



Signs & Portents

B5 - PART 2 OF THE LEGACY OF WAR - A 14 PART CAMPAIGN FOR UNIVERSE OF B5
MEDIC! PART 2 OF ALEX GREENE'S MEDICALLY THEMED TRAVELLER ARTICLE
BRYAN STEELE RECOMMENDS MORE "GAMER FRIENDLY" MOVIES"
DRAGON WARRIORS - A BRAND NEW SCENARIO
ALSO ACTA, CONAN, MONGOOSE NEWS, A REPORT
FROM DRAGONMEET 2008 AND MUCH
MUCH MORE!!!

Editor:
Charlotte Law

Managing Director:
Matthew Sprange

Mongoose Studio Staff:
Nick Robinson, Will Chapman, Ted
Chang and Kelly George

Cover Art: Pascal Quidault

Border Art: Jesse Mohn

Artists: Carl Walmsley, Katrina
Hepburn, Sandrine Thirache, Furman

Contributors: Bryan Steele, Simon
Beal, Charlotte Law, Alan Greene,
Sandrine Thirache, Katrina Hepburn,
Dale McCoy Jr, Carl Walmsley, Vincent
Darlage, Matthew Sprange

Now if your families are anything like mine, Christmas will have consisted of a lot of food, lots of laughs and the consumption of enough alcohol to bring down a few battalions of elephants! Yes my family likes to do it in style. This year was like any other. I awoke whilst it was still dark outside and proceeded to muck out stables and feed horses, with my mother begrudgingly “helping” whilst muttering to herself “merry bl**dy Christmas to me!”.

This was followed by a trip to my dad’s house where my 88 year old grandmother told us how she used to love Christmas as a girl... and then she told us again... and again... and again... pretty much on continuous loop for an hour!

A short visit with my Aunt Rosemary and Uncle Nigel helped to get us in the party spirit, before we got to my Aunt Ana and Uncle Chris’s house, which was to be our base of operations from there on out. My other half and I were swiftly enlisted for veg peeling duty, however my uncle did his best to encourage us my constantly refuelling the wine glasses, allowing the activity to become more enjoyable by the minute!

After much merriment, and once everyone had arrived, we sat down to eat the pterodactyl that my aunt had clearly mistaken for a turkey and cooked to perfection. Once all had been eaten, and many had fallen asleep, including my other half who appeared to have been eaten by the sofa, my uncle and I sat down to commence our Christmas tradition... watching the Football Factory. Now many of you may be thinking “football hooligans... what’s Christmassy about that?”. Yet after a day that is so completely lovey dovey fluffy and cuddly, there really is nothing better than a bit of mindless violence on the telly... that and the fact that when you have been drinking all day that film becomes the funniest film you have ever seen! Happy New Year!

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Convention and Events Diary

WarpCon XIX

University College, Cork, Ireland
Fri 23rd - Sunday 25th Jan 2009
www.warpcon.com

Conception 2009.

Naish Holiday Village, Highcliffe,
Christchurch, Dorset, UK
Wed 28th Jan - Sun 1st Feb 2009
www.conceptionuk.org

Conflagration 2009

Queen Margaret Union, Glasgow,
Scotland
Sat 21st - Sun 22nd Feb 2009
www.conflagration.org.uk

Leprecon XXX

Goldsmith Hall, Pearse St, Dublin 2,
Ireland
Fri 27th Feb - Sun 1st March 2009
www.lepricon.ie

Travcon 2009

Redwings Lodge Hotel, Huntingdon,
Cambridgeshire, UK
Fri 13th - Sun 15th March 2009

Concrete Cow '09

The Old Bath House, Wolverton, Milton
Keynes, UK
Sat 14th March 2009
www.mk-rpg.org.uk/Concrete_Cow

Salute Zero Nine

ExCel, London, UK
Sat 28th March 2009
www.salute.co.uk

Dragonmeet Southwest

The Croft Sports Centre, Swindon,
Wiltshire, UK
Sun 19th April 2009
www.mongoosepublishing.com

Tentacles 2009

Castle Stahleck, Bacharach, Germany
Fri 28th May - Mon 1st June 2009
www.tentacles-convention.de

UK GAME EXPO 2009

The Clarendon Suites, Stirling Road,
Edgbaston, Birmingham, UK
Sat 6th - Sun 7th June 2009
www.ukgamesexpo.co.uk

AmberCon UK '09

Harben House, Newport Pagnell,
Buckinghamshire, UK
Fri 10th - Sun 12th July 2009
www.ambercon.org.uk

Yog-Sothoth.CON 2009

University of Bradford, Student's Union,
Bradford, UK
Fri 10th - Sun 12th July 2009
www.yog-sothoth.com

Constitution 2009

New Hall Cambridge, UK
Fri 31st July - Sun 2nd August 2009
www.constitution-con.org.uk

Gen Con UK 2009

University of Reading, Berkshire, UK
Wed 2nd - Sun 6th September 2009
www.horsemenevents.com

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

More events will be added to this list on a
monthly basis as they are confirmed



Press Play

DVD Reviews for Gamers

By Bryan Steele

Hello and happy New Year, your gift...another edition of *Press Play*, DVD reviews for gamers by a movie-loving game designer! This month we are looking at four drastically different movies; one childhood favourite, one that was a late night choice to satisfy an urge for *brains*, one that is amongst the most quotable in gamer-moviedom and finally a movie that made a man's career and showed that horror and sci-fi can still be married successfully after *Alien*.

Game playing or designing requires new and interesting ideas and movies often help me come up with mine. I hope that by looking at these DVD reviews you might find a few new ideas of your own!

The Press Play Gamer Rating System

1d4 – Not a DVD I enjoyed or recommend; definitely not a worthwhile rental.

1d6 – A rather negative experience with a few shining moments; rent it if you are bored.

1d8 – The average movie-watching event. Rent it, watch it, and buy if you like it...but probably do not buy it without watching it first.

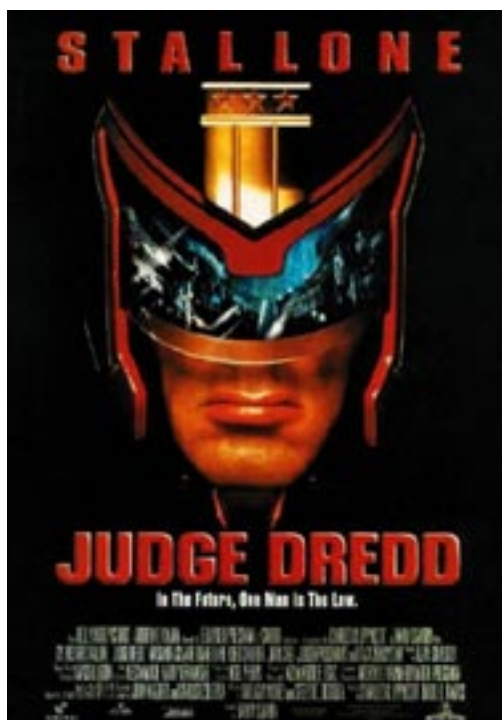
1d10 – I liked it and found it inspiring in some way for my gaming; an overall enjoyable experience. You should really go out and rent this DVD if you are fan of the genre.

1d20 – This was a great movie and I highly recommend it to anyone reading this column. You may as well go out and buy it, because I think you probably will after you see it anyway.

1d100 – Why are you still reading this? Go and get this movie!!!

Judge Dredd

Hollywood Pictures



While our *Gangs of Mega-City One* and *Judge Dredd RPG* are currently out of print, new futures for the license are on the horizon so I dug out this classic from 1995 and dropped it into the player – reminding myself how much I enjoyed this film. Sylvester Stallone gets a rough wrap for his portrayal of the Judge himself but I ask anyone to say they think of anyone else when they read the old comics and come across that stiff chin and *winning* personality. Stallone did not win any Oscars for his portrayal of Dredd – but I think he was perfect for the role.

The movie itself is based around a decent plotline about Judge Dredd being framed for a crime that he did not commit and being sent off into a prison system filled with his own judgments. The transport ship runs into some trouble and the real test for Dredd begins. The movie is peppered with unexpected appearances from the 2000 A.D. comics like the Angel Gang out in the Cursed Earth and one of the best animatronics enforcer robots of its time or any other – a real testament to the non-CGI special effects at the time.

While I'm a big fan of 'buddy movies' and 'plucky sidekicks' in many films, I did not care too much for Rob Schneider's 'Ferguson'. I like the presence of a wrongly judged individual but I think he became too much of a constant reminder that Dredd has no sense of humour – by repeatedly slathering on Schneider's. I see the need for a bit of lightness in the dark and



to think about looking into the movie, if only to see a good representation of a story-within-a-story-within-a-legend sort of thing. Who knows, I think the people that can think like a kid again might enjoy it.

Gamer Rating: 1d8



The Zombie Diaries

Bleeding Edge Films

Earlier this season, when we dropped the open release of *Apocalypse Z* for *Battlefield Evolution* I went on a zombie-movie marathon that included a variety of new straight-to-DVD movies. One that stood out as falling a little short of my expectations was *The Zombie Diaries*. It

might have had something to do with seeing a similar movie with a larger budget called *Diary of the Dead* but this movie tried its best. I will give it one real good strike – it tries to be ‘real’.

The movie is segmented into several different stories about a handful of different groups of people in Britain trying to survive the initial days of the zombie holocaust. The whole movie is shot through handi-cams, some more professional than others and the plot comes up with several reasons why these groups are filming everything. It comes off as rather happenstance but as the film is a kind of ‘documentary’ about how humans fall apart when a true crises takes place – which, by the way, zombies count as.

The movie moves rather slowly in places and too fast in others, for my tastes. There are a lot of really grainy nightvision shots that make it very hard to tell the zombies from the living people, which may very well be exactly what the director was looking for. Several of the protagonist groups overlap slightly as well, which made it hard for me to follow who exactly I was looking at any given time. Even with these cinematic issues that I had with it, the movie just seemed to fall flat on the terror aspect that I personally find in other zombie movies.

There is one really good moment in the movie with a half-crazed survivor that walks away from his fallen friends, literally walking into the next group’s segment. I will not spoil it the moment, which was one of the better shocks while I was watching.

As far as ‘get you into the zombie mood’ movies to go and play some *Apocalypse Z*, I would not necessarily choose this one to be the headliner of your zombie-fest. It can join the playlist somewhere in the middle for a decent

background, while the games are raging on. There are better zombie flicks out there that are also lower-budget projects, maybe grab those first before snagging up *The Zombie Diaries*.

Gamer Rating: 1d6



Pitch Black

Interscope Communications

Several members of my gaming group and I saw a strange movie poster appear in our local theatres back in the year 2000, something about a science fiction movie called *Pitch Black*. We went into the theatre without any idea what we were getting into...and we walked out completely addicted to a genre that had yet to even be fully

[illegible]

Gamer Rating: 1d100



TRAVELLER

The Legacy of War Episode 2: Dark Places

by Simon Beal



TRAVELLER

Episode Date: November 25th 2266

“You never know what you’re going find when you look over the edge of what’s known and into what’s not...”

Captain Maynard “A Distant Star”

News Reports

The players may catch the following news or Chen will mention it during the mission briefing:

“An IPX vessel has been reported missing. The Columbus was scouting out near the rim when all contact was lost two days ago. Concerns are mounting due to other reports of civilian vessels disappearing over the last month. A civilian search and rescue operation is underway.”

Background

Interplanetary Expeditions (IPX) have lost contact with one of their teams on Kandar III. The archeologists were investigating an ancient civilisation on this planet out near the rim.

The team has actually been taken captive by a group of Drakh. As a prelude to their attack on Earth, the Drakh want to find out more about their enemy. By monitoring how humans cope

with fear and paranoia, they can see how they embrace chaos.

The Drakh used some of their remaining Shadow agents to lure the scientists to Kandar III. They also know that a rescue team will eventually come. These are the real test subjects, trained soldiers who would give them a good indication of how humans would react when their world turns to chaos and their lives are ruled by fear.

IPX - Exploring the Past

After their infamous discovery on Ikarra VII in 2258 (as shown in the season 1 episode, “Infection”), IPX increased their search for organic technology. Due to the disaster on Babylon 5, every would-be treasure hunter was now bound for the Ikarran system, so they decided to look elsewhere.

Since the Shadow War, IPX realised there was a connection between the Ikarran & Shadow technology. If the Ikarrans were influenced by the Shadows, then perhaps their neighbours were too.

A little known secret is that IPX is actually a front for the Earthforce bio-weapons division and they have put the pressure on to obtain more alien technology. Over the last few years, several expeditions have been sent to Kandar III but it was only recently they finally hit pay dirt.

New Skill – Engineer (Organic)

Since organic technology plays a large and important role in this campaign, the Engineer (Organic) skill is required to repair and understand



organic technology. You may give skill levels to anyone who has had experience with organic technology as detailed in their background.

Mission Briefing

Chen will explain their first mission:

“One of our contacts, Martin Fisher, has some information that could prove useful to us. However, he is very paranoid and will not transmit the details, instead he insists we meet him on Zafran VIII where he will hand over the information for a fee.”

You are to go to Port City, where he has reserved a room in the Royal Port hotel under the name of Smith. He will make contact with you the following morning. You will need this.”

Chen hands the captain a data crystal.

“It is encrypted with two pass codes. My code is 34a26z22. He will ask for the crystal and you will both enter your codes to confirm who you are.

Once you have the information, examine it and follow it up if you can. This is your first real test so do what you think is best but consult with Carol before taking any action.”

Zafran VIII

From Babylon 5, it takes three days to reach the Zafran system via hyperspace. The jump gate is not far from the planet so once in real space the journey will take less than an hour.

Zafran VIII is a typical backwater world with a climate and atmosphere very similar to Earth. It is probably these similarities that drew humans here in 2190. The native technology is similar to

Earth's Oil Age but many other races have also settled here since the humans made contact with the indigenous population.

Port City

Port City has a variety of technologies and architecture, the most prominent ones being Human and Brakiri. Many other races frequent this place including Narn and Pak'ma'ra. Since humans and other races started to frequent Zafran VIII, Port City has become a hub for trade and commerce for the outer worlds.

The Royal Port Hotel

This fine establishment is owned by a Brakiri called Nakir. This has become a popular hotel and has made Nakir a very wealthy man.

Carol will give a sum of money to whoever meets Martin (150 credits for the room and 2000 for the information). Martin has only reserved a single room, so if more than one person books in it may arouse suspicion. Martin has a special arrangement with one of the people who work at the hotel, a young Human by the name of Chris Halloway.

Chris will inform Martin of their arrival and Martin will then observe them throughout the night to make sure they are alone and pose no threat. A Recon check (DM -2), will give the player a feeling that someone is watching them. They can investigate if they wish but this could scare Martin off.

Martin Fisher

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

Skills: Broker 0, Carouse 1, Computers 1, Deception 1, Gun Combat (Energy Pistol) 1, Investigate 0, Language (Brakiri) 1, Melee 1, Persuade 0, Recon 2, Social Sciences (Psychology) 1, Stealth 1

Information: Martin is a thin wiry man and wears glasses. His pale complexion indicates that he doesn't get out much. He actually seems quite a fragile being, both mentally and physically. He is a very nervous and paranoid man and constantly looks around and speaks very quietly, afraid that everyone is out to get him for the things he knows.

If all goes well, Martin will arrange a meeting in a private room in the hotel. Although he has been working with Chris for about six months, he will still sweep the room for bugs and monitoring equipment.

Martin will ask for the data crystal and will insert it into a pad. He will enter his code and ask the player to do the same. If it checks out, he will hand the crystal back and ask for the payment. Once he is given the 2000 credits, he will give the player another crystal with the information. He will not answer any questions; everything he knows is on the data crystal.

“I've encoded this crystal, the pass code is...”
He will write it down on a bit of paper and secretly show it to the player:
“theuniverseisaconspiracy”

After the player acknowledges the code, Martin will then screw up the paper and swallow it. Once the exchange has been made Martin will ask the player to leave and he will leave a few minutes after.



The Data Crystal

Once the players access the crystal, give them the handout for the Data Crystal Contents. This presents several opportunities for the party, which Carol will point out if necessary:

- It could be up to a week before the relief team get there, the Star Dancer can be there in two days.
- Can they convince some of the archeologists to join Ancient Wonders?
- They could investigate the site for technology.

Kandar III

It is a two day jump to get to the Kandar system from Zafran VIII. The jump gate is very close to Kandar III since the Shadows created it for the Kandarrans to attack the Ikarrans.

Preparation

If the players are organised, they should also find out about the planetary conditions and climate before they travel there. If they do enough digging (or they have the appropriate contacts or knowledge) they will discover the following rumours from Carouse and Computers checks (DM -1).

- Most of their cities remain intact.
- Their cities were few and scattered but are always found near water.
- It is believed that they were wiped out by the Ikarrans (the players will only discover this if they have very good contacts/sources and succeed their skill checks by at least 3).

Handout - Data Crystal

Contents

An IPX team has discovered an ancient site on Kandar III out near the Rim. The team have been there several months and have discovered the remains of an ancient civilisation. It is also believed that they may have found some Shadow technology.

Intelligence indicates that the team are having problems, many of them have fallen out with each other and several have openly spoken out against IPX, who are obviously keeping this under wraps. A relief team, including some soldiers, are due to be sent there in the next few days to resolve any issues and get things back on track.

The exact location of the site is unknown but attached are coordinates of their original search area which is in the southern continent.



Planetary Conditions

Kandar III is a dry planet with little water. Most of the surface is desert and therefore hot and dry, requiring frequent consumption of water. As with Earth, the polar regions are very cold. If they do not possess any protective clothing when visiting these regions, they will suffer the consequences as detailed on page 74 of the core rulebook.

History

The early Kandarran settlements were located near watering holes and oases but as the tribes grew in size, they had to move to larger water sources. This resulted in all of their major cities being developed around the few lakes that scattered the planet.

From their very beginnings, the Kandarrans were watched and manipulated by the Shadows. A thousand years ago, they made it to the stars. The Shadows built a jump gate for them and provided a target to attack, Ikarra VII.

The attack was doomed to failure, for not only were the Ikarrans more advanced; they were also favourites of the Shadows. The attack failed and the Kandarrans retreated but unknown to them they were carrying a lethal virus back to their home world. Their scientists searched relentlessly for a cure but the plague was too quick for them and within a year, the entire population was dead.

Archeologists

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

Skills: Comms 0, Computers 1, Diplomat 0, Investigate 1, Medic 0, Social Sciences (Archeology) 1, Social Sciences (Linguistics) 0, Space Sciences (Xenology) 0

Information: This template can be used for any of the archeologists encountered by the players. Add levels in Linguistics or Xenology depending on their experience and specialities.

Capital City

If they did some digging, then the players will know that most cities are located near the lakes. Since water is very rare on this planet, all they need to do is find the water with a Sensors check.

See next page for a detailed map.

The capital is the biggest city, situated west of the largest lake in the southern hemisphere. They will approach from either the North (if they first visited the canyons) or the East (if they come directly from the jump gate). If they circle the city to get an aerial view, they will see the obelisks and the burial ground.

Luckily, this region does not get much wind, so much of the city remains uncovered and in good condition. Some of it has begun to collapse with age but for the most part, the city is intact. Of course, there is a thick layer of sand and dust, especially toward the western side where the sand has blown in from the desert.

Even though the Kandarrans were an advanced civilisation, most of the buildings are built from white stone, shaped into sharp but elegant structures. Due to the constant heat, no glass was used on the windows but many used wooden shutters for privacy and security.

The use of traditional materials and architecture indicates that the Kandarrans held firmly to their traditions even after more advanced technologies

were available to them. They seemed to use technology only where necessary – to enhance, not replace.

The city was built up over centuries so there is no particular structure other than the city centre, which at some point was converted to house the landing pad. From here, many streets lead off in all directions.

The map shows the main roads of the city. The grey areas represent the built up areas which consist of numerous buildings with many smaller streets running through them, connecting the main roads. Due to the amount of streets and lack of structure, the city is almost maze like and if the players do not mark their routes they could get lost quite easily.

There are no signs of any ancient vehicles or spacecraft anywhere in the city and most buildings seem to be empty too, except for the odd chair or dinner plate. No doubt the city has been picked clean over the centuries by treasure hunters.

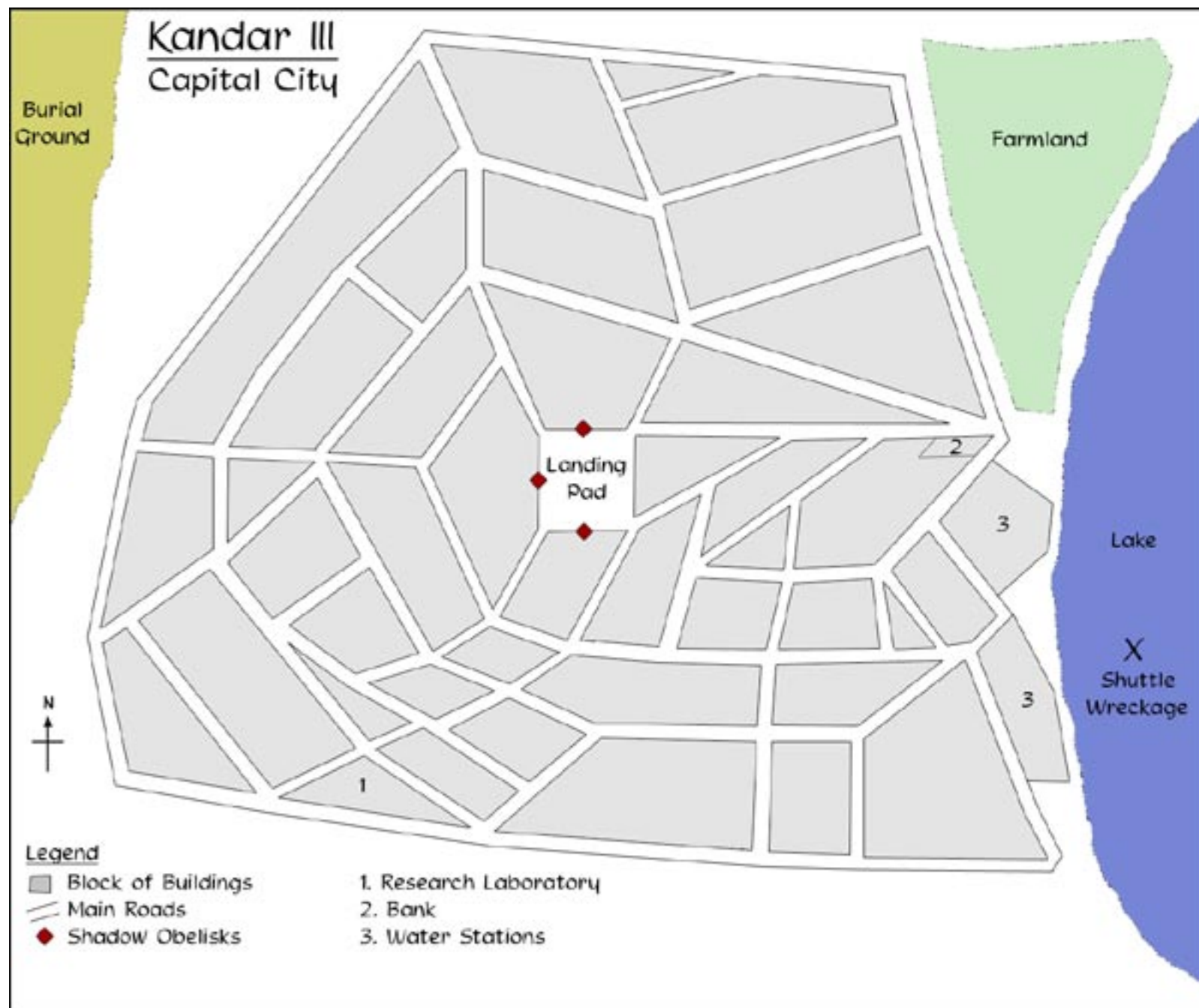
Landing Pad

There is a large landing area in the centre of the city large enough to fit several ships. It is obviously old and worn but still stable enough for the Star Dancer to land upon it.

As the crew step from the ship, they will immediately be hit by the dry heat and will want the first of many gulps of water. When they depart the ship, the party will also notice the obelisks towering into the skyline.

The city is like an old ghost town but there is no tumbleweed here. The stillness of the wind only adds to the feeling of a dead world.





If the party have their wits about them, they will search for signs of the IPX team. Upon inspection of the landing pad, they will see that the dirt has recently been disturbed but no sign of a ship can be seen. Lots of footprints will also be noticeable but since the IPX team were walking back and forth searching the area, it is too hard to determine which way they may have gone.

Shadow Obelisks

Placed around the edges of the landing pad are three ancient looking obelisks. These dark stone structures stand 60ft high and are in stark contrast to the white surrounding buildings. The obelisks have three sides, each decorated with glyphs in a repeating pattern.

The obelisks are controlled from the Drakh base. They play on people's fears and paranoia, turning them against each other. Anyone in the city will start to hear faint noises and whispers and they will see things out of the corner of their eyes.

Players must pass an Endurance check (DM - 2) every hour. Each time they fail, the effects of the obelisks become more pronounced and exert greater control over the characters' emotions. Since the characters do not know each other well, any trust they have will soon crumble away.

As the party start to succumb to mistrust and paranoia, they will accuse each other and eventually start fighting. The captain may begin to think they made a big mistake with the people they recruited.

To add to the players' paranoia, you can start giving some of them secret messages to sow the seeds of mistrust and fear. You can prepare these before the game and start handing them out as obelisks take effect. Some examples are listed here but feel free to get creative and add your own.

- Player X seems to be hiding something.
- Player X is acting suspiciously.
- Player X and player Y seem to be planning something.
- You hear something from the opposite street.
- You see someone run around a corner.
- You hear a noise behind you.
- You notice that player X's hand is never far from his/her weapon.

Once the players realise what is going on, they can overcome *some* of the effects by making an Intelligence check. However, it is unlikely that anyone will want to be left alone with another character and they will still be watching each other very carefully.

Deciphering the Glyphs

As they are studied, the obelisks exert more influence on whoever is attempting the translation. Anyone studying the glyphs gets a -4 penalty to their obelisk check. As the obelisks gain influence, the translator will almost "feel" the meaning rather than actually working it out.

Each obelisk contains one of the three principles of the Shadows:

- Evolution through bloodshed
- Chaos through warfare
- Perfection through victory

Water Stations

The water stations are two large networks of buildings and refining stations built next to the lake. The architecture here is a little more industrial than the rest of the city with a lot of metal being used for pipes and structures.

Due to their more robust structure, these stations have withstood the test of time much better than anywhere else and many of the buildings remain intact, although some of the taller structures have collapsed, making the area difficult to walk through.

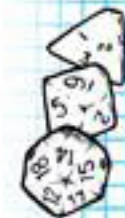
There is not much of interest here but if the players snoop around, a successful Investigate check will draw their attention to some wreckage that looks out of place amongst the other metal scattered around. This wreckage is part of the IPX shuttle, which they can use to find the shuttle wreckage below.

