animal) 83%, Lore (World)
23%, Perception 53%, Persistence 35%,
Resilience 34%, Language (Native) 63%,
Lore (Regional) 33%, Lore (Theology) 83%,
Streetwise 30%
RQ2 Skills: Evade 16%, Influence
75%, Insight 58%, Lore (Animal) 86%, Lore
(World) 36%, Perception 53%, Persistence
35%, Resilience 34%, Language (Native)
63%, Lore (Regional) 36%, Oratory 50%,
Streetwise 30%, Theology 86%
Typical Armour: None



By Alex Green

Introduction

Of all the ultra – high technology devices available beyond Technology Level 15: antimatter, teleportation systems, pocket universes, psionically active AI: no advanced technological item is more popular among Player Characters than disintegrators. Weapons that make their targets literally disappear forever are deeply coveted by many Player Characters.

This article looks at two types of tool, which use the same principle in different ways: nuclear dampers and disintegrators. Since the first launch of *Traveller*, these devices have been considered to be signature technologies and the purpose of this article is to take an in-depth look at these marvellous devices.

Recommended Traveller Books

You will need the *Traveller Core Rulebook*. Nuclear dampers and disintegrators also appear in *Book 1: Mercenary* and *Supplement 4: Central Supply Catalogue*. If you have *Book 4: Psion* and *Book 5: Agent*, you might find these books useful as well. However, you do not need any of these sourcebooks to use this article.

Author's Note to Readers

Some of this article outlines a plausible theory to explain how these devices work. The theory covers abstruse scientific subjects such as atomic structure, particle physics and so on. The article may therefore, in places, seem to positively drown in technobabble.

Conversely some readers may deride the article for the opposite reason, considering the same technobabble to be excessively simplistic. To both kinds of reader, I offer my apologies.

Without A Trace

The invention of the nuclear damper is but one step in a quest into the study of the

fundamental structure of matter: a topic with a long history.

Nuclear Science

TL 0

Early sophonts might, at this primitive stage, know of the yellow stinking powder that comes from the fiery mountain, the black powder left behind after a tree is struck by lightning, or the hard white crystal and yellow metal that make jewellery. They know of the grey metal and the red metal that make bronze and the heavier metal used in swords. And that's it.

TL 1

The first stabs in the dark are made at this level, when philosophers theorise that matter is composed of atoms. At this technological level, the idea that atoms can be split is unthinkable.

Science might seem to take a wrong turn at this point, by theorising that matter is composed of only four elements – earth, air, fire and water. Later scientists might look back at this simplistic thinking with derision, little realising that what these early natural philosophers were describing is actually the then known *states* of matter – solids, liquids, gases and plasmas.

Scientists discover Archimedes' Principle – a means of measuring the purity of certain substances by water displacement. This is called specific gravity.

TL 2

At this stage, early experiments in chemistry lead to the discovery of a variety of different substances, many of which require extraction from oxides or minerals. Some substances which cannot be further refined are called elements. Carbon, iron, gold, sulphur, silver, arsenic, phosphorus and a handful of others are known or discovered: towards the mature TL 2 stage, early chemists create lists and make the first fumbling attempts to order them. But the basic idea of the indestructible atom developed at TL 1 persists.

TL 3

The cataloguing of elements becomes a rush, as new kinds of physical experiments yield new ways to refine elements from the raw materials. Matter is formally described as composed of molecules – combinations of different kinds of elements in specific ratios, such as water (H₂O) – two atoms of hydrogen to one of oxygen. The modern science of chemistry is born.

At this stage, science has uncovered enough elements to begin to see a pattern forming. The listing of different kinds of elements leads to the development of the first periodic tables.

Towards the mature TL 3, scientists discover radioactivity for the first time, along with the realisation that the atom can be split.

TL 4

Discoveries come thick and fast in this era. Scientists identify different kinds of particles being emitted by radioactive materials: alpha particles, beta particles, neutrons, gamma rays and so on.

At this point, scientists know of the existence of protons, neutrons and electrons. The structure of the atom – a nucleus made up of protons and neutrons, surrounded by a cloud of electrons – is laid bare to them.

At this stage, science now has the fullest understanding of why elements are all different: each element has a unique atomic number, the number of protons in its nucleus. Hydrogen is hydrogen because its nucleus is a single proton: uranium is uranium because of the 92 protons in its nucleus. With this, the periodic table reaches its final form. Scientists make the final discoveries and determine that only 92 elements can exist in nature.

And then they make more elements.

Towards the mature TL 4 era, nuclear chemistry splits off from its parent, as

scientists begin to pursue divergent interests: some continue to play with the molecules, and the others play God.

TL 5

At TL 0, primitives banged bits of rock together and made sparks. This era is marked by a single event: when the primitives bang together lumps of metal and produce a spark that levels cities.

A deceptively simple formula, $E = mc^2$, leads to the discovery of nuclear fission and then nuclear fusion. The possibility of nuclear power is broached; it becomes a reality at the next tech level. But a major step towards nuclear damper technology has also been made, as science discovers for the first time that matter can be converted into energy.

TL 6

The knowledge that the atom can be split and that matter can be converted into energy, drives the development of nuclear power: and also begins to pose a problem, that of the disposal of nuclear waste. Sadly, the answer to this problem eludes scientists for a few tech levels.

TL 7

Nuclear science matures considerably, as neutrinos are first hypothesised and later confirmed with experimentation. Particle accelerators make increasingly exotic discoveries and the first hints, which form the foundation of nuclear damper theory, are laid down.

TL 8

During this era, the next discoveries are made, not in the atom, but out in the depths of space. Astronomers begin to hypothesise about the existence of dark matter. At first a curiosity, planet-bound scientists are unable to make much headway in studying dark matter at this point. Also discovered is dark energy, a theory first laid down as early as the mature TL 4 but only now beginning to be taken seriously.

TL 9-11

The development of gravitics and the Jump drive open up a number of possibilities. Fusion drives and power plants become practical thanks to gravity pinch fields and containment bottles; gravity technology also permits scientists to create reliable particle containment systems for particle accelerators. Gravity accelerators allow neutrons to be used in accelerators for the first time.

The expansion of society into the stars also allows science the opportunity to go out and hunt down dark matter and dark energy, rather than create it in the lab.

TL 12

It isn't until this technological level that dark matter is finally encountered and the first experiments with dark matter and dark energy can begin, leading to the development of the first nuclear damper units. Nuclear dampers are initially put to work decontaminating the legacies of the past: regions contaminated by old fallout from nuclear weapons and waste dumps containing remnants of experiments with nuclear medicine, which still pose a hazard centuries afterwards.

Nuclear dampers become available as ship-mounted screens. Nuclear damper installations spring up to protect cities. Damper proliferation becomes the major political issue of the day, as emotive a subject as the threat of nuclear weaponry poses to society back in late TL 6 to 8.

Medicine, too, makes use of nuclear damper technology to decontaminate citizens exposed to radiation, as well as to minimise the side effects of medical treatments such as radiotherapy.

TL 13

Nuclear dampers make their appearance on the battlefield, increasing the lethality of warfare as, in response, military forces stock up on weapons which cannot be stopped by a damper field.

The nature of the interactions between dark energy and matter continue to be studied. Scientists make breakthroughs in their understanding of how damper fields work, but the ultimate breakthrough – the disintegration of stable nuclei – remains theoretical.

Damper boxes are developed as a reliable method of transporting nuclear matter and warheads.

TL 14-15

Nuclear damper technology evolves, the damper units themselves getting smaller and cheaper to run. Further advances lead to the first experiments with disintegration technology but the first practical advances in disintegrator technology do not occur until TL 16.

Damper technology has advanced as far as it can go by this stage; with damper boxes containing radiation and dampers becoming small enough to carry by hand, the containment of radiation hazards becomes almost completely routine.

TL 16

The first working disintegrator weapons are large and bulky, fixed weapons the size of spinal mounts protecting large installations and cities. Disintegrator therapy is developed on a small scale, an advancement on nuclear damper decontaminators that allows the safe destruction of foreign bodies or tumours inside patients' bodies.

TL 17

The first ship mounted disintegrators appear: large spinal mounts on capital ships. Ranges and power efficiency increase with each new tech level. On the battlefield, vehicle-mounted disintegrators appear; like the introduction of the nuclear warhead and the first battlefield nuclear damper screen, disintegrators change the face of war yet again, as society worries about the potential for atrocity: an army equipped with disintegrators can conceal

Ships Locker

- Nuclear Dampers and Disintegrators

its war crimes in a whiff of smoke, leaving nothing but silent dust and nothing to point to them at the war trial afterwards.

Fortunately, damper box technology develops apace with disintegrators, eventually leading to disintegrator screens, fields which set up a disruptive resonance that interferes with disintegrators.

TL 18 +

At this stage, man-portable disintegrators become available. Hand held disintegrators and disintegrator small arms are the ultimate expressions of weaponry. Defence technology catches up with weaponry at this stage, with the introduction of the personal anti-disintegrator screen, a portable device which interferes with the functioning of disintegrators.

Nuclear Damper Theory

How Dampers Work

Nuclear dampers strip the radioactivity away from radionuclei harmlessly. No nuclear by-products such as radioactive gases and no harmful radiation. How does this work?

As far as the scientists who develop nuclear dampers are concerned, when a damper field is applied to a radioactive nucleus it works continuously on the nucleus for as long as it remains unstable.

Decay Chain

For instance a nucleus of uranium undergoes a number of decays, each to another radioactive element which in turn decays still further until the nucleus changes to a stable isotope of lead: the final product of uranium decay. This process of continued radioactive decay from element to element is known as the *decay chain*. In the process, the uranium changes to radium and even to gaseous radon, another dangerous radioactive element.

The Damping Process

Under the influence of a damper field, the decay chain is completely bypassed. The uranium decays straight away to stable lead

and from that point the nuclear damper has no further effect on the nucleus, so the process stops.

This would release a huge amount of energy and many particles and gamma photons all at once; but the damper process instead releases that energy harmlessly in the form of neutrinos. This happens regardless of whether the atom is a super heavy nucleus like plutonium or a lightweight element such as tritium (a radioactive hydrogen isotope with two neutrons and one proton in its nucleus).

Understanding Damper Theory

In order to understand how nuclear dampers work, science has to proceed far enough along in its understanding of particle physics to come up with a working model for the structure of atomic nuclei, the processes of nuclear chemistry and an understanding of the strong and weak nuclear forces, as well as gravity and the electromagnetic force.

Science may come to a plateau of knowledge and stumble blindly for generations before crossing the threshold of understanding which leads to the development of the damper field. Some cultures never develop the understanding fully, instead discovering the principles through examination of found alien devices or through random chance: they might uncover a nuclear warhead left behind from an ancient war, which was transmuted into lead before it could detonate; or one of their own nuclear warheads might pass through an anomalous energy field and be rendered inert.

One thing is, however, clear. The development of the nuclear damper begins with the discovery of dark matter and dark energy, discoveries made as early as TL 4.

Dark Matter and Dark Energy

Dark matter exists in greater abundance in the universe than the regular matter which

makes up every living being and object. Dark matter does not interact with normal matter; only with gravity. Dark matter interacts with dark energy in the same way as normal matter interacts with photons.

Dark energy is postulated as the force driving the universe to expand and in fact accelerating its expansion. Dark energy is understood to be a kind of repulsive force, partial understanding of which leads to the development of gravitics, manoeuvre drives and ultimately the Jump-drive. Although dark energy, focused and directed in a coherent beam, has another effect; it weakens the strong and weak nuclear forces.

Directed against unstable matter, dark energy has the property of destabilising that matter without the usual release of particles or gamma photons. Instead of the energy being released as harmful ionising radiation, the dark energy converts all that energy into a burst of neutrinos.

Quantum Level Interactions

Damper theory posits that the influx of dark energy creates a quantum-level vacuum fluctuation, the result of which means that the unstable matter instantly reaches its most stable "ground state" configuration; and the surplus excitation energy, rather than be converted into gamma photons or a nuclear release, is converted instead into neutrinos – and some dark matter, which harmlessly passes through the normal matter.

Only at around TL 12 does it become possible for a space faring civilisation to begin to make use of dark energy, through containing particles of dark matter in damper emitters. The initial experiments at TL 10 and TL 11 yield promising results but dampers only become practical at TL 12.

Mode of Operation

Damper Emitters

Nuclear dampers operate in pairs of emitters, programmed to work together. One emitter is the master and the other

a slave – the latter module is operated remotely from the vehicle housing the master module. The emitters focus their dark energy beams on a region to be decontaminated. Where the beams intersect, they create a node. The beams' frequencies heterodyne (reinforce one another) and reach a threshold value, above which the damper effect activates.

At TL 12 and 13, damper pairs are short ranged – their maximum range is only about 100 times the distance separating them, up to a maximum of 200 metres. TL 14 dampers have a much better range of 1,000 times the separation distance. TL 15 dampers have a maximum range up to 10,000 times the separation distance.

Because early dampers operate at such a short range, it makes them almost useless for defusing flying nuclear ordnance. Early dampers are usually developed for use in military and civilian HAZMAT and decontamination vehicles, designed to enter regions of high radioactivity such as those produced by nuclear fallout or accidental spillage of nuclear cargoes. Larger, fixed-mount dampers have sufficient range and power to protect cities from incoming warheads.

