

Fictional Reality

Issue 09

September 2002

Call of Cthulhu

WARHAMMER
SKIRMISH

CHRONOPH

INQUISITOR

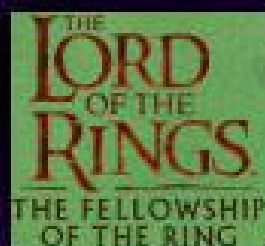
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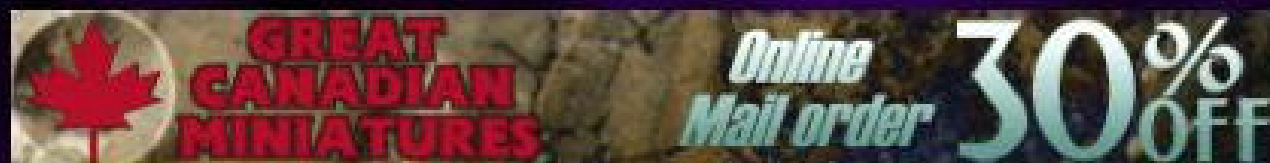
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FROM THE EDITOR

Greetings from Texas, which is rather mild temperature-wise right now. Hope that you all are having a fun summer of gaming and attending conventions. My play schedule has picked up just a bit, but I can see that fading away a bit with the birth of our daughter, Megan. Yes, she's already the princess of the house and will likely be spoiled beyond all possible comprehension, but what can you do but enjoy it.

As you've probably heard WOTC has decided to pull the plug on Chainmail with word of a re-vamped version, more centered on D&D, to come out next year. Man, I really did like Chainmail a lot, but hopefully this is only a delay. If you take a trip down memory lane you'll see that when Target Games went belly-up the death knell of Chronopia and Warzone were being taken as the final word on those games. Well, lookee here, the new edition of Chronopia has hit the shelves and you'll find a preview of the background for the game in this issue of Fictional Reality. The new edition of Warzone can also be expected by the fine folks at Excelsior Entertainment in the near future.

There are also a couple of other new games that are either out already or will be soon that I'm chomping at the bit to try. Hundred Kingdoms looks quite interesting and the Simian army has caught my eye. I can't wait to throw down with a game of IK:Warmachine. From what I've seen the figures look amazing and you can pick up a set of the demo rules from their website at www.ikwarmachine.com

This issue of Fictional Reality brings a bit of something for everyone. Miniature and D20 reviews of all sorts of products, a Warhammer Skirmish battle report, A scenario for Inquisitor fans (which could be easily modified for other sci-fi games), a Call of Cthulhu adventure (also quite customizable for other RPG's), a new troop for Chronopia, Deano Ware takes a look at Hundred Kingdoms in this issue's installment of Standing Orders, and a massive amount of information from the guys over at Excelsior Entertainment starting with Thom Talamini answering a bunch of my questions and ending with a guidebook to the world of Chronopia.

Have Fun!

Mark Theurer

As usual, I make no claims whatsoever to any property, intellectual or otherwise, that is owned by any company whose product(s) appear in Fictional Reality.

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CONCEPT ARTWORK WARZONE



ASHIGARU LEADER



FEMALE ASHIGARU



VENUSIAN INFILTRATOR

This issue will mark the beginning of a new column similar to the miniature reviews, but it's actually couple of stages before there are actually figures to review. We'll take a look at some concept art, some new and some not so new, which sculptors will use to create new miniatures. When possible, we'll also compare the finished pieces to the original artwork. Everything in this first installment is from Excelsior Entertainment for the upcoming Ultimate Warzone miniature game.

All of the pics on this page are troops from the Mishima army. Some new sculpts for older troops like the Ashigaru is cool, but I wonder what happened to their polearms? The Infiltrator looks like a bad man and I'd bet that he is able to deploy just about anywhere. The Typhoon Rocket Launcher Team reminds me a lot of the 4th of July. That missile canister looks like a barrel full of fireworks. Pretty neat. Like the Infiltrator, the Engineer is a new troop type that I expect to make an appearance in Ultimate Warzone. That extra heavy looking armor should make for an impressive figure. At first glance I thought that the Assault Samurai was a re-do of the Ronin Samurai, but now I'm wondering if it's an all new troop type. His gun just doesn't look a lot like an assault rifle to me.

The next page starts off with another new Mishima troop type, the Overlord Guard. It has a very mechanical look to it and I'd love to see a prominent role of machines in the Mishima army.

I liked all of the Mishima drawings presented here and they should make for good figures. I especially like the addition of a female squad member to the Ashigaru ranks.



TYPHOON ROCKET LAUNCHER



ENGINEER



VENUSIAN ASSAULT SAMURAI



OVERLORD GUARD



MINISTRY OF FEAR



EVISCERATOR

Do you want to tell the representative from the Ministry of Fear to go get stuffed? Me neither, but I do want to have one in my Bauhaus army. This picture is from the old Mutant Chronicles role-playing game and would make for an imposing figure on the game table.

Now on to lots of good bad guys! I'd be willing to bet that the Eviscerator is not aligned to a particular dark power and is available to generals of any Dark Legion force. Of course, I could be way off but it strikes me more as a monster that would appear in the general horde.

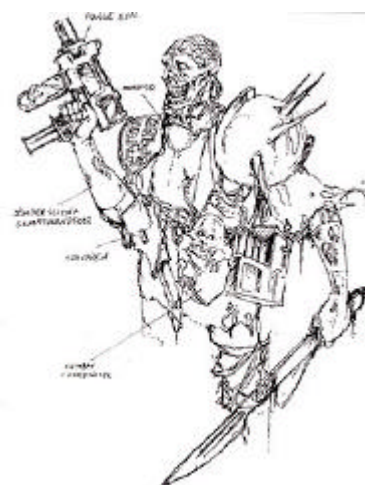
The last three pictures, to the right, are all pieces of artwork that appeared either in an earlier edition of Warzone or the Mutant Chronicles role-playing game, which I'd love to see a d20 version of by the way.

The Plague Guard, if I recall correctly, are based off of old artwork of a Curator. With that in mind my first thought would be that they might be bodyguards for the deranged doctors. Like the Curators, I expect the Plague Guard to fall into the Demnogonis army list.

You're probably not surprised to find out that I bet the Gas Grunts to end up in the service of Demnogonis also. I can see these guys tossing around the Warzone equivalent of mustard gas or some other vile chemical or biological agent.

It's not too much of a stretch to guess that the Voice of Demnogonis will be part of his army. These strike me as quite different than the Children of Illian though. They have a much more look of intelligence about them and don't seem like demonic little kids. That's not to say that these will be a barrel of laughs because I bet they turn out to be some type of command model.