Shuttle Wreckage

If the party start to look in the vicinity, a successful Investigate check will reveal a trail of wreckage leading to the lake on the eastern side of the city. Some of the archeologists tried to escape in the shuttle but were shot down by the Drakh. The bulk of the shuttle crashed into the lake.

The wreckage is about 200m from the lake shore. It is not too deep so if the players do not have any breathing apparatus, they can hold their breath. Since the lake is shallow at that point, water pressure is not a problem.

The shuttle rests on its side and parts of the hull have ruptured, filling it with water. The party will



need to force open the door manually, or override the locks using Engineer (Electronics) (DM -2).

It is very dark inside the wreckage so lights will be required. There is very little of use inside the shuttle as most items have either been ruined by impact damage or water. However, there are two bodies in the shuttle. One has clearly drowned but the other is alive. The harness of her seat is stuck but luckily her head is in an air pocket. She is almost out of air so the party will need to get her out quickly before it is too late.

Emma Sullivan

Emma is an attractive young woman. She is also quite intelligent and good at reading people. She is fresh out of university and this is her first expedition.

Although she has been under the influence of the obelisks, her near-death experience in the shuttle has negated much of the effect on her. Also, since the players have saved her life she will be more trusting.

Once she has recovered from her ordeal, she will name the dead man as Jeff Fields and explain a little of what has happened:

“Shortly after landing here, everyone started to act strangely. After the first day, people started to get aggressive. Jeff and Gerry even started fighting each other until Professor Lomax split them up.

“We talked of leaving. Everyone was on edge, then... they came. They...”

She pauses to compose herself. Clearly it was quite traumatic.

“They led us away. As we rounded a corner, Jeff made a break for it. Without thinking, I followed him. We ran to the shuttle. Once inside we could hear them firing at us. He took off but I guess they must have hit us pretty bad.

It all happened so quickly but I remember the shuttle going down and a jolt as we hit the water. I think Jeff must have been knocked out from the impact. I tried to get up to see if he was OK but could not undo my harness. All I could do was sit here and watch him drown. I thought I would too until you got here.”

Emma will start to sob and will need some consoling. Once she has calmed down a bit she will answer any questions the players may have.

- Who are "they"?
"I don't know. I've never seen them before – some kind of alien. One looked a bit like a Drazi but the others were quite frightening."
- How many other ones were there?
"Two, I think."
- Do you know where they were heading?
"Not really no but it was toward the east side of the city."
- Have you found anything of interest here?
"Well there are the obelisks; I guess you've seen those? We also found some kind of research laboratory. We were all heading there when we were attacked. I can take you there if you like?"

Emma will remain with the players from now on and will most likely stick close to whoever rescued her. She will feel safe in their presence and will not want to leave their side.

Research Laboratory

The research laboratory is in the south western part of the city. If the players have rescued Emma, she can take them to the laboratory, otherwise finding it could be time consuming depending on which direction and route they search.

When they do find it, the only thing that will make it stand out are the skeletons near the doorway and inside the building. This is the only place where the dead have not been buried, for they were the last to die; searching for a cure right up until the end. There are several skeletons throughout the building, plus some on operating tables in isolated bays.

Hiding in the laboratory is the only other member of the IPX team who was not captured by the Drakh. James Hackett was the one who found the lab and was waiting for the others to return and saw the Drakh capture his colleagues. After hearing gunfire and the shuttle crash, he remained hidden, too terrified to venture outside.

James Hackett

Str: 7 (0), **Dex:** 7 (0), **End:** 7 (0), **Int:** 8 (0), **Edu:** 9 (+1), **Soc:** 8 (0), **Psi:** 5

Skills: Computers 1, Social Sciences (Psychology) 0, Space Sciences (Xenology) 1

Talents: Communication 1, Scanning 0, Sensing 1

Information: James has just turned 21 and is a small and skinny individual. He is a natural coward due to being bullied a lot as a child.

His paranoia has escalated further due to the effects of the obelisks and the fact he knows



there are some aliens out there who have taken the rest of his team and are most likely looking for him too.

When the players search the laboratory, James will make a run for it. Hopefully they won't kill him since he is the key to finding the Drakh base. Since he does not know who they are it will be a while before he will trust them but if Emma is with the players she can convince James that they are here to help.

Computer Terminals

There are several alien computer terminals in the building connected to a powerful server located in the basement. Getting the computers working and accessing the logs is a lengthy process so the party will be here for some time.

The computers are currently useless due to age and lack of power. A skilled technician can jury rig them by cannibalising parts from each one to make one working terminal which can access the server. This requires an Engineer (Electronics) check (DM -2) and will take $1D4 + 2$ hours to set up.

A sufficient power source is also required once a working machine has been assembled. This requires an Engineer (Electronics) check (DM -1) and will take $2D4 \times 10$ minutes to set up.

The players might suggest taking the computers with them and doing the work later. However, it would take longer to extract the server from the network than it would to do the work here.

When they have a working terminal, a Computers check (DM -2) must be made in order to access

the data. This will take $1D4$ hours to access but can be repeated if they fail. If they fail they can try again but it will obviously take longer and time is not on their side due to the obelisks and the imminent arrival of the rescue team.

Once they access the data, it can be copied to a data crystal for later translation. A full translation will require weeks of study but they can glean some basic information in a few days on their return journey.

Burial Ground

If the players head west out of the city, the western desert will come into view and they will see a sight that will probably sadden their hearts and be forever imprinted in their memories.

As they look out across the desert, it is littered with wooden sticks that have been stuck into the ground. Tens of thousands of them fill the desert sands as far as the eye can see. Upon closer inspection, the sticks in the immediate vicinity are made of wood; most of which are rotten or worn away but those in the distance are made of metal and are in much better condition.

Most of the sticks have the rotted remains of some kind of leather strap that has been tied at the top. A few will have what looks to be a leather pouch hanging from the strap.

Each stick marks the grave of a Kandarran (or in some cases a family of Kandarrans). These are victims of the plague that was brought back from their attack on Ikarra VII.

It was Kandarran custom, that when someone passed on, they were buried in the desert. A stick was then placed upright in the ground to mark their resting place. A leather canteen of water was tied to the stick to aid them in their journey to the other side. Although water was a rare commodity, this was done as a mark of respect for the deceased.

Although the stick was traditionally wooden (and treated so it did not rot), the amount of burials meant that many people had to use metal poles due to the lack of wood. Where several people have been buried under one stick, several canteens are usually attached.

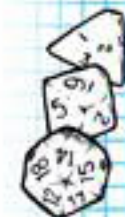
This mass burial site indicates that the Kandarrans had great respect for the dead, since even with the sheer amount of bodies, each one was given a proper burial as befits one of their race.

Checking the Bodies

If the bodies are exhumed and examined, no traces of the plague will remain. However, if several bodies are checked, it could be deduced that they all died from some type of infection since there is no evidence to support any kind of physical damage (the only other possible explanation would be natural causes but there are bodies of all ages so this is highly unlikely).

Analysing the Metal

A Physical Sciences (Chemistry) check (DM -1) will reveal that it does not match any known metal but is in fact a very tough and light alloy. Although similar alloys exist, the metal may be



of scientific interest if studied further. If given to Chen, he will pass it on to the right people. If the players keep it for themselves, they could earn a lot of money for this discovery as it would have numerous applications.

The Relief Team

The relief team will arrive six days after the players obtained the data crystal from Martin. The team consists of two archeologists and four soldiers. They will land near to the Star Dancer and, seeing a different vessel to the IPX ship (which should have been there); the soldiers will make a tactical sweep of the area beginning with the players' ship.

Some of the soldiers will get trigger happy once the obelisks start to affect them. They are trained warriors so the urge to fight is much stronger. The team is led by Sergeant Ben Hunter.

Earthforce Soldiers/Marines

Str: 10 (+1), **Dex:** 11 (+1), **End:** 12 (+2), **Int:** 7 (0), **Edu:** 8 (0), **Soc:** 8 (0)

Skills: Athletics (Co-ordination) 1, Drive 1, Gun Combat (Energy Pistol) 2, Gun Combat (Energy Rifle) 2, Heavy Weapons 1, Medic 0, Melee 1, Persuade 0, Recon 1, Stealth 0, Survival 0

Equipment: PPG or PPG Rifle, Knife, Flak Jacket, Flashlight.

New Traits –

Drakh Upgrades

Blast – The Drakh projects an energy blast from it's hand. The blast has a range of 30ft and deals 2d8 damage.

Mindeater – The Drakh is able to read the short term memories of a living creature by consuming it's brain. Only the last six hours can be accessed and the brain must be eaten while it is still fresh (or it has been preserved).



The Drakh Base

The Drakh leader of this operation is called Shar'Nar. He is accompanied by three Drakh soldiers who will protect him at all costs.

Shar'Nar

Str: 8 (0), **Dex:** 9 (+1), **End:** 8 (0), **Int:** 12 (+2),

Edu: 9 (+1), **Soc:** 10 (+1)

Skills: Computers 1, Gun Combat (Energy Pistol) 1, Investigate 2, Language (English) 0, Persuade 1, Pilot 1, Recon 1, Social Sciences (Psychology) 1, Space Sciences (Xenology) 0

Traits: Mindeater

Equipment: PPG

Drakh Soldiers

Str: 10 (+1), **Dex:** 12 (+2), **End:** 14 (+2), **Int:** 9 (+1), **Edu:** 8 (0), **Soc:** 7 (0)

Skills: Athletics (Co-ordination) 1, Gun Combat (Energy Pistol) 2, Melee 1, Recon 1, Stealth 1

Traits: Blast

Equipment: Flak jacket

The remaining scientists are either prisoners in the base, or lie dead in the base's laboratory. Those that

have died have had their brains eaten by Shar'Nar so he can absorb their knowledge to gain more understanding of human nature.

Finding The Base

The Drakh do not expect their base to be found and they clearly were not expecting a big fight. They had planned to let the soldiers kill each other due to their aggressive nature.

However, what the Drakh did not count on was that one of the archeologists would be a telepath. With the protection of the players, James will use his Locate Mind ability to find the archeologists. He will need to move around the city until he is close enough to locate them.

Eventually, on the east side of the city, he will detect Prof Lomax and Dr Boone. He senses that they are underground, so there must be an entrance somewhere nearby. An Investigate check (DM -2) will reveal some recent tracks leading to an old bank. If the players search the building (DM -2), they will notice that one of the walls has a secret doorway.

Behind the door is a vault which leads to the secret base. It requires an Engineer (Electronics) check (DM -2) to open. If the party spend too much time here, the Drakh will eventually notice their presence and make a surprise attack on the party.

Entering the Base

The base consists of a short tunnel that leads to a small cavern area. This then leads on to two further tunnels. Dim lights adorn the tunnel

walls every few metres. The tunnels do not appear to be natural and it is unclear if it is a recent or not but the Shadow obelisks would indicate that the Kandarrans were being watched just like so many others.

Ambush

The Drakh soldiers will be waiting for the players in the cavern where a fire fight will ensue. If the Drakh start to lose, they will flee down the right tunnel that leads to the launch bay and their flyer. They will not risk losing the data from their experiments, it is important and must be taken to their mother ship for analysis. If the players pursue, the soldiers will slow them down, allowing Shar'Nar to escape by himself. The shuttle will be long gone by the time the Star Dancer is launched.

Searching the Base

The right tunnel is quite long and leads to two sleeping quarters and the launch bay. The launch bay is actually located under the lake, which is why nobody was aware of their presence. The left tunnel leads to the laboratory and prison cells.

Laboratory

As the players enter the laboratory, they are greeted by a disturbing site. There are two operating tables, each occupied by a dead archeologist and lots of blood. Upon inspection, it would appear that a hole has been made in the skull with a surgical instrument on a nearby table. The brain then appears to have been sucked out (eaten by Shar'Nar).

A search of this laboratory will also reveal a data crystal containing some of Shar'Nar's personal notes. This is not data from his experiments as he has taken this with him.

Prison Cells

The prison holds the four remaining survivors, each locked in a separate cell. The cells are made from reinforced glass and are secured with electronic locks. Since the players do not have the access code, they will need to make an Engineer (Electronics) check (DM -2) or attempt to break the glass (which could injure the prisoners).

Prof Randall Lomax

Professor Lomax is a stereotypical archeologist. He is an elderly gentleman, kind and courteous but a little absent minded. When he discovers the secrets of IPX, he will refuse to believe them at first but when he thinks back over the last few years he will begin to see some truth in the accusations.

Dr Gillian Hobbs

Gillian refuses to believe the "rumours" about IPX and will continue to work for them. She is very loyal to IPX and was a big supporter of President Clarke during his administration. She does not like people speaking against authority.

Dr Gerry Boone

Gerry is not a particularly nice person. He is not well liked by his team but he is very good at what he does. People just tend put up with him and try to ignore him where possible. He can see some



truth in the IPX rumours but that does not bother him. For him it is all about the discovery; if people get hurt because of it, well it's not his problem.

Beth Rowley

Beth is trying to make her mark in the world and is hoping that this dig will be the one. Although she would do almost anything to reach her goal, she is something of a pacifist, so the thought of her great discoveries being used for weapons is enough to convert her to Chen's team.

The Journey

Home

If all has gone well, the players have hopefully rescued most of the IPX team and retrieved some very good information, items and maybe some Drakh technology and/or bodies. They are all probably feeling pretty pleased with themselves but this is about to change.

Analysing the Data

During their trip back, the players will most likely start deciphering and analysing any data they found.

Shar'Nar's Data Crystal

The players can attempt to translate the data (written in Drakh) with a Social Sciences (Linguistics) check (DM -3). If they succeed they will discover some of the details of the experiments. You can give the players some or all of this information at your discretion:

- The IPX team were "lured" here by agents within Earthforce.
- The obelisks affect the minds of the subjects so they can analyse the effects of fear and paranoia and can also assess whether they embrace chaos.
- Once the subjects have been observed, they are captured so Shar'Nar can feed on their brains.
- Consuming brains allows him to absorb their short term memories to gain further understanding of humans and their behaviour.

Kandar III Lab Data

Much of the data is corrupted due to the age of the computers it was stored on and it will take weeks to reconstruct and fully translate it but some basic information can be translated with a successful Social Sciences (Linguistics) check (DM -2). Most of the information seems to be medical data but the following details can be found:

- The Kandarrans were nurtured by the "Dark Ones" (Shadows).
- At their urging, they launched an attack on Ikarra VII in a neighbouring star system.
- The attack was short lived, very few vessels made it back and those that did brought a terrible plague back with them.
- The virus acted quickly and the death toll grew rapidly. They would barely finish burying the most recent victims, when more would fall prey to the disease.
- The scientists worked right until the very end searching for a cure but they were unsuccessful.

Talking to the

Archeologists

The players should also take this opportunity to talk to the IPX team to see who will join Ancient Wonders. Only three will agree to join Chen's employ – Professor Lomax, Beth Rowley and Emma Sullivan (whose main reason is due to the players saving her life). Those who do not join Chen are free to return to IPX.

James would like to stay with Ancient Wonders but he is a telepath and has to be careful what he does. Against his better judgement, will stay with IPX.

Dr Hobbs will not like the idea that the players will end up with all the data and items, when her team did most of the preliminary work. She will make a point that it all belongs to IPX who made claim to the site (and technically, she is correct). She will make a secret transmission to IPX, explaining the situation.

When IPX are contacted by Dr Hobbs, they will in turn contact Earthforce Biotech. A few remaining Shadow servants are still involved in the secret projects and on hearing mention of the Drakh (not by name but by description), they will immediately dispatch the Equinox so the Legacy Group can deal with the situation.

Note that these agents are the ones who allowed IPX to discover the ruins on Kandar III in order for the Drakh to perform their experiments. If Shar'Nar escapes (which he should do, unless the players were particularly clever), he will also send word of what happens, so either way the result is the same.



The Equinox

As the Star Dancer comes out of hyperspace at an appropriate jump point, they will be confronted by the Equinox, the Legacy Group's Hyperion heavy cruiser. They will be hailed by Captain Durall who will order them to stand down and prepare to be boarded.

Removing The Evidence

Seth Warner and a squad of marines will board the Star Dancer and the crew will be herded into the mess hall and guarded by four of the marines. The rest will then search the ship for any Drakh related items and remove them.

Seth Warner

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

Edu: 11 (+1), **Soc:** 12 (+2), **Psi:** 12

Skills: Computers 1, Diplomat 0, Gun Combat (Energy Pistol) 1, Persuade 2, Recon 2

Talents: Blocking 3, Communication 2, Scanning 3, Sensing 2

Information: Seth will play an important role during the course of the campaign. He was a loyal member of Psi Corp and a valued member of Shadow Science. He truly believes in what he is doing, some say he is a fanatic.

Seth is quite cunning and sees a potential use in the Star Dancer and its crew. He knows there is more going on than meets the eye. Although he

has to destroy evidence of the Drakh, he is also learning more about them.

Seth decides to keep an eye on the crew of the Star Dancer; they might make other useful finds and he would rather he knew about them. To this end several bugs and other tracking devices will be installed on the ship. Some are easy to find and some are very hard to find (DM 0 to -6).

Any Drakh-related information will be left for now. Seth will plant a virus in their computer systems and data crystals. The virus will lay dormant, allowing itself to be copied to as many systems as possible. Then, it will activate and remove any evidence of the Drakh and remove itself. This is to ensure any hidden or transmitted data also gets deleted, leaving no stone unturned.

Leaving the Star Dancer

Before he leaves, Seth will take the Captain to a different room and have a little talk with them. Basically he will intimidate the player, making it perfectly clear that they are in over their heads and they are powerless to do anything about it.

It will be made very clear that telling anyone about this encounter would end badly for the captain and their crew. Seth and his associates have people in high places so any mention of this would easily be brushed under the metaphorical rug.

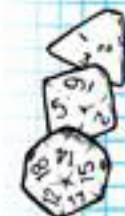
Ending the Episode

The episode ends when the Star Dancer docks at Babylon 5, leaving the players to contemplate the dark turn of events. Reporting to Chen and researching their data will take place in the next episode.

The players should now be genuinely scared that they have stepped into a whole world of trouble. They are very small fish in a very big pond!

Next Time in the Legacy of War

The players are introduced to Mr Garibaldi and a secret is revealed. The future of Ancient Wonders is uncertain as the players unravel a new mystery.



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Medic! Part 2

More Medical Matters in Traveller

By Alex Greene

Introduction

In Part 1, the cultural role of the physician in the *Traveller* universe was examined. Part 1 outlined the historical development of medicine through the technological levels, and looked at elective surgery, obstetrics and those complications which take *Traveller* medicine out of the realm of “cure light wounds.”

Part 2 brings further expansions to the repertoire of the physician in a *Traveller* game, in the form of new specialities, new tasks and new medical technology. The article also presents material for the Referee.

About Those Patrons

Last issue, medical Patrons were promised but never appeared. Apologies. At the last minute they were withdrawn because, in the light of the release of *760 Patrons*, it was felt that they could be given better treatment here. - AG

New and Tasks

New Specialities

The Medic skill, as described in *Traveller*, was presented without specialities. However, medicine is a field rife with specialities, and this article can only present a few of the major branches, the ones of greatest relevance to the player characters.

- Neurology: The study of the brain and nerve function. Required for specialist neurosurgeons.
- Cardiology: The study of the cardiovascular system (the heart and blood vessels). Required for specialist cardiologists.
- Psionology: The practice of psionic medicine; covers both the use of psionics in medicine and the practice of treating deterioration or injury of a patient's psionic talents and abilities and the study of things which affect them for good or ill.
- Epidemiology: The study of diseases and pathogens, and how they spread in a population.

Specialities

- Immunology: The study of the body's immune system, and how it fights off infections and pathogens.
- Pathology: The study of how the body's systems fail, and the causes of death. Coroners and medical examiners develop this speciality.
- Forensic Medicine: The practice of medicine as it relates to determining causes of wrongful or unlawful death, and the presentation of evidence in court.
- Triage: The practice of assessing the survivability of patients in battlefield situations or after disasters.
- Obstetrics: The practice of medicine concerning pregnancy, birth and the reproductive system.
- Cryomedicine: The operation of cryoberths, low berths and the administration of fast drug and other techniques of suspending animation.
- Cybernetics: The practice of implant medicine, usually found among medics whose crew relies on combat implants. Also covers nanomedicine, nanotherapy and nanotechnological augmentation procedures.
- Genetech: The practice of genetic medicine, including gene therapy and genetic augmentation procedures.
- Xenomedicine: The practice of medicine concerning alien species.

New Tasks

These tasks expand upon the repertoire of tasks from *Traveller*. The difficulty rating for some of the procedures varies with the technological level: see below.

Diagnose new disease or poison, Intelligence, 1-6 hours, Special. Identifies a disease.

Stabilise serious injury, Intelligence, 1-6 minutes, Average (+0) (Patient will no longer deteriorate, and is considered injured rather than seriously injured).

Remove foreign object, Education, 1-6 minutes, Routine (+2). Foreign object removed; healing improves by +2.

Implant cybernetic / genetic / nanotechnological augmentation, Education, 1-6 hours, Special.

Perform transplant surgery, Education, 1-6 hours, Special.

Perform cosmetic surgery, Education, 1-6 hours, Special. Alters patient's appearance or eliminates negative Social penalties due to appearance, e.g. battle scarring, tattoos.

Perform remote surgery, Education, 1-6 hours, Special. (Character performs surgery by text message or via a local internet, or by giving verbal instructions to another doctor over the

telephone or comm – the operation must be some distance from the calling physician).

Conduct autopsy, Education, 1-6 hours, Average (+0). Identify cause of death or study anatomy of decedent.

Antique and Advanced Medicine

In the previous article, the stages of medical development by technological level were outlined. Just as with other forms of technology, medical developments begin as groundbreaking procedures at these technological levels, become routine as technology improves and ultimately become simple procedures, usually replaced by more advanced therapies only just coming into being. Blood typing leads to transplant surgery,

ultimately being replaced by stem cell organ cloning and full organ tissue synthesis, for instance.

The difficulty of a medical task check depends on the difference between the local technological level and the technological level of the procedure being conducted.

For reference, the technological levels for certain procedures, drugs and equipment are listed below. These are the levels at which tasks involving these procedures and drugs are considered Average (+0) checks.

Local TL

– Procedure TL

TL – 3
first test tube baby
TL – 2
transplant
TL – 1
surgery
TL +0
battlefield triage
TL +1
transfusion
TL +2
baby
TL +3
aspirin

Procedure

Groundbreaking
Pioneering
Advanced
Average
Routine
Easy
Simple

Task Check

Formidable (-6)
Very Difficult (-4)
Difficult (-2)
Average (+0)
Routine (+2)
Easy (+4)
Simple (+6)

Example

Germ theory;
First heart
Open heart
Setting a bone;
Blood
Delivering a
Prescription of

Set a bone, deliver a baby	TL 2	TL 8 Medkit (p. 93, <i>Traveller</i>)	TL 8
Simple vaccination	TL 4	Remote surgery	TL 8
Surgery with anaesthetics	TL 5	Regenerate nerve tissues	TL 9
Blood typing	TL 5	Clone new organ from stem cells	TL 9
Truth Drug	TL 5	TL 10 Medkit	TL 10
Medicinal Drug	TL 5	Slow Drug	TL 10
Mass inoculation program	TL 6	Combat Drug	TL 10
Chemotherapy	TL 6	Cryoberth	TL 10
Eye and ear surgery	TL 6	Fast Drug	TL 10
Laser surgery	TL 7	Synthesise organ	TL 10
DNA typing	TL 7	Medicinal Slow	TL 11
Panacea Drug	TL 8	TL 12 Medkit	TL 12
Anti-Rad	TL 8	TL 14 Medkit	TL 14
Stim Drug	TL 8	NAS	TL 15
Transplant organ / bone marrow	TL 8	Bioscanner	TL 15

New Medical Technology and Techniques

Drugs and Medicines

Regeneration Drug (TL 9): Cheaper than Medicinal Slow, and available at an earlier Technological Level, Regeneration Drug (“Regen”) is a useful alternative. Regen accelerates the metabolism, but more slowly than Medicinal Slow and not requiring a Cryoberth. A resting patient (bed rest)’s natural healing rate (see p. 75, *Traveller*) is doubled. An active patient regains 1d6 + Endurance DM (if positive) per treatment, but all tasks are performed at a -2 DM from the pain. Frequently Regen is administered with a sedative to keep the patient quiet; given the intense pain that comes with treatment, the patient typically finds sleep welcoming. Cr 300 per dose.

Dermal Patches (TL 8): Dermal patches are perfect for slow release delivery of Medicinal

Drugs through the skin. Costs are per drug, except derms take one hour to take effect and last four times as long as pills or injections. TL 9 Slap Patches deliver a quicker dose; these are used to tranquillise patients quickly (1d6 + Endurance DM combat rounds).

Youth Serum (TL 8): A weakened form of a toxin such as Botox, delivered by facial injection, this drug paralyses the facial muscles, thus tautening the skin. Has no effect on aging or aging rolls; but does offset some negative reactions to aged appearance – eliminating a negative Social DM brought about by Social characteristic loss due to aging. Cr. 150 for a single shot lasting about 12 hours. Sometimes produces a mask-like appearance; on a failed Average Social check, the negative DM is actually doubled instead, and the character suffers 1d6 Dexterity damage.

Oxytocin (TL 8): An advanced form of Truth Drug, this undetectable liquid increases the bonds of trust between a subject and his

interrogator. The patient finds it harder to resist attempts at Carouse, Deception, Leadership and Persuade tasks performed against her (-2 DM). This drug lasts for one hour, and costs Cr. 100 per dose.

Fertility Drug (TL 7): Increases fertility. Patients are more likely to conceive through sexual activity. On an Endurance roll of 8+, a female patient undergoing treatment is more likely to conceive multiple births. Cr. 1,500 for a course.

Contraceptive Drug (TL 6): At TL 5, simple contraceptives become available. TL 6 is the first technological level at which they are available by prescription to the general public. Taking the form of a regime of pills, initially a female human takes one pill daily over the course of a single fertile cycle (period to period, typically about 28 days). At TL 8, a contraceptive patch is available, which has the same effect; at TL 9, a contraceptive implant becomes available which is a Routine task to inject, and lasts for six months between injections. Cr. 5 for a regime of pills; Cr. 10 for a patch; Cr. 50 for an implant.

New Medical Equipment

Biobed (TL 10): An open bench lined with a variety of sensors, onto which the patient lies. The biobed provides the equivalent readings of a TL 12 medkit. The TL 12 version has the equivalent of a TL 14 medkit. Not portable; usually found in a sickbay. The TL 10 version is immobile and bolted to the ground; the TL 12 version can be wheeled around like a trolley. A TL 14 version is a simple frame which is mounted around a bed; that is portable, weighing

the same as a TL 14 medkit but requiring 1-6 minutes to set up, and providing a bonus DM of +2 to uses of the Medic skill.

TL 10: Cr. 2,000.

TL 12: Cr. 8,000.

TL 14: Cr. 16,000.