Damper Boxes and Containment Fields

Damper theory requires that, in addition to nodes where the damper effect is enhanced, damper beams can intersect at antinodes where the opposite effect occurs: the strong and weak nuclear forces are reinforced, rather than disrupted.

Damper boxes are specialised containment boxes designed to store and transport radioactive material in relative stability. Commercial damper boxes are used to transport hazardous radioactive cargoes. Military damper boxes are used to store depleted uranium rounds and ammunition, as well as tactical and strategic nuclear warheads; the warheads retain their potency over long periods.

It is possible for someone to tamper with a nuclear warhead inside a damper box, or even to devise a warhead where the payload is designed to be detonated within a damper box. The effect is up to the Referee but one recommendation is that the effective yield of the warhead could be multiplied by the square of the technological level of the damper box: a 50 kiloton tactical warhead detonated from within a TL 15 damper box (a multiplier of $15 \times 15 = 225$) would have an effective yield of 11.25 megatons instead!

Disintegrators

From the development of the nuclear damper, it is only a matter of time before the next leap to the development of the disintegrator.

The Threshold

The development of a nuclear damper that works on stable matter marks the threshold beyond which nuclear dampers become disintegrators. Up until this point, the concentration of dark energy was not strong enough to disrupt the strong nuclear bonds in stable matter.

Disintegrators change all that.

Invention

In his book *Profiles of The Future*, the late science fiction author Sir Arthur C Clarke wrote three famous laws concerned with predicting technological advances. The Third Law states "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic," and the mechanisms and devices of Technological Level 16 and above may appear to be just that – magical.

Arthur C Clarke's Second Law states "In order to explore the limits of the possible, we must venture a little way beyond it into the realm of the impossible." So it is with the invention of the disintegrator, which crosses a threshold previously considered impossible – the successful application of a damper field against stable matter, effectively causing it

to decay completely into a spray of neutrinos, leaving nothing behind.

Disintegrator weapons begin as clumsy, bulky spinal mount cannons fitted to capital ships at Technological Level 16. Disintegrators are built progressively more compact at higher technological levels, becoming available as ship-mounted bay weapons and then eventually as turret weapons, vehicular weapons for military support and ultimately as small arms; disintegrator rifles and pistols appear at the dizzying heights of Technological Levels 17 through to 19 and beyond.

However, disintegrators appear as tools for far more peaceful purposes at earlier technological levels and find a variety of uses.

Art

Disintegrators work in the same way as dampers: two emitters focus beams of dark energy at a targeted point. At that focus point, matter disintegrates. In the case of disintegrators, each weapon casing houses both emitters.

Because the individual dark energy beams can penetrate into matter without harming it except at the focus point, it becomes possible to hollow out objects without having to drill into them or open them up.

Sculptures have been discovered at the sites of particularly advanced alien cultures, such as the Ancients in the *Official Traveller Universe*, which appear to be solid and intact on the outside but have been hollowed out in an intricate pattern; how this is done is a mystery unless one realises that a disintegrator had been used to make it.

Medicine

Foreign bodies and tumours can be removed if their locations within a body can be pinpointed accurately enough. This is the principle behind disintegrator

therapy, a form of treatment which becomes available at TL 16.

Just as importantly, disintegrator therapy can help eliminate another problem: heavy metal contamination by contaminants such as lead, mercury and thallium. Heavy metals accumulate in the bones and organs of patients and are hard to remove.

However, disintegrator beams are more effective against denser, heavier atoms than against lighter atoms such as carbon, hydrogen and oxygen. Attuning the beams to a particular spectrographic signature, such as that of lead or cadmium, disintegrator therapy can prove beneficial here too.

Society

The likeliest place a culture's civilian population is going to find disintegrators is in the hands of miners and construction workers. Short range beam disintegrators make excellent and efficient mining tools; selectively attuned to eradicate the lighter rocks, a mining beam can cut away at the rock and expose the veins of valuable minerals which have a different signature.

Smoking Boots – Types of Disintegrator

The principles behind disintegrators may vary from the version presented for the *Original Traveller Universe*. Here are some exotic variations on the narrative theme of wishing unwanted items – and people – to the cornfield.

Structural Destruction

The principle is simple. Sound makes objects resonate. If one finds the right sound, one can make an object ring like a bell, or shatter into pieces.

Experiments with coherent sound waves produce a device called a saser – a sonic laser, capable of projecting a focused beam of sound that disrupts inorganic matter such as walls, doors and armour. For that reason, these weapons are often

called sonic disruptors. Disruptors are available as hand weapons at Tech Level 14 to Tech Level 16. They cannot be mounted as shipboard weaponry and cannot function in Very Thin, Trace and Vacuum atmospheres.

Molecular Decohesion

Another form of disintegrator operates on a different principle: even the most perfect crystalline structure contains flaws and inclusions. No substance is entirely chemically pure and so on the molecular level everything solid has at least some points of structural weakness.

This weapon focuses a beam of coherent dark energy and a stream of neutrinos into the target. This has the effect of causing the matter to lose structural cohesion, becoming physically brittle; the lightest touch may cause the affected material to shatter.

This device can operate selectively on a specific element or molecule to devastating effect. Removing all of the iron in a sophont's bloodstream will kill the target in a few seconds; removing all the calcium will cause the target to collapse as its skeleton vanishes. Deleting the water molecules will cause the target to turn into a loose pile of dry chemicals.

In game terms, the former device affects a vehicle's Hull and Structure points, including space going vessels' Hull and Structure. Armour is bypassed and living things are not directly affected. The latter device, which eliminates organic matter, operates in the same manner as the neutrino detonator (p. 115, *Central Supply Catalogue*).

Chronon and Antichronon Bombardment

Chronons are hypothetical particles measuring disruptions in time. In some versions of *Traveller* chronons can be controlled and directed like lasers or particle beams.

A burst of concentrated chronons shot at a target could cause the target's matter to age physically, accelerating physical decay at an alarming rate. Conversely a beam of coherent antichronons could unravel a target's history, effectively erasing the target from time as if it, or he, never existed.

Morphic Field Disruption

All matter exists. The presence of a given particle at a particular point in the Universe is a point of data; it exists as much as a field of data as energy or matter. The morphic field disruptor, a psionic weapon, erases the field of data, making the Universe forget that the particle was ever there at all.

The Argand Gun

This variation on the theme of the disintegrator is the most exotic: the Argand Gun kills its targets with mathematics.

Using a principle similar to psionic teleportation, this weapon eliminates its target by rotating it dimensionally out of the universe and out of existence altogether. The target seems to recede from the observer at high speed as if from a video effect no matter what angle the observer views the target, as if he were rotating 90 degrees away from everything else.

The Argand Gun is a unique Artefact. Its name refers to a Terran mathematician who pioneered a form of mathematics involving imaginary numbers.

Skills and Specialities Art

Mystery Carving: At the highest technological levels, sculpting reaches its height with the development of so-called "mystery carving," where an object has been intricately hollowed out apparently without cutting into the thing.

Engineer

Damper Technology: This is the speciality covering the manufacture, maintenance, repair and calibration of nuclear dampers, from the ship-mounted screens to the civilian damper emitters on decontamination vehicles. This speciality also covers damper boxes and the long-term storage of nuclear materials within them.

Disintegrator Technology: This is the speciality covering the manufacture, maintenance, repair and calibration of disintegrators.

Gunner

Nuclear Dampers: A specialisation of the Gunner skill, this covers the operation of nuclear damper bay weapons aboard a ship.

Disintegrators: This speciality covers control and use of disintegrators, whether as spinal mounts, bay weapons or turret weapons.

Gun Combat

Disintegrators: This speciality of Gun Combat skill specifically covers the operation of hand held disintegrator weapons in combat.

Exotic Energy Weapons: This speciality of Gun Combat skill specifically covers the operation of exotic, high technology weapons in combat other than neural weapons or disintegrators.

Heavy Weapons

Disintegrators: This speciality of Heavy Weapons skill specifically covers the operation of vehicle-mounted battlefield disintegrator weapons.

Life Science

Nuclear Medicine: This speciality of Life Science skill covers the development of nuclear medicine; the use of radioisotopes and other radioactive sources as diagnostic tools and as a treatment of cancers (radiotherapy).

Damper Decontamination: This speciality of Life Science skill specifically covers the issue of nuclear dampers and their function in decontaminating the environment, as well as medical application of dampers in the medical decontamination of patients.

Disintegrator Therapy: This speciality of Life Science skill specifically covers the operation of disintegrator therapy devices in therapeutic medical treatment.

Physical Science

Nuclear Physics: This speciality of Physical Science skill covers all aspects of the study of matter on the atomic and subatomic scale, from the study of protons, neutrons and electrons to the processes of nuclear decay and radioactivity, from nuclear fission and nuclear fusion through to the study of quarks and more exotic particles, such as neutrinos.

Nuclear Damper Theory: This speciality of Physical Science skill specifically covers the physical principles and current theories behind nuclear dampers.

Disintegrator Theory: This speciality of Physical Science skill specifically covers the physical principles and current theories behind disintegrators.

Space Science

Cosmology: This speciality of Space Science skill specifically covers the study of the cosmos as a whole. Everything from

the size of the Universe, to theories as to the nature of reality, are covered by this speciality. This does cover the presence and role of dark matter and dark energy but these are covered in greater detail by the speciality.

Dark Matter and Dark Energy Theory: This speciality of Space Science skill covers the study of dark matter and dark energy, and their relationship with regular matter and regular energy.

Tools and Equipment

Referee Note: Sufficiently Advanced Technology

The following items of technology are mostly of an incredibly high technological level. Matter disintegrators as hand held weapons, covered in *Central Supply Catalogue*, are available at a minimum of Tech Level 18; some of the more esoteric tools and exotic weapons are only achievable at TL 20 or higher, beyond the limits of even theoretical knowledge at TL 15.

As always, allowing Player Characters unfettered access to such advanced technologies has serious implications. Sometimes, though, it can be satisfying to run a story where Player Characters equipped with regular technology have to face off in desperate, one-sided combat against hostile aliens equipped with far more advanced devices. The Borg were far more fun when they outclassed the weapons of Starfleet in *Star Trek*, and one-sided conflicts have been a staple of science fiction authors since H G Wells first wrote *The War of The Worlds*.

Nuclear Damper Equipment List

Vehicular Nuclear Damper (TL 13): Available for civilian and military vehicles for nuclear decontamination. Emitters come in pairs – a master module and a slave module. Each module is fitted to a single vehicle and decontamination dampers have a range of up to 500 metres. Modules draw current from the vehicle's power plant.

Item	M ³	Mass (kg)	Cost (Cr.)	Note
Master Module	10	100	7,500	Includes slave controls
Slave Module	10	100	4,500	500 m range

Vehicular Nuclear Damper, Improved (TL 15): Much lighter and more powerful than lower technology versions, the TL 15 damper module comprises of a master and slave module operated from a single vehicle. The range is the same as before but mass and costs differ greatly. The modules draw current from the vehicle's power plant.

Item	M ³	Mass (kg)	Cost (Cr.)	Note
Nuclear Damper	2.5	25	30,000	500 m range

Damper Box (TL 12): The first damper boxes are large, bulky containers used to carry radioactive cargo payloads. Both civilian and military versions draw current from vehicular power plants, or from external battery packs. *Small Damper Box (1m³ capacity):* Wt.: 50 kg. Cost: Cr. 5,000. *Cargo Damper Box (50m³ capacity):* Wt.: 250 kg. Cost: Cr. 25,000.

Damper Box (TL 14): Damper boxes at this level have their own internal miniature fusion power sources, allowing them to run for up to five years. *Small Damper Box (1m³ capacity):* Wt.: 50 kg. Cost: Cr. 15,000. *Cargo Damper Box (50m³ capacity):* Wt.: 250 kg. Cost: Cr. 75,000.

Disintegrator Equipment List

Sculpting Tool (TL 17): A bulky tool used in the art form called "mystery carving," this device includes a holographic densitometer readout that enables the artist to see the interior of the object being carved. Safeties prevent it being used on living tissues. Mass: 4 kg. Cost: Cr. 30,000.

Sculpting Tool, Advanced (TL 19): A tool shaped like a short baton, this mystery carving tool interprets the interior of the object and psionically transmits it into the wielder's mind. A psion can add his Psionic Strength characteristic DM to the Art roll. Mass: 250g. Cost: Cr. 50,000.

Mining Tool (TL 17): Looking like a sawn-off double-barrelled shotgun and powered by a belt battery pack with a duration of 1 hour's continuous operation, this mining tool can disintegrate solid rock at a rate of 1m³ per round. Safeties cause the mining tool to disengage if living tissues enter the beams. Sensors can also program the beams to operate selectively, disintegrating valueless rock and ignoring veins of valuable minerals, which are exposed. An ideal tool for Belters mining asteroids because it has no recoil. Mass: 2 kg. Cost: Cr. 60,000.