I'm glad to see that work on the fleshing out of the figure lines for Ultimate Warzone has begun. I've heard that the game will include every Warzone figure released and this looks to add to the list. Sounds good to me!



PLAGUE GUARD



GAS GRUNTS



VOICE OF DEMNOGONIS

Ok, so there are my thoughts on the couple of preceding pages of concept art. Here's Thom Talamini from Excelsior Entertainment with the most accurate version, theirs, of the artwork.

The Ashigaru Leader. We wanted this model to fit more closely with the existing troop types so a leader was drawn up to represent this. Prominently displayed on its back will be the Mon for that squad. The Mon is the standard proudly born into battle. The decorations on the Mon tell a few things about the model. It tells his squad affiliation, his rank and the Lord Heir he serves. This was a feature we wanted more incorporated into the Mishima troops.

The Asihgaru Female. We like the idea that women can serve as grunt forces just like men. Lady Mariko is particularly inviting when it comes to female combatants.

The Infiltrator. When lone recon is needed in the dense jungles of Venus or the deep caverns of Mercury, the Mishima Corporation relies on their Infiltrators. We wanted a trooper that would be specially outfitted for speed and efficiency. When it came to the Mon, it was decided that the Infiltrator was still a corporate warrior, not some back-alley assassin so the Mon would be used, though it folds down onto the figures back when he is trying not to attract attention.

The Typhoon Rocket Launcher. Designed to function in the confines of the Mercurian underworld, the Typhoon is a marvel of ingenuity and practicality. The shells are outfitted with a simple guidance system that allows them to miss large obstructions like stalactites and home in on their targets. While not perfect, these weapons allow Mishima a terrific advantage in underground warfare. Since the rockets are loaded in groups, their rate of fire and coverage is higher than your traditional mortar.

The Engineer. A new class if you will to all the armies, this was something we saw as an extension to life in the Mutant Chronicles Universe. The Engineers are trained in the arts of demolition and reclamation. These are the troops that can take down buildings, effectively coordinate attacks on vehicles, and they are also the ones that can commandeer a downed vehicle for possible reuse. The helm off picture was done to show the circuitry that is present under the samurai-like helm he wears normally. For the most part the Engineers of all the corporations share these abilities though they vary on specialty. Engineers are capable warriors in the Mishima army and are highly trained in demolitions.

Assault Samurai. We started by wanting a lightly armored, yet powerful hitting force to handle situations of dense cover. The Assault Samurai wear a form fitting reinforced mesh body armor that allows them very free movement and fairly good protection. The substance, a Kevlar-like material makes these fellows fast moving in spite of their heavy firepower.

The Overlord's Guard. Of course the Emperor is not without his own protection and the mystics who serve him in the Guard are loyal to a fault. Though this rendering makes it seem that the Guard has cybernetic limbs this is not the case. As the Brotherhood already has enough issues with Mishima and their development of KI powers, the Emperor would not be so bold as to throw Cybertronic designs in their face. Mishima are masters at micro-circuitry. They have begun the creation and production of exo-armor. This technology is not invasive like bionics would be, but rather is worn on the outside of the skin and the interface allows it to augment particular attributes. In this case of this character. The exo-armor augments his strength and speed allowing for great power and high leaps. As the technology is not invasive, it keeps the protestations of the Brotherhood to a minimum. Loyal to a fault, we see these Guards as the eyes and will of the old Emperor.

The Executioner from the Ministry of Fear. We pulled this guy right out of the Bauhaus RPG book and wrote up stats for him.

The Eviscerator. Drawn from an old piece of art that hasn't been used, this piece looked like an excellent addition to the army of Muawjihe. We all liked this piece of art and felt that it was a good representation of a walking nightmare. The Eviscerator will be able to fight in close combat and wield Dark Symmetry.

Adopting an old piece of art that originally represented a Curator (who now have a different look), we thought too highly of this design to leave it alone. The elite troops of Demnogonis come armed to the teeth and also have toxic creatures they carry with them. **[Plague Guard]**

"Gas Grunts" (working title). When the 41st Trench Battalion held off the armies of Demnogonis during the Siege of Taranshire Prime, Imperial was able to successfully escape the overwhelming forces of Demnogonis. Unfortunately for the Trench Battalion, their actions meant that they would be left behind. Impressed with the audacity and resolve of the Trenchers, the Nephrite Mortis turned these stalwart defenders into servants for his own campaign. Since that dark day many years ago, the 32nd has been seen amid the forces of the Demnogonis raining chemical death down upon his enemies.

Again, this piece came from the old RPG book and was something that stuck out in our collective heads as a cool Akira-esque picture. The **Voice of Demnogonis** will be a powerful wielder of Dark Symmetry, a high ranked Nephrite in his own right.

MINIATURE REVIEWS

CONFRONTATION

Sykho Volesterus is the first Confrontation figure that we'll be looking at this issue. I picked him up less for what he is, a character in the Alchemist army, and more for what I plan to use him for, a doctor/surgeon-type character for Dungeons and Dragons. The model comes in two pieces; Sykko and a back-banner. I could not make out the mold line, but there was a rather large amount of flash and bits of metal that connected the figure as it was cast. After several careful minutes with a model knife he was much more presentable. The figure itself has tons of

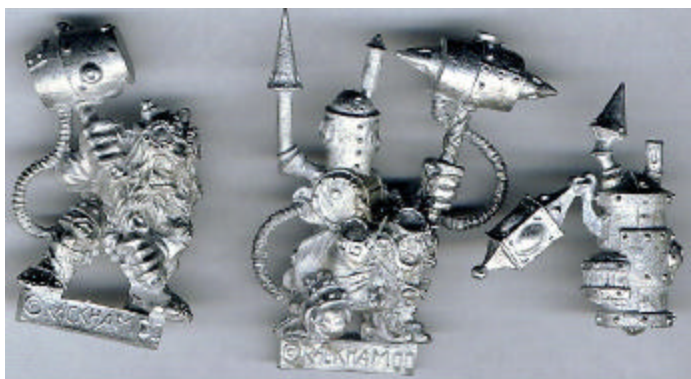


character. From his overcoat with lots of clasps and buttons to his medical (?) bag with a small padlock on it I just immediately thought of him as some kind of doctor gone wrong. His familiar, some sort of a quasit or tiny dragon does give him an arcane feeling also. His back-banner has me worried though. It's automatically going to be the weak point on the model and it looks like a hard job to pin. I'll be gluing it and hoping for the best. Even with considerably more cleanup time that I'm used to with Confrontation figures I am very pleased to have picked him up. What else can you use him for? Easy, a Cleric without any fuss at all and also a mage. Sykko will set you back \$6.99 USD.