Disintegrator Therapy (TL 16): This technical equipment is more advanced than the highest Technological Level of the Imperium, but is available as a bulky prototype as low as TL 14 where it first appears as a piece of immobile equipment the size of an ATV into which the patient is inserted. Scans and pinpoints foreign objects such as lodged bullets, pieces of broken-off melee weapons and tumours, and applies a field which suppresses the strong nuclear force. The targeted object sheds neutrons and disintegrates harmlessly in the body. The TL 14 version is immobile and costs Cr. 1,000,000; at TL 15, it weighs 100kg and can be wheeled around the patient. Cost Cr. 250,000. The TL 16 version is the size of a briefcase, weighs 10 kg and costs Cr. 50,000 on a TL 16 world.

Medical Nuclear Damper (TL 13): Eliminates radioactive particles in the patient's body. A single treatment by this device eliminates all accumulated rads in the patient's body. Patients may still require further treatment to restore any radiation damage to their systems. Usually carried into a disaster scene, at TL 13 the apparatus is the size of a shower cabinet. It is immobile when set up, weighs 50kg and costs Cr. 25,000. At TL 14, the mass is 25kg and the cost Cr. 12,500; at TL 15, the mass is 10kg and the cost Cr. 10,000.

Medical Robot (TL 14): A mobile, autonomous medical robot unit combining the best features of the Autodoc (p. 95, *Traveller*) with the mobility

of a Servitor robot ("Robots and Drones," p. 94, *Traveller*). Often purchased by rich, paranoid Nobles who prefer to trust a machine when it comes to medical treatments. As with Autodocs, medical robots are traditionally exempt from laws against robotics due to their utility.

Strength 7 (+0), Dexterity 9 (+1), Hull 2, Structure 2

Intelligence 9 (+1), Education 12 (+2), Social Standing 7 (+0)

Traits: Integrated System (TL 14 medkit), Specialised Computer/3 (running Intellect/1 and Medic/2)

Weapons: Surgical tools (Melee (scalpel), 1d6 damage)

Cost: Cr. 150,000

Antique Medtech

Surgical Equipment (TL 5): Old-fashioned scalpels, hypodermic syringes, forceps, separators, a bone saw, trepanning apparatus, needles and sutures. Low technology, unpowered and still capable of saving lives even at Technological Levels as high as 15. 10kg. Cr. 1,000.

Doctor's Bag (TL 4): Basic equipment to check the patient's condition. Includes thermometers to measure temperature, a sphygmomanometer to measure blood pressure and a selection of Medicinal Drugs of various kinds. Also includes bandages and other first aid apparatus. 8 kg. Cr. 1,000.

Autoclave (TL 5): Apparatus to sterilise surgical apparatus for a procedure by subjecting them to high temperatures. 10kg. Cr. 500.

First Aid Kit (TL 5): Apparatus specifically to

provide first aid on an injured patient, stabilising the patient and preparing her for transportation to hospital. Includes bandages, gloves and other apparatus, including a few doses of Medicinal Drugs. 5lg. Cr. 150.

Resuscitation Kit (TL 8): A portable defibrillator and vials of adrenalin to be injected directly into the heart. Comes with syringes and other supplies to bring patients who have suffered a severe injury crisis (see p. 37, *Traveller*) back to life. 15kg. Cr. 1,500.

Intensive Care Equipment (TL 4): Oxygen tents, traction frames and stirrups. +1 to long term medical care tasks. Cr. 2,000.

Dialysis (TL 6): Antique medical technology for patients whose kidneys have failed. Requires being hooked up to the machine for hours at a time. Initially the size of a large, immobile cabinet, they reach briefcase size by TL 8 before being phased out by efficient transplantation, organ cloning and tissue synthesis. Cr. 50,000.

X-Ray Machine (TL 5): Provides primitive internal examination of patients. Detects foreign objects, broken bones and tumours, and permits dental identification of corpses. Cr. 10,000. The machine weighs 20kg; the articulated frame is immobile. Someone subjected to this machine accumulates 1 rad per hour of continued exposure.

Ultrasound Scanner (TL 7): Using the sonar principle, the ultrasound scanner is primarily used in OB-GYN, or where X-rays are contraindicated (such as testicular scanning). A handset is placed against the abdomen of a pregnant patient, and the foetus is imaged on a screen. TL 8 provides full 3D imaging, computer-generated: at TL 9, the handset is wireless: at

TL 10, the display is holographic. Cr. 25,000. 20 kg.

Full Body Scanner (TL 7): From the earliest CAT Scanners to NMR and PET scans, full body scanners work the same way. The patient is immobilised on a trolley, and inserted into a machine which scans the patient, detecting tumours or abnormalities undetectable to X rays. At TL 8, 3D computer-generated imaging is feasible: at TL 10, imaging is holographic. Immobile. Cr. 100,000 to Cr. 500,000.

Anatomical Skeleton (TL 3): Usually mounted on a frame, the joints held together by wire, the anatomical skeleton is a useful guide to the human skeletal structure. At the lowest technological level, the skeleton is often that of a real deceased person. Cr. 500 (Cr. 250 as a prop from a theatrical shop). Where available, alien anatomical skeletons provide useful guides to the skeletal structure of alien sophonts (endoskeletal sophonts, that is). Cr. 1,500 to Cr. 50,000, depending on rarity of the specimen.

New Augmentations

The following are new cybernetic implants and augmentations, adding to the list of augmentations on pp. 89-90 of *Traveller*.

Memory Augmentation: By enhancing the brain's ability to process stored knowledge and learned experience, the character is able to make better use of his experiences. This augment enhances the character's Education characteristic in the same way as the Intelligence Augmentation implant (p. 89, *Traveller*). Apply the same TLs, characteristic increases and costs for Intelligence Augmentation to the character's Education characteristic instead.

Enhanced Hearing (TL 13): The character's ears are enhanced, giving her superlative balance (+1 to all Athletics tasks) and enhancing her ability to hear (+1 to all tasks using hearing) as well as the ability to pick up ultrasonic and infrasonic cues beyond the range of human hearing. Cr. 25,000.

Enhanced Kinaesthesia (TL 14): The character's senses of taste, smell, balance and touch are enhanced. The character makes task checks for the following skills as if her characteristic DM were doubled (positive only): Animals, Athletics, Deception, Investigate, Medic, Stealth, Survival. If her Dexterity DM is negative, this implant eliminates the modifier.

Biotechnology and Genetechnology

Technically these are just as much Augmentations as the cybernetic modifications above; but these Augmentations tend to operate on the genetic structure of the patient directly, and thus produce more far-reaching alterations.

Biotech and genetech therapies involve the creation of viral creches in the patient's thymus gland and bone marrow tissues, nanofactories producing modified T-cells in the bloodstream and lymphatic system which house tailored retroviruses. These retroviruses partially rewrite the patient's DNA, altering certain genetic, cellular and chromosomal structures which result in the desired outward phenotypical changes (the augmentation).

All of the augmentations listed in *Traveller* on pp. 89-90 and below are available through this kind of treatment. However, the most potent and most desired use of genetech and biotech augmentation is in the control of the processes

of aging.

Organ Regen (TL 9): Eradicates conditions such as diabetes or kidney or liver disease. Through cultivated stem cells, the patient is given a new kidney, liver or other organ to replace the failed organ. At TL 9, the organ is grown outside the body from the patient's own stem cells. At TL 11, genetically neutral organs are developed, which can be implanted into any recipient. At TL 14, the organ is grown inside the patient. Cost Cr. 50,000 – Cr. 150,000.

Restoration (TL 14): Restores damage brought about through a failed aging roll. The patient's age remains unchanged, and aging rolls are made as normal: but this therapy permits restoration of the patient's health and the eradication of the accumulated deterioration brought about by age once the aging roll has been made. Costs Cr. 100,000 plus Cr. 10,000 per term; a patient aged 46 (7 terms) will pay Cr. 170,000 for the procedure, rising to Cr. 180,000 when he reaches age 50 (8 terms). Typically as illegal as regular anagathics, but available more widely and at lower Technological Levels.

Rejuvenation (TL 15): Through intensive genetic therapy and immersion for more than a week in a tank of bubbling fluids connected to oxygen and life support, the patient's physiological age is reset back to age 18. aging rolls no longer apply to the patient until the fourth term after this procedure (physiological age 34) whereupon they begin again as normal for the patient. The patient cannot receive a further rejuvenation until he has once again reached the chronological age at which he received the first rejuvenation treatment: if the patient received his first rejuvenation at age 66 (11 terms) he cannot receive another rejuvenation treatment for a further 11 terms, resuming aging after 4

terms (physiological age 34, chronological age 100). The patient may not take anagathics during this time, though she may have Restoration therapy (above) to alleviate aging damage sustained with each aging roll. Cost Cr. 1,000,000 plus Cr. 100,000 per term; a patient receiving rejuvenation at age 38 (5 terms) will pay Cr. 1,500,000.

Aging Slow (TL 13): This course of drugs does not prevent the character from aging, nor from the ravages of aging rolls. What it does do, however, is slow it down to a crawl. Each year from the first that the character receives this treatment, the character ages one year for every four. At TL 14, this increases to one year for every 8; at TL 15, this is increased to one year for every ten. In effect, while the character ages, he only needs to make an aging roll once every 16 years at TL 13, 32 years at TL 14 or 40 years at TL 15. Neither rejuvenation nor restoration treatments are effective to a patient under the influence of this therapy. One year's supply of this treatment costs Cr. 12,000; the character resumes aging at the normal rate if the supply is interrupted for one month.

Nanotechnology

Nanotechnological developments allow for the creation of temporary augmentations. These have the effects of regular implants, but their effect is temporary; at the end of their course, the nanotechnological devices dissolve and are ejected from the body as harmless chemicals. Such augments leave a distinctive and visible pattern on the skin while they last, resembling a kind of tattoo of living silvery circuitry running just beneath the skin.

The following augments are available as temporary implants: Neural Comm, Physical Characteristic Augmentation, Intelligence Augmentation, Skill Augmentation, Enhanced Vision, Memory Augmentation (above), Enhanced Hearing (above), Enhanced Kinaesthesia (above), Psionic Shield (above), Psionic Strength Augmentation (above).

Temporary implants are available at 1 TL below the standard level for each augmentation listed – a temporary Neural Comm with a duration of 1 week, providing basic audio reception only, can be obtained at TL 11. Cost is 50% of the cost of a full implant, and the duration is one week: each extra week adds that amount again to the cost. The above audio only neural comm would cost Cr. 500, but one that lasts one month would cost Cr. 2,000.

Even shorter-term implantation is possible: a temporary augment lasting just one day costs as little as one fifth the listed cost. If the patient desires an augment which lasts for longer than four days, it is more cost effective to purchase a one week duration treatment instead.

Referee's Section

Not all Referees like the idea of running medical-themed scenarios. Stories of diseases, wounds and wandering about clad in blood-stained scrubs aren't to everyone's tastes.

However, some Referees might like the idea of setting challenges for medic characters. Perhaps a rich Patron approaches the medic looking for a supply of anagathics, or a plague might require an urgent delve through a trap-riddled Ancient base in search of a cure for a germ thought to be millennia dead.

One's crewmates are always urgently demanding the medic's attention: despite medical advice, most characters prefer the sort of lifestyle where getting shot at is very common, and frequently they have to be on call to patch up their friends, only to send them right back onto the battlefield again – or join them there.

Some ideas were offered in last issue's article. The following are some more challenges to present to a medic character.

Medicinal Slow ... And When To Say No

Most player characters rarely have to worry about injuries. One shot of Medicinal Slow (or Regen – see below) takes care of everything. But that reduces medic characters to mere dispensers of healing potions. Referees need to challenge physician characters – that means masks, bloodstained scrubs and arms sunk deep into gaping wounds.

The Referee is advised to think of circumstances in which Medicinal Slow cannot be used, requiring player characters to actually perform surgery (see p. 56 and 75, *Traveller*) on their patients. Some suggestions include:-

- The patient is allergic to Medicinal Slow; administering it would inflict 2d6 damage;
- No Cryoberth, low berth or other cryogenic facility (including Fast Drug) are available, or their power sources are unreliable and erratic;
- Medicinal Slow is unavailable anywhere, including the characters' own supplies, due to low Tech Level or too high a local Law Level;

- The wound is infected with a pathogen which thrives on the drug;
- A foreign object is lodged in the patient, requiring removal;
- The patient suffers a medical crisis (heart attack, stroke, aneurysm), requiring immediate stabilisation;
- The patient is a child, a pregnant female or infirm from natural old age, high blood pressure or diabetes;
- The patient has a congenital condition, and is too frail for the Cryoberth;
- The patient has been prescribed a drug which reacts with Medicinal Slow, or is under the influence of recreational substances or Psi drugs;
- The patient has a combat implant which interferes with Medicinal Slow;
- The patient has a religious objection (e.g. the drug may be made from a natural herb which the patient's religion considers taboo, or conversely the Medicinal Slow could be purely synthetic, and the patient's religion forbids treatment by any medicines not derived from Nature);
- The patient is an alien.

Xenomedicine

Much of these articles has involved humans practising medicine upon other humans. Traveller being a science fiction game, humans aren't the only species – so sooner or later, either an alien medic may have to treat a wounded human, or an alien requiring medical treatment may end up on a human surgeon's table.

Each alien species has its own cultural approaches to medicine. Human medics require a licence to

practise medicine, but some alien cultures may not. The Droyne, for instance, have a strict caste system – and a Droyne doctor might not have a license as such, as her career has been picked out for her at her Coyning (casting) ceremony.

Zhodani doctors, being mostly drawn from the ranks of the psionically-gifted Intendants and Nobles, don't rely so much on mechanical technology to scan for deep injuries, as they consider their Psionic abilities to be far superior to any Imperial scanner. Hivers do not have Maternity wards in their hospitals or OB-GYN specialists, due to the unique manner of Hiver reproduction; and the K'Kree prefer non-invasive surgery – whatever avoids breaking the skin and exposing the scent of spilled blood and meat.

A physician encountering an alien from a new species will find the alien's anatomy, physiology and psychology baffling. Regardless of the character's Medic skill, without the Xenomedicine speciality initial treatment of the alien species suffers the following drawbacks:

- The very first task check, whether it's an initial examination or first aid or medical care, will initially be a Formidable check for a *Groundbreaking* procedure;
- All task checks involving medical procedures on a member of this species suffer a -2 DM.

After each encounter with a member of the species, including the first, the character has a chance to learn from the encounter and eliminate the -2 DM. This requires a Very Difficult (-4)

Education check. Success means that the medic learns enough about the species encountered that he can treat further members of this species with confidence.

The Xenomedicine speciality benefits medics in two ways. Firstly, rather than a Groundbreaking procedure and a Formidable task, the initial task check is Difficult (-2) instead. Secondly, the Education check to learn from the encounter and eliminate the -2 DM is Average (+0).

Another way of learning about aliens is, sadly, to examine alien corpses – providing the aliens' culture permits such examination. Success with this task automatically eliminates the -2 DM. The task check, in this case, is:-

Perform alien autopsy, Education, 1-6 hours, Difficult (-2).

These limitations apply to humans treating aliens, to aliens treating humans, and to alien medics treating aliens of entirely different species. It is as hard for an Aslan surgeon attempting to treat their first Droyne patient as for a human attempting the same treatment on that same Droyne.

Diseases

On occasion, you may have to come up with an alien disease or pathogen. Perhaps the ship's crew come down with something while in Jump, or a plague is spreading across the planet they just landed on. The following tables can help you to generate a nasty bug to trouble your characters. These expand upon p. 73 of Traveller.

Signs & Portents

Nature: The type of pathogen.

Dice (2d6)	Type	Earth equivalent
2-3	Bacterial	plague, MRSA
4-6	Viral	influenza, the common cold
7	Retroviral	HIV (any kind of virus that rewrites the patient's DNA)
8	Fungal	thrush, athlete's foot
9	Parasite	malaria
10	Pollen	hay fever
11	Prion	CJD
12	Other	Nanotech; Psionic possessor entities from the movie <i>Ghosts of Mars</i>

Vector: How the pathogen travels from patient to patient.

Dice (2d6)	Vector
2-3	Airborne
4-5	Skin contact
6-7	Bloodborne
8-9	Waterborne
10	Animal vector
11	Genetic / Congenital (and thus cannot be transmitted except through heredity)
12	Psionic (e.g. Teleportation) or Other (e.g. infectious bite from a cadaver animated by a parasite)

Exposure: The DM applied to the character's Endurance check to shake off the disease.

Virulence	DM
0	-3
1-2	-2
3-5	-1
6-8	+0
9-11	+1
12-14	+2
15	+3

Damage: How much harm the pathogen causes each interval after exposure.

Virulence	Damage
0-2	1d6-6
3-4	1d6-4
5-6	1d6-2
7	1d6+0
8-9	1d6+2
10-11	1d6+4
12-14	1d6+6
15	1d6+8

Interval: The interval between Endurance checks.

Dice (1d6)	Interval
1-3	1d6 weeks
4-5	1d6 days
6	1d6 hours

You can modify the disease to affect a characteristic rather than Endurance. A disease that affects Strength causes muscle atrophy; a fungus that produces a neurotoxin that induces a tremor in the hands affects Dexterity. Education can be affected by a sickness that affects memory, and Psions dread the onset of Targea's Syndrome, which causes a progressive reduction of Psionic Strength at a rate of 1 point of Psionic Strength per month.

Patrons

The following are six Patrons with a medical theme. Three are Protagonists, and three Antagonists. These Patrons follow the same format as the Patrons in the supplement 760 Patrons.

Protagonists

Loyal Intern

Required Skills: None

Required Equipment: None

PLAYER'S INFORMATION

Motivated, helpful and skilled, this loyal intern is the character's understudy and a quick student of medicine.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The loyal intern is (roll a d6) ...

- 1: - a social networker who can procure drugs and medical technology at an advanced technological level and a good price, no questions asked.
- 2-4:- from the character's old neighbourhood, and a childhood friend.
- 5: - a relative of the character's old Mentor, who is indebted to the character for giving her daughter the practical medical experience she needs.
- 6: - a powerful Psion with a Talent for healing (treat as the Regeneration ability of Awareness, with a maximum Range of Close (range cost 0) and each Psionic Strength point healing a number of a patient's characteristic points lost equal to his Psionic Strength characteristic DM of +2).

Medical Ship's Captain

Required Skills: Medic

Required Equipment: None

PLAYER'S INFORMATION

This captain runs a Saint-class hospice ship (Traders and Gunboats, p. 52) who is taking on

shipboard medical staff. He is rich and bored, a former Noble, and his mission is to travel to Poor worlds in his sector to help communities who can't afford fancy and expensive medical treatments.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The medical ship's captain is (roll a d6) ...

- 1-2:- an eccentric ex-Noble who, true his word, wants to help others, even if his motivation is boredom at first. Perhaps the characters can inspire him to genuine empathy.
- 3-4:- a former rakehell who has turned to religion and wants to make amends for his past life.
- 5-6:- actually running a flying brothel. The characters are paid well, and get to do some work dispensing contraceptives and broad spectrum inoculations to the "nurses," but they are mostly only there to make the ship's mission seem legitimate to the authorities.

Medical Archaeologist

Required Skills: Medic, Science

Required Equipment: Ship

PLAYER'S INFORMATION

This doctor has heard a rumour that an Ancient site may lie on an alien world a few Jumps away. He needs the characters to take him to the rumoured site so he can see if it's there – and, if so, that the rumours of a piece of Ancient medical technology are true. He's generous with funds and equipment, and his evidence appears solid.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The Patron is (roll a d6) ...

- 1-2:- desperate to find a cure to a disease that is killing his wife, currently resting in a Cryoberth in the hospital.

- 3-4:- hoping that the discovery will be the break that assures his fame in medical circles.

- 5-6:- honest and earnest, but fears that he could be wrong in spite of all the evidence. The characters may be needed to prove him right. If they do, they gain a skilled and knowledgeable Medic as a staunch Ally with access to a collection of Ancient medical artefacts.

Antagonists

Drug Trial Victim

Required Skills: Investigate, Medic

Required Equipment: None

PLAYER'S INFORMATION

This unfortunate guinea pig was a participant in a drug trial which failed, leaving him looking monstrous. The only survivor of the trial, he claims that he is fleeing agents of the pharmaceutical company who have been sent to kill him to cover up their failure.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The Patron is (roll a d6) ...

- 1: - slowly dying from the effects of the non-infectious disease he was being treated for.
- 2: - a Typhoid Mary, carrying an infectious disease and immune to it.
- 3-4:- bitter with the company, a favoured Patron of the characters, and wants to expose their activities. If he does, the characters will no longer be able to count the company for work.
- 5-6:- a con artist who has run this scam before, and is looking to rip off the characters.

Advanced Tech

Physician

Required Skills: Streetwise

Required Equipment: Medicinal Drug, any medical technology

PLAYER'S INFORMATION

This arrogant physician comes from a world with a far higher Technological Level than the characters', and likes to rub the characters' noses in it at every opportunity, showing off his advanced technology and medicines at every turn.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The advanced tech physician is (roll a d6) ...

- 1-2:- secretly a heavy drug addict, hooked on the stims the characters' world is producing.
- 3-4:- a dreadful bore, and some nurses are planning on taking down this buffoon a peg or two. They need the characters' help to prescribe some sedatives and procure a couple of hookers.
- 5-6:- actually a worse medic than the characters, with a lower Medic skill. Without all his fancy tech toys he'd be little more than a glorified general practitioner.

Angel of Mercy

Required Skills: Investigate

Required Equipment: Forensic toolkit

PLAYER'S INFORMATION

Patients are dying in the hospital where the characters are currently working. This Angel of Mercy is killing them.

REFEREE'S INFORMATION

The Angel of Mercy is (roll a d6) ...

- 1-2:- a licensed euthanist offering a voluntary service from the hospital. She has a hard job to do, but her world's government and Law Level sanction her activities to those who wish to die with dignity.
- 3-4:- a religious freak killing patients he deems "unclean," such as women having abortions or people taking anagathics.
- 5-6:- a psychopath who has been killing people for years, and is on the verge of becoming a spree killer and cutting patients up at random in a bloody rampage.

Author's Afterword

From *Star Trek's* Dr McCoy, *Firefly's* Dr Simon Tam and *Babylon 5's* Dr Stephen Franklin, to the medics of *House* and the BBC's *Casualty*, physicians are portrayed as knowledgeable and skilled healers. *Traveller's* medics do everything regular characters do; but their mission is to restore what is broken, not to break or kill it. This poses a challenge to medics who are often the odd man out in a heavily armed, violent *Traveller* crew. But it's a rewarding challenge.

Even at the time of writing, new medical inventions and treatments are being invented in the real world. Medicine is one of the most dynamic fields of human endeavour, and while this article can't make you a doctor, I hope it inspires some of you to practice medicine for real, or at least to try approaching *Traveller* from a healer's perspective.

- Alex Greene

Body & Spirit

Hyrkanian Medicine and Religion

By Vincent N. Darlage

Hyrkanian Medicine

and Health

Medicine in Hyrkania is guided by superstition and spiritualism, although an excellent understanding of diet and herbalism makes up for their lack of medical sophistication. Health is a matter of living in harmony with the spirits in and of the world. Hygiene is always a priority for Hyrkanians, which helps them in matters of infection. The basic premise of Hyrkanian medicine is that inharmonious living causes most illnesses and appeasing the spirits can prevent or cure most ailments.

Diet

Hyrkanians consider breakfast and lunch to be important meals. Primarily they eat meat, milk, cheese, millet, rice and yogurt. Meat choices are varied, including fox, wolf, hare, mutton, wild ass, mountain sheep, oxen, horse, dog, goat, gazelle, camel and sausage freshly made from horse intestines. The Hyrkanians make bread biscuits cooked on hot stones and enjoy making a dish made with rice butter, sugar and raisins. Dumplings, often with meat, are widespread throughout Hyrkania, cooked in slightly different manners in each region.

Cooking is done over a fire or on hot stones that had been near the fire. Meat is either cooked on a hot stone or cooked in salted water. Hyrkanians

do not make sauces or gravies. Cooking fires are made with dried dung. Wood on the steppe is too scarce a material to use for burning.

Milk, from mares, cattle or goats, is boiled for the cream. The remaining milk is often made into cheese, curds, yogurt or liquor.

The most common beverage for the Hyrkanians is a salty milk tea. Hyrkanians sometimes add butter and flour if a soup-like tea is desired.

A Hyrkanian does not waste food. If a Hyrkanian cannot eat all of his meal, the remnants are placed in a square bag and stored for eating later. Even bones are not wasted. Marrow is sucked out of the bones and the bone itself is gnawed on for a substantial period of time. Only after the marrow is gone and the bone has been gnawed on appropriately is a bone given to a dog.

Meat is often dried and ground up. Known as 'bort,' this lightweight dried ground meat is easy to carry and can be cooked in water to create a soup.

Medicine

Hyrkanian medicine is primitive. The Hyrkanians have no physicians; each warrior is taught some rudimentary first-aid techniques to use on their fellow warriors in need. Most hordes of Hyrkanians have learned to travel with a Khitan

or Turanian physician in tow but this is not always possible. Although Hyrkanians do not have learned physicians, they do have shamans. Shamans, though, are only called for when the basic skills of the nomads and herbalists fail.

While shamans prefer to deal with the spiritual causes of illnesses, they know the physical symptoms must also be treated, so most shamans administer a herbal remedy as well as a spiritual healing, which is the true source of the problem. See *Conan: Hyboria's Fiercest* for a table of herbs a Hyrkanian shaman might use.

Ultimately, illness is caused either by angry ancestor spirits, sorcerers, devils or nature spirits according to the Hyrkanian shamans. Less powerful spirits (minor illnesses) can be cured by singing while waving a ritual fan over the sick person. The shaman will also make pulling or sucking gestures to draw the spirit out of the sick body. A shaman using this method may make a Heal check to cure the illness if the patient believes the shaman has the power to cure him (this may require a successful Perform check by the shaman against a Will save by the patient). Failure means the spirit is more powerful than the shaman initially thought.

A more powerful spirit or a spell from a sorcerer usually requires the shaman to go into a trance (see the Shamanic Ecstasy spell in *Conan: Faith & Fervour*) and battle the spirit or spell on a spiritual plane. Illnesses caused by demons or extremely

powerful nature spirits are the hardest to cure and usually require sacrifices by the shaman. The shaman will also use weapons or hot irons to scare the spirit away. The shaman may also try to blind the spirit with reflected light from a mirror. Often with these most powerful of spirits, the shaman uses idols made of felt to catch the exiting spirit so it does not possess another.

When a Hyrkanian falls sick, his family stabs a lance wrapped in black felt in front of his *ger*. Strangers to the sick warrior do not enter *gers* with the black lance planted in front other than a shaman and assistant. If the Hyrkanian is deemed to have a mortal wound or sickness, then everyone leaves to let the dying die in peace. Any who stay with the dying is not allowed to enter the camp of a Khan for at least nine months afterward. In these dire cases, a shaman may come and perform a soul retrieval. People die of sickness because either the *ami* or *suns* soul has left the body and entered the realm of Erlik Khan.