Breacher (TL 18): A short-barrelled device the size of a heavy flare gun, the Breacher is used to open portals in walls, quickly and efficiently. Drawing power from a standard belt – mounted battery, the Breacher is good for 10 shots. Each shot will open a single two metre tall portal in a wall or bulkhead almost silently. Safeties mean that the beam refuses to activate if aimed at a living being. The default shape is a circle, though the Breacher can be preset to a couple of other geometric shapes: square, diamond, oval or pentagon. Mass: 2 kg. Cost: Cr. 25,000.

Disintegrator Screens (TL 17): A modification of ship-mounted nuclear damper screen weaponry creates a screen proof against ship-mounted disintegrators.

Screen	TL	Effect	Tons	Cost (MCr.)
Disintegrator Screen	17	Reduces disintegrator damage by 2d6, removes automatic crew hit	50	100

Matter Transmuter (TL 20): The ultimate tool of matter manipulation, matter transmuters use a combination of nuclear dampers and disintegrators and damper box / disintegrator screen technology to manipulate matter on the subatomic scale. Any kind of stable element can be transmuted into any other kind of stable element.

The transmuter draws its power from matter conversion and could run forever. The source element may be no more than three atomic numbers above or below the target element on the periodic table: to make lanthanum, the transmuter could use barium or neodymium. The transmuter converts a flat rate percentage each hour.

These legendary Artefacts are coveted for all the obvious reasons.

Item	TL	Payload (kg)	Rate	Mass (kg)	Cost (Cr.)
Desktop Transmuter	20	10	10%	25	185,000
Desktop Transmuter	20	10	20%	25	270,000
Cargo Transmuter	20	10,000	10%	30,000	220,000
Cargo Transmuter	20	10,000	20%	30,000	500,000

Disintegrator Weapons

Handheld disintegrators have been covered in *Mercenary* and *Central Supply Catalogue*. The following weapons are somewhat more exotic. Some of these devices are from tech levels so high as to qualify as virtually magical. The Referee should use discretion in introducing them.

All disintegrators do damage the same way; the Effect is determined by the armour or Hull rating of the target, rather than by the die roll.

Weapon	TL	Range	Required Skill	Damage	Magazine	Auto	Recoil
Saser	14	Shotgun	Gun Combat (Exotic Weapons)	3d6	—	No	1
Water Disintegrator	18	Shotgun	Gun Combat (Exotic Weapons)	3d6	—	12	1
Chronon Gun	19	Rifle	Gun Combat (Exotic Weapons)	4d6	—	No	1
Morphic Field Disruptor	19	Rifle	Gun Combat (Exotic Weapons)	4d6	—	No	0
The Argand Gun	20	Line of Sight	Gun Combat (Exotic Weapons)	4d6	—	No	0

Weapon	Cost (Cr.)	Mass (kg)	Ammo Cost (Cr.)	Notes
Saser	30,000	4.5	—	Will not operate in Thin, Very Thin, Trace or Vacuum atmospheres.
Water Disintegrator	50,000	2.5	—	—
Chronon Gun	120,000	3	—	Uses time as a weapon. Target rolls End vs. damage rolled. If the target fails, he is permanently erased from history or aged 1,000 years in 1 round.
Morphic Field Disruptor	200,000	1	—	Draws on 1 Psionic Strength point per shot; has a “magazine” of 10 points.
The Argand Gun	300,000 or more	1.5	—	Target rolls End vs. damage rolled. If the target fails, he is permanently rotated out of the space time continuum.

Patron: The Dauphine Estrellita Markov

Noble, 50, 8 terms

Str8 Dex8 End9 Int11

Edu12 Soc13

Admin-2, Athletics (climbing)-2, Athletics (endurance)-2, Art (sculpture)-3, Diplomacy-2, Leadership-2, Recon-2, Social Science (archaeology)-3, Social Science (linguistics)-3, Survival-3.

TAS, survival kit, Contacts (academic), Cr. 150,000.

Player Information

A physically fit, imposing woman whose hair is only now beginning to grey, still-youthful belying her age, the Dauphine is a keen archaeologist. All her life she has heard rumours of wonderful Ancient devices in strange sites in out-of-the-way places and strange planets and she has devoted her entire life to seeking them out.

One story in particular has fascinated her: the story of the Argand Gun, a legendary Artefact which her father used to describe to her while she sat on his knee as a little girl. A small object, looking like a featureless solid gold tetrahedron, her father held it in his hand before he was forced to leave the site in a hurry. Estrellita remembers her father's great regret in never taking the time to take the object with him, and when her father disappeared without a trace when she was 17, the Dauphine resolved to follow in his footsteps.

She now has a mission for the characters. She has located the site and she is prepared to fund an expedition there to find the Argand gun and maybe find out what happened to her father.

Referee's Information

The Dauphine is ... (roll 1d6):

1-2: ... actually a ruthless and ambitious woman, who will not hesitate to

turn the Argand Gun against the characters once she gets her hands on it. Dead men tell no tales.

3-4: ... concerned that her father may have returned to, and fallen victim to, the Argand Gun.

5-6: ... being pursued by a Rival. Use the Dauphine's characteristics. The Rival is a male and he has backup in the form of a force of NPCs equal in capability to the Player Characters.

Last Word

The major theme of damper technology and disintegrators has never been about their use on the battlefield. Deep

down, it has always been about matter transmutation and manipulation; the end goal of primitive alchemy. Knowledge of the periodic table and particle physics must always precede these tools.

The properties of dark matter and dark energy are not sufficiently understood to establish whether or not it could be used in the manner described here. However, dark matter and dark energy were not even known to theoretical physicists in 1977. Who knows what could be possible in the far future. Whatever developments occur, however, they will always use the discoveries of the periodic table and the fundamental particles as their foundation.





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By Simon Beal

LEGACY OF WAR

Episode 10: Moments of Transition

Episode Date: January 2268

"Nothing's the same anymore."

Jeffery Sinclair "Chrysalis"

News Reports

When the players stop at an appropriate world or outpost, give them the latest Universe Today handout.

Background

After the players and other inmates have escaped the prison, the Legacy Group know their position has been compromised. They have no choice but to evacuate the base and destroy it.

As a further precaution, the Legacy Group have released a news report claiming that the Orinoco has been destroyed, but some of the survivors have joined up with the StarDancer outlaws in their new ship. Once again the players will be in the media so maintaining their freedom will be difficult, especially as a price has been put on their heads.

On the Run

The players will most likely want to lay low for a few days while they think about their

next move. Being wanted criminals should make them think twice before entering heavily populated areas, especially in Earth and ISA patrolled systems. They will be much safer sticking to backwater worlds and outposts near the rim.

Although their ship is unknown, it will still draw attention. Especially since the news reports state that the fugitives have an unknown alien ship.

Their initial priorities should be getting supplies and repairing the ship so all systems are fully working. Both of these will require money which they do not have so they have several options such as resorting to crime, selling one of their new fighters or attempting to get in touch with their contacts.

At some point, the players will want to uncover the truth about the Legacy Group to prove their innocence. However, they must be patient and wait for an opportunity to present itself.

Although they are on the run, the players will have a new found freedom that they did not have before. Many encounters await them as they adapt to their new life as outlaws.

Due to the freeform nature of this episode, there are a number of locations and encounters detailed here but feel free to add your own as required. If the players get stuck, the NPCs can suggest several havens known to shelter outlaws. Their main options are as follows:

- **Toren's Rift** – A criminal haven in the Brakiri owned Comac system.
- **Dreshak's Junk Yard** – Located near Toren's Rift, this is a perfect place to repair the ship.
- **Fendimir IV** – The so called "haunted planet" in Drazi space has a number of outlaw and refugee settlements.
- **Freedom Outpost** – A Narn controlled station near the rim. A great place to lie low and get supplies.
- **Antra System** – The players may have allies at the mining colony or cult they visited in episode seven.
- **Arraki III** – The lost Ikarran colony the players visited in episodes five and six is a perfect safe haven but it is a long way to travel.
- **Zafran VII** – As described in episode two, this independent trade hub is an ideal place to rest and resupply.

Universe Today

Galaxy Edition

4th January 2268

Fugitive Coup

The crew of the infamous *Star Dancer*, are still on the loose and considered more dangerous than ever. Earthforce have revealed that officers on board the *Orinoco*, the ship sent to apprehend the fugitives, were in league with them.

Both crews met at a secret rendezvous but those loyal to Earthforce seized control of the *Orinoco* where a deadly fire fight ensued, resulting in the destruction of both vessels. Unfortunately all hands were lost and the fugitives escaped on board an unknown alien vessel.

This alien ship, the "*Ghost of Hyperspace*", is believed to be the key to their power. The death toll from these attacks is now estimated at nearly 500.

Shamed by their actions, their former employer Chen Wing took his own life and left his savings of 100,000 as a reward for their capture.

Please see our feature on page A8 for a full list of personality profiles and photos of the most wanted men in the galaxy.

Cure Hope Shot by Mystery Assassin

Captain Mathew Gideon, Captain of the *Excalibur* was shot by an assassin yesterday on Mars. The fate of Captain Gideon remains unknown but rumours from within Earthforce say the shot was fatal.

The motive behind the shooting is also a mystery. Captain Gideon is seen as a figure of hope by so many people, making this is a dark day for Earth and humans everywhere.

What effect will this have on the *Excalibur*'s mission? Turn to page A3 to find out.

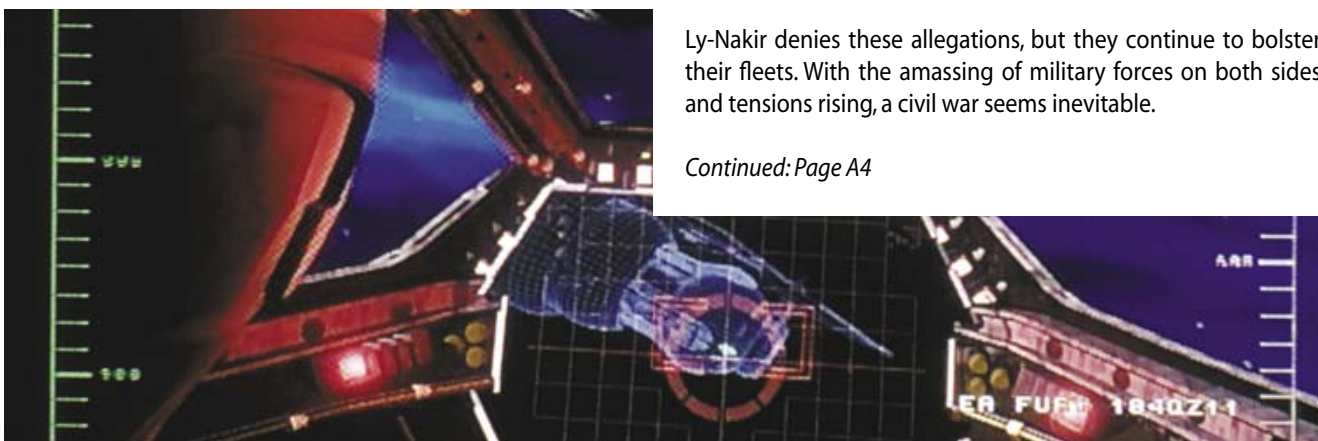
Civil War Looms on Brakos

With the sudden rise to power of Ly-Nakir corporation, the balance of power in Brakiri government has shifted drastically.

Although Ly-Nakir hold one of the four Primary Chairs, their sudden increase in wealth and military power was unexpected. Hostilities have risen as rival corporations believe Ly-Nakir seeks to overthrow the remaining Chairs and become the dominant power.

Ly-Nakir denies these allegations, but they continue to bolster their fleets. With the amassing of military forces on both sides and tensions rising, a civil war seems inevitable.

Continued: Page A4



Being 'on the run' means just that, the players must always be on the move and never stay in one place too long. There are many people pursuing them so the longer they remain in one place, the more likely their hunters will catch up.

If you feel your players have been in their current location for too long you can have them encounter the local authorities, bounty hunters, or even agents of the Legacy Group. The players must fight or flee and even if they choose the former it will encourage them to move on knowing that their position has been compromised.

Space Combat

To begin with, anyone opposing the player's new ship will not know its strengths and capabilities, so for their first few engagements the players will easily outgun their opponents.

Once word spreads however, things will begin to change. Although fewer bounty hunters will try to ambush them in space, the Legacy Group and government forces will make sure they send sufficient firepower.

Morale

Morale is important, especially with a bigger ship and larger crew. Being cooped up in a spacecraft for long periods of time is hard at the best of times. Combined with the fugitive lifestyle, these stresses eventually take their toll.

It is therefore important for the crew to get shore leave occasionally or their performance will suffer. If morale starts to drop, you can apply penalties to skill checks. Not only does this reflect their situation, but it also forces them off the ship so you can play out more events and encounters.

Encounters

In addition to the locations already mentioned, there are other encounters that the players will have to deal with.

Security Bracelets

The security bracelets fitted to the party in the prison include a short range tracking device. This is not a fact made public by

the prison, but a reasonable conclusion to come to considering their purpose. The range of the device is planet wide only.

Jamming the Signal

The signal can be jammed if such a device is available or one can be made if the appropriate parts and tools are available with an Engineer (Electronics) check -2 DM.

Removing the Bracelets

The bracelets can be cut with a high powered cutting tool, but not only is this very difficult a failure could result in injury.

Alternatively, if the players have an electronic tool kit, an Engineer (Electronics) check -4 DM will release the locking mechanism.