Next are a couple of goblins that were previously only available as part of the goblin pirate box set. In this blister you'll get two goblin buccaneers, each armed with a black-powder firearm. The mold line on these little gits needed some work and there was also a bit of flash that needed my attention. Again, more than I'm used to with Confrontation figures. Both of them are dressed in very typical and flashy pirate garb and should paint up very nicely. The first one, one the data card, is my favorite and is the more versatile of the two.

He would be perfect for a goblin PC based in Freeport. He met with an accident and his right hand has been replaced with a hook, nice touch. The second one is slightly more comical as he comes with a small wagon to ride in. Maybe he lost both legs and can't hobble around on two pegs. He reminds me of Eddie Murphy's character at the beginning of 'Trading Places'. Of course, if you're playing Goblins in Confrontation you can now build up an all-pirate army, which is very tempting by the way. They would make for a great lighthearted army that could still kick your opponent in the crotch. For an RPG, you would have to rationalize how goblins got gunpowder (they stole it from the dwarves), but that shouldn't be too much trouble. Retail price is \$7.99 USD.

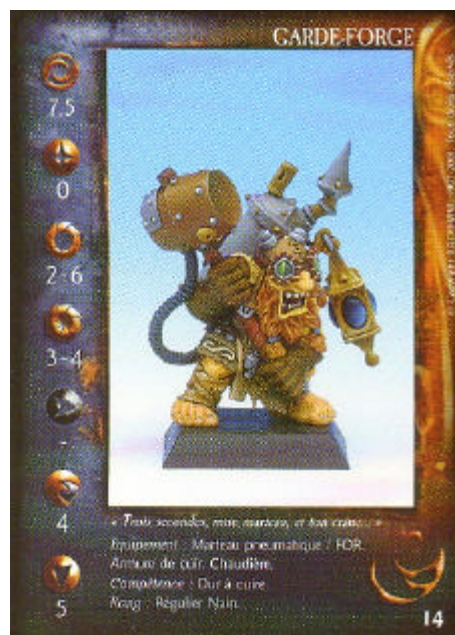




Like the goblin pirates, the dwarf Guardians of the Forge were previously available only in the Dwarf Clan box set. You can now grab two of them for \$7.99 USD in a blister. These guys got back to the very minimal flash that I'm used to with Confrontation figures. Cleanup was minimal and took just a few scrapes of my model knife. Both are wearing minimal armor, but carry large hammers and a steam tank on their back.

One comes with it as part of the model and the other will need you to attach it. The tank could also be used for something else and the model's appearance would not suffer for it much at all. The head/faces on the dwarves are my favorite feature. Each guy wears a leather cap that has goggles that remind me a lot of a welder's helmet. I would expect a large electrical discharge when their hammers strike. Their hammers are very nice, being made up of several metal plates with prominent rivets. I no longer play Dwarves in Confrontation, too many armies too little time, but I still picked up these guys, specifically to use as player-characters or NPC's in Dungeons and Dragons. I liked them enough just for that purpose alone. The only thing that is wrong with them is that they are not the dwarf warriors in heavy plate that are also in the Dwarf Clan box set. Hopefully they will also come out soon in their own blister.

Last up for Confrontation this time around is The Iron Lady, Priestess of Griffon. She retails for \$8.99 USD and comes as a three piece model that will require more than a few minutes to put together. You can see the pieces that go



into putting this model together in the center of the page. You can't tell from the picture of the card, but there are actually two back-banners on the model. There is also a lot of fine detail that will need to be picked out during painting such as several lengths of small chain on her robes.



This is a great model that I would heartily recommend even to people that don't play Confrontation because she would do great as a cleric in any fantasy role-playing game and since I don't play the Griffon in Confrontation that's exactly how I plan to use her.

The model will require a decent amount of time on your part though. Careful assembly and a dedicated paint job is what will make this model truly wonderful. At about nine dollars she's nowhere near the shallow end of the pool when talking about price, but if you can find a reason to pick her up then I highly recommend it.

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LARRY LEADHEAD

1 Jul 2002

YOU SUMMONED ME, MY LORD ?

YES, ADMIRAL, I WANT YOU TO ASSEMBLE MY FLEET AND PREPARE IT FOR BATTLE IMMEDIATELY

IS THERE A PROBLEM, MY LORD ?

I AM NOT SURE... BUT I FEEL A GREAT DISTURBANCE IN THE FORCE...

MEAN WHILE, BACK ON EARTH...

WAY TO GO LARRY, THAT'S YOUR **THIRD** SIX IN A ROW

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MINIATURE REVIEWS

HERESY

I've recently gotten a hold of several miniatures from the Heresy line and present them here for you to take a gander at.

Heresy figures are available from several sources here in the US or directly from the manufacturer. The first specimen is Boris the Barbarian. Just from looking at him you can tell that he's tall. In fact, from the top edge of his axe to the bottom of the base he measures 1 7/8ths inches. Yes, he's big and muscled. Yes, he's professional wrestling kind of big and muscled, but somehow it just looks good.



Boris comes as a multi-part model consisting of his body, head, right hand and two weapons. You can choose to arm him with either a double bladed axe or a large hammer. As you can see I went with the axe and am thinking of what to do with the hammer. I also dropped him onto a 25mm square base rather than the 20mm base that he came

packaged with, just my preference. The mold line was quite visible on all of the pieces, but there were no defects and he cleaned up with relative ease. Assembly was easy and everything fit together perfectly. Boris is dressed in about as few clothes as is possible. His garb consists of boots, a loincloth, a belt and some bracers. Perfect for getting knee deep in the dead and not ruining your Sunday church clothes!

This model is a perfect human barbarian and would fit in well in many places. Leader of a Sons of Kronos Chronopia army, perfect. Berserk Warrior for a Keltois Confrontation army, perfect. Barbarian or even Fighter Player Character for Dungeons and Dragons, you guessed it, perfect. He's even big and bad enough that you could drop him on the battlefield as a Chaos Warrior and nobody would look at you funny as long as he was painted up with lots of ritualistic tattoos and evil-looking symbols.

Boris will set you back around \$6.00 USD, depending on where you pick him up and while he is a bit larger than standard figures, he's not too much over the top. There's no way that you couldn't see him charging down some dungeon corridor laying waste to everything in sight.



The rather large fellow above is called 'The Fallen One', but he reminds me a lot of 'Horny' the demon from the Dungeon Keeper games. He'll run you about \$7.50 USD and is also a multi-part model. Six pieces make up big red and you can choose to arm him with either the scythe (above) or a daemon sword. Around his waist is a belt holding a skull, bits of bone and flesh and a face that's been pulled off of someone's head. Yeah, I can see a demon doing something like that to enhance his appearance. I would not want to be the one that he's pointing at. Unless, of course, I'm Boris and then I'd be ready to rumble.