Hygiene

Hygiene is important to a Hyrkanian because filthiness is an insult to the Everlasting Sky but, as nomads, there are some obstacles to overcome. To wash, they fill their mouths with water and spit small amounts into their hands, which they then use to wet whatever part of their body they wish to wash; for example, they will run their wet hands in their hair to dampen it for washing.

Disease Descriptions

Diseases suffered by the Hyrkanians are not different from those suffered by humans anywhere, so the rules for diseases will not be reprinted here. This section describes common diseases suffered by horses, a serious concern for any Hyrkanian.

Diseases have various symptoms and are spread through a number of vectors. The characteristics of several typical diseases are summarized on *Hyrkanian Horse Diseases* and defined below. This chart uses modern names for diseases for the ease of our use – the Hyrkanians would not call the diseases by these names.

Disease: Diseases whose names are printed in *italic* in the table are supernatural in nature. The others are extraordinary.

Infection: The disease's method of delivery—ingested, inhaled, via injury, or contact. Keep in mind that some injury diseases may be transmitted by as small an injury as a flea bite and that most inhaled diseases can also be ingested (and vice versa).

DC: The Difficulty Class for the Fortitude saving throws to prevent infection (if the character has been infected), to prevent each instance of repeated damage and to recover from the disease.

Incubation Period: The time before damage begins.

Damage: The ability damage the character takes after incubation and each day afterward.

Cure: Use of this cure or cures by a healer gives the affected character a +1 bonus to his Fort save.

Hyrkanian Horse Diseases

Disease	Infection DC	Incubation	Damage
Brittle Hoof	Injury 18	1d2 weeks	Lameness
Rabies	Injury 22	1d8 weeks	Insane fury

Types of Diseases: Typical diseases include the following:

Brittle Hoof: Often caused from having the hoofs in water for extended periods of time followed

by a period of dryness, brittle hoof can split the hooves and cause lameness in a horse.

Rabies: Rabies are contracted through the bite of an infected animal, usually a dog. The disease ends with the death of the animal. An animal with rabies believes loud noises are the onset of an attack, so they become violent as they attempt to protect themselves. They bite and kick. They often break their jaws in their attacks, especially if they attack fences or mangers. Their attacks usually reopen the original bite, which they also attack with their bites. It will throw itself at the ground and typically breaks its limbs. Eventually the animal dies of internal bleeding.

Religion in Hyrkania

The Hyrkanians are not particularly passionate in their religious beliefs. Religion is a minor matter in the lives of the Hyrkanians and is mostly something they take for granted and give little thought toward. Their uncaring attitude toward religion leaves them fairly tolerant about varied belief systems; generally speaking, Hyrkanians do not bother to indulge themselves in religious persecution of others.

Basic Cosmology

The Hyrkanians believe everything in the universe is interdependent and interconnected circles within circles, built upon fundamental processes that appear in every aspect of the universe, large and small, visible and invisible. Everything is part of the universe, a micro-universe in an infinite series until the whole of the universe is captured as a whole. Thus, an open and wise mind can observe smaller facets of

the universe in order to arrive at greater truths. If the universe is comprised of interconnected microcosms that work with the same principles of the greater universe, then observation of one microcosm or phenomenon informs the observer about the rest of the microcosms. This leads the wise man to a fundamental truth – a person is a micro-version of the universe, wherein all parts are also interdependent and interconnected. Therefore, if a wise man understands himself, that man understands everything in the universe. ‘Know thyself’ is the ultimate truth of Hyrkanian religion.

This interconnected cosmos has multiple layers, all connected by some spire, be it a tree or mountain, just as the human body has multiple layers all connected by the spinal column. These layers are not stacked on top of each other but interconnect and lie throughout each other, sort of parallel worlds; they are spiritual worlds. People or spirits in the upper or lower spiritual layers cannot be seen by most people in the physical layer but their presence can be indicated by a sudden sparking of a fire, the barking of a dog at the unseen or other omens. Shamans are often able to see the spirits regardless of which realm they are in.

The Hyrkanians believe all things have a dominant spirit, especially things that have long been in the possession of living things. There are greater and lesser spirits just as there are greater and lesser people or horses. Each spirit has its own jurisdiction, an object, person, process or area in its charge. Other spirits have other spirits in their jurisdiction, just as a khan might have a tribe under his protection and guidance. This ultimately ends up with one ultimate spirit or force from which all comes from – but the Hyrkanians do not attempt to give this force any kind of human traits or foibles. This force is simply an all-pervading

reality. Unlike monotheistic religions, this force does not command people or demand anything from people, since people are just as much a part of it as rivers, mountains, stars or the sky. Through this force everything and everyone is connected and in their place. There are spirits of the upper worlds and spirits of the lower worlds and spirits of this world.

This belief in spirits is the reasons why Hyrkanians do not till the soil and never developed an agrarian culture. They believe digging into the soil and growing plants with the sole intention of harvesting them are attacks on nature. Attacking nature is a sure way to anger the spirits and bring down horrid luck upon themselves and the tribe.

The Hyrkanians observe that all the world around them serves a purpose, so they also believe the same is true of themselves – giving them a belief in personal destiny or fate, a purpose to exist in the universe. They also believe that destiny is created by the person, every single moment of every single day. Hyrkanians do believe in destiny but not as the Shemites believe. Destiny is not something handed to them by gods but something self-created, for are not the Hyrkanians spirits themselves and part of the ultimate reality? By taking responsibility for their own destinies, the Hyrkanians develop an intense faith in their own personal power. By cooperating with the spirits around them, they grow more powerful still, for a spirit ally will aid a friend, just as a physical ally will aid a friend. So long as a Hyrkanian’s actions are in harmony with the greater forces around that Hyrkanian, then the harmonies will extend throughout eternity and that Hyrkanian’s actions will effectively be endorsed by all the Heavens.

Everything in a Hyrkanian’s world-view is circular. The heavens are circular, the movement of the

sun is circular, the shape of the sun and moon are circular, the cycles of time are circular and lives are circular, as people live, die, are reborn to live and die again and again. Even their homes, the *gers*, are circular. Everything in the universe has direction as well. Hyrkanians are extremely nervous and uncomfortable if they cannot orient themselves in terms of the four cardinal directions. North, south, east and west are a matter of course to Hyrkanians; if they lose track of the directions, they are likely to become upset and frustrated, if not panicky.

Heaven and Hell

After death, the souls of humans pass into the lower world, where they dwell in cold and darkness. Shamans who have visited the lower world say the inhabitants are likewise cold and they have cold, black blood. The sun and the moon are dim here but otherwise it resembles the physical world, complete with forests, mountains and settlements. The souls living here even have their own shamans. Some of the inhabitants are waiting for reincarnation while others are permanent. The Great Khan of the lower worlds is Erlik and to him is given the authority of a khan over the souls in his realm. His is the decision to allow a soul to reincarnate and to which family the incarnation will be given. If a soul wanders into the lower realm before the physical body has died, shamans must still negotiate with Erlik Khan, for only he can give permission for the soul to return. The World River, a wild river with rapids, flows into the lower world and it is protected by a spirit named Hyrkandai Nagts. This spirit’s purpose is to stop souls from entering the lower world before physical death. Whirlpools, springs, caves and caverns also lead to the lower world. There is also place called Ela Guren where Erlik sends the worst

of the evil souls to be extinguished forever, never to reincarnate again.

The upper world is brightly lit by seven suns and its lands are unspoiled, a place where spirits always live in the traditional ways. The souls of humans do not go here after death, although shamans may visit. Its khan is Ulgen, a brother to Erlik. To reach the upper world, a shaman must learn to fly, transform themselves into birds, mount a flying animal, such as a reindeer, horse or goat, climb the Tree of the Universe, or ascend a rainbow. These are done in ecstatic states and are symbolised in the physical realm to give the shaman power in the spiritual; for example, if the shaman wants to climb the Tree of the Universe, he chooses an earthly tree to symbolise the Tree and climbs the physical tree in an ecstatic trance, which sends his spirit up the Tree of the Universe.

The Power of Spirit

The Hyrkanians believe spiritual connections are stronger than biological connections. For example, a man who swears a certain oath to his chief is considered more bound to his chief than if he were his chief's biological brother. As another example, a man who marries a woman with children from another man considers the children to be his, believing there is a pre-existing spiritual bond that brought the children to him. Hyrkanians also believe that blood-ties are brought about primarily because of the same spiritual ties. This belief is a precursor to the more codified Karmic beliefs of later civilisations.

A Multiplicity of Souls

The physical body requires more than one soul to animate it. Humans have at least three souls (shamans, for example, have four) and animals

have at least two souls. The three souls of humans are the *suld*, the *ami* and the *suns*. Shamans also have an *utha* soul. The *ami* and *suns* souls oscillate together around the spinal column in the pattern of a sine wave, speeding up as a person gets excited, whereas the *suld* soul rests atop the spinal column at the crown of the head. The various souls in Hyrkanian religion are defined in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Suld: The *suld* soul resides in the crown of the head and is a connection to the Everlasting Sky. This soul does not reincarnate but resides in nature after death, sometimes residing in an object or place closely associated with the Hyrkanian in life. Some reside in *ongon* idols or dolls after death. This soul is the most individual of the souls, living only once in a physical body. Animals do not have a *suld* soul.

Ami: The *ami* soul is a reincarnating soul that grants a body the ability to breath and move. Between incarnations, the *ami* exists as a bird. *Ami* souls usually reincarnate with relatives, maintaining a lineage. When the spirit of the womb, Umai, is ready to give a baby its breath, she sends a spirit horse, an *omisi morin*, to summon the needed *ami* and bring it to the womb where it can enter the body of the baby. Animals have an *ami* soul. The *ami* can be displaced from the body by sorcery or trauma and, if displaced, can cause illness. If an *ami* soul is displaced, it often takes a shaman to restore it to the body and put it in harmony with the *suns* soul. Necromancers animate the dead by summoning *ami* souls and putting them in corpses; this is a horrible crime, for while trapped in a corpse by a sorcerer, the *ami* soul cannot be summoned by Umai for reincarnation – and results in a stillbirth.

Suns: The *suns* soul is the repository of the collective experiences of the person and all of its past lives. It forms a large part of a person's personality. This soul, like the *ami*, reincarnates – unless Erlik Khan deems otherwise. It is the *suns* soul that travels to the lower worlds upon death and Erlik Khan is in charge of these souls. Erlik decides if the souls reincarnate and may even consign a *suns* soul to eternal oblivion by destroying it. The *suns* soul is the most likely to leave the body and, if it leaves, it sometimes becomes lost or confused – and sometimes unwittingly becomes trapped in the lower worlds, requiring a shaman to negotiate with Erlik Khan for its release. Ghosts are either visiting *suns* souls or *suns* souls that did not, could not or would not find the lower worlds upon the death of the physical body. The *suns* soul of a person who has lived an utterly outstanding life is allowed to live in the upper worlds (usually on clouds) after death as an *endur* spirit.

Utha: The *utha* soul is a spirit that attaches itself to a shaman and follows the shaman around as a fourth soul. The *utha* soul is a manifestation of Heaven's power. In game terms, the *utha* soul is what provides the shaman with Power Points (see the rules for sorcery in *Conan the Roleplaying Game*). The *utha* can be stored in the shaman's costume or in certain relics of power. The *utha* soul stays with certain lineages, so a shaman's power can be handed down from shaman to child during the child's initiation. The *utha* soul is the spirit that initiates new shamans, often during an illness or trauma. When not attached to a shaman, an *utha* spirit lives in the upper worlds as a shaman to the upper world inhabitants.

The Power of Words

The Hyrkanians believe words create reality if said with conviction. Melodies and songs carry words

of power and the drum is the primary instrument. They believe in astral projection and similar ideas about out-of-body experiences where the battles with hostile spirits occur. It is a dangerous occupation, for certain powerful objects can trap souls. The northern Hyrkanians believe the 'man in the moon' is a shaman who flew too close to the moon and became ensnared by it. The moon is analogous to the Land of the Dead for most of these Hyrkanians.

Fire is Sacred

Fire is a purifying force for the Hyrkanians and is sacred to the point that anyone who can control fire (such as a smith) is seen to have magical powers. Hyrkanians believe it is rude to stamp out a fire, put rubbish in it or douse it with water. A Hyrkanian may make a small sacrifice to the spirit world by throwing a piece of grease on the fire. The resulting spurt of intense flame and sound after the sacrifice reveals the resulting happiness of the spirit.

In the shamanistic society of the northern Hyrkanians, the blacksmith is considered more powerful than the shaman, for though the shaman can speak with spirits, the blacksmith commands fire and protected by fire. Often, the blacksmith is the older brother of the shaman. Still, the shaman is the more charismatic and must be, for he must be able to sway his tribe with the power of his performances to have any effect, using props and symbols as necessary.

Sacrifices to the Gods

Hyrkanians make live sacrifices is through the Pole-offering. Horses, humans or game meats are suspended living from poles and dedicated to the gods. Another sacrifice is made after a man's

marriage. In the first spring after marrying, a man must sacrifice a light coloured horse to the gods. The sacrifice is made in a birch thicket. The horse is treated with full respect. A red ribbon is tied to its mane and no woman may mount it. Women are not allowed to be present at the sacrifice. Women may eat the meat afterwards but only unmarried girls may partake of the feast at the sacrificial location after the ceremony is concluded. A married woman may not approach any closer than sixty feet.

When any animal is killed for a sacrifice, the head, throat, lungs and heart are always removed as one piece to avoid damaging the soul residing within. Collectively, the head, throat, lungs and heart are called the *zuld* and are believed to be the home of the *ami* and *suns* souls of the animal. After any sacrifice, the *zuld* and the animal's hide are hung on poles.

Animals are Sacred

Animals, because they have *ami* and *suns* souls, reincarnate and have personalities. Animals may reincarnate as humans and vice versa, so an animal is not seen as inferior to humans in any way. If a human behaves in an animal-like manner, then it is obvious to a Hyrkanian that the person was an animal in a prior life and if an animal betrays an almost human-like canniness, then the observing Hyrkanian will know the animal was once a person. Animals are also believed to have language and even psychic abilities. The tiger, the snow leopard and the bear are the most powerful animals the Hyrkanians know; these animals are often revered as honoured ancestors. Many tribes and clans take certain animals as their tribal totem or symbol. Eagles, bulls, reindeer, wolves, tigers, snow leopards and bears are among the most common totemic symbols. Other animals are

unlikely to be 'real.' Snakes, fox, spiders, pheasant and porcupines are believed to be soul-travelling shamans, so they are never hunted or eaten. Shamans call upon animal spirits for guidance and teaching.

The Nature of Death

Hyrkanians do not distinguish much between animate and inanimate, or even between living and dead, beyond physical differences. Spiritually, there is no difference – the difference is only in physical state. A dead man is still spiritually present, just as a tree is spiritually present. Thus Hyrkanians have little fear of death. Hyrkanians also believe in reincarnation. If a spirit wants to take physical form as a person, it becomes born as a person. No one speaks a dead man's name for three generations out of fear of the still living consciousness of the dead, for he probably will not have reincarnated yet. Hyrkanians believe they will live in a similar but different world than this after death, a world where their lifestyle remains essentially unchanged.

Burials

Funeral ceremonies are ritual attempts to reconcile the *suld* soul of the deceased with the local *gazriin ezen* spirits. Since the *suld* soul tends to occupy things in nature, the *gazriin ezen* spirits often take offence, so the ritual diplomatically handles the situation.

A Hyrkanian burial is of two forms, depending on the rank and esteem of the dead Hyrkanian. Lower ranking Hyrkanians are simply buried. A living slave is buried beneath the corpse. Before the slave can die, the slave is exhumed, resuscitated and re-buried. Three times the slave is exhumed.

If the slave survives, he is freed. Otherwise he is buried a fourth time and left there.

A high-ranking Hyrkanian is buried within his tent, usually in a place of his choosing. The corpse is buried in a sitting position in the centre of the tent. His table is in front of him with a bowl of meat and a jug of fermented mare's milk. A mare and her foal is buried in the tent along with the saddled stallion. This gives the newly dead soul something to eat and drink, a horse to ride, the beginnings of a new herd and a home, for everything in the physical world has a counterpart in the spiritual world. A horse is killed after the burial for a feast in the honour of the dead (although the dead person's name is never mentioned). The meat is eaten at the feast but its skin is stuffed in straw and raised on a pole over the grave.

Idols

The Hyrkanians make doll-like idols out of felt, stone and/or wood to represent the images of their household spirits; these idols are called *ongons*. As houses for ancestor spirits, these idols are set up on the sides of the tent-doors or other places of honour. Hyrkanians always offer these idols the first milk from their flocks. They are routinely given offerings of alcohol, blood or fat as well.

An important idol is an *ongon* made to honour the totem spirit of the tribe and is seen as a protector of *ger* and herd. Shamans have their own special *ongons*. They make temporary *ongons* to hold disease spirits and possessive devils. The spirits are released when the *ongons* are safely disposed of in the wilderness. Hyrkanian shamans also make a large set of *ongons* to house their special helper spirits. Other *ongons* are made by shamans and left with patients to help them heal and to protect their souls.

Other than temporary *ongons*, the idols are passed down from generation to generation. Destroying an *ongon* tends to anger the ancestor spirit whose home it is.

Shrines

The sites of Hyrkanian worship are cairns of stones with a single vertical pole sticking out of the center where prayers and sacrifices are performed. These piles of rock are known as *ovoos*. Sacrifices include leaving food or gifts to the spirits of the *ovoo*, including just adding another stone to the pile. A Hyrkanian visiting the *ovoo* (or even just passing by one) will circle an *ovoo* three times in a clockwise direction when leaving an offering in order to receive luck from the *ovoo* spirits (the Games Master may grant a Hyrkanian doing this a one time reroll during the game, or a +1 bonus to something, or allow one attack or skill check to automatically succeed instead of requiring the character to make a roll). The circling is symbolic of joining the cosmic procession of the stars and sun. Adding stones to the cairn is said to improve the spirit's overall power.

Each clan makes *ovoos* in their own peculiar way, often using them to mark the outer limits of a clan's territory. A person knowledgeable in *ovoos* may use them to determine whose land he is entering in the same manner that a noble might read another's heraldry.

In addition to *ovoos*, the Hyrkanians have prayer trees. A prayer tree is a shrine to nature spirits and becomes such after a shaman performs a certain ceremony around the tree to cleanse the nature spirits of the area of the after-effects of violence in the area. Prayer trees are said to promote harmony and calm in those passing by or living in their vicinity.

Fate Points & Luck

Hyrkanians believe strongly that they are individually responsible for one's actions and that each person has their own path. They also believe in blessings from the spirits for being in harmony with nature. This is reflected in Fate Points in *Conan the Roleplaying Game* and is called *buyanhishig*. Games Masters should feel free to penalise a Hyrkanian character for violating taboos, showing disrespect for spirits or ancestors, unhygienic behaviour (including general uncleanness) or by offending nature spirits by tilling the soil or killing animals for no purpose. Likewise, Games Masters may grant Fate Points or bonuses (as if circling an *ovoo*) if the Hyrkanian character is especially generous or if the character performs the *dallaga* ritual. The *dallaga* ritual is a ritual calling of the spirits of heaven by circling the hands in a clockwise motion while chanting the word 'hurai' over and over. If a Fate Point is too much, then grant a bonus similar to that earned by circling an *ovoo* (see the previous section).

Gods of Hyrkania

Hyrkanians do not worship gods as most men in the Hyborian age do. Hyrkanians worship the nature spirits of the world around them. They worship lakes, rivers, mountains, forests and, as the most powerful of nature spirits, the Everlasting Sky. Some greater spirits are given names, such as Erlik Khan, who is a greater spirit who the khan of the lower worlds.

The Everlasting Sky (Tngre Etseg): The Everlasting Sky, Father Heaven, is both timeless and endless. The Everlasting Sky is not seen as a person but simply as the blue sky. He has two children, Erlik and Ulgen. All Hyrkanian rituals begin with an invocation of the Everlasting Sky, the Mother Earth and the ancestors. The

Everlasting Sky is everywhere and sees everything, so he assigns fate based on the behaviour of his worshippers. Spells designed to influence the weather are always directly addressed to The Everlasting Sky. Mountains are emblems of his power.

Mother Earth (Gazar Itugan): Like the Everlasting Sky, the Mother Earth is not visualised as a person. Trees are emblems of her power. She is prayed to for fertility.

Erlik Khan: Erlik is the khan of the lower worlds and his is the power to command the *suns* souls who reach his realm. He is an evil spirit, the brother of Ulgen Khan. Erlik is a son of the Everlasting Sky. His colour is yellow and he is death personified. He has a strong sense of irony and humour. Although humans are supposed to reincarnate as humans, he often likes to force *suns* souls who have been particularly evil to reincarnate as monkeys. For those of a particularly vile nature, he sends them to Ela Guren, the region of the lower worlds where souls are annihilated. Erlik created the eagle and disease. His holy direction is to the east.

Ulgen Khan: Ulgen is the khan of the upper worlds and his is the power to command the upper spirits. He is a good spirit, the brother of Erlik Khan. He is the creator of man and the animals. His holy direction is to the west.

Usan Khan: Usan is the lord of water and his is the power to command the water spirits. His holy direction is to the south.

Tatai Khan: Tatai is the lord of violent weather and his is the power to command the weather spirits. He can summon tornados and lightning. His holy direction is to the north.

Umai: Umai is the daughter of Mother Earth and is the spirit of the womb. She is charged with power over *ami* souls, granting them to newborns. She sends spirit-horses to find the *ami* soul desired and bring it to the womb. If a sorcerer steals *ami* souls to animate dead things, then the child will be stillborn. Umai is prayed to when fertility is desired.

Golomto: Golomto is the daughter of Mother Earth and is the spirit of fire. She is summoned by flint and iron. She is a patron of blacksmiths. She is prayed to when matters of purity are of concern.

Spirits of Nature and Sky: There are more spirits in the world than can be discussed in a volume of this size. Some spirits are so powerful a shaman cannot master them, yet others are so easy to control that a novice has but to speak and they listen. Listed here are some of the more well-known spirits. The Games Master is free to create new ones for his campaigns.

- **Chotgor:** These are *suns* spirits of the deceased that become lost and did not find their way to Erlik Khan's dark realm – or found their way out of that bleak underworld due to accident or anger. These spirits bring with them death, disease and insanity.
- **Kut:** *Kut* spirits are similar to *chotgor* spirits but they were never incarnate, just troublesome.
- **Ozoor:** Ozoor spirits are the *suld* souls of deceased persons that roam freely through the wilderness and the natural world. Sometimes they pick a natural place to reside, such as a rock, tree or cave. They are relatively neutral to man but can be angered or pleased.
- **Ongon:** Ongon spirits are *suld* souls of deceased persons that reside in dolls and figures of the same name. They are helper spirits.

- **Utha:** The *suld* souls of shamans sometimes become spirits who hang about shamans of the same lineage, becoming a fourth soul. Some shamans classify the *utha* as a special type of *ongon* spirit, others give it its own category.
- **Burhan:** *Burhan* spirits are demons that cause illness and disease. *Burhan* spirits are extremely powerful, much more powerful than *chotgor* or *kut* spirits. Shamans cannot usually master a *burhan* spirit but require helper spirits if control is needed. Most of the time, shamans simply plead with a *burhan* to leave a person alone. Otherwise, the shaman must battle the *burhan* spirit and force it into the form of an *ongon* spirit, which leaves the spirit weak and more easily handled.
- **Gazriin Ezen:** The *gazriin ezen* spirits are the masters of nature, the spirits of the places on the earth. They are the spirits and voices of mountains, lakes, trees, rocks, buildings and settlements. They sometimes come into conflict with ancestor spirits who want to inhabit the natural things that belong to the *gazriin ezen*.

Requirements of Worship: Live in harmony with the spirits of all things.

Benefits of Worship: Atonement, Faith.

Requirements for Ordained Priesthood: Knowledge (religion) 6 ranks.

Benefits of Ordained Priesthood: Standard plus as follows: sorcery teaching available (Divinations and Nature magic only).

Typical Punishments for Disloyal Shamans: Cast out of the tribe or killed.

The Hyrkanian Shaman

The Hyrkanian shaman is a master of ecstasy and usually has a magical specialty, such as control over fire or health. The Hyrkanian shaman enters an ecstatic state and his soul is believed to leave the body and go into the spirit worlds. The Hyrkanian shaman has spirit helpers and can communicate with these spirits. However, unlike the ecstatic experiences of Black Coast natives, the Hyrkanian shamans retain control of their consciousness. Only on the rarest of occasions would a Hyrkanian shaman become possessed. Hyrkanian shamans have techniques for lucid dreaming and out-of-the-body experiences. They can work with dreams while being conscious and they can fly out-of-the-body so their souls can take journeys. Hyrkanian shamans take journeys into the nether realms, the Outer Dark, to higher levels of existence or even, some claim, to parallel physical worlds. Some can travel out-of-body to other parts of the world.

Most nomads who become shamans do so because they had a near-death-experience which honed their shamanic intuition. Others become shamans after being hit by lightning, taking a great fall or nearly dying from a horrible illness. Many report dreams after or during these experiences of their organs being consumed by spirits and replaced – and thus the old nomad is reborn a new man, a shaman. Regardless of the truth or fantasy of such dreams, the near-death experiences tend to give the nomad an increased ability to work with others, an understanding of what it means to die and what can be done to help people live. Most Hyrkanian shamans are men but women are not forbidden by any means.

Shamans are paid for their services by giving them anything they may need for the ceremony or healing, offering ceremonial scarves to honour the helper spirits and giving at least one gift the patient or the patient's family can afford.

Types of Shaman in Hyrkania

There are many varied types of shamans in Hyrkania, depending on where the tribe primarily lived because the shamanistic religion is invariably tied to ecology. Some are merely healers, others are skilled hunters and others exist to ward off evil spirits in efforts to stop plagues or kill witches and sorcerers. Many shamans deal primarily with the forces of the world, either the classic elements such as wind, or the animal kingdom such as wolves. Stories tell of shamans who could sit naked in the snow and melt ice with their body heat. Other shamans can turn into animals. Most Hyrkanian shamans, however, are concerned primarily with the continuation and reproduction of family and are associated with the cult of skies and mountains. Some specialised types of shaman are listed here.

- **Barishi:** A barishi is a bone-setter, although they also help with back pain and skin diseases. They are best at setting broken bones and repairing dislocated bones. They can go into a trance and use spirit-helpers but they do not learn to control spirits (they are not taught any spells that provide control over demons, ghosts or spirits). Barishi usually inherit their powers from their family lines.
- **Bariyachi:** A bariyachi is a female shaman who aids in birthing and birth rituals. The bariyachi is a Hyrkanian midwife. She draws on the spirit of the fox for her power. She deals both with the physical side of child

birth as well as the spiritual side. Bariyachi usually inherit their powers and learn their skills from their family lines.