Disabling the Beacons

If the bracelets are removed, the players will still need to stop the signal from being transmitted. This can be easily done by destroying the bracelets or the beacon fitted inside.

Leaving a False Trail

Instead of destroying the beacons, once removed the bracelets can be left somewhere or hidden on a different ship to leave a false trail.

Making Contact

Once the players are able to use a working communications system, they may want to contact their allies such as Chen, Garibaldi or even the authorities. Any attempt to contact these people is very risky as communications can be traced.

If the players discuss this, several of the NPCs will advise against it. If they ignore the advice, the Legacy Group may get a fix on their location.

Contacting Chen

If the players try to contact Chen, they will not get a reply. If they do some digging around (checking news reports, computers and so on) they will discover that he committed suicide shortly after hearing that the players escaped and were wanted criminals. The players may already know this is they have seen the latest news reports.

Chen's suicide was faked and he was actually murdered by agents of the Legacy Group. This was done partly for what he knew, but also to add weight to the false charges by leaving incriminating evidence in a suicide note.

The players can obtain the note by remotely hacking into Chen's office computer with a -3 DM, or by speaking to Garibaldi. If the players are successful, give them the handout.

Contacting Garibaldi

Mr Garibaldi will not be surprised to hear from the players, especially if Philippe is still with the party. Garibaldi will explain his situation but feel free to modify his response as appropriate to any other events that have occurred:

'I am already walking a fine line due to Ancient Wonders. You have to consider my connection to President Sheridan, you are big news and if our connection was made public it could be a political disaster for the ISA.

Your crimes are an internal Earth matter, so the ISA can not intervene and neither can I. I'm sorry. But, if you can get some evidence I'll give you my full support and I'm sure the ISA will too.

I'm afraid I am also the bearer of more bad news. Shortly after you escaped, Chen apparently took his own life. I'm transmitting his suicide note on a sub-channel. Make of it what you will.

Be careful, the people you are dealing with are very powerful and very clever. Good luck.'

If the player's press the issue, Garibaldi will agree to send some of his people to give them some credits, but this is the best he can do. They will meet in a quiet region of space (such as Daltron VII) and the amount of money given is at the Referees discretion.

Other Contacts

The players should only attempt to contact people they share a mutual trust with. Anyone else will be very risky and could result in an encounter with Earthforce or the Legacy Group.

Chen's Suicide Note

As my final act in this life, I wish to make a confession. I am not a religious man but recent events have forced me to rethink my beliefs.

It all started about a year ago. I hired a number of individuals to crew a ship. Their mission was to find alien artefacts so we could use the technology for the good of others.

Shortly after allowing them use of the ship I heard stories and new reports of missing ships. It never occurred to me then, but looking back the connection was obvious.

Six months ago when I heard reports that the Star Dancer was connected with the Ghost of Hyperspace, I did not believe them. But then, when the crew did not return from their assignment I put the pieces together.

I believed in them. I trusted them. And they betrayed me. They must have found some alien technology which they used to perform these heinous acts.

The police cleared me of any involvement. They said I was innocent, but I was not. Without me those individuals would never have met. Without me they would not have had their own ship. Without me all those innocent people would still be alive.

The shame is so great that I cannot continue anymore. It is just too much of a burden to bear. And so I have decided to end my suffering and hopefully balance the scales of justice.

I leave my savings of 100,000 credits as a reward for anyone who captures these villains. They must be stopped.

Goodbye,

Chen Wing...

Even with an established trust, most contacts will be reluctant to help given the situation and how high up the corruption seems to go.

Claiming their Innocence

This should be strongly discouraged given that the players are wanted criminals and have no evidence to prove their claims. The Legacy Group has agents in many government and military positions and if the player's location became known it would be immediately given to the search teams.

Trying to prove their innocence at this stage will prove impossible as they have no evidence to back up their side of the story; they have been framed by powerful and resourceful individuals.

Legacy Group

The Legacy Group have assigned several units to find and destroy the escaped prisoners. They will follow leads and use the tracking devices in the bracelets. They will also be monitoring communications of known associates. You can use the same characters and ships detailed in previous episodes.

Providing there are no other witnesses, the Legacy Group agents will attempt to kill every single member of the crew to end the matter once and for all.

Earthforce & ISA Patrols

As noted previously, the player's ship is unknown but unique, so it will draw attention. Earthforce patrols will be looking out for unknown alien ships and will investigate any potential leads. The players are most likely to encounter Earthforce vessels if they enter Earth controlled space.

Earthforce or ISA personnel will attempt to capture the players and any other crew members. Once captured, they will be detained so they can be tried in a court of law.

Local Authorities

Even if the players stick to the outer worlds, some of those are still governed by ISA member worlds. Eventually the news of the

fugitives will reach these places and the local law enforcement or even patrolling vessels may recognise the players and their ship.

If anyone is captured, they will be placed in holding cells until Earthforce are able to retrieve them.

Bounty Hunters

A reward of 10,000 credits has been put on each of the fugitives. This is payable to anyone who captures them, kills them, or has information leading to their arrest. This adds up to a substantial profit, so a lot of bounty hunters are out looking for the fugitives.

Encounters with bounty hunters can happen anywhere and at anytime, giving you options for space battles, fights, chases and so on. You could even have an encounter with two separate groups creating a three-way fight.

You should time these encounters to fit in with other events and try to make it believable how the players were tracked down and found. Most bounty hunters will know the places where criminals hide and conduct business, so some will no doubt be waiting for the players in these places.

You can have groups of mercenaries, or lone gunmen. Feel free to create your own or use any of the NPCs listed in this episode.

Captured

If the players are captured, they will need to use their cunning and most likely their destiny points if they are to escape. The nature of their captivity will depend greatly on who has captured them.

Mr Garibaldi may interject (if he hears about this through official channels) and send some of his agents to help them in this or you could provide the players with various opportunities to make their escape such as the transport breaking down, or a guard who is sympathetic to their cause. However you orchestrate this, do not make it easy and it should be clear to the players that they were lucky and if they were captured again it is unlikely they would escape a second time.

If only some of the players or the NPC crew members have been captured then the remaining crew must rescue them.

Breakdown

The players are still learning about their new ship and at some point something will go wrong with it. This could be something they overlooked during their initial escape or it could be due to adding inferior parts or incompatible technology to the vessel.

The breakdown can occur in space, or perhaps when they attempt to take off. This encounter can be combined with another to really make things interesting and stressful for your players.

Making Money

The players will need money if they are to survive. There are usually a number of jobs available in the free ports and underworld colonies. Such jobs will include transporting cargo or passengers, body guards, and escort duty. Passenger jobs are also a good way to get the players from one location to another where bounty hunters or Legacy agents might be waiting.

Another good way to earn some money is from salvage, especially from any ships the players defeat as their various adversaries try to capture or destroy the players. The players might already have some items they can sell from their escape (such as some of the EVA suits and anything else they managed to liberate from the prison).

Bar Fight

The players will be travelling to lots of backwater worlds where mercenaries and smugglers hang out. These places tend to be dangerous so it is a good opportunity for a good old fashioned barroom brawl.

NPCs

A number of NPCs are presented here that you can use in any location or encounter as required.

Da'Lon (Narn)

Str: 11 (+1), **Dex:** 10 (+1), **End:** 6 (0), **Int:** 6 (0), **Edu:** 5 (–1), **Soc:** 7 (0)

Skills: Broker 1, Computers 0, Deception 1, Drive 1, Gambler 1, Gun Combat (Energy

Pistol) 1, Investigate 1, Melee 0, Persuade 1, Pilot 1, Recon 2, Stealth 1

Information: Da'Lon lost his arm during the Shadow War. When the war ended, he decided find a new profession. His knowledge of weapons made him an astute trader in the arms business.

Don Jones (Human)

Str: 11 (+1), **Dex:** 7 (0), **End:** 9 (+1), **Int:** 7 (0), **Edu:** 7 (0), **Soc:** 11 (+1)

Skills: Broker 1, Zero-G 0, Deception 2, Gambler 1, Gun Combat (Energy Pistol) 1, Melee 0, Persuade 2, Recon 1

Information: Don is the owner of the 'Drunken Bear' and is well liked by his patrons. He is a good listener and has many stories to tell. Don walks with a noticeable limp due to an injury he sustained when he tried to stop some brawlers wrecking his bar. He now has a rifle behind the bar for any disagreements that get out of hand.

Modak (Brakiri)

Str: 7 (0), **Dex:** 9 (+1), **End:** 10 (+1), **Int:** 8 (0), **Edu:** 9 (+1), **Soc:** 11 (+1)

Skills: Broker 1, Computers 0, Deception 2, Diplomacy 1, Gun Combat 0, Language (Drazi), Language (Narn), Investigate 1

Information: Modak believes she is cursed by bad luck. No matter how hard she tried, she was never successful on Brakos. Each failed attempt put her further in debt until she had no option but to hide in the criminal underworld. Ironically, she has done rather well in her new environment where she operates as a broker. Modak can introduce her clients to a variety of contacts for just about anything they might need. She has arrangements with a number of local traders and providers. Modak gets a commission for any business she puts their way, and her clients also get a discount.

Sozar (Drazi)

Str: 8 (0), **Dex:** 7 (0), **End:** 9 (+1), **Int:** 9 (+1), **Edu:** 10 (+1), **Soc:** 9 (+1)

Skills: Broker 1, Computers 1, Deception 2, Gun Combat 0, Language (Brakiri) 0, Trade (Shop Owner) 1

Information: Sozar trades in rare and exotic goods. Due to the merchandise he sells, Sozar has a very high opinion of himself. His arrogance is legendary and he is never seen without his two bodyguards (use thug stats).

Kuzar (Drazi)

Str: 9 (+1), **Dex:** 9 (+1), **End:** 9 (+1), **Int:** 7 (0), **Edu:** 8 (0), **Soc:** 9 (+1)

Skills: Gambler 1, Gun Combat (Energy Pistol) 2, Investigate 1, Melee 0, Persuade 1, Recon 1, Survival 0

Information: Kuzar runs a mercenary gang called the Kindred. They are a group of ex-soldiers who for one reason or another no longer wish to serve their people. Most are Drazi, but there are other races too (use thug stats). The Kindred will take on most jobs but most of their work is as body guards or bounty hunters. They are a rowdy bunch that like to drink and gamble. They are usually found in the rougher drinking establishments.

Thug

Str: 9 (+1), **Dex:** 8 (0), **End:** 9 (+1), **Int:** 7 (0), **Edu:** 6 (0), **Soc:** 7 (0)

Skills: Drive 0, Gambler 1, Gun Combat (Energy Pistol) 1, Persuade 1, Melee (Blade) 1, Recon 1, Survival 0

Equipment: PPG, Knife, Armour

Information: These thug stats can be used for a variety of NPCs the players may meet.

Na'Doth (Narn)

Str: 12 (+2), **Dex:** 11 (+1), **End:** 11 (+1), **Int:** 10 (+1), **Edu:** 9 (+1), **Soc:** 5 (–1)

Skills: Astrogation 1, Athletics (Coordination) 1, Drive 1, Engineer (Electronics) 1, Gun Combat (Energy Rifle) 3, Investigate 1, Medic 1, Melee (Blade) 4, Persuade 1, Pilot 2, Recon 2, Stealth 2, Survival 1

Equipment: Ka'Toc, Rifle, Narn Battle Suit, Electronic Toolkit

Information: Na'Doth is an ex-military soldier who became a bounty hunter after the Narn-Centauri war. She is cold, determined, and says very little. Na'Doth uses guerrilla tactics and will attempt to take the fugitives out one at a time (starting with one of the NPCs in the party). She may even board the player's ship and fight them there where they have nowhere to run.

Dreshak's Junk Yard

Located on the edge of Brakiri territory in the Comac system, Dreshak's Junk Yard is a repository of wrecked ships and broken salvage.

The station was built a short distance from Comac IV to avoid interference with Pri-Wakat corporation who own the planet, but close enough to Dreshak's main customer base on Toren's Rift.

Surrounding the station are hundreds of ship wrecks floating in a chaotic miasma of broken technology. A clear perimeter can be seen surrounding the wreckage with a well armed defence grid.

Defences

The junk yard has a well defined perimeter armed with an automated defence grid. Dreshak also has a number of security guards that protect both him and the facility.

Defence Grid (24)

Hull: 0

Structure: 1

Armour: 6

Software: Fire Control/3

Weapons: Twin Medium Laser Cannons, 4 Missile Racks

Facilities & Services

As well as the extensive selection of ships and parts, Dreshak also has repair facilities that his customers can use. Dreshak will charge 100 credits per hour for using these facilities. As with all his prices, this includes forgetting that his customers were ever there should anyone come asking.

For an additional fee of 100 credits per hour, he will also provide an engineer to do the work.

Meeting Dreshak

As the players approach the perimeter, they will be contacted by Dreshak asking what their business is. Once the players explain their situation, Dreshak will authorise them to cross the perimeter and dock at the station to meet him.

Once they have docked, two guards will escort the players to the conference room where Dreshak will greet them.

'You are welcome to stay here as long as you like to find what you need and make repairs if necessary. Your ship must remain docked but we will provide

a shuttle and EVA suits for you to browse the facility.