He also had mold lines that needed cleaning, but he also went together very easily and I did not feel that it was necessary to pin the pieces together. He's very well muscled and has many bony protrusions all over his body. I liked his scythe much more than the sword. It's made up of several long bones that, when painted, will contrast nicely with the red that his flesh will undoubtedly get painted. The sword is not a waste or anything. It's nice to have for another conversion, but it's just not as cool as the scythe.

So, where does big evil fit into your game? For Dungeons and Dragons, anywhere you want to put the hurt on your PC's. You could drop one, or several, into a Devout army for Chronopia and if you just wanted something out of the ordinary I would not smack you in the head if you used a bunch of them for bloodletters in Warhammer Fantasy. In fact, I'd probably applaud you for doing something very original. I like both models very much and can't wait to get some more.

www.heresyminiatures.com

MINIATURE REVIEWS

CHAINMAIL™

SKIRMISH GAME

I was very disappointed to hear that WOTC decided to no longer promote the Chainmail game and brand of figures. I like the game enough to keep playing it, but it's entirely possible that future Chainmail figures could get real scarce, real fast so grab them while you can.

A Thalos Ogre starts us off and I hate to say it, but I was looking forward to this figure much more before I actually picked it up.



He just looks kind of dopey to me. Maybe it's the pose. I can't quite put my finger on it, but the model just doesn't do too much for me. It cleaned up easily and there were no defects, but he's just kind of 'here I am' and not too special. Maybe I'm expecting too much, but he's my least favorite of the

Chainmail ogres. He's carrying a large blade and a flail draped over his left shoulder. I do like that the sculptor took the time to add scars on his back where he got into a bit of self-flagellation to atone for being an ogre in the first place. You'll drop \$8.00 USD on the Ogre Penitent, which is very good for an ogre miniature, but he would be fourth on my list of the four Chainmail ogres. I'd pick him up to round out my collection of ogres or specifically for a Chainmail Thalos army.

On the other hand, I've had almost the exact opposite feeling with the Ice Paraelemental. I was not looking forward to this model very much, but as soon as I got it and put it together I started liking it more and more. It comes as four pieces (arms, head, and body) and has many hard lines

and sharp edges that make up his icy body. It required a fair bit of cleaning, but it fit together pretty well and I decided that pinning was not needed. Unless I go tossing it around the room it should hold together just fine.

Outside of Chainmail there are several uses for the Ice Paraelemental. A monster in D&D is obvious, but you could also paint it up as an earth elemental or use it as an Adamantite Golem in Chronopia. It also has a retail price of \$8.00 USD and gets a definite 'thumbs up' from me.

Last up for Chainmail this time around is the Hell Hound. It's a mercenary troop that will work for any faction so right away it should make everyone's "maybe" list. Right away this figure reminded me a lot of the old Krenshar figure from not too long ago. The Hell Hound comes in two pieces (one paw separate from the rest of the body) but required a fair amount of cleanup but it went together easily. The figure is bendable (be very careful that you



bend and don't break) so if you have more than one you can add some variety to their look without too much trouble.

Obviously, you can use the nether-pooch in D&D or it even makes a passable Chaos Hound for Warhammer. At \$6.00 USD they are not a bad deal, but I'd have rather seen two in a box for \$8.00 instead. That would have prompted me to buy several right off the bat.



MINIATURE REVIEWS

REAPER

We have a few current Reaper offerings to take a look at this time around.

First is Patches, the Flesh Golem. He's a bit hunched over and looks either to be way ticked off or in a great deal of pain. I'd say that either are reasonable reactions after being stitched back together using a variety of parts.

His clothing consists of a pair of pants and a sleeveless vest and both are in rather worn shape, which works well for him. All of his exposed flesh looks well muscled, but strained and scarred in many places. He certainly looks strong enough to pound you into jelly, but being a construct he shouldn't look like some bodybuilder and he doesn't. It looks very good. Even hunched over a bit this is a model that is a bit larger than regular figures and it should be. It's not like you're going to create a Flesh Golem the size of Emanuel Lewis or Gary Coleman after all.

Cleanup wasn't too bad. The mold line was faint but needed to be trimmed and there were little bits of flash here and there. Players in my D&D campaign can expect to see him in action soon.

With our second figure my dreams have come true. Awesome Reaper figures made to fit on slotta-bases right from the start. Grundar Hoardtaker is a Barbarian from the new Warlord line of figures. They are sculpted in 'heroic' 25mm scale which means that they are a bit larger and more grandiose than many of Reaper's other figures. He's as good as any other really nice Reaper figure, with lots of detail and character, but he's on a slotta-base, a metal one by the way, so those of us that just cannot stand the regular bases don't have



to go through clipping and puttying to get their Reaper figs onto regimental bases. He's carrying a mace and sword and little in the way of armor except for several animal pelts. There was more cleanup needed than I'm used to with Reaper figures, but in almost no time at all he was based up and waiting line to be primed.

Our last Reaper fig this issue is also from the Warlord line. Ashkrypt, the Lich is, in a word, awesome! There was a bit of cleanup needed, but he was worth it. As you can see he comes as two pieces that fit together neatly. His robes have a very nice flow and his breastplate, shoulder plates and bits of jewelry really help him stand out as a leader of the undead. There are so many ways to use this figure. In miniature



games he's an obvious leader for either a unit or the whole army and in role-playing games he's a wonderful lich.

Patches and Grundar each run \$4.00 USD and Ashkrypt retails for \$5.00. So far, I am really pleased with the Warlord line and cannot wait to see more of them, many more!

www.reapermini.com

MINIATURE REVIEWS

Fantasy Encounters

This issue we have another batch of figures from Holistic Design from their Fantasy Encounters line. If you remember back to last issue you'll know that each box set comes with five pre-painted figures, bases, and fully detailed character cards for each figure. In fact, each figure comes with three different character cards detailing them as a low, medium and high level.

characters. Here we have five fine elves that can easily find their way onto my game table.



While I found the dwarf paint jobs good and certainly passable I found these several steps above them. I was sold on the dwarf package in the end by the cards, but here it's the figures all the way. They are all very, very good. The set retails for \$24.95 USD and these painted figures are certainly worth five bucks each. Even if you figure \$2.50 per figure if they were unpainted, you're only paying \$2.50 per figure and you're getting a Dungeon Master assist in the form of the character cards. On top of the quality of the paint jobs they are also sturdy as heck. My package arrived from UPS and looked like it had been drop-kicked all the way from HDI to me here in Texas. All of the figures were bunched up, lying all over each other and I had bad thoughts right before I tried to gingerly pull them out one at a time. I expected them to be scuffed into oblivion, bent, broken, or ruined. They were almost perfect! Each figure has maybe one small point that needs a touch up (10 seconds of time each, a decent selection of paints and a brush is all it would take) but otherwise they all



got here in great shape. I wouldn't want to put them through that kind of a rough shipping test on purpose, but whatever they are sealed with is doing a marvelous job!