- **Otachi:** The otachi are female shaman who heal through the power of the wind and tree spirits. They are powerful herbalists who specialise in child care and fertility, although they can also tend to physical ailments of most sorts. They are never buried in an earthen grave but their corpses are raised into trees or high on platforms. They are strong feminists. Otachi do not use drums; instead, they use colourful fans with silk strips. They wear animal hide skirts and wear a colourful hat.
- **Smiths:** The smith is a powerful shaman in Hyrkanian society for they control and dominate fire. Instead of drums, smiths use anvils. They create shaman equipment from metal and so rank higher than other shamans. In the shamanistic society of the northern Hyrkanians, the blacksmith is considered more powerful than the shaman, for though the shaman can speak with spirits, the blacksmith commands fire and protected by fire. Often, the blacksmith is the older brother of the more general shaman.
- **Shaman's Assistant:** Often a shaman in training, an assistant is invaluable to a shaman. They are charged with preparing the shaman's equipment, helping with the rituals and so on. Shaman assistants are often people who have a natural inclination toward spirituality but have not had the trauma or calling to be transformed into a shaman. They do not dress as shaman, although the shaman will often gift the assistant with a protective talisman of some sort.

Skills and Abilities of Hyrkanian

Shamans

Hyrkanian shamans are part of the nomadic tribe and are part of the cavalry and are also horse-archers. All Hyrkanian scholars will take the Mounted Combat and Mounted Archery feats. Feats improving their archery will almost certainly be taken, especially Far Shot, for which the Hyrkanian does not need to meet the prerequisites. Hyrkanians are well-reputed for being able to shoot things at incredible distances. For this reason, a Hyrkanian will often keep his Spot skill as high as possible. It is easier to shoot a thing at a distance if one can see that thing in the distance. A Hyrkanian shaman will usually keep his Ride and Survival skills maximised. A Hyrkanian will rarely walk as much as 20 paces if he can ride instead. He will often put at least 5 ranks in Handle Animal to earn the synergy bonus to Ride. He will usually teach his horses tricks. The shaman will also put ranks in Hide in order to attack from ambush at range. Moving silent is secondary to Hide, as the Hyrkanian scholar rarely gets up close to his prey and distance hides sound fairly well. Hyrkanian shamans will often have ranks in Craft (blacksmith) as well as in various Perform skills. Hyrkanian shamans should put their strongest statistic in Charisma. Shamans live and die by the effectiveness of their magic. A high magic attack bonus is better than more spell points. A high Charisma also adds to Perform bonuses, an important aspect of shamanistic life.

Shamans are expected to be able to heal the tribe, so ranks in Heal is a must. Self-Sufficient and Skill Focus (heal) are well-chosen feats for Hyrkanian shamans who specialise in healing. Those who focus on warding off evil spirits take the Counterspells sorcery style early in their careers. Others take the Weather Witching style

(presented in Conan: Pirate Isles) or the Nature Magic sorcery style.

Clothing and Accoutrements of Hyrkanian Shamans

Clothing: Shamans traditionally wear white clothing, usually inherited from previous shamans. Many Hyrkanian shamans believe metal on or about their body is essential. Some carry up to forty pounds of metal strips and bells sewn onto their clothing to represent feathers. Over the kaftan an apron of cotton strips in various colours is worn. Over the apron is worn a leather belt hung with mirrors because evil spirits fear mirrors and because the shamans believe a mirror reflects everything, including secret thoughts. These costumes are considered *ongons* and usually house the *utha* soul of the shaman. Shamans often wear helmets with horns but around Pathenia, they wear red silk headcloths instead of a helmet.

Wearing metal (weapons do not count) gives a shaman a +1 circumstance bonus per 10 lbs. (maximum +4) while in the spirit world to do whatever he needs to do (see the spell Shamanic Ecstasy in *Conan: Faith & Fervour*). It offers no bonus while in the 'real' world, only when the shaman is in a trance.

Dalbuur: *Dalbuur* are ritual fans used to drive out possessing or disease causing spirits from the sick. If used by a Hyrkanian shaman within 20 feet of a demon or other outsider, this fan forces the entity to make a Will save (vs. the shaman's magical attack roll) or flee.

Drums: Hyrkanian shamans prefer the kettle drum, which they believe makes a sound that frightens evil demons and drives them away. Another drum used by the Hyrkanian shamans is a small drum with a handle and rattles inside. The drumstick is an important part of a shaman's regalia. Some are carved with a horse's head on the end, some are carved to look like horse's hooves, some actually *are* horse's hooves. Others are just thin sticks covered in snake-skin with coloured ribbons dangling from the mouth of the snake. War drums are made from the skins of black bulls. A smith shaman uses an anvil instead of a drum.

Horses and Animals: Hyrkanian shamans traditionally ride white horses and, if they have a pet, only keep white animals for companions.

Khadgas: Khadgas are ceremonial scarves that honour the spirits of the shaman's equipment. They are often given to the shaman as payment for his or her services.

Masks: During the triennial ritual to honour all spirits and initiate new shamans, a mask called the aygaldai is worn; this mask is a copper mask of a bear. Other rituals may call for other masks and these are often unique to each clan or tribe.

Tngerii Us: *Tngerii us*, which means 'Heaven's hair,' are objects that are magical. There are three types of magic items to the Hyrkanian: objects that have been hit by lightning; meteorites; and ancient artefacts. Magical items are deemed to have their own *utha* spirit attached to them, giving them some of Heaven's power. If small enough, these items can be placed in milk or liquor to give the drink the spirit of the object temporarily, which can then be imbibed by the shaman so he can have this power.

Toli: The *toli* is a metallic circular mirror. The main one is worn over the chest, providing the shaman with armour to deflect a spirit attack. A *toli* gives a shaman a +1 circumstance bonus to any saves vs. spells or demonic attacks. The shaman can also use the *toli* to blind spirits and demons. The *toli* also focuses Heaven's power on the shaman, giving him a +1 bonus to power points. Shamans often have one or more additional *toli* to represent spiritual horses for use on spiritual journeys but the bonuses listed above do not stack. Some shaman try to attach as many *toli* as their benefits do not stack beyond the first.

Feats

Hyrkanians are relative newcomers to the Hyborian age but they bring with them ancient traditions dating back to the Lemurians who were their ancestors. This chapter details some unique feats for Hyrkanian characters for cultural flavour.

Aradai-emshe

(General)

You are trained as a folk healer, an herbalist of repute. You are not necessarily a shaman (although you could be) but you do know what you are doing with herbs.

Prerequisites: Craft (herbalism) 6+

Benefit: The synergy bonus to Heal for Craft (herbalism) ranks is +2 per 5 ranks of Craft (herbalism) if herbs are used in the healing process.

Barishi Training

(General)

You are trained as a *barishi* shaman and are skilled in setting broken or dislocated bones, as well as handling skin diseases.

Prerequisites: Hyrkanian Shaman; shaman ancestor

Benefit: The character gains a +4 competence bonus to Heal checks if the damage involves broken or dislocated bones.

Hyrkanian Shaman

(General)

You have been called as a shaman for a Hyrkanian nomad clan or tribe.

Prerequisites: Hyrkanian; must have experienced Left for Dead or faced some other trauma sufficient for shamanhood (as determined by the Games Master; usually the trauma must necessitate a Fate Point to survive or a horribly unlikely series of die rolls)

Benefit: The character gains a +2 bonus on all Craft (herbalism) and Heal checks. The character can cast Shamanic Ecstasy (from *Conan: Faith & Fervour*) regardless of Sorcery Style taken (if the character does not already have Power Points, the character gains enough to cast the spell once). The character is given all the necessary equipment needed for a shaman (see page XX) when the feat is first taken; equipment lost subsequently is not automatically regained. You are an ordained shaman and this feat otherwise functions as the Priest feat found in *Conan the Roleplaying Game*.

Special: This feat satisfies any prerequisite calling for the Priest feat.

Otachi Training

(General)

You have been called as an *otachi* shaman. You are a skilled herbalist, specialised in the care of children and pregnant women.

Prerequisites: Hyrkanian Shaman; Aradai-emshe; female; shaman ancestor

Benefit: The character gains a +2 competence bonus to Craft (herbalism) and Heal checks; this benefit is doubled if the patient is a child or a pregnant woman.

Powerful Utha Soul

(Sorcerous)

All Hyrkanian shamans have an *utha* soul, for this is what gives them power points and training; however, your *utha* soul is particularly powerful.

Prerequisites: Shaman costume; Hyrkanian Shaman

Benefit: The character gains +1 power point every four character levels possessed by the character, regardless of class.

Special: The *utha* soul is contained in the shaman's costume as an *ongon* spirit. If the costume is destroyed or lost, the *utha* spirit must be sought for and given a new home. The benefits of the feat are lost for the duration of this loss.

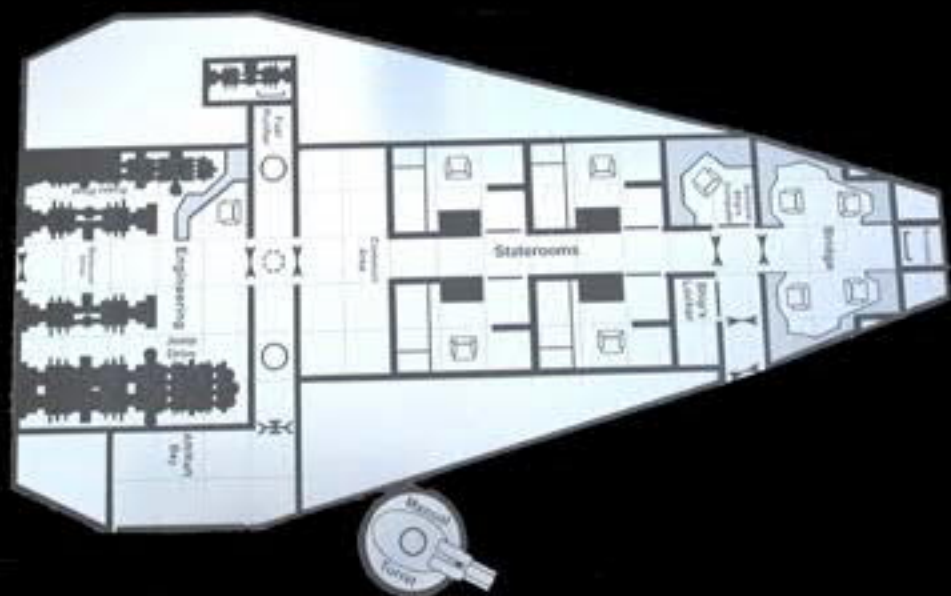


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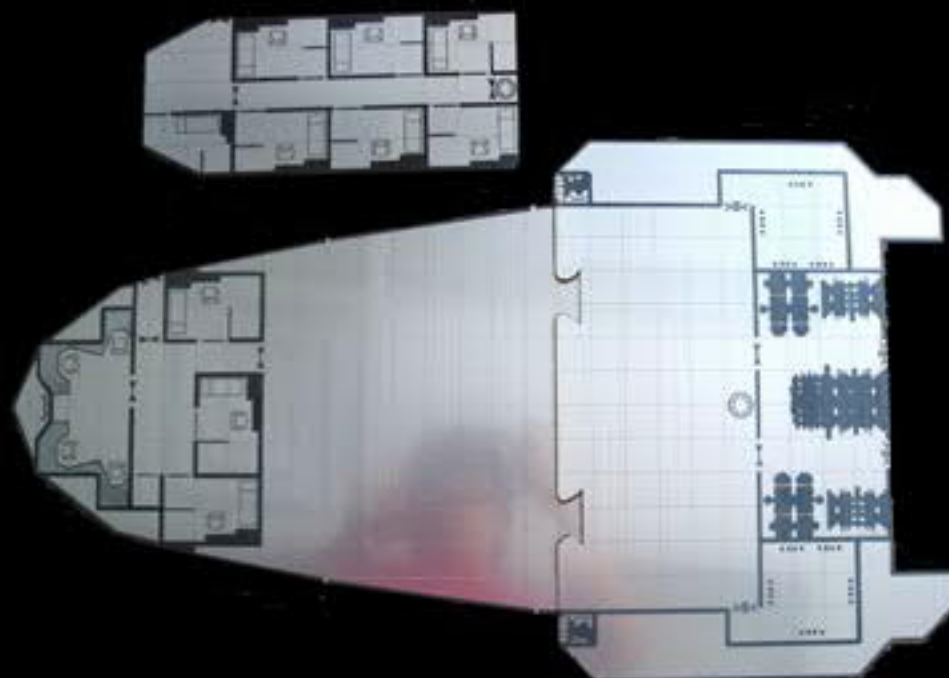
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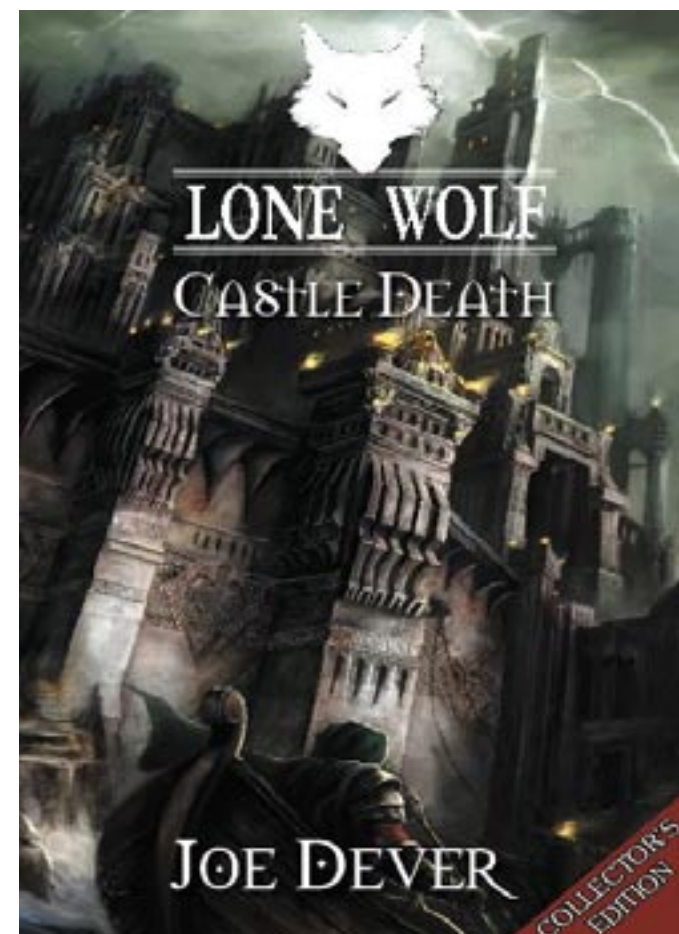
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Dragonmeet 2008

By Katrina Hepburn & Sandrine Thirache

Despite the title of the convention we didn't actually meet any dragons.

We will not mention anything about our Mongoose Matt almost setting fire to his seminar speech and let's not mention anything about baby vomit either. I would hate to incriminate myself.



Gladiators... ready!

The trade hall was bursting with life, Mongoose naturally taking centre stage and was literally the first stall directly in front of the entrance. You couldn't miss it if you tried!

Among the stalls at the convention were other big names in the roleplaying games business: Cubicle Seven (we actually managed to grab Angus for a photograph at his stall, a very very rare opportunity indeed!), Leisure Games, the Traveller stand which specialises in all of the classic traveller

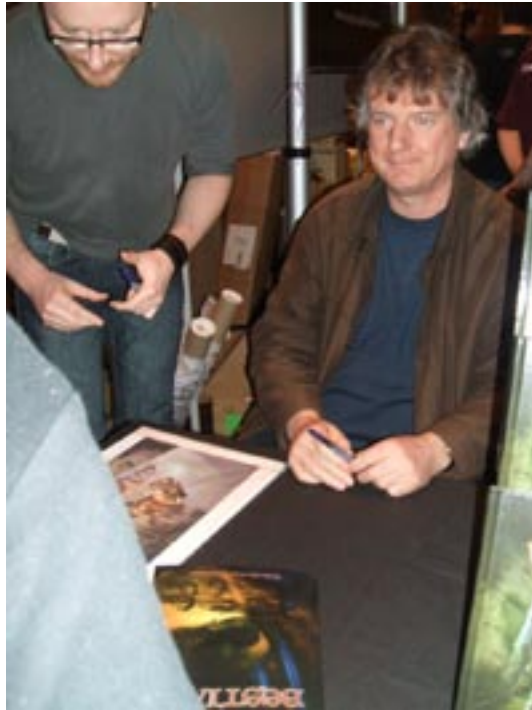


Cubicle Seven... ready!

books and memorabilia, Tablescape specialising in all of your tabletop gaming scenery and of course Pagan Angel with all of their wonderful jewellery, T-shirts and gaming goodies, including pendants and key



... Let the gaming begin!



John Hodgson was a real hit with his fans

rings made to hold your lucky dice. But of course the dominant feature absorbed the majority of space, the gaming!

Wall to wall roleplaying and tabletop games including a mega-sized version of Settlers of Catan, Formula D, which is a game based around formula racing in which the aim of the game is to get around the track before anyone else while trying to keep your car “on the track” (and yes I trashed my car on the second bend), Call of Cthulhu, Traveller, Dragon Warriors, Advanced Dungeons & Dragons, Tales of Adventure by Triple Ace Games, which is a wonderfully immersive yet easy game to pick up and play, set in a pulp style background (think Indiana Jones meets Tomb Raider), and there was even some STAR WARS! yay!

After initial set up of the Mongoose trade stand we both couldn't wait to get our claws into the shopping, there was so much to see and buy that we couldn't help ourselves. As far as we were concerned the gaming could wait a little until we had some new stuff, it didn't matter what kind of new stuff... just as long as we had some stuff and it was new. A couple



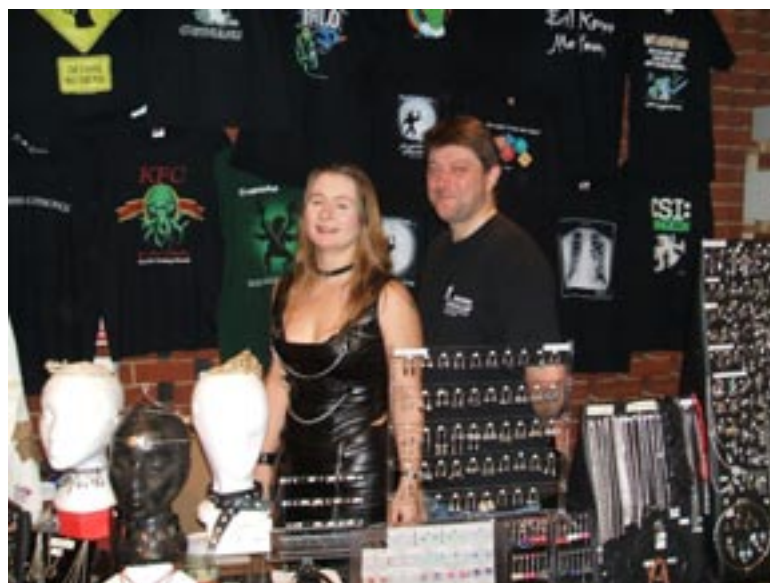
Nick thrives under pressure

hours later (there was so much to see and buy it literally took that long to go around and have a decent look at all the goodies on sale) we then turned our talons to the gaming, starting off with Formula D. This game is



Kat and Nimrod bask in the glory of the Mongoose stand

a tabletop bundle of fun, even if car racing isn't your "thing" this is still a good laugh to play. Your cars begin at the start line and you have a kind of "gear box" in front of you. The number of the gear you are in determines the dice you roll for movement, Gear 1 being a d4, gear 2 being a d6 and so on up to gear 6 which is a stupidly high dice and which none of us managed to use. At every corner there is a zone which your car must end its turn in, failing to stop in these designated areas gives your car damage and when your car is reduced to 0 Health, it careens into the side of the track. Needless to say, my car didn't survive the second corner. Not my fault, honest.



Pagan Angel

Another game definitely worth the mention was Tales of Adventure set in Savage worlds by a company called Triple Ace Games. This game is very groovy, setting the scene in an old Egyptian tomb where a damsel in distress had been kidnapped and chained up to be ritually sacrificed. Enter the intrepid heroes - myself, Sandrine and some guy we both didn't know who had hair like Bob Marley. Sandrine took on the role of an Indiana Jones style character, except with a Tommy gun. I had taken on the role of a sexy 1920's style female investigator (think old gangster movies where the woman shows leg and a garter holding a magnum) and of course "Bob" with a character similar to some kind of mad

scientist. Of course it was at that point in the adventure that everything went completely loopy. Sandrine let loose on anything that moved with her Tommy gun which involved hosts of cultists and mummy-like creatures being ploughed down in a rain of bullets; Myself taunting anything that moved so the Game Master could barely get any decent roles on the dice for all the bad guys; and "Bob" activating his mad scientist's rocket pack to zoom in and grab the damsel in distress (chains and all) and flying off into the sunset. Needless to say the Game Master was completely bewildered because it had all happened quicker than he had ever expected and his confidence was completely crushed because nobody that day had managed to beat him. All in all (including the gloating) it was a smashingly fun game and definitely worth a try if ever you spot it on the shelves of your local gaming store.

A plethora of artists including David Griffith and Ralf Hoarsley were also at the convention signing artworks and Dragon Warriors books were being signed by the lead artist Jon Hogdon at the Mongoose stand.

Lots of faces both old and new (including our friend Nimrod who was helping out with the Cubicle Seven stand) along with an impressive amount of shopping and a multitude of gaming made Dragonmeet a brilliantly unique, diverse, fun and immersive place to be.



Gaming for the masses!



Betrayal at Desolate Mountain

By Carl Walmsley

Beneath the jagged slopes of Mount Desolate are the remains of an ancient prison. Abandoned by a long forgotten people, this gaol has become a haven for renegades and foul beasts. Drawn by tales of lost treasure and magical items, the site also serves as a beacon for adventurers and treasure hunters. When the PCs become involved in a rescue mission, how will they fare in the treacherous tunnels of this former prison?

This scenario is designed for use with the new edition of *Dragon Warriors* and will serve especially well as a way for characters to begin their adventuring careers.

With a little work, it could also be modified for use with *RuneQuest* or any other fantasy system.

A New Power

Douring Gaol was officially abandoned centuries ago. According to some legends, there was an uprising during which the inmates claimed the prison for themselves. The sturdy doors, hidden traps and formidable defences were just as well-suited to keeping people out as they were to keeping prisoners in.

For many generations, those living outside the law sought sanctuary within Douring – swearing allegiance to one of the bandit tribes that dwelt there or simply finding a place to lie low. From time to time adventurers would pit themselves against the denizens of Douring and the ancient tunnels have played host to numerous such confrontations.

A few months ago, a new leader arose within the ranks of the brigands that call Douring home. Unlike his wild and bloodthirsty comrades, Gulruin is a man of vision – a man around whom the tribes have united. More than this, he is an accomplished sorcerer. Under Gulruin's guidance, Douring has become more than just a monster-infested ruin: it is now a well-organised stronghold. In a few month's time, under Gulruin's banner, the bandit's plan to venture forth and begin carving out a kingdom of their own.

Hearing rumours of a new power rising in the mountain, a band of experienced adventurers set out to investigate. Unfortunately, the over-confident heroes fell into a carefully laid trap and all but one of their number was captured by Gulruin and his men. The lone escapee – a knight named Ser Pailor – remained hidden within the tunnels for two days. During this time, he captured one of Gulruin's men and had him deliver an offer – another group of adventurers to serve as slaves in the bandit's fighting ring – in exchange for the release of Ser Pailor's companions. Ser Pailor ambushed another bandit and learned that his proposal had been accepted – but that he had only two weeks to deliver upon his promise.

With time ticking away Ser Pailor arrives in the PC's village, apparently in search of aid...

The Adventuring Begins

The beginning of the adventure will work best if the PCs are all gathered together in the small village of Renselmead in Cornumbria (*Dragon Warriors*, page 151). The village is a few days travel from the Pagan Mountains to the north and Mount Desolate lies at the southern edge of this range.

It may be that the PCs grew up in Renselmead, or that they have travelled there looking for adventure. Whichever is the case, they will not have long to wait. When you are ready to begin the adventure, read or paraphrase the following:

A grizzled looking man with a bandaged arm and bloodied brow struggles into town, drawing curious glances from the locals. He wears a suit of battered mail and has a variety of weapons slung about his person.

Dropping onto a bench outside the village tavern, where you yourselves are currently eating lunch, the man orders and drains a large mug of ale. In a voice that seems hewn from granite and to no one in particular, he then asks "Where am I?"



The newcomer is Ser Pailor. He is every inch the grizzled knight veteran – his leathery skin criss-crossed with old scars – and he will draw plenty of attention from the locals. Most of them will be too nervous to talk to him, however, giving the PCs an opportunity to introduce themselves.

Once Ser Pailor has – quite deliberately – allowed his presence to be felt, he climbs up onto nearest table and addresses the crowd that is beginning to gather.

“I am Ser Pailor, Knight Errant of the Sanctified Blade! I am in need of brave hearts – men and women, good and true, who will join me in a quest!”

Ser Pailor draws his sword and thrusts it skywards. “My companions are taken captive – by brigands and thieves that would strip this place bare. If you would help me free them, I will place 20 florins in your hand this day – and promise you a share of the king’s ransom that shall be ours for the taking! What say you?”

Ser Pailor will cause quite a stir but no one besides the PCs will have any inclination to set off on a quest to rescue people that they have never met. Ser Pailor will wait at the tavern for volunteers to come forward.

The Deal

No doubt, the PCs will want a more detailed explanation of Ser Pailor’s quest:

My companions and I – adventurers all – set off for a craggy fang of rock called Mount Desolate. According to legend, it was once the site of a prison – now a refuge for the worst kinds of scum.

We entered the tunnels beneath the mountain and began routing out the bandits and monsters that reside there – and to gather a fair share of chinks into the bargain. We underestimated them, though. Some of the bandits were better organised than we had anticipated and we walked into an ambush. My friends were captured and I only barely managed to escape. As I fled, their leader called after me, saying that he would keep them alive for two weeks – just enough time for me to return with 1000 florins ransom!

With your help, I intend to return – but not with his money: with hot steel and cold vengeance!

Ser Pailor is careful to keep his story as close to the truth as possible. A deal has indeed been struck but it is another group of adventurers that he has promised to hand over – not 1000 florins.

If asked about his captured companions, Ser Pailor reveals them to be: Kaylyn Matif – a female knight from Albion; Bastion BloodProw – a barbarian seaman from Thuland; and Bakile Sunfane (a sorcerer from Krarth).

Setting Out

Assuming that the PCs agree to help Ser Pailor, he presents them with 20 florins each that they may use to bolster their equipment. They then begin the three day walk to Mount Desolate.

Along the way, Ser Pailor regales the novice adventurers with the tale of his former adventures. For instance, he speaks of the time he and his companions destroyed an entire village where all of the children had been transformed into ghouls. Feel free to elaborate and expand on his tale-telling in an effort to have the PCs see him as a grizzled mentor-type guiding them along the path on their first adventure.

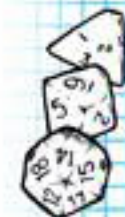
Blessed Shrine

As the PCs prepare to make camp after their first day of travel, they come across a shrine to some unknown deity or wilderness spirit. The shrine consists of a well and a small stone structure that offers shelter from the elements.