Use these electronic tags to mark items you are interested in and when you are done we can negotiate a deal.'

Dreshak (Brakiri)

Str: 8 (0), **Dex:** 9 (+1), **End:** 7 (0), **Int:** 9 (+1),

Edu: 8 (0), **Soc:** 10 (+1)

Skills: Broker 2, Computers 1, Deception 2, Engineer 0, Gun Combat 0, Investigate 1, Mechanic 0, Persuade 2, Zero-G 1

Information: Dreshak is a less than honest businessman and will take advantage of anyone if he thinks he will get away with it. He started the junk yard five years ago after spending some time at Toren's Rift. Many of the outlaws who came to the Rift had damaged vessels and he seized the opportunity and started his business.

Guards (Brakiri)

Str: 9 (+1), **Dex:** 9 (+1), **End:** 8 (0), **Int:** 8 (0),

Edu: 7 (0), **Soc:** 7 (0)

Skills: Athletics (Co-ordination) 1, Deception 0, Gun Combat (Energy Rifle) 1, Melee 0, Persuade 0, Pilot 1, Investigate 0, Recon 1

Equipment: Rifle, Flak Jacket, Communicator

Finding the Parts

The shuttle has room for a pilot and three passengers. The players must then search the yard for the parts they need using Sensor and Investigation checks 0 to -2 DM depending on size and rarity. This will involve finding suitable places in the shuttle and then going outside to search manually for the smaller items.

The players need fuel cells and a number of parts to get the weapons, communications and sensors working on their ship. There is a huge variety of ships and parts here, most of the wreckage is from civilian and commercial vessels, but a few military ships can be found here too.

The player's ship has no equipment at all other than what the crew took with them from the prison, so they may want to look out for other useful items such as:

- Furniture & storage containers
- Spare parts

- Tools & Weapons
- Computers & Scientific equipment
- EVA suits

Exploring Shipwrecks

Many of the smaller parts can only be found inside the shipwrecks. Since most of the wrecks are damaged, Zero-G rolls must be made to avoid snagging the EVA suits.

Negotiating with Dreshak

If the players have not been able to obtain much money, the only method of paying for the parts they need is to put up one of their fighters as collateral. Dreshak will trade everything they need plus 100,000 credits for one fighter. It is a steal on his part but the players do not have much choice in the matter if they are to survive.

Repairing the Ship

Once the players have the parts they need, they can repair the ship using Dreshak's repair facility (if the players haggle with him he might even throw in some tools).

It will take approximately one week to do the repairs and the players can also use this time to furnish and refit the ship with any other items they traded with Dreshak.

There is nowhere to stay on the station, but the players can visit Toren's Rift if they need some supplies and R & R.

Toren's Rift

Comac IV is a cold and dry world in Brakiri space. Although it is owned by the Pri-Wakat Corporation, the abandoned strip mine known as Toren's Rift has become a haven to criminals and anyone who prefers to avoid interference from the authorities.

Toren's Rift is not the safest of places but it is a great place to hide for anyone being pursued by the law or bounty hunters. Whether they like it or not, the players are criminals now so if they are to survive they must deal with other criminals.

The surface has plenty of space to land ships, but most of the action and danger takes place below the surface.

The Mines

The vast network of mines is home to crime lords, smugglers and petty thieves. The unstable cave formations make it a hazardous place and several tunnels have already collapsed. Braces can be seen throughout where a modest effort has been made to strengthen the structure.

Most areas are dirty and loud. It is a busy place with people laughing, shouting, fighting, drinking and gambling.

Although most people here live quite well, it does have the appearance of a slum. Most public areas are filthy and strewn with litter. Individual establishments tend to be cleaner but that largely depends upon the owner and the type of products they sell.

A range of goods and services are available here from weapons to contract killings. The Rift is a popular place for bounty hunters as they can re-supply and look for new contracts.

Although the players can get most things they need here the prices are often very high, especially for the more exotic and rare items.

Freedom Outpost

Freedom Outpost was built in secret during the Narn-Centauri war as a secret Narn supply base. Located between the rim and Hyach space in Sector 92, it was far enough away from the Centauri not to be noticed, but near enough to Narn territories to transport supplies when needed.

Due to the secrecy of the installation, the only officials within the government who could make any legal claim on it were all killed during the Centauri occupation of Narn.

After the war, a few Narns remained to maintain the outpost and it was not long before their companions started using it as a stop off point. Over the years it grew into a self governed haven for backwater traders, mercenaries and smugglers.

More recently it has come under the 'protection' of Na'Rog, a shrewd businessman who now runs the facility. All traders pay rental for their premises and any visitors pay a modest docking

fee. In return, Na'Rog's well trained militia provide protection for anyone onboard the station.

The main rule here is that it is neutral territory and Na'Rog will not tolerate any contract killings or thefts to take place here as it is bad for business. The few people that have disobeyed this rule were dealt with very quickly and publicly, so anyone with common sense now abides by the rules which are clearly given at the time of docking.

Although Na'Rog can be quite ruthless, he has in fact created a place of free trade which is what makes it popular with its many visitors. Of course, his main reason for doing this was to have somewhere where he could route many of his own business dealings.

There are a number of permanent establishments here and it is a good place to stay and get supplies.

G'Feel's Bar

Although there are several bars on the station, G'Feel's Bar is considered the most friendly, especially for new visitors to Freedom Outpost.

G'Feel (Narn)

Str: 8 (0), **Dex:** 7 (0), **End:** 10 (+1), **Int:** 7 (0), **Edu:** 9 (+1), **Soc:** 9 (+1)

Skills: Broker 1, Gambler 2, Investigate 1, Melee 0, Persuade 1, Stealth 0, Survival 0, Trade (Bar Owner) 1, Zero-G 0

Information: G'Feel is famous for his late night gambling sessions, although trying to order a drink at this time is like getting blood from a stone as he is so focussed and involved with the games.

Fendimir IV

Although Fendimir is a Drazi owned planet, they only have a small colony here. At some time in its past the planet was terraformed by an alien structure known as 'The Fortress'. The origins of this technology are unknown as it is far more advanced than anything the indigenous race, the Diranos, were capable of building.

Colonists reported strange phenomena such as hearing whispers and feelings of being watched. This soon resulted in rumours which lead to it being known as

'the haunted colony'. Telepaths cannot detect anything but they do seem to be more susceptible to the effects.

Fendimir IV has a number of small military, research and mining bases but the crews have to be rotated frequently. Few people have ever stayed here more than a few months.

During the Shadow war, it became open to refugees but like everyone else they left as soon as they were able by securing transport off the haunted planet. Although the refugees have gone, the settlements remain and are used as stop off points for those wishing to avoid the authorities.

In recent years, the colony has become a minor tourist attraction to the brave travellers who wish to experience the haunted colony. It is by no means a booming industry, but there are a number of facilities that cater for the infrequent visitors.

The main settlements have little in the way of policing and official representation, which makes this a good place for the players to rest and re-supply. It is unlikely that news of the fugitives would have reached here or if it did it would be of little concern to the residents.

The Fortress

This black tower is something of an enigma. No-one has unlocked its secrets and many have tried. It does not give off any signals or readings and it does not respond to telepathy.

The closer anyone gets to it, the more pronounced the effects. When in close proximity, characters must make an Endurance check -1 DM every hour. Anyone who fails this check must move a considerable distance away for the effects to diminish.

Antra System

Although it is close to the Legacy Base where the Star Dancer was captured, the players might have made some friends and allies here during episode seven.

Mining Facility

If the players had successful dealings with the Brakiri, the mining colony is a good place to rest. The station also has repair facilities for any big work that needs to be done. Of course, being Brakiri, there will be a fee for any services used by the players.

Cult of the First Moon

If the players were able to help them in any way, the cultists will welcome them back. Since so few people know of this place it is a good place to lay low. The players will be well fed and looked after until they wish to leave.

Arraki III

The lost Ikarran colony is a long way to travel, but no one will come looking for the players here. It is important that they have enough supplies to last the journey, but once they arrive on the planet the party can get food from the Arraki. A lot has happened here since the players left over eight months ago.

Zener Space Station

If they players have already explored the station as detailed in episode six, then the following will probably not apply. However, if they left before or during the battle between the Equinox and the station, the party will have much to investigate.

Most of the station has been destroyed, filling the area with wreckage. However, two of the spheres remain relatively intact, although the connecting pylon has been severed. A scan of the wreckage will reveal one faint life sign from the small spheres.

Corpses

A lot of Zener corpses will be found as the players explore the remains of the station. Some are floating in the vacuum of space and have been preserved, whilst those in sealed areas would have decomposed. Only a few Drakh corpses will be found, again both outside and inside the spheres.

Research Laboratories

This sphere has remained sealed and has minimal life support and gravity. Of the two Arraki prisoners that were here during episode six, only one has survived. She is

suffering from malnutrition and is very weak. Her ordeal has also made her terrified of aliens and technology so the players will have difficulty in helping her.

However, by giving the survivor food and water, the players can eventually win her trust and she will allow the party to take her home. Once she has been safely returned to her family, the players will learn that all her captors were killed in the attack and she survived by rationing what little the food remained. Her companion was badly injured in the attack and died shortly after.

Control Sphere

The primary control sphere was badly damaged and roughly half of it remains. The players will need to don their EVA suits to investigate the wreckage but they will find little of interest.

Salvage

Inside the spheres and floating amongst the wreckage are a number of items that can be salvaged at the Referees discretion such as spare parts, tools, medical supplies and perhaps a weapon or turret. These might prove useful for their ship or can be sold to a junk dealer such as Dreshak.

Visiting the Planet

Much has happened on Arraki III since the players left over six months ago. Depending on the actions of the players when they visited here the council might have kept knowledge of the Zener space station a secret or they may have revealed the truth to the people. Referees should make whatever changes are appropriate to their story.

It would be prudent for the players to use discretion until they can confirm the state of play here. They can meet up with Amur or any other contacts they made here during their visit and this person will fill them in on what has happened here. The player's presence may need to be kept secret or they might be hailed as heroes.

Food & Aid

Amur and the council will give the players any supplies they need including a good supply of food. The fresh fruits, meats, bread, cheeses and teas will be a welcome change from the processed food the player's would have been used to.

If the situation allows, the player's and the rest of the crew will be given accommodation or they will be given permission to set up their own rudimentary settlement in a remote area.

Returning the Survivor

If the players rescued the survivor from the station wreckage, the council will give their appreciation.

The Excalibur

After many months of travelling criminal havens and backwater worlds, the player's will encounter the Excalibur. If the players tried to get help from one of their contacts, you can tie that in with the Excalibur finding or meeting the players as appropriate (but they should not be informed to maintain the surprise). If not, then the Excalibur will eventually use their own means to track down the players.

The Excalibur is a Victory-class destroyer, details of which can be found in Signs & Portents issue 71.

The best time to have this encounter is when they have just jumped out of hyperspace and have to wait for the jump engines to come back online. The Excalibur is the most powerful ship in the galaxy so the players have no chance in a battle against it. They will receive an incoming signal.

'This is Captain Matthew Gideon of the Excalibur. We need to talk, please stand down and let us dock.'

If the players try to run, the Excalibur will fire a warning shot across their bow. Make it clear that there is no escape for them. A shuttle will dock and much to the players surprise only Gideon and Galen will emerge from the shuttle.

'Sorry for the dramatic meeting. We are not here to arrest you, or detain you for the authorities. We just want to talk with you.'

Introductions will be made and Gideon will make a point of letting them know that Galen is a Techno-mage. Once things settle down, Gideon will continue.

'It would seem that we both have a common enemy – a secret organisation known as the Legacy Group. They have people in the highest positions of the military and government. These are the people who framed you and attempted to assassinate me.

I believe some of them are the remains of President Clarke's administration and the Psi Corp. Their main focus seems to be developing Shadow technology.

I want to expose the Legacy Group and I imagine you do too. So, I thought you might like to know you have some friends out here, and perhaps we can work together?

However, before we can dedicate our resources to that task, we must find a cure for the plague. Again, I hope we can work

together on this as you are responsible for some of the data we currently have.'

The players will want to discuss this new turn of events. If they ask Gideon about his assassination, he will suspect that it was agents of the Legacy Group who tried to silence him after he and Galen discovered a Legacy Base in Sector 420.

If the players ask how Gideon survived the assassination attempt he will simply say *'Reports of my death were greatly exaggerated.'* and leave it at that. If the players somehow manage to convince Gideon to explain further or they scan him, they will discover that Gideon had an ancient alien artefact called an 'apocalypse box' that was used to revive him after he was shot.

'This meeting will be kept off the record. My people are currently analysing the data you collected from your missions with Ancient Wonders. I suggest we meet up in about a month to discuss our options.'

Gideon will suggest they meet in the Zafran system at a certain date and time.