In the set you get, in order of appearance, a male fighter, a female paladin, a female fighter/sorceress, a female druid and a male ranger.

The fighter could easily accept a shield, but looks good with the yellow and blue contrasting the gray of his armor. On the paladin I might go in and change the color of the sword so it stands out against the armor, but that would be all. I'm really happy with the fighter/sorceress and don't see anything that needs changing. My two favorites are definitely the last two, the druid and ranger. The druid is really suitable for any type of elven spellcaster that you want to run. She even has a small familiar or animal companion (a mouse) poking his head out of a small pouch. Other than her staff she has no visible weapons, but does have her left hand extended in some kind of spell preparation. The ranger is in 'Robin Hood'-ish kind of garb and that works just fine.

In addition to being a boon for DM's the cards and figures could also be put to great use by a gaming group as each person could kick in \$5.00 and would get a painted figure and character stats.

I liked the dwarf set, but I love the elf set. All in all, thumbs up for Fantasy Encounters: Elves.

I haven't seen what set is next in line from Holistic Design, but I'd personally like to see sets made up of different races of player characters.



www.holistic-design.com

MINIATURE REVIEWS

EXCALIBUR Miniaturen

Here we have another batch of figures from Excalibur Miniaturen in Germany. This time we explore part of their range of fantasy figures in the form of several orcs, goblins and amazons.



First up is one big, bad mama...literally! She is several hundred pounds of mean greenskin that is wearing far too few clothes for public decency standards. Ok, being indecent probably goes along with being an orc. She is wearing a tube top and a loin cloth with all sorts of butt-cheek real estate showing. This is one of the most light-hearted figures I've seen in a long time and I think it's very cool. I imagine her as the one in the orc camp that all of the male human prisoners are sent for interrogation. The mold line was quite visible and needed a bit of filing, but it was well worth the effort.

Next up are two female orcs that are very suitable for player characters in D&D if you allow monster races. The first one is more of a ranger type as she is wearing light leather armor and boots and is armed with a bow. She is showing a little bit of cleavage, but thank goodness that the dogs are not running the yard like with the big momma.



Facial detail is very good and while the figure did need a bit of trimming around the bow and some minor cleanup there were no defects.

The one on the bottom-left looks like either a rogue or a dancing girl. The second thought is somewhat disturbing as I would not want to be the guy holding a fistful of dollars at her show. She is wearing very little in the way of clothes, but is not "A Whole Lotta Rosie" like the first one. She has a body that's built for action and a face that's built for a paper bag! Too cool! She's armed with a dagger and 'killer' good looks. There was a bit of mold line that needed cleaning on her, but not too much.

Fourth up is a pretty standard orc warrior carrying a two handed axe, except it's a female. Like most of the others she's pretty skimpy on the clothes and armor and is probably hoping that the shock value of getting your ass kicked by a big green girl is enough to make up for it. As is pretty standard for most of the figures in this batch she required a bit of cleaning but the model was in perfect shape. She has more of a butch haircut than the others.

After thinking about it for a little while I guess you could use the middle two as half-orcs, but if regular orc women are this ugly how much trouble would they have getting dates if they were in human society. ☺

To the right is the first of two goblins this time around. He is wearing an outfit that he either stole from a ranger or a Jester. I'll go with the Jester motif when he gets painted. He's having





Trouble carrying the axe that would be one-handed for most other characters and has a nice big bulbous head perfect for being kicked by an angry orc woman. There were just a couple of spots that needed filing on the mold line. He's a cool little bugger suitable for any goblin war party.



His mate, carrying a large hammer, can be seen above. He's in a much worse mood and is either screaming at whomever he's trying to smack with the hammer or yelling because it's too heavy to pick up and he just gave himself a hernia. He's wearing a pair of shorts held up by a large belt and has a dagger which would probably be easier for him to carry. He needed just a bit more cleanup than the other.



The last three figures are from a line of amazons and some are wearing so little in the way of clothes that they'd get arrested in my part of town. The first is the most clothed of the bunch, but her shirt

is pretty open showing off her cleavage. Her face is a little round and looks a little puffy. She needed a bit of cleaning as the mold line was pretty visible. She has no weapons other than a two-handed sword and the fact that male opponents will probably have to make WILL saves to avoid looking at her chest.

The amazon archer above is wearing the least of the three and is also the best model of the group. No, not because she has no shirt on and is wearing a G-string

That's only suitable on South Beach in Florida. This is an outstanding figure with great facial and hair detail that really stands out. Ok, part of why she will stand out to some people is because she has no shirt on and is in a very skimpy outfit, but she's an amazon for goodness sake. They are supposed to be wearing next to nothing. She



reminds me a lot of the female barbarians from Confrontation. There was some cleaning needed along the mold line. I'd say that she needs another weapon besides the bow and her quiver of arrows, but I don't know where she'd keep it.

Last up is another topless amazon (above), but in addition to her G-string she is also wearing an animal pelt for a cape. Facial detail is about the same as the previous girl, which is very good and cleanup time was also very short. She's in more of a 'stand-by' pose waiting for someone to cleave with that axe.

While their normal use would be in Magic Challenge from Excalibur, all of the figures presented here are very nice and would do well in any fantasy game, even replacing standard line troops and in some cases, characters. The orcs and goblins would fit in pretty seamlessly into a Warhammer army and the amazons could easily work in Confrontation or Chronopia. I plan on using them in my Dungeons and Dragons campaign either as monsters or Non-Player Characters or PC's. They all required a bit of cleaning but none were defective.

These figures are not yet available, but will be in October. Consequently I don't have prices for them but most regular sized miniatures run between \$2.95 and \$3.95 USD and I would expect these to fall into that range.