Ser Pailor made camp here during his journey to Renselmead and will suggest that the party does so now.

During the night, an eerie moaning will emerge from the well. It is unclear whether this is caused by the wind or truly originates inside the well-shaft. If awakened, Ser Pailor shows little interest in the sound and will go back to sleep.

Any PC who elects to climb down the well will hear the noise intensify. The water within the well rises to a level 5 metres below the ground. Any character who ventures down this far – and who has some illumination – will notice two things. Firstly, there is an inscription carved into the stone. It is written in an ancient form of Elleslandic (the native tongue of Cornumbria and Albion)



and reads:

Honour the spirits and you shall receive their blessing.

Secondly, the character will notice that there are glinting metal objects just beneath the surface. If examined, these are revealed as various copper and silver trinkets.

A shrewd PC should discern that the shrine has been the site of various offerings over the years, presenting him with several choices – including option to loot the shrine or to make an offering himself.

A PC who offers a trinket worth at least 3 florins receives a blessing. The next time he receives an unfavourable result on a die roll of any kind, you should tell him that he has the option of using the blessing to re-roll the die. This blessing may be saved indefinitely but can only change a single die roll.

A character who loots the well will accrue 35 florins worth of items (brooches, pendants, rings and so forth) but will be cursed. The next time he is in a life or death situation, he will automatically fail the first die roll he is required to make. Alternatively, you may wish to have the player roll on the Curses Table (*Dragon Warriors*, pages 123-24) to determine the curse inflicted upon his character.

A Dangerous Road

The PC's second day of travel passes without incident but midway through the third day they encounter a riderless horse cropping grass beside the track. The horse is extremely jumpy and has an arrow protruding from its rump. This injury has rendered it lame.

If the PCs sooth the beast and check the saddlebags it carries, they will find several days worth of supplies and a religious scroll. This is a single, rather poorly copied, page from *The Book of Dathnan* (*Dragon Warriors*, page 151).

If the PCs continue along the trail, they will find no sign of the horse's owner – a Cornumbrian monk named Leofric. However, any character with the special ability Track will find the spot where he was ambushed. The grass is scuffed and trampled and an arrow is lodged in a tree. Rough hoof prints head off in the direction of the looming mountain. The PCs may deduce that the

horse's rider has been captured.

The Scent of Blood

A short time after the PCs discover the riderless horse, a pair of apemen – drawn by the smell of blood – arrive, searching for food. Their aim will be to eat the horse but they will just as happily devour any PCs that get in their way.

Apemen (2)

ATTACK: 12, Club (d6+1, 4 points)

DEFENCE: 5

MAGICAL DEFENCE: 2

Health Points: 12 each

Rank Equivalent: 1st

AF: 0

Movement: 8m (20m)

EVASION: 3

Stealth: 10

PERCEPTION: 5

This first fight is a chance for the players to see how combat works. The apemen are potentially tricky adversaries and – as the goal here is to warm the PCs up before the main part of the adventure – you should feel from to have the carnivorous simians flee after receiving a wound or two.

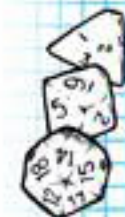
Douring Prison

By the end of the third day, barring any major mishaps, the PCs will have scaled the lower slopes of mount Desolate and reached the entrance to Douring Prison (see the Map of the Prison Exterior). The gates to the prison are open and a lone bandit stands guard.

The prison gates are reached via a steeply sloping road cut into the mountainside. Before reaching the gate, those wishing to enter the prison must cross a deep, sheer-sided pit, 6 metres across and three metres deep. A rough but sturdy covering has been placed across the gap to allow easy passage. If the prison is threatened, the guard can slide this forward so that it falls into the pit.

Anyone who decides to scale the sides of the sloping road will need to make a climb roll. The difficulty factor for this is 13.

Ser Pailor will suggest that they try to trick their way inside by approaching the entrance with what appears to be a heavy sack, laden with the promised 1000 florins. If the PCs proceed with this plan, they will be able to dupe



the lone guard and get close enough to deal with him before he can check the sack and discover the ruse.

This bandit has the same characteristics as those that the PCs will encounter inside.

Venturing Inside

Once the PCs have dealt with the guard, Ser Pailor will strive to maintain his role as helpful mentor by suggesting that one of the PCs disguise himself as the lookout. As the guard was wearing a rag-mask, this is easy to do. This will allow the PCs to make their way through the prison unmolested.

Whatever the PCs do, they will find getting into the prison at this stage is easy. The guards realise that Ser Pailor has kept his bargain and is delivering another group of adventurers to exchange for his companions. Most of the bandits will stay out of sight – and any that the PCs do encounter will play along with the ruse that Ser Pailor is delivering the ransom.

Unless the PCs object, Ser Pailor guides the party on a circuitous route through the prison and the Fighting Pit (Room 34). He urges them to be ready for anything and says that they must deal with Gulruin first.

The Betrayal

The large arena into which Ser Pailor guides the PCs is split into two levels – a viewing area and a sunken pit where warriors fight for the amusement of the bandits (see the map of Level One). The PCs arrive in the viewing gallery.

Cut into the sheer walls of this chamber is a balcony from where Gulruin watches the games. Once the PCs and Ser Pailor enter the chamber, Gulruin emerges. At this point, read or paraphrase the following:

The large, circular chamber you are in is split into two levels: the tiered seating gallery where you stand and a sunken area where the stone floor is stained with blood. Above the gallery, a balcony juts from the rock wall. A tall figure strides into view, resting his hands on the balustrade and peering down at you.

“Be ready,” Ser Pailor hisses and takes several steps closer to the balcony.

“I have kept my bargain, Gulruin. Now free my companions.”

The figure on the balcony regards you coldly. “I think not. I shall keep the offerings you bring me in exchange for your companions but I have no intention of letting anyone go. Now, throw down your weapons.”

Several doors in the gallery walls open and armed men emerge.

It should become apparent at this point that Ser Pailor has betrayed the PCs and that he, in turn, has been double-crossed by Gulruin.

Bandits enter the room from doors to the east, south and west and these are hastily locked behind them. There should be three times as many guards as there are PCs. They are lead by a man wielding an enormous battleaxe: this is Gulruin’s captain, Morthak (see Dramatis Personae).

Bandit Guards

ATTACK 12, Damage d8, 3 (shortsword)	AF 2 (padded Armour)
DEFENCE 5	Movement: 10m (20m)
MAGICAL DEFENCE 3	EVASION 4
Health Points: 6	STEALTH 13
Rank-equivalent: 1 st Level	PERCEPTION 5

As the guards advance, the PCs are forced back towards the edge of the gallery. If the PCs do not surrender, the bandits attempt to subdue them. Any PC who takes damage from an attack will fall into the pit.

During the ensuing melee, Gulruin will cast spells at the adventurers from the balcony above. He will continue to do so until an attack is aimed his way. At this point, he will withdraw out of sight and seal off the balcony. This should be a big clue for the players that Gulruin is a coward.

Pailor’s Escape

As soon as the guards appear, Ser Pailor rushes towards a secret, stone door in the gallery wall (marked with an S on the map of Level One). Using a key that he acquired when last inside the prison, he makes good his escape – at least for now. Any PC that tries to follow him must use his EVASION to dodge inside the closing door. The secret door has a SPEED of 16. There will only be time for one PC to attempt to slip inside before it slams shut.

Directly beyond the door is a chute – the remains of an old trap, long since



converted into an escape route. Ser Pailor and any PC who makes it through the door, will tumble down the chute. The chute – fashioned from polished stone – forks into two, with each branch leading to a different room in the prison. A PC who makes it into the chute will tumble out into Room 20 on Level Three. Ser Pailor ends up in Room 23.

A Light in the Darkness

A few rounds after the fight begins, a set of double doors in the eastern wall of the fighting pit opens and a figure emerges. His monk's robes are despoiled and he carries a bloodied mace. After taking a moment to gauge the situation, the man calls out to the PCs and beckons them to follow him. If the PCs elect not to go, they may well meet their end in this room. It is only a matter of time before reinforcements show up – including archers that can fire down into the gallery from Gulruin's balcony.

If the PCs leap down into the pit, Leofric will help them to seal the heavy doors that grant access to the fighting pit. This will buy the PCs enough time to decide what it is they want to do – even if Gulruin's men are hammering on the doors from the other side.

On the Run

At this point in the adventure, the characters should realise that they have been misled by Ser Pailor and that they are now trapped inside a bandit-infested prison – quite a predicament for their first foray into the adventuring world.

Once the dust settles, the PCs have a number of choices before them. They may wish simply to search for a way out of the dungeon. Equally, they may elect to hunt down Pailor and exact revenge for his betrayal. They may even decide to try to vanquish Gulruin and his bandit followers. Whichever path they choose, the way ahead will be fraught with dangers and they will have little choice but to begin working their way through the prison.

If the characters question Leofric, he confirms that he was ambushed by bandits whilst travelling from his former home in the south to a new monastery in the northwest of Cornumbria called Beaconheath. Leofric was a warrior for many years before converting to the True Faith and has only recently taken his vows. When the PCs first encounter him, he will have just subdued the man who was guarding him and started searching for a way

out. Assuming that the PCs have no objection, he will accompany them.

If the PCs have escaped with Leofric's help, they will find themselves on Level Two – the middle level – of the dungeon.

The Search

Following the PC's escape, Gulruin will dispatch teams of his men to search for them. Each team will consist of one fewer bandits than there are PCs. Use the characteristics provided above for the bandits, though one man in each team will be armed with a bow, which he will use to attack the PCs from a distance. Each bandit group will also carry a key, determined at random:

D6 roll	Key Type
1, 2, 3	A
4, 5	B
6	C

All bandits carry a Type D as these open the rooms where they sleep.

Rather more unusual will be the inclusion of a 'sniffer worm' with each group. A brood of these large, caterpillar-like creatures has been domesticated by Gulruin's men and employed as watch beasts. They have an acute sense of smell and the ability to detect vibrations, making them excellent for use as trackers.

Sniffer Worm

ATTACK 9, Jaws (d3, 3)
DEFENCE 3
MAGICAL DEFENCE 3
Health Points: 3
Rank-equivalent: 1st

AF 2 (thick hide)
Movement: 15m (30m)
EVASION 5
STEALTH 13
PERCEPTION 5

Each time the PCs enter a new room there is a 10% chance they will run into one of these search parties. In addition, you should feel free to have the PCs encounter a search party each time they do something to draw attention to themselves – or simply if you feel the pace is lagging and wish to inject some urgency into the proceedings.

In addition, there is a 1 in 6 chance that a search party will be accompanied



by Gulruin's lieutenant, Captain Morthak (assuming that he was not killed during the confrontation in the Fighting Pit).

Locks, Doors and Corridors

There are numerous locked doors inside the remains of Douring Prison, some of which were standardised for ease of use by the prison guards. All locks are assigned a Type, ranging from A to D. An A Type key opens all A Type locks; a B Type key opens all B Type locks and so on. If no lock Type is indicated for a door, it does not have a mechanical lock.

The only exception to this is the lock which seals the door to Gulruin's chamber – the key to which he keeps on his person.

The corridors of Douring Prison were skilfully hewn from the mountain rock. They feature smooth, blank walls and ceilings that rise to a height of 2.5 metres. A few of the corridors have collapsed over the years and are now blocked off. These are marked on the maps with fallen boulders.

The Underworld corridors – those to which the prison links but which were created by other denizens of the mountain – have similar dimensions to those of the prison but are jagged and rough hewn.

The doors of the prison were sturdily built but have suffered somewhat from age and damp. Typically, they can be forced open by any character with Strength of 17 or greater.

Prison Level Two

1 – Pit Fighters' Room. Before they are sent out to fight for the entertainment of Gulruin and his men, the gladiators take up arms and prepare themselves in this area. There are three shields, two shortswords and a flail stored on racks, as well as a suit of spiked pit-fighter armour. This provides the same protection as a mail hauberk (3 AF) and the linked armour plates and spiked gauntlet on the left arm serve as both a shield and a dagger. If none of the PCs wish to don this, Leofric will take it for himself.

An unconscious guard lies on the floor. This is the bandit that Leofric attacked in order to gain his freedom. The guard has a Type A key affixed to his belt and is armed with a dagger.

2 – Scavenger Crab's Lair. Entry to this foul-smelling room is via a one metre step down. The room is piled high with all kinds of waste: it has been deposited here by the bandits and is gradually devoured by the scavenger crab. Any character who enters this room will be attacked by this territorial creature, which comes scurrying out from beneath the waste.

Scavenger Crab

ATTACK 13, Damage d6+2, 3 (pincers)

DEFENCE 5

MAGICAL DEFENCE 3

Health Points: 7

Rank-equivalent: 2nd

AF 4 (thick shell)

Movement: 8m (16m)

EVASION 3

STEALTH 13

PERCEPTION 5

Buried beneath the pile of refuse is a narrow chute that leads up to Room 32. A character willing to have a good rummage about can unearth this.

3 – Chasm. This passage is sliced in two by a very deep, dark abyss. It is possible to leap the 4 metres across to the other side but requires a Reflexes score of 13 or higher to do so safely. Any other character attempting the leap must roll under their Reflexes or fall short. Characters that do so should be allowed to make a further Reflexes test to grab hold of the ledge before they plummet to their doom.

The path beyond the chasm leads deep into the mountain, to a region where countless foul creatures dwell. If the PCs insist on going this way – despite the weird, echoing sounds they hear and the vile smells which assault their nostrils – feel free to have them encounter whichever dire monster(s) seem appropriate.

None of Gulruin's men will venture beyond the chasm. Accordingly, it provides a good place to hole-up and seek refuge when necessary.

4 – Practise Room. Lock Type A. This large open room contains practise dummies and a collection of wooden weapons. There are also bandages and other medical supplies designed to patch up wounded fighters. Any character who binds his wounds and applies the relevant ointments recovers 2 HP. There are enough supplies here to treat five separate injuries.

5 – Stairwell. These stairs descend to Level Three and emerge in Room 13.



6 – Waterfall Chamber Balcony. A short, roughly hewn passage leads to a natural balcony that gazes out over an enormous, domed cavern. The cavern is so large that it links all three levels of the dungeon.

At the base of the chamber (which is on Level Three) is a large lake. From high above water pours down through a narrow fissure, then spills from one pool to another in a series of spectacular waterfalls.

From this balcony – which emerges midway up the chamber wall – the PCs can climb (difficulty factor 13) down to Level Three. Due to an overhang, it is impossible to climb up to Level One. A character who falls loses only 1d2 Health Points as his fall is broken by the water.

A more complete description of this room is provided with the details of Room 16 on Level Three.

7 – Walkway Trap. At this point, the corridor floor drops away into darkness, 5 metres below. The gap – some 6 metres across – is bridged by a narrow stone walkway. Protruding from the wall are three metal levers.

When the PCs first encounter this trap, the levers are in the ‘safe’ position: the middle lever is up, the other two are down. When the levers are positioned in this way, the walkway is locked in position and can be crossed safely. When the levers are in any other position, the walkway will revolve 180 degrees as soon as 10 kg or more of pressure is placed upon it. Any character on the walkway at this time must test against his REFLEXES (difficulty factor 15) or tumble into the pit and lose 1d6 Health points.

It is possible to leap across the hole – difficulty factor 14 (or 16 for a character in heavy armour).

If the characters return to this location after leaving it to explore other levels of the prison, then the bandit guards who are searching for them will have changed the position of the levers. If none of the PCs state that their characters are checking the arrangement of the levers, you may allow them to test against their PERCEPTION before they unwittingly trigger the trap.

8 – Torture Chamber. Lock Type A. This room houses a grisly assortment of tools designed to inflict as much pain as humanly possible whilst keeping a subject alive. Unlike most torture rooms, this one has the distinction of being semi-automated. Constructed around the traditional torture table is a

sort of box, open at one end for the hapless victim to be placed inside. A series of dials and levers then activate the various mechanical implements built into the device.

It should not be immediately apparent to the PCs what the box is. In the unlikely event that a character is daft enough to crawl inside the device and have someone activate it, he will lose 1 Health Point – but in the most painful way you can imagine.

9 – Stairwell. These stairs ascend to Level One, emerging in Room 25. Gulruin will position three of his men here, all armed with crossbows. If the PCs come this way, they will open fire whilst calling for assistance. If the PCs do not silence them within d3+1 rounds, four more bandits will arrive to assist in efforts to deal with the PCs.

10 – Sleeping Area. Lock Type A. This room houses four beds, used by the bandits that Gulruin has assigned to tend the sniffer worms. The smell emanating from their nest – accessible via a corridor in the eastern wall – seeps through into this room.

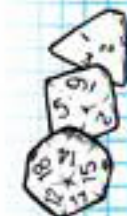
Though most of the bandits know better than to leave valuable items lying around for their fellows to filch, a Type B key has been left atop a small bedside table.

10a – Sniffer Worm Nest. This rough cavern reeks of rotting meat and vegetation. The floor is covered in purple mould and tall, thin mushrooms: burrowed into this fungoid mass are the nest tunnels of the sniffer worms.

At any one time, there will be 1-6 sniffer worms residing in this chamber. They are well-fed by Gulruin’s men and, though they will investigate anyone who enters the room, they are not aggressive.

11 – Guard Room. Lock Type B. This guard room controls access to some of the former prison cells. Even with the bandits searching for the PCs, a guard is left in this room to watch over Bakile Sunfane, who is sealed in the first cell (A).

Bakile is a sorcerer who accompanied Ser Pailor on the ill-fated attempt to vanquish Gulruin and his men. Bakile will have no reason to mention Ser Pailor to the PCs, though if they questioned Ser Pailor they may realise who



Bakile is.

The cell in which the sorcerer is held is inscribed with runes and magical glyphs which ensure that anyone trapped within cannot recover lost magic points. This means that when the PCs find Bakile – who went through quite a tussle before being imprisoned here – he has 0 magic points. Once freed from the cell he will recover Magic Points as normal.

Bakile is not an evil man – though he is a pragmatic one. If he learns of Ser Pailor's betrayal of the PCs he will be rather ashamed and, if anything, such news will motivate him to help the PCs and make amends for his companion's wrongdoing.

Bakile has no idea whether his other companions (the knight, Kaylyn Matif and the barbarian, Bastion BloodProw) are still alive.

12 – Storage area. An assortment of crumbling odds and ends fill this room: brittle bed pallets, mouldy prison uniforms, blunted tools and so forth. There are also several sacks and barrels filled with fresh supplies of cured meat, pickled vegetables, sour ale, salt and pepper. Inventive PCs might use liberal doses of this last ingredient to hamper efforts to track them – a sniffer worm that gets a nose full of pepper loses its sense of smell for a full day.

One other item stands out – a large ballista that was once part of the prison's defences. It is warped and in need of repairs but an hour or so of labour can have it in working order. The ballista is too large to be carried but moves on a rickety set of wheels. It takes 3 rounds to reload and aim. There are four ballista bolts in this room.

Weapon	Damage	Short	Medium	Long Range
Ballista	(2d6, 7)	0-50m	51-150m	151-250m

Prison Level Three

Originally, this was the section of the prison where the most dangerous criminals were housed. Now, Level Three is the least frequented area and the one which has most fallen into disrepair. As a result, many of the critters that haunt the underworld have crept in through crumbling walls and past decaying defences. None of Gulruin's men venture onto this level alone and even in groups they remain warily vigilant.

This part of the dungeon is much colder and damper than elsewhere. Water pools in cracks and depressions, mould creeps up the walls and strange sounds gurgle up out of the dark places of the underworld.

13 – Stairwell. Key Type B. This stairway leads up to Room 5 on level Two.

14 – Checkpoint. This now abandoned guardroom once controlled access to this level. Small portcullises – each operated by a wheel built into the wall – bar entry to each of the corridors leading to the former cell areas. The minimum Strength required to lift a portcullis without using the wheel is 20.

When the PCs first reach this area, portcullis R is raised: the others are all lowered.

The door in the east wall leading to the shrine is unlocked. This has no portcullis.

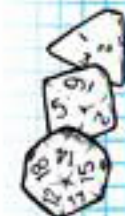
15 – Desecrated shrine. Before Douring Prison was overrun, this room served as a place of prayer and meditation for the guards and for those rare inmates who showed genuine repentance for their crimes. It has long-since been despoiled and looted – though a hidden drawer beneath the altar contains a nugget of silver worth 50 florins. A character who searches the room must roll against his PERCEPTION to find this.

16 – Waterfall Chamber. A short passage leads to the shores of a large lake that fills the base of a vast, domed cavern. The entire cavern hisses with the sound of tumbling water and a series of falls cascade down the sides of the cavern walls, filling the lake.

Directly above the entrance is a natural stone plateau (see Room 6) and high in the western wall is a small opening that grants access to Level One of the dungeon (Room 37).

Climbing up to Room 6 has a difficulty factor of 13. Failure indicates that the PC tumbles into the lake and loses 1d2 HP. The splash from such a fall will also draw the attention of one of the monstrous leeches in the lake.

Attempting the climb up to Room 37 is far more difficult. Any PC wishing to do so must first cross the lake to a point where the wall is climbable and then succeed with two climb rolls, both with a difficulty factor of 14.



Failure on either roll plunges the character into the lake as described above.

That the lake in this cavern has not expanded to flood the entire complex tells the PCs that the water must be draining away somewhere. A character who explores the floor of the lake – some six metres beneath the surface – will find a narrow passage through which the water escapes. It flows through a channel for some two hundred metres before emerging out on the mountainside – and could provide a (very dangerous) means of escaping the dungeon. A character who swims into the passage may hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to his Strength. After this time, he begins to drown and loses 1d3 Health Points each round until he draws breath. It takes [30 minus the character's REFLEX] rounds to traverse the water passage.

Currently residing within the pool are several monstrous leeches. These powerful swimmers can move freely back and forth along the underwater passage. They will attempt to feed on any creatures that stray into the lake.

Monstrous Leeches (3)

ATTACK 10, Bite (d3, 1 point)

DEFENCE 4

MAGICAL DEFENCE 3

Health Points: 5 each

Rank-equivalent: 1st

AF 0

Movement: 12m (25m)

EVASION 4

STEALTH 14

PERCEPTION 7

17 – Triggered Trap Room. Key Type B. In the centre of this flagstone-floored room is a large cage, inside of which sits a hungry-looking ogre. A glance at the square hole in the ceiling tells the PCs that the cage was part of a trap that has captured the lumbering beast.

If the PCs wish to kill the ogre, they will find it easy enough to do so. However, the creature is not truly evil, simply brutish and wild.

Any PC who takes the time to feed and sooth the creature – which is clearly malnourished – will find that it warms to them in much the same way that a wild dog might. With enough gentle coaxing – and a ready supply of food – the PCs might be able to acquire a useful ally; albeit one who will be unwilling to leave the dungeon.

Ogre

ATTACK 18, club (d6+2, 6 points)

DEFENCE 12

MAGICAL DEFENCE 8

Health Points: 21

Rank-equivalent: 5th

AF 1 (tough skin)

Movement: 10m (20m)

EVASION 4

STEALTH 10

PERCEPTION 9

18 – Cells. Key Type A. These abandoned cells still contain rotting pallet beds, rusted shackles and mouldering bones. There is no sign that they have been used recently and all of the doors have been removed or rotted away.

19 – Pummelling Trap Room. Key Type B. The floor of this chamber is covered with flagstones much like those in Room 17. A number of these are marred with aged blood-stains.

The flagstones marked on the map of Level Three with an X are pressure pads: if depressed, these cause a stone column to crash down from the ceiling and then snap back into place. A weight of at least 50 kg is required to trigger a pressure pad.

The pummelling columns can be evaded but have a SPEED of 15. Any character caught beneath a descending column loses 6 HP. The attack always pierces armour.

20 – Cells. Key Type A. All but two of these cells fell into disuse long ago and are in a similar state to those described in area 18.

However, the first cell in this area (marked A on the map of Level Three) is where any PC who follows Ser Pailor through the secret door (see The Betrayal) will end up. This cell does not have a wooden door but rather a gate forged from iron bars. Through these, the door to Room 19 is visible. A character with the Pick Lock Skill should, given time, be able to open the gate. However, no amount of battering from normal weapons will destroy the bars.

The other cell still in use is just south of this one (marked B on the map). Within this cell is Kaylyn Matif – one of Ser Pailor's companions. She will hear the sound of someone being dumped inside the room and attempt to strike up a conversation. Kaylyn – just like Bakile – has no knowledge of



Pailor's duplicitous actions. She is unable to get out of her cell but will offer to team up with another prisoner that frees her and to search for the PC's (and her own) companions.

Kaylyn is an entirely noble and trustworthy knight. Unlike Ser Pailor, her word is iron and if she teams up with the PCs she will prove a worthy ally.

Ser Kaylyn

ATTACK 15, none at present

DEFENCE 11

EVASION 5

STEALTH 14

level: 4th level Knight

AF: none at present

MAGICAL DEFENCE 6

Health Points: 14

PERCEPTION 6

C – which he will loan out to PCs that befriend him. He keeps these hidden beneath a piece of loose stone in the floor.

The rats that Gert has taken to feeding and talking to are present when the PCs arrive. If the PCs attack or threaten Gert or the rats, then they will have a fight on their hands as this odd pack has become surprisingly close-knit.

Giant rats (5)

ATTACK 9, Bite (d3, 3 points)

DEFENCE 2

MAGICAL DEFENCE 2

Health Points: 3 each

Rank-equivalent: 1st

AF 0

Movement: 12m (25m)

EVASION 4

STEALTH 17

PERCEPTION 8

21 – Collapsed Corridor. From Room 14 it is possible to gaze through the portcullis and to see the condition of this corridor: the walls and ceiling have collapsed and the floor has fallen away. If anyone moves up to the lip of the chasm, they will see that a plateau juts from the wall some 4 metres below. A body – crushed beneath falling rock – rests upon the plateau.

The body – dressed as it is in knight's armour – may well pique the PCs' interest. This former adventurer was killed when his sorcerer companion cast a spell that triggered the destruction of this corridor. A search of his corpse will reveal a map of Level Two of the dungeon.

22 – Rat Room. If the PCs approach this room quietly they will hear the sounds of a man talking – apparently to himself. This is Gert – a somewhat senile member of Gulruin's bandit clan. In recent months, the aged Gert has taken to spending all of his time on Level Three, feeding and talking with his giant rat 'friends'.

Gert has been all but forgotten by Gulruin and the other bandits and he will have no knowledge of the alarm that the PC's presence has triggered. In fact – regardless of their appearance – Gert will take the PCs for new recruits. If they act in a friendly manner, he will reciprocate and welcome them as new members of the band.

Gert can be persuaded to reveal the layout of Level Three if the characters can provide a reason as to why they should need this. He cannot be nearly so helpful regarding Levels One and Two. Gert also has keys – Types A and

One final piece of information that Gert can provide relates to Ser Pailor. When the treacherous knight left Room 23 (see below), he passed by Gert – ignoring him entirely – and headed back towards Room 14.