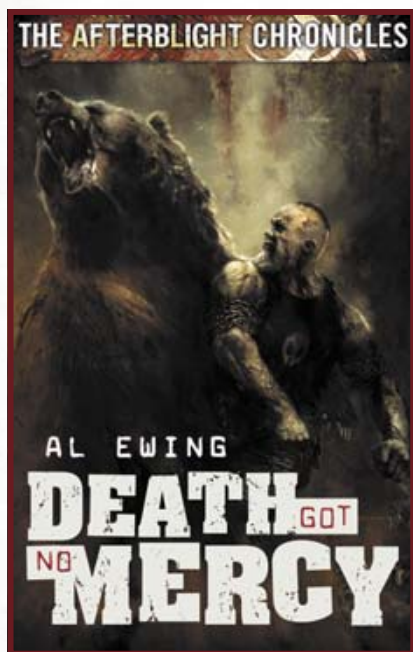
Ending the Episode

The episode ends after the encounter with the Excalibur. The players have one month until they next meet up so they have time to complete any tasks they need to do but they must also continue to avoid the various groups that are after them.

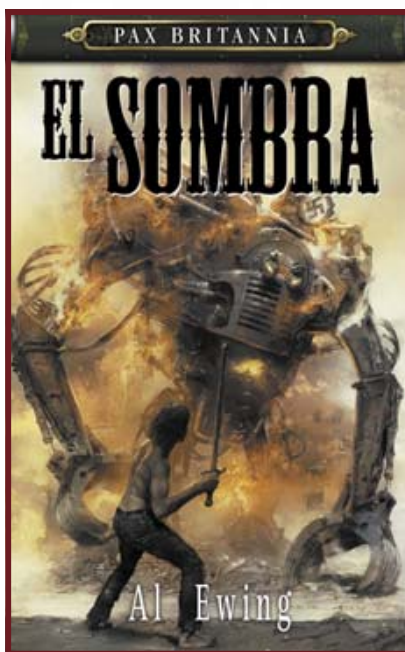
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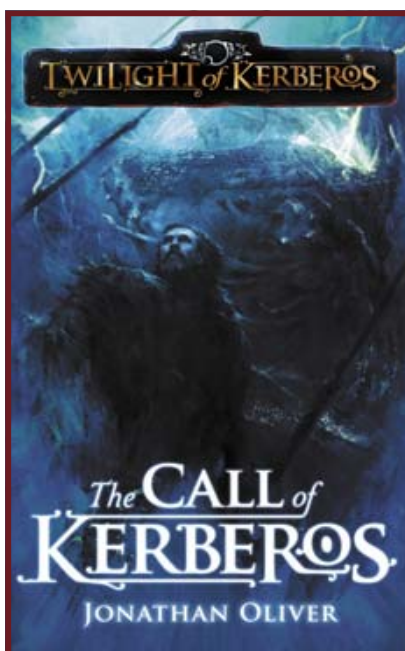
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Imenthi'er - The Dragon Graves of Melniboné

By Lawrence Whittaker

'What happens when they die?'

'They do not die. They are immortal, perhaps. No dragon prince of Imrryr has yet seen a dragon die.'

'Then what happens when they are killed? I know they can be killed, because several dragons were mortally wounded in the war with the Dharzi.'

'Ah – yes. That is a different proposition altogether. When a dragon is killed, or when it is injured and cannot be healed through sleep, then it is taken to Imenthi'er. But that is a secret that only the Dragon Lords know.'

— A discussion between Dyvim Tvar and the young Prince Elric, concerning the fate of dragons.

The dragons of Imrryr are thought to be immortal; certainly they are long-lived, existing long before the Melnibonéans settled their island, and their life spans may therefore be unending. Yet, on occasion, dragons can be mortally injured (as Prince Elric notes, the last such occasion was during the war with the Dharzi, long centuries before) and when these occasions fall, the dragon is taken to Imenthi'er.

Imenthi'er is a Melnibonéan High Tongue word referring to both a ceremony and a place. The ceremony is the preparation and transportation of the dragon's body for burial and the place is the secret valley, known only to the Dragon Lords of Imrryr, where the vast graves of slain dragons are located. This article details Imenthi'er as both ritual and location.

The Ritual

The death of a dragon is a time of great mourning for all Melnibonéans but especially for the Dragon Lords – those who carry the Dyvim prefix to their name – and the Dragon Lord who rode the dead dragon. It is traditional for the dragon's rider to take his own life, using a ceremonial blade, carved from the claw of the dead

dragon, to slit his own belly and throat, and then for his corpse, clad in the war gear of a Dragon Lord, to accompany the procession to Imenthi'er itself. Even though Melnibonéans are an unsentimental race, the bond between them and the dragons is powerful enough to provoke such grief in the ones who ride them into battle.

The bodies of dragon and rider are placed on matching plinths in the Square of the Scale and Claw in the northern quarter of the city and here the nobles of Melniboné parade in solemn silence before the fallen, paying their respects with a bow of the head and the scattering of chrysanthemum petals at the feet of the plinths of dragon and rider. Once the last noble has passed the twin catafalques, 12 slaves are ritually killed at the base of the dragon's plinth and then dressed in fine robes of samite and silk. These 12 will be the servants of the dragon and rider in whatever afterlife exists beyond the mortal realm. The act is symbolic more than a genuine belief in any form of afterlife but being chosen as one of the slaves to die in the Imenthi'er ritual is considered a great honour.

Hundreds more slaves carry the bodies of dragon and rider to the harbour, where, resplendent in the colours of the dragon's livery, a specially prepared battle barge waits to accept the cargo. The barge's decks have been cleared so that the body of the dragon can be easily accommodated and the barge's crew lines the hind decks as the dragon and its rider are lowered, reverentially, onto the waiting ship.

From Imrryr, the ship sails through the Sea Maze and out into the Dragon Sea, sailing first east for a day and then turning and sailing up towards the coastline of the northern continent. The barge passes Vilmir and Ilmiora, sailing for precisely eight days until a mist-shrouded, rocky isle, rises into view. This is the island of Guladd'rin; no more than 10 kilometres in width but densely forested and protected by a sea mist that keeps it obscured from all but the most knowledgeable sea captains.

Those who know of the island steer clear of it; the mists hide powerful currents and treacherous rocks that tear away keels and hole boats below the waterline. Guladd'rin is an island of ghosts, the mariners believe, and to land there is to perish.

However, the battle barge bearing the body of the dragon lands there; it circles the coast until the harbour is reached – a long, wide, stone jetty designed to accommodate a single battle barge, the jetty wide enough to accommodate the body of a dragon. On the jetty waits the immense, ornately carved wagon, decorated with runes and images of dragons and covered in gold leaf. The barge docks and the dragon's body is transferred to the wagon. Slaves, brought to Guladd'rin for this purpose, then pull the wagon inland, following the road of marble that winds into the interior of the island, the land rising steadily around it, until the Imenthi'er Valley is reached. This is the final resting place of the dragon; the place where it will join its kin in death. Its body placed, with all reverence, in a mausoleum prepared specifically for dragons.

The valley is filled with mausoleums: vast ziggurats that stretch in lines on either side of the marble road, shadowed by the steep valley sides, for six kilometres. There are 30 ziggurats and it is believed that no more than 30 dragons can ever die. Only six of the ziggurats are occupied and once the bodies of dragon and rider have been taken into the ziggurat and placed on the waiting catafalque, the ziggurat is sealed (the slaves who brought the dragon on this final journey are entombed with it) from within. The Melnibonéans then return to their barge and sail for home.

The Ziggurats of Imenthi'er

Each ziggurat is a stepped pyramid with many steps, made from the gleaming white marble found on the island, and every single stone is ornately carved with leering faces, draconic motifs and, on the very apex

of the pyramid, a marble representation of the dragon that the ziggurat holds or is destined to hold. Although the ziggurats conform to a similar design, they are unique in their carvings and accoutrements.

Neither are the ziggurats of Melnibonéan design: this is obvious to any Melnibonéan, or any other character succeeding in a Lore (World) roll. Melniboné did not prepare the Imenti'ér Valley for the dragons but it was clearly taught that, when a dragon dies, this is where it should be brought. The race that built Imenti'ér may well have been the race that forged Stormbringer and Mournblade, and the runes that decorate the carved walls of the ziggurats bear some resemblance to the runes that grace those treacherous runeswords. Other than this, the architects of Imenti'ér remain a mystery. The Dragon Lords of Imrryr believe that the Emperors of Melniboné have a particular dreamquest involving Imenti'ér but as the nature of the dreamquests is known only to the emperors, none can be sure.

A typical mausoleum ziggurat is 60 metres high and 50 metres at the base. Only one set of doors is built into the structure, at ground level and is 10 metres high and five metres wide. If a ziggurat is occupied, then the doorway is sealed by a massive slab of carved marble. The carvings are more of the leering faces and swirling runes which, whilst reminiscent of the Melnibonéan High Tongue, is a different language altogether. The runes articulate the dragon's full, true name – a name that is unpronounceable to humans and one that, if studied to any degree, drives even the strongest mind insane.

The infamous Doctor Aqeer of Imrryr came, alone, to Imenti'ér, to study the carvings. He was found a decade later, a raving maniac, having ripped out his finger and toenails and every tooth in his head, and could only communicate in a certain kind of gibberish. When Imrryr's physicians had finished observing it was concluded that

deciphered a single true name of a dragon and the knowledge had utterly shredded his mind. Doctor Aqeer choked himself with his own fist 10 days later.

It is possible to walk inside an unoccupied ziggurat. Strategically carved slits in the stone of the upper steps of the ziggurat allow light to flood in, illuminating the catafalque reserved for the dragon. This plinth is made of yet more marble inlaid with gold and its upper surface can be reached via a series of wide steps on the east side of the plinth. The catafalque is 10 metres high and in its base is a single door of stone that can be opened on a successful Athletics (Brute Force) roll. Within is a chamber running the full length of the catafalque and in an unoccupied ziggurat is empty; but, if a dragon has been entombed, then the catafalque crypt contains the saddle, spurs, lance and other regalia of a dragon rider. The rider is also buried in here, in a stone sarcophagus located at the head end of the catafalque. This sarcophagus is inscribed, in the High

Tongue of Melniboné, with the Dragon Lord's name and an Imrryrrian haiku summarising his deeds.

Around the outside of the catafalque are statues of dragons. Every ziggurat has precisely 12 such statues and each is a representation of the dragon at different stages in its life; from egg through the death. Intricately, perfectly carved, the statues are several metres high and exquisite in their beauty. Collectors of such things would pay hundreds of thousands of silver for a single statue and an entire set is priceless. Such statues would be popular in Hwamgaarl and the courts of certain kings where Melnibonéan artefacts are both revered and reviled but draconic imagery is valued above all else.

If a ziggurat is closed, then within are also the bodies of the slaves who brought the dragon on its final journey, and laid it to rest on the catafalque, and its rider within. The final act of the slaves is to activate the great stone levers that bring down



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the closing slab, sealing them within the catafalque forever. These slaves starve to death, and whilst some lie down to accept their fate, the remains of others, desiccated by the dryness of the ziggurat's interior, can be found in dreadfully contorted positions, having died in agony.

Who Would Rob a Dragon Tomb?

Few know of the secrets of Imenthi'er and few human sea captains would approach the island. But some might, and rumours persist of a dragon's graveyard somewhere outside Imrryr. The temptations for persistent collectors, curious sorcerers and greedy grave robbers will eventually lead people to Imenthi'er Valley.

Unsealed Ziggurats

Unsealed ziggurats contain the statues of the dragon that may, one day, be held in the mausoleum. Each statue weighs in the region of 24,000 kg, making them difficult to move but not impossible. Moving a statue triggers a random effect – all part of the master plan of the ziggurat's master builders to deter theft. Roll on the following table to determine what happens if one of the statues is moved as much as a fraction of an inch from its resting place.

Dragon's Dream

If a statue is successfully removed from the ziggurat, and brought back to the Young Kingdoms, it fetches easily 1D6 x 100,000 silvers, if sold to the right collector (which would include any number of Young Kingdoms cults, serving both Law and Chaos). However, the statue comes with the curse of its makers. Whoever possesses a dragon statue is fine for 1D6 months – the amount of time it takes for his soul to come to the attention of the slumbering dragons of Imrryr. Gradually, the dreams of the statue's owner become sucked into the dreams of the dragons and the collector is trapped inside the dreamscape of dragons – the equivalent of a dream of the Seventh, un-named Dream Realm. The Dragon Dream has an Intensity of 7D4, making it

1D6	Trap
1–2	The door slab starts to close. People inside the ziggurat have 2d4 rounds to get out before they are entombed within
3–4	A slab of rock, anchored eight metres above the floor of the ziggurat, is dislodged and tumbles down, inflicting 6D6 damage on anyone beneath who fails to make an Athletics roll to get clear.
5–6	The floor beneath the statue suddenly tilts. Those standing on the tilting rock must make Athletics rolls to leap clear or fall into the 10 metre deep pit, sustaining falling damage. The stone above swings back into place and locks, trapping the prisoners beneath: it requires a combined STR of 100 to unlock the stone and tilt it so that the prisoners can be rescued.

a risky proposition for all but the strongest Dream Thieves to tackle.

Inside the dream, the dreamer is trapped in a hellish, draconian world where the great wyrms rule and the lesser races of the multiverse are playthings and prey, treated like animals and subjected to the inhuman, unsympathetic whims of the dragons. The dragons create micro-realities to torment the lesser races, which dissolve and reform as the dragons see fit, and, indeed, the dragons are every bit as powerful of the Lords and Law and Chaos (so powerful, in fact, that even the Lords of Chaos dare not enter the dream realm of dragons).