**STEAM POWERED
MINIATURES
COMBAT**

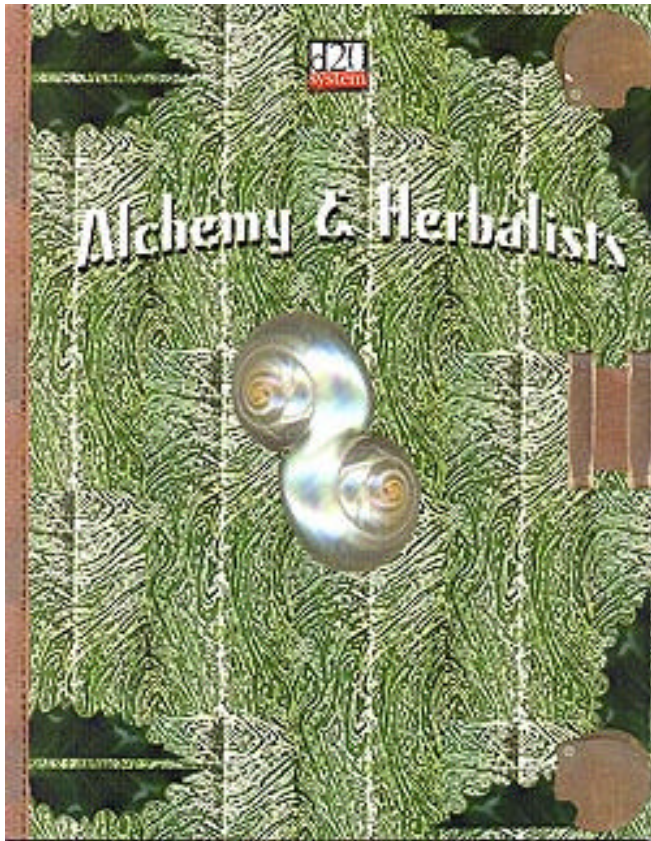
**FEBRUARY
2003**

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D20 PRODUCT REVIEW



BASICS

Alchemy & Herbalists, from Bastion Press, is a 96-page d20 sourcebook that delves into the scientific pursuits of alchemists and the more natural studies of herbs and plants. So, it's the egg-heads and the tree-hugging-hippy-freaks. Ok, not really. The interior is full color and contains lots of pictures. The artwork is a blend of what you've seen before in other Bastion Press books along with some new work that reminds me a lot of fairy tale books and liked it a lot. Alchemy & Herbalists retails for \$24.95 USD.

BETWEEN THE COVERS

Inside you'll find seven chapters (Basics of Alchemy, Saragun's Alcheminary, Basics of Herbalism, Tarasta's School of Herbalism, Herbal Catalog, Knowledge & Development, and Catalog Herbala Y Alchemica) and two appendices (Monsters and Feats). The 'basics' section are each only a handful of pages long, but really help to bring each area into the fantasy d20 world. I found these two chapters to be quite a good read and would help any DM to bring these types of characters into their world with

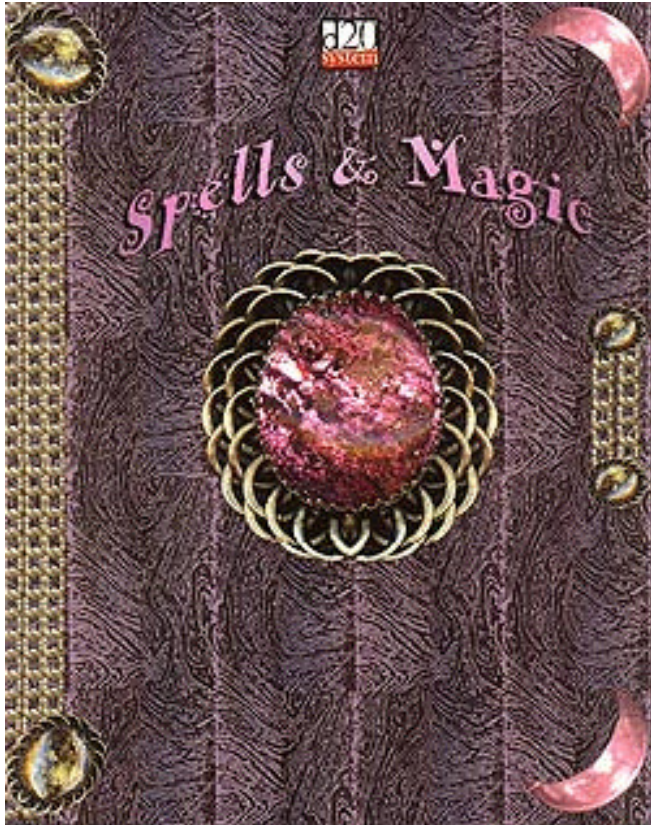
no problems. You'll also find two schools, one for each type of character, to plop down into your campaign. Even if you don't have characters that want to be Alchemists or Herbalists they can still serve as nice locations for adventure hooks. There are four prestige classes presented, split evenly between the disciplines, each one focusing on a slightly different aspect of the arts. The herbal catalog gives you an ingredient or shopping list of various plants including their cost, rarity and game use. You'll find natural cures for lycanthropy, ingredients for poisons, some with magical affects and spell components. The chapter on Feats and Skills has many new item creation feats to go along with your new career choice. This piggybacks right into the next chapter that discusses the actual manufacturing process and gives pages and pages of items. The section on monsters is kind of thin and might have fit better in the specific chapters on Alchemists or Herbalists as it includes two familiar-like creatures and a template, Kin 'o the Green. The last section is only one page long, but it's something I thought was a very nice touch. It's a chart of all of the new Feats that are presented in the book. Like the monster section, it's short enough to fit in the Knowledge chapter, but I love that it's an easy and organized way to get a quick look at all the feats.

VALUE

This book is definitely targeted towards a more narrow audience than the couple of previous books from Bastion Press that I've had the opportunity to read. With that said, if you're not interested in either of the topics presented inside then you'll want to pass. On the other hand, if you are looking for a way to expand the role of some non-standard character types and want to flesh out your alchemist to be more than a guy with a monstrous skill bonus in Alchemy or are looking for a new twist to your druid or ranger then you have a \$25 book that will serve you very well. How scary is it that I started playing a gnome illusionist with lots of ranks in Alchemy before I ever picked up this book? I found it to be an interesting read that dealt with both areas nicely and one, Alchemy, that I will be using a whole lot.

www.bastionpress.com

D20 PRODUCT REVIEW



BASICS

Also from Bastion Press we have *Spells & Magic*. As has become commonplace (and in a very good way) for books from Bastion Press it's a 96-page sourcebook that has full-color artwork and centers around a fairly specific group of topics. All of the artwork in *Spells & Magic* is in the more 'fairy tale book' style that I mentioned in the review of *Alchemy & Herbalists*. I found it to be a nice change and liked it a lot. Inside you'll find twelve new prestige classes, many new spells, new feats, and several new magic items. *Spells & Magic* retails for \$24.95 USD.