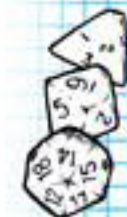
23 – Former Cells. This area has tumbled away into ruin and become part of the larger Underworld beneath the mountain. Only a single cell remains relatively intact, though the front wall has collapsed. It is into this room that Ser Pailor slides when he uses the secret passage to elude Gulruin's men.

The downward sloping passage heading North West leads to a burial mound, haunted by the men once buried there. If the PCs are on good terms with Gert, he will warn them about this and advise them to stay away.

This is a possible route out of the dungeon but one fraught with peril. If the PCs follow this passage, it leads to the location detailed on the map of Area 24.

24 – Gravewalker Burial Mound. Cut into the side of the mountain is an ancient burial site. Ten knights – all honoured for their courage in battle – were entombed here. Unfortunately, some terrible curse has bestowed un-life upon them. They now prowl the mountainside by night, taking prisoners back to their lair where they drag them back into their coffins and feed upon their life force.

Moving along the tunnel towards the burial mound, the PCs will come to



a stone doorway, sealed with criss-crossing lines of creeper (marked C on the map). A character with knowledge of Alchemy can identify the creeper as 'corpsebane', a plant that priests and necromancers use to protect themselves from corporeal undead. The creepers have not grown naturally around the doorframe but have been dried and preserved and then pinned in place.

A character who wraps himself in a length of corpsebane has his DEFENCE increased by 2 if attacked by a gravewalker.

Note that until they remove the ivy, the PCs can discern only the vaguest details of the room beyond but they can hear quite clearly any sounds made there. They will, for instance, be able to hear the gravewalkers rising from or returning to their sepulchres.

If the PCs wish to pass through the doorway, they may carefully unpin the corpsebane (so that it can be replaced later) or simply force their way through.

The chamber beyond is unnaturally cold and filled with shadow-laden alcoves and niches. Lines of ice glisten on the edges of ornately cut sepulchres and sarcophagi. Glowing moss casts an eerie blue light that half-illuminates gargoyles and other funereal carvings. The PCs should be left in doubt that they are violating a crypt.

If the adventurers enter the crypt between the hours of midnight and 5 a.m. they will find that all but two of the gravewalkers are out hunting. At other times, all ten are in residence.

Gravewalkers (10)
 ATTACK 12, Bite or claw (d6, 3 points) AF 0
 DEFENCE 5 Movement: 12m (25m)
 MAGICAL DEFENCE 7 EVASION 6
 Health Points: 7 each STEALTH 15
 Rank-equivalent: 3rd PERCEPTION 8
 Notes: Living creatures lose 1 HP each round that they spend within 1 metre of a gravewalker; if wounded the gravewalker recovers 1 HP from this process.

At the foot of each sarcophagi is a locked glass case or chest. Within each are the treasures of these former warriors. Seven are filled with gold and silver items, each amounting to 100 florins worth of treasure. One of the remaining

chests contains a +1 sword; another a +1 mail hauberk; and the final one an Eye of Foreboding amulet (*Dragon Warriors*, page 142).

If the PCs loot the tomb, they will be hunted mercilessly by any surviving gravewalkers for as long as they remain within five miles of Mount Desolate.

Level One

By far the most populous region of the dungeon, this is the level where Gulruin and his brigand followers spend most of their time.

25 – Stairwell. This stairway leads down to Room 9.

26 – Former cells. Lock Type D. These cells, whilst still dank and unwholesome, have been converted into rooms for Gulruin's men. Each has two simple beds and a few boxes or sacks containing a change of clothes and some rudimentary supplies.

Typically, around a third of the cells will contain sleeping men. However, during the first day of the search for the PCs, they are all empty. If the PCs have not been apprehended during this time, things return to normal: the search goes on but Gulruin's men still need to sleep.

27 – Armoury. Lock Type C. The door to this room is not an original feature of the dungeon but has been replaced within the last year. It will take a long time to batter down and doing so will create a lot of noise.

The armoury contains six shortswords, five shields, one flail, three bows, sixty arrows, four suits of padded armour and a great spear. This last weapon is an unusual item, forged long ago for exceptionally tall and strong warrior.

Weapon	Damage
Great Spear	2d4, 5 points

This weapon requires two hands to use; the wielder must have STRENGTH 12 or higher; the wielder always strikes first against a charging opponent.

28 – Flail Trap Room. Lock Type B. The doors to this room are made from iron and no amount of pounding or hacking will destroy them.



Located in the centre of this room is a 2 metre high metal column, engraved with the letters of the Elleslandic alphabet. Deep gashes mar sections of the walls – though the corners of the room are undamaged.

As soon as a character makes contact with the floor of this room, an audible ticking begins. Two rounds later, a dozen metal chains extend from different points in the metal column as it begins to rotate. Centrifugal forces lift the chains and lash them against the walls – and anything else that happens to be in their way. The column will continue to rotate for as long as pressure is applied to the floor – and for one round after this. At this point, the trap resets.

It is possible to Evade the flailing chains, though they have a SPEED of 18.

Weapon	Damage
Chain flail	d8, 4 points

Perceptive players may – correctly – deduce that a character who presses himself into one of the corners of the room will not be struck by the flailing chains: the chains are not long enough to reach into the corners, hence the fact that there are no marks in the walls there.

Disarming the trap – either before and after it is activated – is a simple matter of typing a deactivation word into the column using the letters engraved there. The deactivation word is Gulruin – yet another sign of the sorcerer's ego.

29 – Games Area. When not out raiding or assigned to guard duty, Gulruin's men use this area to play games of darts or dice, or to gamble away their ill-gotten gains with hands of cards.

So long as the PCs remain on the loose, there is only a 10% of encountering a single pair of bandits in here relaxing.

30 – Hell Hound Kennel. Lock Type A. Gulruin has housed a pack of hell hounds in this room, with the express purpose of unleashing them on any intruders that make it past the outer defences.

His kennel-master – Rakaith – resides in the small chamber just off this room.

Hell Hounds (4)

ATTACK 12, Bite (d4, 5)
DEFENCE 5
MAGICAL DEFENCE 3
Health Points: 7 each
Rank-equivalent: 1st

AF 0
Movement: 15m (30m)
EVASION 5
STEALTH 15
PERCEPTION 10

Pack leader (1)

ATTACK 16, Fangs (d4+1, 5 + poison*)
DEFENCE 6
MAGICAL DEFENCE 8
Health Points: 11
Rank-equivalent: 2nd

AF 1
Movement: 15m (30m)
EVASION 4
STEALTH 15
PERCEPTION 10

* *Dragon Warriors*, page 122

31 – Gulruin's Chamber. The narrow stone stairway leading up to Gulruin's chamber conceals a trick stair which all of the bandits know to avoid. Any PC who ascends the stairs without cautiously checking for traps (roll against PERCEPTION) will depress the stair and trigger an alarm bell. This alerts everyone in Gulruin's room and the antechamber outside.

The rather stark antechamber serves as a waiting room for those who wish to speak with Gulruin: it has a bench and table and a large tapestry adorning the western wall. The subject of the tapestry is Gulruin himself. There are also a few books resting on a shelf – an attempt by the bandit lord to civilize his followers.

So long as the PCs remain on the loose, Gulruin's bodyguard – Thaiysos – and a pair of bandits remain stationed in this room at all hours of the day and night.

Thaiysos

ATTACK 15, sword (d8, 4)
DEFENCE 6
MAGICAL DEFENCE 5
Health Points: 11
Level: 3rd level Assassin
Equipment: lockpicks, 40 florins, vial of weak poison

AF 3 (Mail Hauberk)
Movement: 15m (30m)
EVASION 5
STEALTH 20
PERCEPTION 10

The door to Gulruin's chamber is locked using a key that the sorcerer always



keeps about his person.

The chamber within is quite unlike any other part of the dungeon. The stark stone walls are adorned with paintings and embroidered hangings; ornate rugs cover the floor and finely crafted furniture is tastefully arranged about the room. There is an expansive collection of books and manuscripts and a selection of vintage wines. Unlike his brutish followers, Gulruin casts himself in the role of an epicure, seeing his arcane skills as elevating him to the level of the nobility.

The western portion of Gulruin's chamber contains his luxurious sleeping quarters. A slave girl named Aisha currently resides here, providing entertainment for the bandit leader.

A corridor leading south out of the main chamber emerges on a balcony overlooking the fighting pit. It is from here that Gulruin watches any matches in the arena.

So long as the PCs are loose inside the prison, Gulruin will remain inside his chambers. If the PCs seek to enter his chamber, he will try to escape and summon reinforcements, clambering over the balcony and dropping into the pit if necessary. Such a fall robs him of 1d4 Health points – and a considerable amount of dignity.

The key to playing Gulruin is to remember that he is an arrogant coward, full of bravado but lacking any real courage. He only fights when he feels a victory is assured.

32 – Smithy. When the prison was in use, it had need of its own blacksmith to manufacture chains and tools, to sharpen blades and so forth. The smith is still in working order but now only sees use when Gulruin's men need to repair their weapons and armour.

The forge contains bellows, several anvils and all the tools required for smithing.

In the north-western corner of the room is a waste shoot that leads all the way down to Room 2.

33 – Chamber of Questions. Lock Type A. It is to this room that Gulruin

brings those prisoners he wishes to interrogate personally. At present, the mauled corpse of Bastion BloodProw hangs from the ceiling, his back pierced by meat hooks. It is clear that the barbarian endured terrible suffering before he died.

A search of the room, which contains a table and chairs and several blood-spattered knives, will turn up a clearly labelled healing draft intended to keep victims alive long enough to answer questions. Unfortunately for Gulruin, his enthusiasm got the better of him and he killed Bloodprow before he could administer the draft. There are three doses in the draft (marked on the side of the bottle): each restores D6 Health Points.

34 – Fighting Pit. Lock Type C. Several rows of tiered benches surround a dusty and blood stained arena. Originally a place of judgement where tribunals were held and judgements made, it is now a fighting pit used for the entertainment of Gulruin's growing band of cutthroats.

The fighting pit bridges Levels One and Two of the dungeon. The spectator's seats are located on Level One: the pit itself is on Level Two.

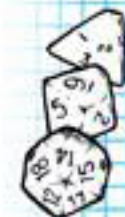
35 – Watch Area. A patrol of four bandits – all armed with bows and shortwords –are positioned here to ensure that the PCs do not escape from the dungeon via the main entrance.

If any of these men spot the PCs they will ring an alarm gong that they have with them. This will summon Gulruin from his chamber, along with his bodyguard, Thaiyos, Captain Morthak (if the PCs have not already dealt with him) and four more bandits. This group will arrive 5 rounds after the alarm is sounded.

If the PCs manage to get outside the dungeon, Gulruin and his men will pursue them to the edge of the Map of the Prison Exterior. If the PCs get beyond this point, they will have escaped.

36 – Captain Morthak's Room. Lock Type C. This room is where Gulruin's most trusted lieutenant sleeps. He will be charged with leading the search for the PCs and during the adventure will make do with only a few hours sleep here and there. As a result, there is only a 10% chance of encountering him here.

In contrast to Gulruin's chamber, this room is cold and bare. Amongst his



few belongings, Morthak has a spare suit of padded armour and a chest containing stolen items worth 150 florins. Morthak's most prized possession – his phoenix axe – he keeps always at his side.

37 – Waterfall Alcove. This corridor is accessible via a secret doorway built into the wall. Any character who states that he is searching this area must roll equal to or less than his PERCEPTION to locate the hidden door. The door may be opened simply by pushing firmly against it.

The corridor beyond leads to an alcove high up in the Waterfall Chamber (see Room 16).

38 – Entranceway. Lock type A. The crumbling statues of once grim wardens reside in the western corners of this room. There are also grooves in the floor where a ballista would once have stood (see Room 12).

A large set of reinforced doors can be used to seal the dungeon. These are sealed from within with a large wooden bar.

39 – Storage Room. General items taken in raids are stockpiled here – lamps and oil, blankets, clothing, tools and so forth. Gulruin – once again in an attempt to civilize his followers – is trying to encourage the communal use of such things.

40 – Tavern. Isolated as they are from the outside world, the bandits have fashioned an eating and drinking area of their own. Crude tables, stools and benches are assembled here and casks of ale are stowed behind a rough sort of bar. A fireplace has been hacked out of the southern wall, connecting to a natural fissure that allows the smoke to escape.

Pailor's Return

At some point during their trek through the dungeon, the characters will encounter their treacherous former companion. The exact timing of this is really up to you but you should consider a number of factors.

Firstly, try to have him reappear at a dramatically engaging moment. For example, just when the PCs are about to begin a difficult fight or when they are having trouble dealing with one of the prison's old traps. This way, Pailor will have a chance to lend a hand and perhaps re-ingratiate himself with the PCs: this may make the decision about whether to attack him a

little more difficult.

Secondly, you should aim to give Pailor a chance to propose a truce. He is quite right in suggesting that, with his help, the PCs have a better chance of escaping. Beyond his skill at arms, he is familiar with the layout of the dungeon.

Ser Pailor

ATTACK 16, Sword (d8, 4 points)

DEFENCE 10

MAGICAL DEFENCE 6

Health Points: 14

Level: 4th

Equipment: sword, dagger, mail armour, sling, 10 bullets, 60 florins

AF: 4 (Mail Armour)

Movement: 12m (25m)

EVASION 4

STEALTH 14

PERCEPTION 6

Having Ser Pailor return to the party can create a very interesting situation – the PCs know they cannot trust him but will need to consider if and when they seek retribution for his betrayal. Suddenly, the search for a way out of the dungeon will become even trickier.

If Ser Pailor is allowed to rejoin the party, he will still want to search for his captured companions – he may be a ruthless liar but he has some loyalty to them. Only if things turn truly dire will he abandon his comrades to Gulruin's cruel embrace.

Concluding the Adventure

With an adventure as open as this one, there are any number of ways in which things might turn out. The PCs will have their hands full simply surviving long enough to escape from the dungeon. There are, however, a number of ways in which they can bolster their forces or find respite from the rigours of their quest – and you should encourage the players to recruit allies wherever possible.

The escape from the dungeon should be presented as the climax of the adventure. Most likely the PCs will be facing overwhelming odds – whether fighting against bandits or gravewalkers. The flight from the mountain should be an exciting moment, rather than a cowardly act. If the PCs wish, they can always come back.

If the PCs can find and kill Gulruin, his followers will soon fall to bickering



and the band will break up. They will have done the surrounding villages a great service.

Whatever happens, the friends and enemies that the PCs make during this scenario should provide plenty of material for further adventures. If Gulruin survives, he can hatch a scheme to exact revenge against the PCs; if Pailor is alive he can also serve as an ongoing character. He may even have the nerve to try to enlist the PCs for another adventure: playing out his possible redemption can be a good source of future drama.

Dramatis Personae

Gulruin: (self-proclaimed) Sorcerer Lord of the Desolate Mountain
 ATTACK 12, staff (d6, 3) MAGICAL ATTACK: 20
 DEFENCE 6 MAGICAL DEFENCE 10
 EVASION 4 STEALTH 15
 PERCEPTION 6
 Health Points: 11 Magic points: 23
 Level: 6th

Equipment: Key to Room 31, Replenishment Potion (*Dragon Warriors*, page 139), Amulet of The Shielding Charm (*Dragon Warriors*, page 142), gold ring (200 florins), pouch of coins (45 florins), A, B and C Type Keys

Gulruin sees himself as sorcerer prince, forging the beginnings of a new kingdom. He has a strong sense of his own destiny and will think nothing of having others sacrifice themselves for him. Thanks to his considerable charisma, he has started to accrue a number of followers willing to do just this. At heart, however, he is a spoilt child, a bully and a coward. If seriously threatened, he will always seek to withdraw and have others do the fighting for him.

Gulruin is tall, broad-shouldered and handsome and might easily be taken for a warrior rather than a sorcerer. He wears purple robes, trimmed with gold and carries a staff fashioned into the likeness of a serpent's tongue.

Gulruin's favourite spells are Armour, Mantlet, Command and Transfix. He always casts spells that will protect him, following by those which allow him to control and, if possible, humiliate others.

Captain Morthak

ATTACK 15, Phoenix Axe (2d4, 6)
 DEFENCE 9
 EVASION 4
 STEALTH 13

level: 3rd level Knight

Equipment: Phoenix Axe, A, B and C Type Keys

Morthak is an ambitious man, convinced that Gulruin will lead him to great things. Accordingly, he is fiercely loyal to the sorcerer. His hair is shaved into a twin-mohawk pattern, dyed purple.

Morthak's most prized possession is his phoenix axe. The head of this enormous battleaxe is fashioned in the likeness of a golden bird of prey, its wings spread wide, the feathers forming razor sharp points. It requires two hands to use and a minimum strength of 12.

Weapon

Phoenix Axe

Damage

2d4 (6 points)

Leofric the monk

ATTACK 14, Mace (d6, 4)
 DEFENCE 8
 EVASION 4
 STEALTH 12

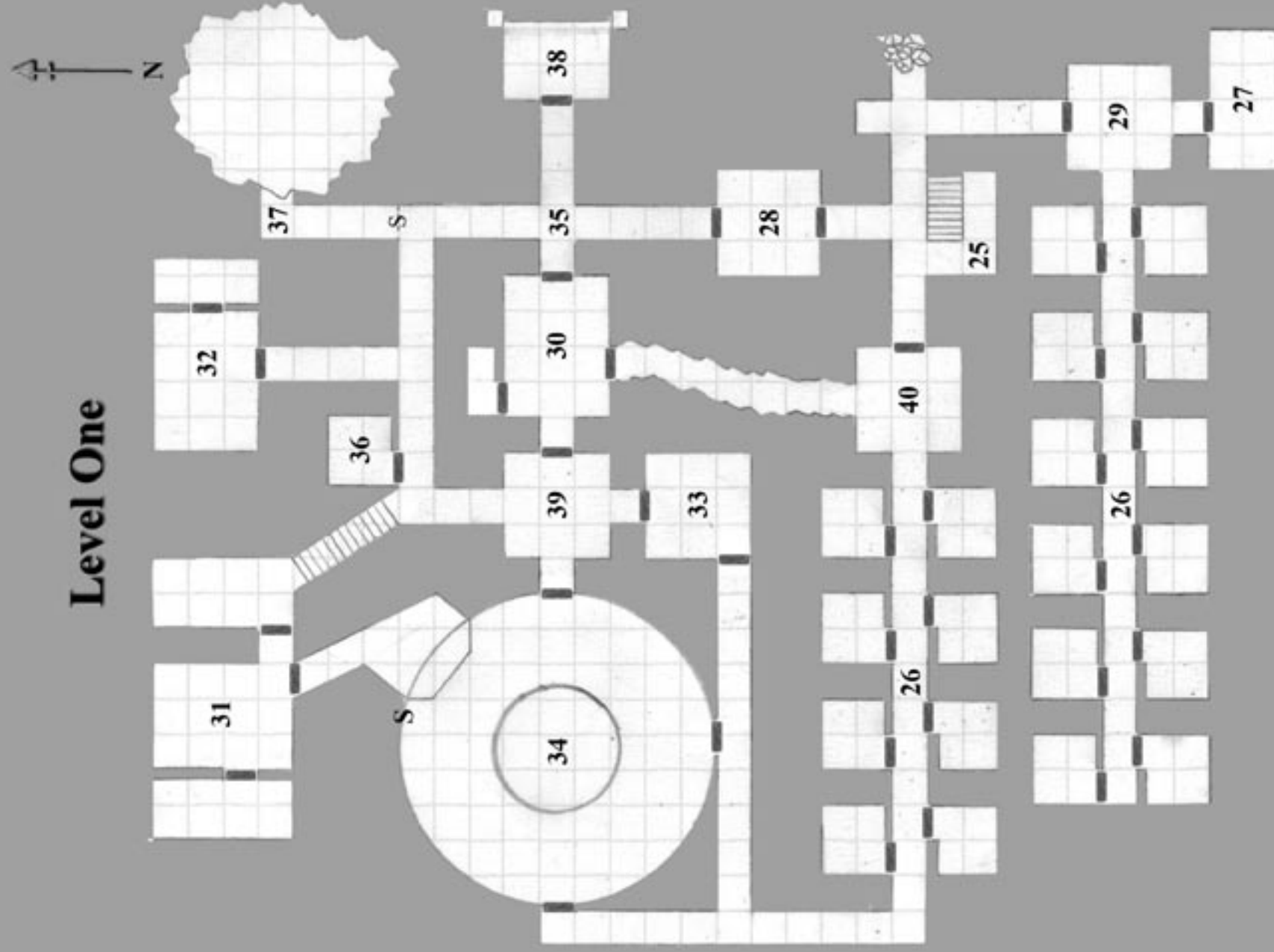
level: 2nd level Knight

AF: 0
 MAGICAL DEFENCE 5
 Health Points: 11
 PERCEPTION 6

After several years service in the household guard of a nobleman, Leofric had come to question the life of blood and battle that he had chosen as a young man. Seeking to abandon this path of violence, he took his vows and set off to begin a new life as a monk. Now, trapped as he is within the dungeon, he has no choice but to take up arms again and seek a way out of the mountain.

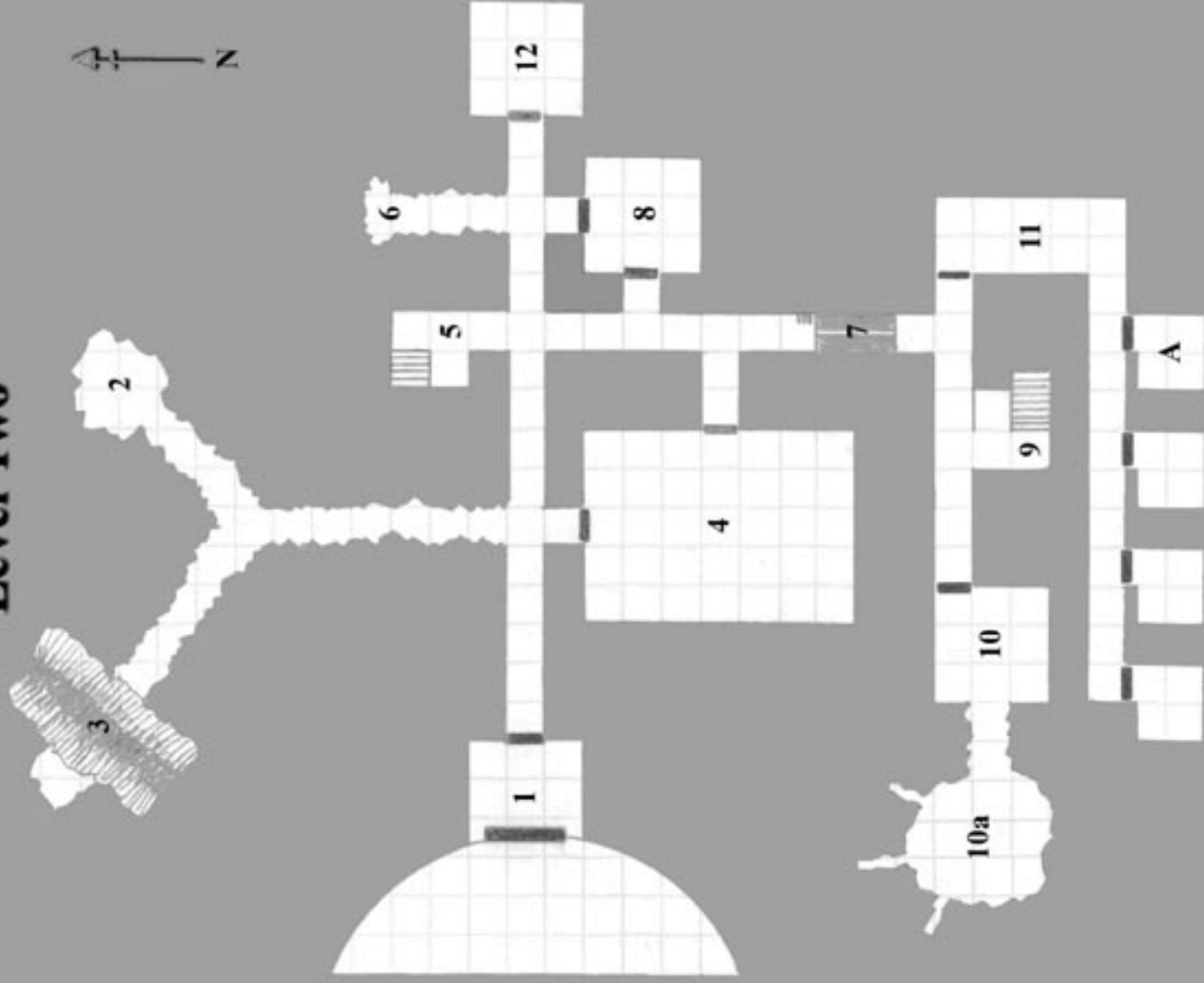


Level One



Scale: 1 square = 3 metres

Level Two

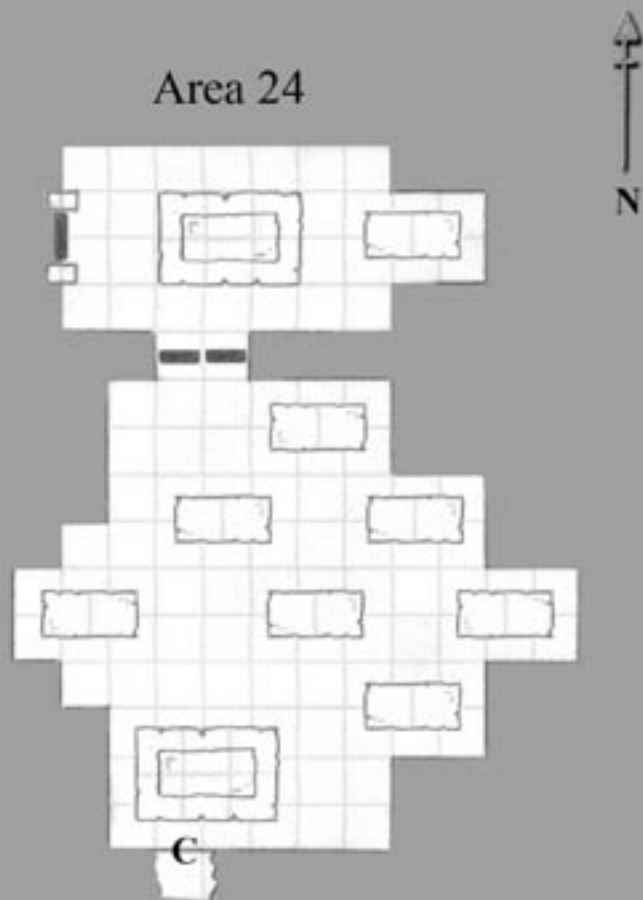


Level Three

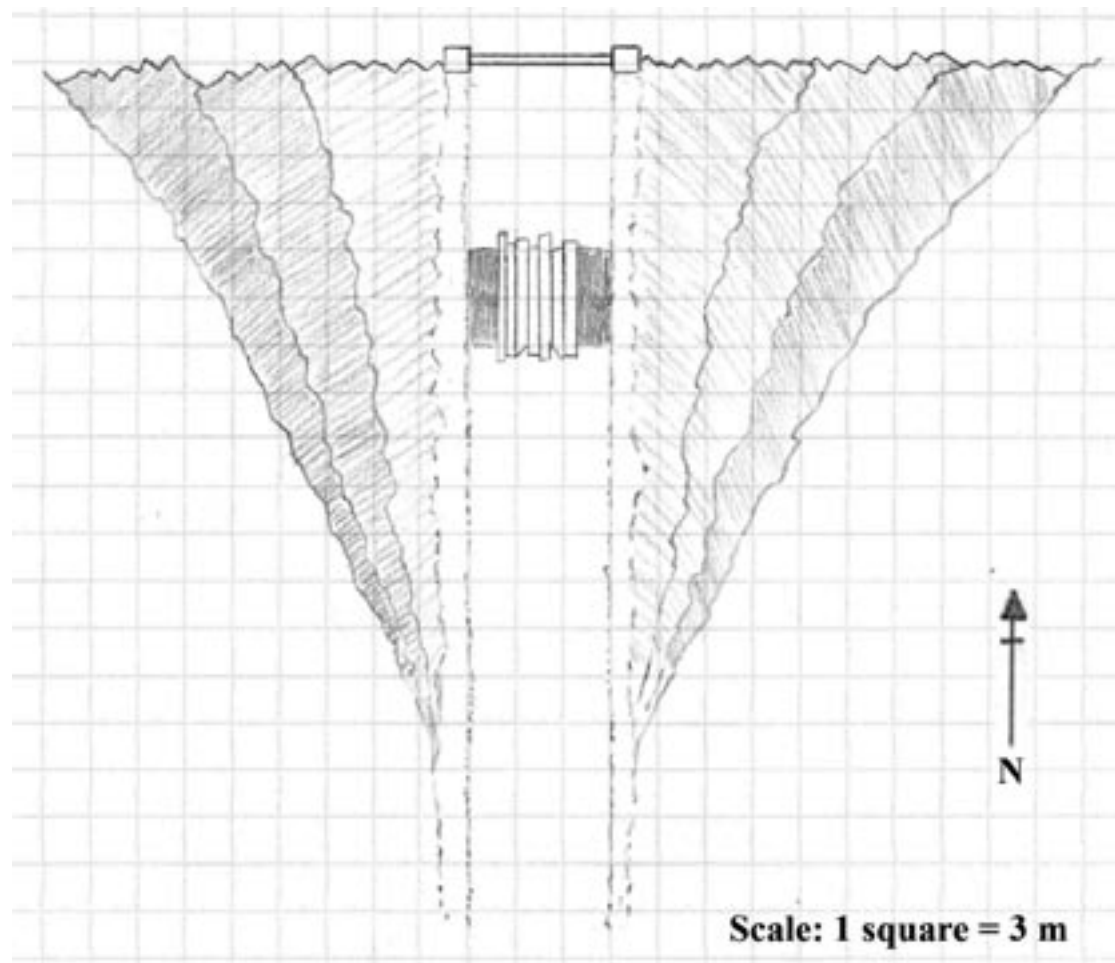


Scale: 1 square = 3 metres

Area 24



Scale: 1 square = 3 metres



Scale: 1 square = 3 m



Optional Beams!