Any human mind trapped for a number of days greater than the dreamer's undedicated POW is driven permanently insane, even if it can be rescued. If the mind remains in the dream scape for more than twice the number of undedicated POW in days, then the dreamer dies as his soul is devoured by the slumbering dragons of Imrryr's dragon caves.

Once the dragon dream has been activated, there is no way of stopping it. Even returning a stolen statue to its ziggurat is no release: only a powerful and experienced Dream Thief has any hope of saving the entrapped soul.

Sealed Ziggurats

Breaking into a sealed ziggurat is no easy feat. The enormous slabs of marble that bar the entrance must be moved with sorcery or a combined STR of 300 or more. Inside, the tomb robbers find the bodies of the

slaves, plus the body of the dragon and, within the catafalque, the body of the rider – along with the riches of the regalia of a Dragon Lord, which, again, to a collector, are worth 1D6 x 10,000 silver.

The sarcophagus of the Dragon Lord is Imrryr-made, and protected with the rune of Bewilderment, which is charged with 10 Magic Points and affects all five senses. If the sarcophagus is opened, whoever opened it has all five senses scrambled and immediately forgets where, and who, he is. His memory returns only when he leaves the island but he is also left with a fear of what the island holds and cannot return there, having gained a deep paranoia of the ghosts the place contains.

If the remains of the dragon are disturbed, there are no immediate repercussions. However, if any part of the remains – scale, hide, bones and so forth – are removed from the ziggurat, then whoever does the removing is subjected to the Dragon's Dream punishment, as outlined earlier. Dragons should be left to rest in peace – tampering with the body of a dragon brings about the magical wrath of all living dragons.

Those Who Quest for Imenthi'er

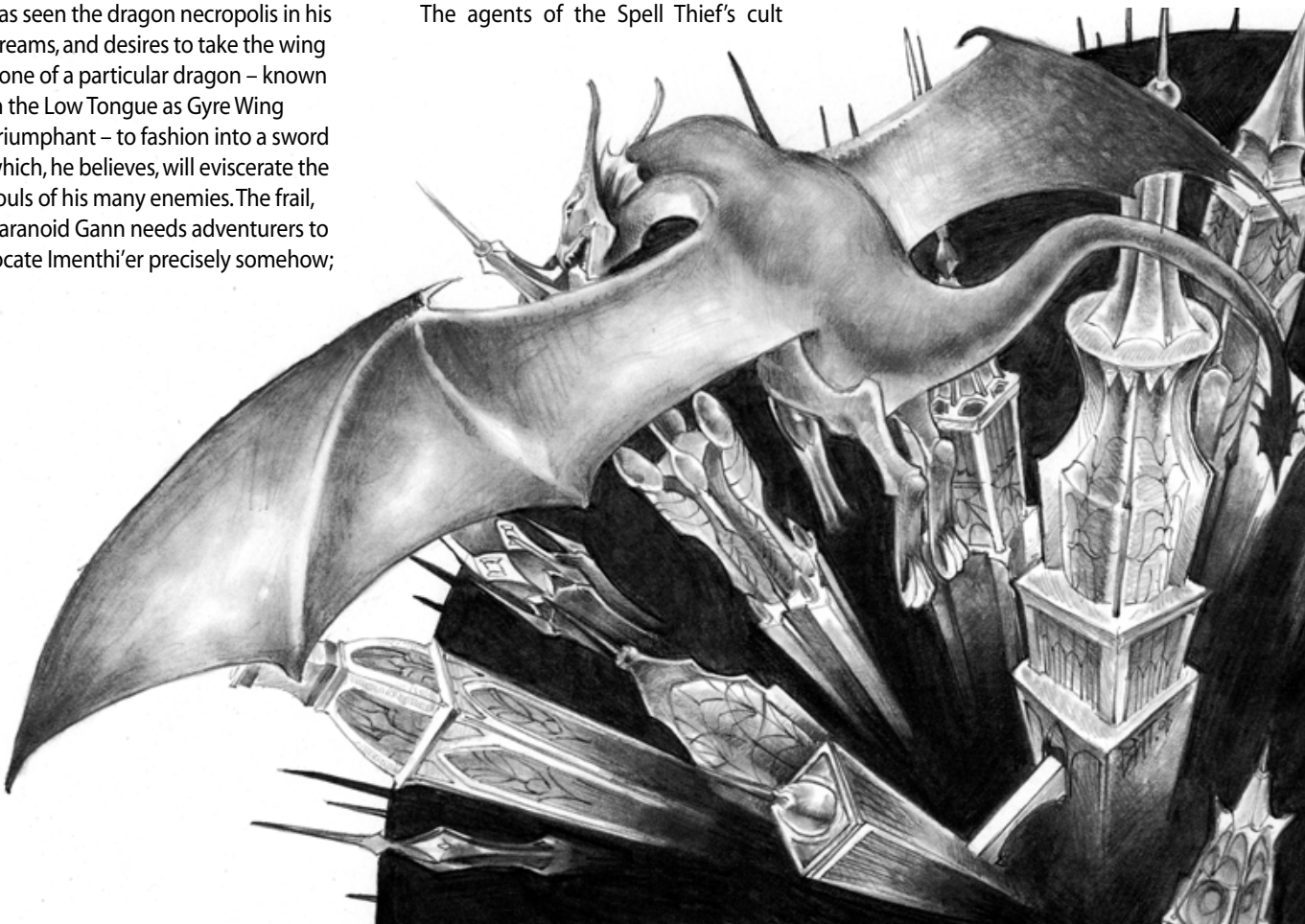
The location of Imenthi'er is a closely guarded secret, but secrets will always out, and the dragons' necropolis is no exception. The following know something of Imenthi'er and are willing to seek it out.

- Captain Bryagan Goldtooth of the Purple Towns came across the mist-swept isle of Guladd'rin six years ago and has been planning a return voyage to investigate it ever since. His investigations have uncovered that, in the distant past, several battle barges ventured in the direction of that isle, and Bryagan suspects the existence of Melnibonéan treasure. A greedy, arrogant fool, Bryagan is prepared to pay adventurers to join his quest and, when he finds Imenthi'er Valley, he sees only a way to make millions from the treasures in the unsealed ziggurats which are simply waiting to be stolen. His obsession with looting the isle grows and he is not content with what can be easily stolen; he wants to plunder the closed ziggurats too – thus condemning all to the fate of dreaming dragons.
- Aloysius Gann, a sorcerer who has dedicated half his soul to Mabelode, has seen the dragon necropolis in his dreams, and desires to take the wing bone of a particular dragon – known in the Low Tongue as Gyre Wing Triumphant – to fashion into a sword which, he believes, will eviscerate the souls of his many enemies. The frail, paranoid Gann needs adventurers to locate Imenthi'er precisely somehow;

perhaps by stealing knowledge from Imrryr itself, or questing for it; and then to take him to the island to retrieve the bone. Yet others are keen to stop him. Jarrulph the Stalwart, a knight of the cult of Aubec, is Gann's sworn enemy after Gann murdered his lover. He, too, has dreamed of Imenthi'er and knows its location, but not what it holds. When the adventurers serving Gann finally reach the island, they find the vengeful Knight of Aubec waiting for them, eager to punish Aloysius Gann for his crimes.

- The cult of the Spell Thieves seeks to build a chaos engine from the bones and stone of the ziggurats of Imenthi'er. The engine, designed by Cran Liret himself, will draw upon the ancient dream energy of both the architects of the ziggurats and the slumbering dragons of Imrryr to create a dragon of pure energy, infested with Cran Liret's madness. The agents of the Spell Thief's cult

will be able to direct this dragon of magical force against the real dragons of Imrryr, destroying them as they sleep and growing stronger with each death, as the ziggurats of Imenthi'er are denied the bodies that should one day occupy them. The cult assembles many slaves, stolen from around the Young Kingdoms, to be brought to Guladd'rin island, and to begin the building of the chaos machine according to Cran Liret's plans. The architects of the machine – various priests and cultists of the Spell Thief – are prepared to risk madness and death to achieve their ends, which culminates with the creation of the Energy Wyrms – a thing driven by hatred, and intent on slaying every last dragon in Imrryr's dragon caves. Can it be stopped?



The Derelict

By Paul Dutton

Introduction

This short adventure is suited to a group of three to five players and is ideal as a ready-to-go scenario should a Referee find that his players misjump and emerge in deep space with not enough fuel to jump away again. For the heavy freighter that is encountered, the Referee may use any design and deck plan to suit his or her own need. If the travellers' ship has reserve fuel then a Referee may decree that their ship has suffered a massive fuel leak after experiencing a rupture to a fuel tank on exiting jump space. Now, aside from the problem of finding more fuel, one PC at least is going to have to don a vacc suit and venture outside the ship to repair the ruptured tank.

Synopsis

The stranded travellers will encounter a heavy freighter floating through deep space, which provides a fortuitous opportunity to obtain fuel. The ship has the name 'd'chaell' visibly painted on its hull. The d'chaell is of an unknown alien (humanoid) origin and has been floating through space since it was abandoned 700 years ago. The original crew, whilst on their last trip, had picked up a small stone pyramid which they hoped to sell for profit. Unfortunately, the pyramid did not turn out to be the priceless art object they had hoped for. Instead it affected their mental states and threatened to send them insane or destroy them. Now the travellers have discovered the d'chaell, will they too fall victim to the strange stone pyramid?

The Stone Pyramid

In one of the freighter's holds is a crate containing the pyramid shaped stone. The stone is black, like polished obsidian, eight inches tall and weighs about four kilograms. The crew of the d'chaell came into possession of the stone during their last trip and thought such a curious object might fetch a nice price in the collectors' markets of their home world.

The stone pyramid exudes an aura that might be mistaken for a form of intelligence. The aura interacts with the brainwave patterns of sentient beings and can produce some very strange effects; as if the subject were under the influence of some form of hallucinogen. The crew never realised that the stone was the cause of their ills and instead of jettisoning it, they themselves fled in the lifeboat to escape the madness of the d'chaell. All fled that is except for one crew member who it was felt had become so crazed as to be a perilous danger to himself and his shipmates. This poor unfortunate was locked inside the clothes locker in his stateroom and left there to die.

When dormant, the stone pyramid has a very low electro-magnetic field, so low as to be imperceptible to even the most high tech of sensor sweeps made from outside the freighter. However, EMF readings spike considerably in periods when the stone's aura becomes active. The stone proves impervious to all attempts of dealing physical damage to it. It absorbs energy, including laser and ballistic and then slowly dissipates that energy.

The d'chaell

There will be no reply from the d'chaell to any attempts at communication. Depending upon the type of sensor array being employed, a sweep of the d'chaell will reveal some or all of the following information: There are no life forms on board the ship, no signs of movement, the ship's life boat is absent, there is no power source, no heat, the engines are cold, there is no jump drive and no armaments – it is what salvagers call a derelict.

The d'chaell's fuel tanks remain partially full and currently hold 118 tonnes of refined hydrogen fuel. Its holds are full of ores and minerals and there are also biochemical fuels which are masked from most sensors by the metal barrels that they are stored in. Radiation levels are safe and the air has an oxygen-nitrogen mix in sufficient

quantities to provide a thin, breathable atmosphere. However, after being so long abandoned, the air has become stale and requires venting.

Boarding the d'chaell

As the PCs prepare to dock with the d'chaell, encourage them to assign duties in order to get them to split up. It is most likely that the PCs will split themselves between a boarding party and those remaining on board the travellers' ship to oversee the operation and to operate fuel hoses. The boarding party will probably explore the freighter, locate the bridge to restore power and life support systems and then investigate the holds and fuel tanks.

The airlock of the d'chaell is alien and incompatible with the travellers' vessel and docking will require an extendable flexible tube to achieve a seal. The airlock is not only totally alien, it has no power and to bypass the locking system will require a PC to successfully set up an external circuit on an *Engineer (electronics)* or *Physical Science (electronics)* check (8+) or a *Mechanic* check (10+). Otherwise the only alternative for docking is to clamp to a hard surface and burn through the hull. Docking with a free floating ship requires a *Pilot* check (10+) and 1d6 minutes. PCs might avoid docking altogether if they elect to exit their ship using vacc suits, then cross the void to the d'chaell and manually open the air lock to gain access. They will still be required to bypass the non powered airlock as described previously.

On board the freighter, the ship is in complete darkness and most surfaces have a layer of frost due to the extreme cold. Zero gravity is in effect and various loose items hang effortlessly in mid air. If breathing is unassisted, then exhaled breath noticeably frosts in the cold and the aged air has a definite metallic taint that hits the back of the throat. Once on the bridge a PC can access redundant power systems, including life support. Unfortunately the computer systems and

controls are in an unfamiliar alien language. A PC well versed in ships' computers should be able to intuitively locate the primary systems with a *Computers* check (10+). If the PC has translation software that can be linked to the alien computer system then the check is unnecessary as navigating the controls becomes routine. Lighting, power and artificial gravity can all be restored. Also, the air can be vented and a fresh oxygen mix introduced to facilitate unassisted breathing; likewise the internal temperature can be raised to a more comfortable level.