BETWEEN THE COVERS

There are twelve chapters in *Spells & Magic* with nine devoted to either new prestige classes (Blood Mage, Spellsinger, Totem Mage) or new types of magic (Rune Spells, Mirror Magic, etc). Most of the Prestige Classes have ten levels to progress through, but there are a few with just five. Of the Prestige Classes I found the Faerier (studies fey creatures) and the Totem Mage (a type of shapeshifter) to be my favorites. The chapter on Feats and Skills is mostly devoted to those that work with the Prestige Classes in the book, but there are

some that will cross over to classes other than those presented inside.

The chapter on spells is quite extensive with over one hundred and twenty spells for all of the standard spellcaster (Cleric, Druid, Bard, Paladin, Ranger, Sorcerer, and Wizard) classes.

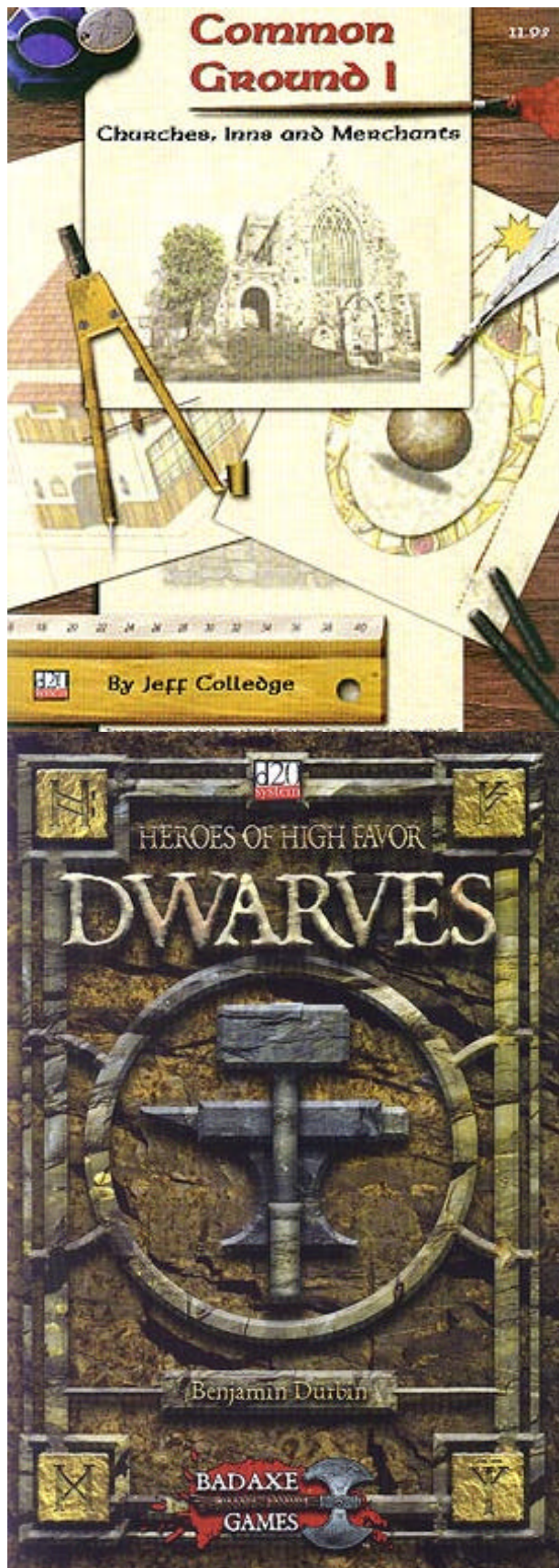
The chapter on Magic Items gives you a new type of potions, the Strange Brew (take off 'eh). Do some Internet research on 'Strange Brew' if you don't get it. These are powerful potions that can give you some wonderful benefits, but which also have side effects that should really make you think two or three times before drinking. Note to DM's, if your players aren't up to taking a swig of a Strange Brew just give them to your monsters and watch the fur fly. There are also some rings, rods, staves, several pages of wondrous items and a handful of new weapon/armor qualities.

VALUE

Ok, let's get this part out of the way up front. If you play nothing but straight fighter or rogue types that have no desire to learn magic then move along as this book is not for you. If you play any of the regular spellcasting classes then you'll find many new spells (except for paladins and rangers which only got four spells each) and will probably find a Prestige Class, or several, that will give you a character that stands out a bit from the rest. I like that the books from Bastion Press come in a format that allows them to be used in pretty much any d20 fantasy setting and that they are pretty specific to one group or type of characters or one topic. What I mean is that you're fighter types will benefit from and probably pick up Arms & Armour, spellcasters will do the same with this book and Dungeon Masters will find many uses for books like *Minions* and *Villains*. At about twenty-five dollars they are a few dollars more than many books of similar size, but they are all on high quality paper and are in full color. I find it to be a perfectly reasonable trade off. If you haven't checked it out yet the Bastion Press website you need to take a few minutes to head over there. In addition to free support material for many of their books you'll also find e-books and e-adventures for sale. Oh, there is also an upcoming book that looks quite inviting. It's called *Pale Designs* and looks like it will give a nod to Rogues and Assassins. Can't wait!

www.bastionpress.com

D20 PRODUCT REVIEW



Common ground I: Churches, Inns and Merchants is 32-page supplement for d20 fantasy games published by Brad's Productions. It retails for \$11.95 USD and contains a lot of information that will make any DM's life easier.

As you might have guessed the book assists in the creation of Churches, Inns and Merchants. In addition to information about the building itself you also generate the people that run the establishment, clerks, and patrons and are given lots of pre-made NPC stat blocks (and empty ones for you to fill in) to populate your new buildings with. The section on merchants has a page dedicated to putting together caravans for your players to protect against menacing orcs or other beasties.

My favorite part of the book are the color floor plans of several buildings. It's only three pages long but you get color layouts to almost thirty buildings, many multi-story. My only gripe with the floor plans is that while doors and furnishings are all represented very nicely I could not find any windows.

You might be asking, "Couldn't I just write up everything in there on my own?" Well, yes you could and it would take that much more time away from your game. I don't know about you, but the more time I can spend playing the better and this helps me do that. In addition to using this for my Dungeons and Dragons campaign I also plan to build several of the buildings inside using the brick and molds from Castle Molds. Now that we have a full castle built, see the previous issue of Fictional Reality, we need lost of other buildings to go around it

Heroes of High Favor: Dwarves is a collection of ten prestige classes, new feats and skills and commentary on playing dwarves. It's a small (6" x 9") 62-page book that retails for \$9.95 USD and is published by Badaxe Games.