By Matthew Sprange

Throughout the years A Call to Arms has been available, fans have been tweaking and testing their own house rules – and even the game's own designers have been known to try a new thing or two!

Powers & Principalities collates some of the best rules variants we have seen, from our forums, meeting and chatting to players at tournaments and events, and from Mongoose's own A Call to Arms archives. Here, we preview a few of the variant rules we have seen for Beam weapons.

You should always agree with your opponent before using any of these rules, but we encourage you to give them a try at least once. You never know, you might find a whole new dimension to the game!

Beam Weapons

Beam weapons are immensely powerful, but often unpredictable – just the way we like them in our games of A Call to Arms. On average, they will do a serious amount of damage compared to other weapons but, on occasion, they will literally slice an enemy ship in two!

Some optional rules have sprung up regarding beams, which may be of interest in those who prefer a little more predictability and a little less drama!

Beam Option A

Roll your beam's Attack Dice as normal. However, the numbers rolled on each dice will dictate how many hits are scored;

Attack Dice	Hits
1-2	0
3-5	1
6	2, and roll again *

* Keep rolling every time you get a 6, scoring another two hits each time.

Beam Option B

Roll your beam's Attack Dice as normal. However, the numbers rolled on each dice will dictate how many hits are scored;

Attack Dice	Hits
1-2	0
3-4	1
5-6	1, and roll again *

* Keep rolling every time you get a 6, scoring another hit each time.

Beam Option C (also known as the Burger Beam System)

Roll your beam's Attack Dice as normal. However, the numbers rolled on each dice will dictate how many hits are scored;

Attack Dice	Hits
1-2	0
3-5	1
6	3



ZEPHNIL

By Dale C. McCoy, Jr.

Playtesters: Janel Bisacquino, Michael G. McMenamin, Jr., William Montana III

PLANETARY READOUT

Name: Zephnil
Planet Statistics: C101313-A Ic, Lo, Va
Size/Gravity: 2,104 km in diameter. Less than 1/10 standard gravity
Atmosphere: None, Vacuum
Surface Water: 8% (100% of which is frozen)
Population: 1,200. 86% Human, 11% Feline, 2% Canine.
Government/Ruler: Corporate Owned, Zephnil Corp, Charles Grayson, Corporate Rep.
Classifications: Ice-Capped, Low Population, Vacuum

Major Population Centres

Zephnil Base I (refuelling/commerce base). Population 850. Class C Starport (Berthing Fee: Cr 200). Planetary Capital
Reesman Station (mining base). Population 300
Class E Starport (special license to berth available at Zephnil Base I).

Local Law Summary

Weapons: Heavy weapons and portable energy weapons illegal.
Drugs: Combat drugs illegal.
Information: Agent programs illegal.
Technology: Alien computer and sensors above TL 12 illegal

Offworlders: Landing only permitted at Zephnil Base I without additional license.

Psionics: Dangerous powers forbidden. Those with psi-powers or psi-tech must register.

Other: Intending to make a monk speak against his will is punishable by fines.

System Details

Zephnil is the forth smallest moon orbiting the gas giant, Ulypses. Ulypses has sixteen moons, most of which are not being used at present. Most do not contain enough resources for a company to profitably mine. Two moons have volcanoes covering over 80% of their surface and three other moons have unstable orbits. One other planet orbits the star. It possesses an atmosphere of thick clouds covering the entire planet. Probes and robots sent through the cloud cover to investigate the planet below failed to send back any transmissions. The outer edge of the system consists of a scrap metal belt from a major space battle fought over 1000 years ago. Additional bodies in the system: a belt of tiny asteroids called the Dust Belt and three comets. Sun color: Green.

Imports

Advanced Machine Parts (Space Ship Repair Parts) - Major
Advanced Weapons (Missiles) - Minor
Pharmaceuticals (General Medical Supplies) - Minor

Exports

Uncommon Raw Materials (Titanium Iron Compound) - Major
Random cargoes - Minor

Major Corporations and Contacts

Zephnil Corporation - Bernard Jenson (Base Assistant Manager)
Senninkee Mining Company - Jun'honshi (Sales Representative)
Paterson Escort and Security, CPC - Rakon Paterson (Captain)
Interstellar Cargo Salvaging Services, LLC - Starkren (President)

Threats

Criminal/Pirate Activity: Moderate, Pirate activity held at bay by privateers.
War Threat: Minimal
Radiation Level: Minimal

REFEREE'S EYES ONLY

Description and Characteristics

Zephnil is an atmosphere-less moon orbiting the gas giant Ulypses. Various rocks escaping from Ulypses' thin ring caused the moon's crater-covered surface. Most of the craters are small but some are of notable size. Two bases rest on the

surface of Zephnil. Zephnil Base I is the larger of the two bases. The base primarily serves as a refuelling station for ships with only short range jump capability. The Zephnil Corporation owns and operates Zephnil Base I. Senninke Mining Company leases part of the moon and operates Reesman Station in the middle of Reesman Crater, one of the larger craters on the surface of the moon. Reesman Station extracts out a Titanium Iron compound primarily used as a raw material in manufacturing specialty armour plating on ships hulls.

Unlike other Class C starports, Zephnil offers refined fuel. Most of the station below the surface consists of a high volume refining plant and storage tanks. Approximately half of Zephnil Base I was built below ground. The other half jets straight out of the rock surface of the moon reaching into the black skies above. The starport rests at ground level with landing pads for ships between 1000 and 2000 tons the furthest away.

Compared to Zephnil Base I, Reesman Station appears quite humble. A ring shaped base of modular sections with a mine in the centre and a class E starport along one side light the dark side of this moon. When the light from the sun hits it just right, the dust plume from the mine appears as the smoke rising from a fire. A small hole about 30 km away permits a secondary exit should an emergency arise in the mine.

Recent History

Privateer ships mistakenly destroyed a refuelling ship piloted by a monk from the Monastery of Silence. The monks staged a protest until Zephnil Corp, punished the captain and gunner responsible for the accident. The corporation's slow response angered many of the monks. Despite them being

back to work doing their refuelling runs, the corporation fears the monks may try something like that again and seeks an alternative should the monks try to get out of their contract.

A vehicle pulling a cargo sled loaded down with ore from Reesman on its way to Zephnil fell into a sink hole. The hole opened when the vehicle stalled, out and the driver used unconventional means to get the vehicle moving again. The driver died during the fall but the rescuers noted that the sink hole leads to a previously unknown tunnel that stretched deep within the moon. No expedition into the tunnel has occurred yet but the Zephnil Corporate Rep knows a license needs issued soon, or someone will go illegally.

Points of Interest

The Last Jump: Despite being a bar designed to mainly service privateers and refuelling space farers, The Last Jump attracts a sizable amount of its clientele from the locals as well. Owned and tended by the canine alien, Franikii, she offers cheaper drinks to those that can entertain her patrons. Herself a former crewman aboard a freelance trading ship, she enjoys listening to the tale of those that simply pass through. Because so many that pass through stop at The Last Jump, the place tends to be a hot bed of rumours ranging from pirate activity to locations of abandon ships to the latest theory on political conspiracies.

Reesman Mining Station: Many that stop at Zephnil know nothing about Reesman. A small mining operation on the dark side of the moon goes scarcely noticed by those passing through. This anonymity allows it to maintain minimal security and a more relaxed atmosphere for the employees. Employees here receive basic training in blade weapons, while management wields the more advanced weaponry. This does not mean

Reesman stands invulnerable to attacks and thieves. The most common involves a trader departing the station without first paying for the ore in their hold. Some wonder whether these ships slip past station security or if someone allowed the thieves to leave.

Crater Assault Field: One of the more popular activities for the privateers when they're not shooting pirates is to practice shooting pirates. Crater Assault Field handles all types of military training operations from close quarters cavern fighting to open field assault to ship attacks on fixed ground targets. Occasionally, someone goes missing during a cave fight. Rumours about a monster or some alien tech beneath the moon's surface eating those gone missing have never been verified.

Green Room: The hydroponics section of Zephnil grows the main staples of the locals' diet. Since some people living here can go months or years without seeing a green plant, Cornucopia Incorporated maintains the aesthetics of the room, making it a favourite place to relax. The Monastery of Silence trains their new monks to meditate here before trusting them to the vacuum of space. With the Green Room a favourite place for new Deft Hands to practice their craft, Cornucopia installed a high tech security system. This served to make the room a target for the criminal organization's more skilled members. Several recent illnesses have been traced back to tainted food grown in the Green Room. Zephnil authorities have questioned a number of people but no arrests have been made thus far. Cornucopia Inc has posted a reward for information leading to an arrest but so far no one has provided any such information.

Defences

Zephnil Station I: 2 Pulse Lasers Bays, 1 Fusion Gun Bays, 1 Basic Torpedo Launcher and 1 Meson Gun

Reesman Mining Station: 1 Pulse Laser and 1 Beam Laser

Groups

Privateers: With no military base in the system, the Zephnil Corporation hires a number of privateers to fend off pirates. Each privateer outfit has an individual license with the Zephnil Corp. Various outfits are under no obligation to work with other privateers. The privateers have no central authority and even less oversight. As such, privateers generally require a bribe to not attack honest traders. While traders complain loudly to Zephnil authorities about this, most would rather pay a higher “cost of doing business” than have to fend off pirates themselves. Other than pulling a privateer’s license for gross misconduct, Zephnil maintains little control over the actions of the privateers. In the space port, rumours about of some privateers firing on each other to get a larger bounty.

Monastery of Silence: Undoubtedly the most curious group of people that have long term roots on Zephnil is the monks of the Monastery of Silence. The head of Zephnil Corp. originally invited the monks to come to the moon. The working arrangement between the monks and the corporation has the monks flying the fuelling shuttles into the gas giant, gather the hydrogen and return it to the station. In exchange for this service, they have exclusive rights to a section of the station as their monastery rent free and receive a small stipend to cover other needs. The corporation president required the monks to allow him to join their order and still talk

during his day job. While the monks loathed the idea, they agreed to the condition. The monks undertake a vow of silence and live their lives in seclusion and silence.

Deft Hands Brotherhood: Wherever humanity goes, thieves follow close behind. Zephnil is no different. The thieves on Zephnil banded together into the Deft Hands Brotherhood. Few rules exist in the group, only do not steal from other members and do not attract attention to the Brotherhood, pay 10% of all you steal to the Deft Hands and every member is obligated to help others escape death sentences when necessary. The members understand that that clause is more to keep convicted members from talking to the authorities about the Brotherhood then it is a gesture of good will. With agreements existing between the Deft Hands and other thieves groups on different worlds, thieves can pass through Zephnil and work their trade as long as they abide by the rules. These visiting thieves also see the barely recognizable remains of a few that failed to follow the rules.

Patrons

Michael “Righty” Stavian: Privateer

Required: Battle Dress, Computers, Zero-G, Career in Marines.

Reward: One-Third/Half of all cargo recovered

Players’ Information

Despite now being a privateer, Stavian still refers to himself as a marine. He captains the privateer ship Stingray, a sleek streamlined corvette heavily armed and has a giant toothy ray painted in it hull. Michael “Righty” Stavian is more honest than his fellow privateers and does not demand much in

the way of bribes. He never demands bribes from fellow marines. Some say that Stavian lost his left arm in a fight with the pirates he now hunts. Others say that he was captured by enemy forces and removed his arm when he refused to talk. When going on a “more then routine” pirate raid, he prefers to ask the assistance of other marines, instead of the regular privateers that hang out on Zephnil.

Referee’s Information

Stavian and his crew heard a rumour as to where some pirates store their cargo. They want an extra set of guns along. If someone happens to have a Marine background and Stavian finds out about it, he’ll invite the characters to help him out.

If the characters have their own ship, Stavian will offer them the higher amount. Much of the cargo happens to be stored on a mildly guarded asteroid in the middle of an asteroid field. A few mounted gun turrets fire at the ships on the way in. Once at the asteroid, the ship(s) must land and the crews must enter the cave on foot, in vacc suits.

1. The pirate ship that stores their cargo there, the Black Falcon, happens to be in the area and will attack the landed ships. The ships require maintenance to take off but are still space-worthy.
2. Halfway down the passage way on the cave wall is an access panel. Unless the characters can either enter the right code or bypass the circuitry, explosive collapse the tunnel behind them.
3. This asteroid is a decoy. When the characters reach the interior of the asteroid, they find a several automated guns ready to fire at them.
4. The asteroid is not as lightly defended as Stavian believed. Numerous missile turrets defend the instillation.

5. While the asteroid itself is lightly defended, its first line of defence includes proximity detectors that signal the presence of intruders to the pirate base in the same asteroid field.
6. Information that Stavian is not sharing with anyone, including his own crew, is that this asteroid belongs to the pirates that removed the marine's arm. Stavian plans to hunt down his old enemy and to return the favour.

Renee Rodriguez: Doctor

Required: Investigate, Stealth, Streetwise, Rodriguez as a Contact or Ally
Reward: Cr. 3,000

Players' Information

Rodriguez is the doctor on Zephnil Base I. More than a few privateers owe their lives to the young surgeon. With a tongue that makes engineers blush and an energy weapon scar on the right side of her neck, she's regularly welcome to drink with a rougher crowd than most doctors choose to associate with.

Referee's Information

Even though Rodriguez left the sector where she racked up a large gambling debt, she keeps a lookout for agents of the criminal organization or their bounty hunters that seek the money owed or her body. Rodriguez keeps a travel bag ready to go in case she needs to leave at a moment notice. She seldom has long term plans and routinely checks the passenger manifest of incoming ships. Should one of the characters mention either a distant or remote destination in front of Rodriguez, she begins sharing in-depth information about the world, the kind of knowledge that only someone that has spent significant time there would know.

1. Bounty hunters working for the criminal organization hunting Rodriguez show up on Zephnil while most of the Privateers happen to be away. The doctor asks the character to help hide her.
- 2-3. Rodriguez gets a message that members of her family are being held captive in a region of space familiar to the characters. Rodriguez has one month to pay back her money with interest.
4. The doctor asks the characters to take her away for a short trip. While away from Zephnil, the characters notice Rodriguez gambling in a casino and losing heavily. The debt she has already racked up is more than the amount of money then Rodriguez and the characters have on hand combined. Unless the characters intervene, Rodriguez will turn to a criminal outfit for the money.
- 5-6. Rodriguez volunteers to join the characters along on a mission. If asked why, she says she needs to stretch her legs and spend time away from Zephnil. She knows the area well and volunteers in-depth knowledge about the place. During the adventure, she mentions that she forgot that the last time she was there, she narrowly evaded capture.

Starkren: Salvage Broker

Requires: a Spaceship
Reward: Two-thirds of the cargo recovered

Players' Information

It is not uncommon for pirates to die before being able to return to a freighter they hit or for a vessel to misjump and the crew die before help could arrive or some other hazard to befall a ship causing some valuable cargo to be lost in space. This is where Starkren's Interstellar Cargo

Salvaging Services comes in. With a mind like a steal trap and the sense to use it properly, Starkren hires enterprising crews to salvage missing cargo armed with his best guess where it might be for a small cut. Some would say that the alien's guesses are a little too accurate but no illegal activity has been pinned on him recently. The same, however, cannot be said for his thugs that Starkren hires to make sure he gets paid properly. Since he is one of the few of his race in this part of space, rumours about his involvement in the disappearance of shipments or of what he does with the crews that fail to return with his cut are in no short supply.

Referee's Information

Starkren always knows more than he tells and never tells anyone everything they need to know about a mission. Some possible complications could include:

1. Royal Cargo: The cargo belongs to a Duke and he has been known to hunt down those he feels do him wrong.
2. Trapped ship: The ship went missing in a region of space where a pirate gang tends to leave traps for rescuers. The ship was already raided by pirates now remains a trap for whoever finds it.
3. Radioactive cargo: The cargo had a radioactive part to it and containment broke before the characters arrived. Unless the crew wants to abandon the job and make Starkren unhappy with the characters, they need to find a way to transport it back without dying in the process.
4. Diplomatic vessel. The ship is a diplomatic vessel and the characters are trying to retrieve documents. Should the characters read the documents, they discover details about illegal government-sponsored covert ops. Should

the government find out the characters' part in the documents' recovery, the PCs could become a liability and the government will need to deal with the crew.

5. Slaves: Told only that the cargo is time sensitive, the characters find the ship holding hundreds to be sold off as slaves. When they arrive, half the slaves died of starvation but the slave keepers live well fed. The ship is still functional but lacks enough fuel to make another jump.
6. Drugs: Medicinal transport lost means those needing medication fail to receive treatment. With a little processing, the cargo in the wreckage could be turned into high priced narcotics. Starkren informs the characters that there is a secure cargo onboard a ship hit by pirates that he does not believe was stolen. The characters must search the ship for the smuggling compartment holding the goods before the pirates return or face a fire fight.

Tabitha Dalmac: Pirate

Required: Computers, Pirate Contact or former career with a pirate organization.

Reward: Cr. 8,000

Players' Information

Pirates have been accused of being dirty low lives, of being cruel and of being some of the worst examples of humanity. No one ever accuses them

of being stupid. People like Tabitha Dalmac are the reason why. Dalmac works as a scout for the pirate cabal the Five Guns. When she meets the characters, somewhere off Zephnil, she hires them to find out solid information regarding the flight plan of the Grey Gander, a ship carrying a noble woman and some unknown cargo. After getting the flight plan and cargo manifest, the characters are to rendezvous in a section of empty space one parsec away from Zephnil.

Referee's Information

Dalmac hires the characters to do the scouting work because all of the scouts that work for the Five Guns are suspected to working for pirate organizations and because The Five Guns wants deniability should things go sour for the characters. With a mission this critical, Dalmac does not want to take any chances. The Five Guns intends to hold the noble woman for ransom.

Some complications for this job could include:

1. A privateer captures a pirate that is aware of the plan but not who was sent.
2. An illegal agent program discovers the identity of those making inquiries into the Grey Gander's flight plan. The players are aware of their identities being discovered before someone can investigate.
3. The characters get the flight plan as well as cargo manifest. The Grey Gander's flight plan

goes to worlds with a recent epidemic and the ship holds medical supplies.

4. The characters determine the official flight plan and cargo manifest is a forgery. After some searching, they discover the Grey Gander currently holds biological weapon components.
5. The person posing as the noble woman is actually a decoy. When the pirates determine this, they seek the characters out and want their money back.
6. The noble woman falls ill while on Zephnil. Her condition forbids her from departing until long after originally scheduled. Should the characters probe further, they discover her aides discussing how to best alter her timetable to accommodate her illness. They also find certain aides and security personnel making arrangements to jump to other locations to inform those she plans to meet about the change.

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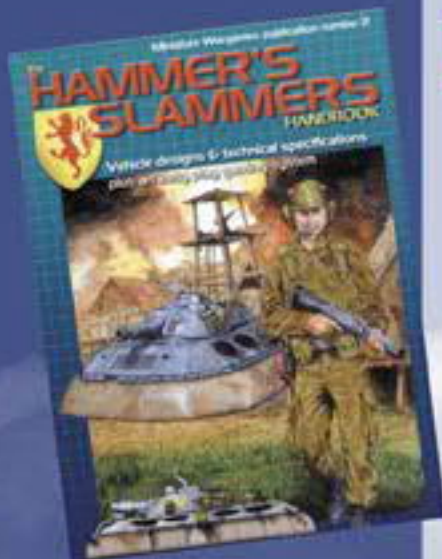
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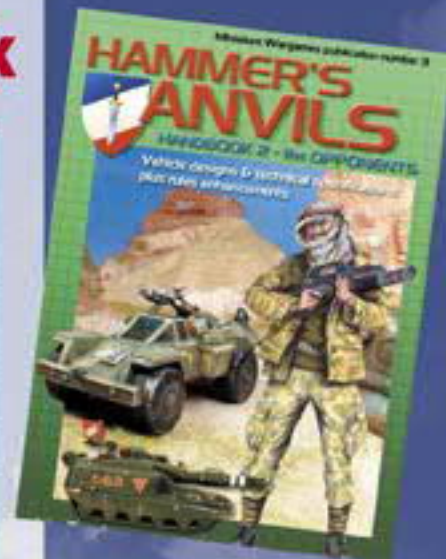
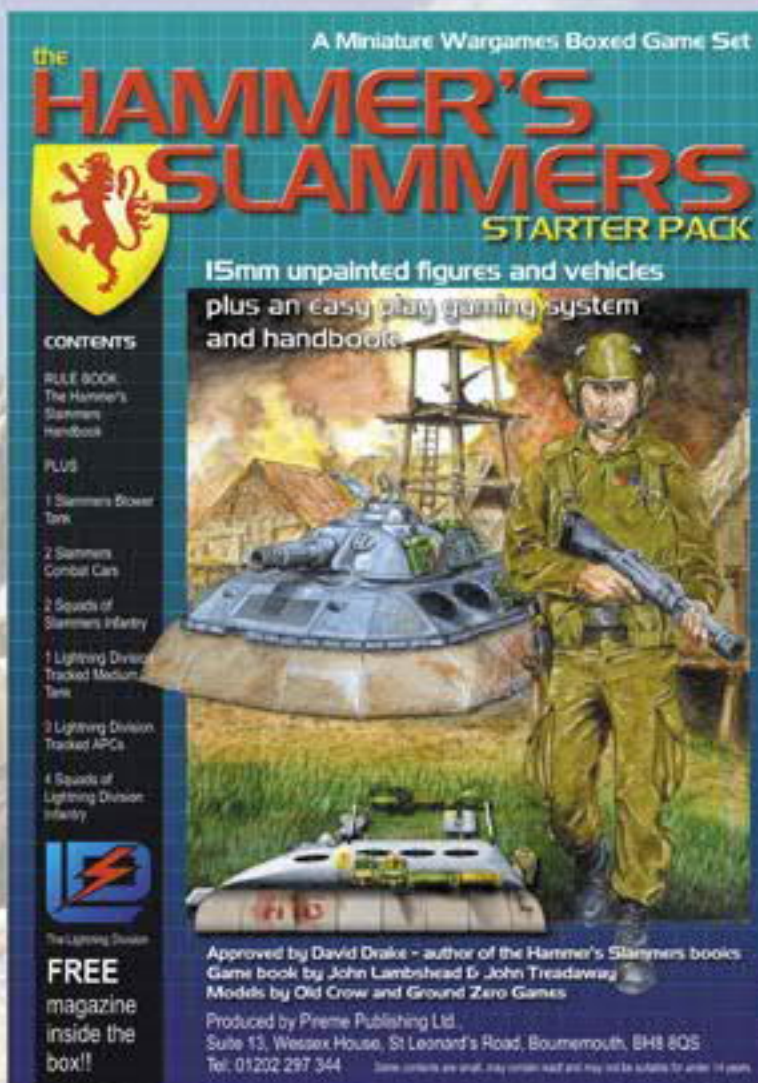
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Want to write for your favourite gaming publisher? Want to get paid for it? Got a great idea for an article? If the answers to these questions are 'yes', then Signs & Portents wants to hear from you.

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You will be provided with a style guide when we commission your article. Make sure you read it!

Please ensure that final submissions are no longer than around 5'000 words. We have had several recent submissions that have had to be broken down into many sections and we are not comfortable doing this too often.

Subject Matter

First and foremost, the article has to be based on any one of our product lines, whether it is any of our miniature wargaming systems or our roleplaying games., ranging from A Call to Arms right through to Conan. If you have ideas for any of our games we want to hear them.

So, you have chosen your game, but what do you actually write about? Scenarios are good. In fact, we love them. Give me a scenario to edit and I am a happy camper. Perhaps you want to discuss the philosophy of a game. That's good. We encourage intellectual thought process around here. If you have something meaningful to say, then try us out. If we don't like it, we *will* tell you. Think hard before you try humour though. With guys like Jonny Nexus about, you will need to be sharp if you want to break in. If you think you have what it takes, though, then feel free to try your hand. Just be prepared to be told you may not be as funny as you think you are.

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