A PC with a translation programme may access the ship's log on an *Admin* (6+) or navigate through ship's schematics to locate the operations controls for the fuel tanks, *Computers* (8+).

Pumping the Fuel Whether by checking the schematics on the computer system or by personally investigating the tanks, it becomes evident that fuel cannot be transferred from the tanks unless the valves are operated manually from the engineering bay. To refuel the travellers' ship requires hoses to be guided in to connect to the external seals of the tank. Guiding the hoses from the travellers' ship takes 1d6 minutes with a *Pilot* check (10+) or *Remote Operations* check (8+). Continuous checks may be made until successful, each check adding another 1d6 minutes to the operation.

Once a seal is achieved the valves that control the flow of fuel may be opened to begin pumping and gauges are present to ensure valves are adjusted correctly to maintain safe working pressure. The fuel begins to pump rather laboriously at a rate of two tons per minute. The fuel will not pump at all if PCs have not restored power to the freighter. As soon as a PC sets off to find the engineering bay, begin running the strange occurrences that effect the travellers as detailed later.

Cargo In the holds there are 200 containers of ores and minerals. Each container weighs 1,000 kilograms, a total of 200 tons (uncommon ore Cr 5,000 per ton). There is also a 95 ton cargo of biochemicals sealed

inside metal barrels. A total of 950 barrels weighing 100 kilograms each (biochemical Cr 50,000 per ton). Salvaging the cargo is not going to be easy; even the lightest containers are far too bulky and too heavy to man handle around the ship and transfer through the airlocks.

Ship's Log The computerised log will require a translation programme in order to read and understand it. The date system is not standard Imperium and means nothing to the PCs. The d'chaell was on a routine run to pick up a cargo from a mining colony and return it home. Captain v'llant reports in the log that some of his crew believed there might be a stowaway or stowaways on board and reports that strange happenings had befallen several crew members during the previous few hours. There are no details in the log that might give a clue as to what these strange happenings were.

The next entry reports that a'keeda had gone crazy and attacked one of his shipmates; it took four of them to overcome a'keeda and calm him down. Later he had gotten into another fight, this time with a crewman who had begun shouting and screaming at shadows or maybe something in the shadows. However, nobody else could see what it was he was shouting at. There would appear to be a gap in the log reports because the next and final entry is very abrupt: 'Taking the lifeboat. Abandoning ship. Having to leave a'keeda behind, his mind is broken.'

The State Rooms and the Dead Crewman

If the state rooms are searched, a *Recon* check (8+) will find the remains of a humanoid alien body trapped in a clothes locker. The locker itself has several deformations to the door where the metal has been forced outwards due to the unfortunate crewman hammering his fists against the inside of the door in an attempt to escape his tiny prison.

Clad in a blue cloth uniform, the almost skeletal remains still retain some vestiges of darkened skin and internal organs.

Decomposition was in an advanced state before life support systems powered down allowing the ambient temperature to drop below freezing which preserved the last of the body's soft tissues. The remains are humanoid, about five feet and three inches tall, with a slightly stooped stance, overlong arms that reach to the knees and a cranium that exhibits a distinct slope of the forehead.

A PC with the medic skill may spend 1d6 hours in medical and forensic examination to determine that the remains exhibit various minor skeletal defects from repairs made to heal old wounds but there is no sign of trauma that might tell of a violent death or any residual of a viral infection. The alien actually died of starvation, but this would be pretty much impossible to conclude through medical examination.

A *Medic* check (8+) may help to establish how long the alien has been dead. The greater the effect on the check, the more accurate the estimation; the alien has actually been dead for 700 years. In his final days he went mad due to the aura of the stone pyramid and his fellow crewmates locked him in the clothes locker for their own protection.

The Strange Occurrences

The following sequence of strange occurrences should affect one PC at a time and will work best if the PCs have split up their party and if these occurrences are run in quick succession. The stone pyramid stored in the hold will begin to exert its influence on the minds of the PCs who succumb to hallucinations and other mental effects with profound consequences. It may quickly become obvious to PCs that all effects are illusionary but simply allowing illusions to happen and pass without reacting to them may not always prove the best policy.

The First Occurrence

When a PC heads off to the freighter's engineering bay to locate the valves for the fuel tanks have him lose communications with his fellow travellers. The PC loses all

The Derelict

track of time, it feels as if he has spent no time at all on his way to engineering but in truth he will be gone for much longer – in fact for as many minutes or hours as it takes for another PC to go and look for him. However it happens, one PC will be temporarily lost to time in the engineering bay. Next, any other PC or PCs that were with him at the time or came after to look for him will inexplicably find themselves standing in another part of the ship without any recollection of how he (or they) got there – see the second occurrence.

The Second Occurrence

After splitting up members of the boarding party, one PC is temporarily lost to time in the engineering bay whilst his companion or companions who were either with him or went looking for him, are now standing in a bewildered state in another part of the ship not knowing how they got there. If only one PC has boarded the d'chaell and nobody else follows to investigate, then that PC is automatically the victim of the first two occurrences which will require the occurrences to happen several hours apart from each other. The second occurrence is experienced by one bewildered PC, if he is accompanied then his fellow travellers just see the affected PC begin to panic in absolute dread and fear, reacting to an invisible menace.

The affected PC begins to feel that he is being watched, a claustrophobic oppression overtakes him and the room or corridor in which he stands begins to darken. The shadows around him grow and lengthen with strange angular shapes that reach toward him. A snaking tentacle begins to form in the shadows which takes on a solid form of putrid flesh and exudes a nauseating aroma of death. The tentacle lashes out at the PC followed by another and the full form of some alien nightmare manifests before him. A heaving, bulbous body with no discernable head, just a gaping slavering maw filled with rows of jagged teeth. Around the body, its tentacles writhe and make ready to strike again. A second creature rises up from the shadows, either before or behind the PC, to cut off any hope of his escape.

These alien creatures are hallucinatory manifestations of the PC's own mind. If the PC is 'killed' he is actually rendered unconscious for d66 minutes. If he destroys the creatures, then when the combat encounter ends the PC will be left standing unharmed; although his adrenaline pumped body is likely suffering from the after effects of an extreme panic attack or shock. If the PC opened fire, damage to the ship's internal structure or systems may have occurred and will require damage control. The PC will have suffered no physical injury unless inadvertently self-inflicted or perhaps received from a bump to the head if he fell unconscious. No traces of the nightmarish creatures are to be found. The Referee might decide not to allow the PC to recover consciousness or realise the truth until after running the third occurrence.

Tentacled Nightmare

Str 12 (+2), **Dex** 10, **End** 10, **Int** 4, **Instinct** 7, **Pack** 2; Melee (tentacle) 1, Melee (teeth) 2; Tentacle (4 attacks) 2d6 damage per tentacle or Bite 3d6 damage; Armour (Hide) 2.

The nightmare has no creature classification as it appears as a hallucinatory effect and is a figment of the victim's own imagination. It requires no stealth skill or movement statistics as the victim cannot escape from his nightmares while the hallucination is in effect.

The Third Occurrence

PCs remaining on board the travellers' ship will be suddenly surprised by a proximity alert. Ship's sensors will be tracking two inbound missiles that have 'locked on'; though there is no sign of a hostile vessel on the sensors. Missiles begin at a range of 15,000 kilometres, travel at thrust 5 and will impact in two turns. Those PCs aboard the travellers' ship may correctly believe that the missiles are not real – just phantoms. They might engage the incoming missiles with ECM or attempt to destroy them using point defence but neither action will have any effect. The alternatives are to either ride out the attack or to begin evasive

manoeuvres. The Referee should keep in mind that if the travellers' ship has a direct hard seal with the d'chaell, employing evasive manoeuvres will leave the d'chaell compromised as the burned hole in its hull becomes exposed to open space.

If the PCs decide to ride out the phantom missile attack, then impact will feel very real. At the moment of impact, all PCs on board will be rendered unconscious as the pyramid's influence shuts down their minds. PCs on board the d'chaell will not be affected and will not be able to pick up any incoming missiles on the freighter's sensors and after the phantom impact, the travellers' ship will disappear from the freighter's sensor readings. If however, PCs on the d'chaell have the possibility of checking visually, they will be relieved to see their ship still along side, intact and safe. Looking back to the freighter's sensors, their ship will now have reappeared but they will still be unable to contact it. PCs on board the travellers' ship will remain unconscious for 1d6 hours or for d66 minutes if a PC from the freighter returns and successfully renders medical aid with a *Medic* check (8+).

The Fourth Occurrence

The Referee should ensure the PC who falls victim of the fourth occurrence understands that his character is helpless to resist the influence of the stone and will quickly develop an infatuation for it. Indeed, it may be prudent to take the player to one side for a brief moment to explain the effect upon his character. Alternatively, this occurrence will also work well if there is an NPC amongst the traveller crew that the Referee can take control of.

One PC (or NPC) aboard the freighter can hear beautiful music and feels drawn towards the source of it; nobody else will be able to hear it. Amongst the cargo of the main hold, there is a crate that contains the black, stone pyramid. The affected PC will become charmed by the stone pyramid and will take it and want to keep it for his own. If any other PC shows interest, the Referee informs the charmed PC that his

character stakes a claim over it; violently so if necessary. If the charmed PC is keen to role play, he may come to blows with any other who asks to see the stone for himself or tries to persuade him to part with it – whether this infers handing it over or leaving it behind.

The charmed PC will cradle the stone in such a way that it becomes obvious he treats it as something precious. Every time the charmed PC feels challenged by one of his fellow travellers he reacts angrily. Each time his ire is invoked, the stone's EMF readings will spike. Any traveller close to a sensor will be able to pick up these readings as they go off the scale and any traveller near to the charmed PC will feel an inexplicable sense that the stone is emanating some sort of powerful aura. As the aura continues to grow in response to the charmed PC's raised temper, it becomes powerful enough to induce feelings of nausea and also a humming vibration in the heads of all PCs except for the one who is charmed by it.

Dealing with the Stone Pyramid

During the fourth occurrence, the Referee should have seen to it that one PC (or NPC) will insist on keeping the stone and will refuse to give it up or leave it behind. He should become angry, even violent if his will is opposed. If the stone is taken aboard the travellers' ship it could spell disaster as everyone begins to fall further under its maddening influence. Eventually, everyone will end up going insane.

The PCs need to relieve their charmed comrade of the stone pyramid and unless they have a moment of genius, there would seem to be only one of two ways to proceed with the problem at hand: Either to overcome the charmed PC by physical means or to attempt to instil some sense into the charmed PC in order to make him realise what is happening to him. This second option may require the Referee setting a task chain of difficult skill checks (10+), typically involving *Deception* and *Persuade* checks and possibly *Leadership* checks too. Failure will likely leave the PCs

with only the first option – physical action against their charmed shipmate.

The pyramid itself proves impervious to all attempts of dealing direct damage to it. PCs may decide to simply leave the pyramid and the d'chaell behind when they are refuelled and ready to depart deep space. Alternatively, the pyramid can be jettisoned into space or the travellers may decide to destroy the d'chaell with the pyramid on board.

Ending the Adventure

Following the strange occurrences and when PCs have relieved their charmed shipmate of the stone pyramid, they should gather their wits about themselves and complete the operation of siphoning fuel. Refuelling follows the procedure and skill checks as

detailed in *Pumping the Fuel*. The Referee may decide that the PCs have already had enough strange experiences and allow the refuelling to go ahead smoothly so that they may complete the task and leave. Otherwise, unless the PCs have had the forethought to jettison the pyramid into space already, the Referee might choose to harass the PCs with one more experience – space pirates are suddenly loose about the freighter, armed to the teeth and out for blood. Of course they are merely phantoms.

On leaving, the PCs might decide to destroy the d'chaell with the pyramid on board. But if they left the d'chaell and the stone intact or if they jettisoned the pyramid into space, then it will simply float through the void – for all eternity. Unless, maybe one day, some poor unlucky crew of travellers will be unfortunate enough to discover it.



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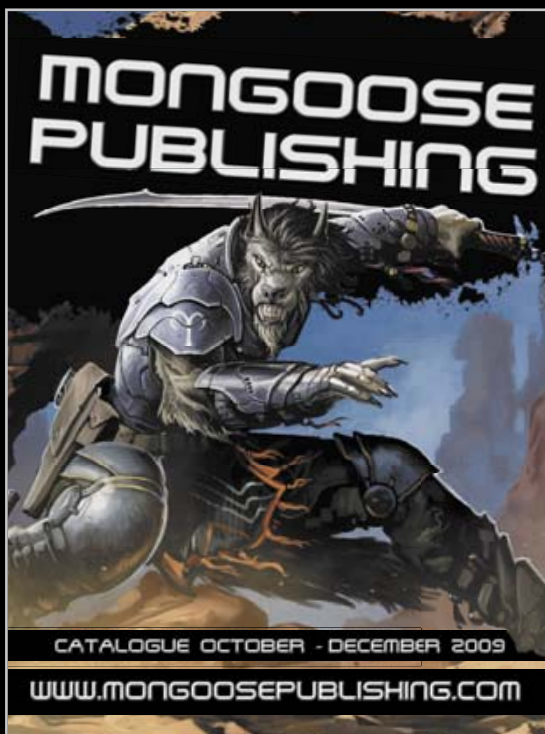
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