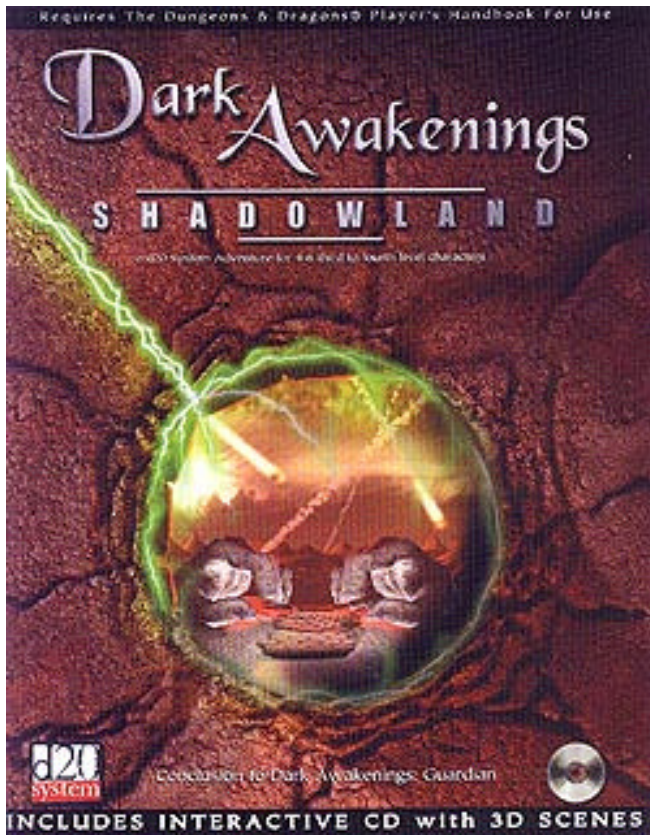
Badaxe Games will be publishing one book for each PC race that puts together prestige classes based around the fusion of two standard classes. As Fighter is the preferred class of dwarves all of the prestige classes are based around fighter-Something Else. The interior text and tables are easy to read, but a lot of the artwork is a notch or two below what you'll find in most other d20 publications. Each entry also has information to help players integrate the new classes into adventuring parties.

The section I liked the most was about dwarven runes, which can be added to masterworked weapons to give them some limited special abilities. They don't seem very overpowering and can make your dwarven characters a bit more colorful.

I like the book, but I'd like it a lot more if you got two races worth of stuff instead of just one. For around ten bucks you do get some nice stuff, but it just feels a bit on the light side. I am looking forward to the next in the series, but am also looking forward to a little more bang for the buck.

www.badaxegames.com

D20 PRODUCT REVIEW



BASICS

Dark Awakenings: Shadowland is a d20 adventure from Auran d20 Adventures for 4-6 characters of 3rd to 4th level. It is a continuation of Dark Awakenings: Guardian adventure. Shadowland is a 56-page perfect-bound soft cover book with a color cover and black and white interior art and a CD of 3D scenes, maps, and PDF files of the adventure. It retails for \$19.95 USD.

BETWEEN THE COVERS

As you can guess, Dark Awakenings: Shadowland will work best if your group has already completed the Guardian adventure. There is a brief synopsis on how the characters got to the beginning of the Shadowland adventure so an industrious DM could pick up there without going through Guardian first, but I suspect it would feel like something is missing.

All of the text is very easy to read and Open Gaming Content is easily identifiable. While black and white, all of the interior art is of very good quality and the full-color maps are wonderful.

The adventure is broken up into seventeen acts, most of which are accentuated by a 3D scene that can be found on the CD. The adventure is certainly playable without using the material on the CD and while all of

the scenes are well done they just don't seem completely necessary. The adventure itself finds the characters being transported to a realm called, you guessed it, the Shadowland. Giving many specifics about Shadowland could ruin a bit of its mystery for players that may be reading so we'll leave it as being another realm or plane of existence. While not a hack-and-slash module, Shadowland does turn up the dial a bit when compared to Guardian.

The NPC's are fully fleshed out and have good background information that, if they survive, can help a DM drop them in as recurring characters for your players to deal with.

VALUE

At about twenty dollars I think that Dark Awakening: Shadowland is a few dollars more than I'd like to shell out for an adventure that will likely take just one sitting to complete. It's a quality product, no doubt about it. In fact, everything about it really does scream out "high quality". I'm still not convinced that using a PC during a gaming session is the way to go though. For game and character prep my computer is invaluable, but during play I don't even really consider it around. As with the previous adventure the printable maps are a huge help.

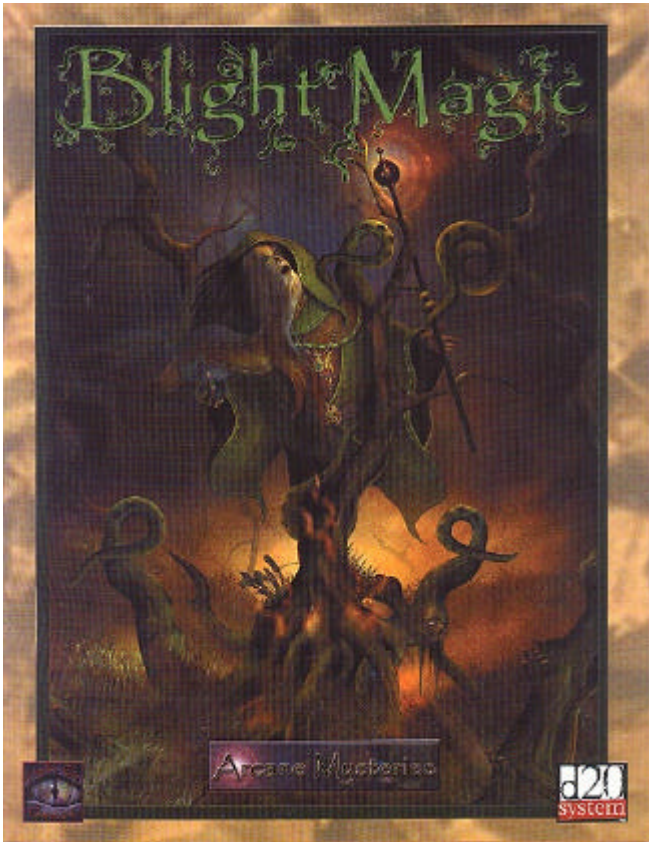
Their next adventure, Sanctuary, will also feature a CD with the same information that their first two did, but will also include eight musical tracks. That might turn out to be very cool. Additionally, check out the Auran website. They have a very nice assortment of free downloads including a character sheet, a free adventure, maps and more.



www.auran.com/d20

D20 PRODUCT REVIEW

by J. Michael Tisdell



BASICS

Blight Magic is a 56-page soft cover book published by Mystic Eye Games. The front cover is full color, but the illustrations inside are all black and white. The book describes a new type of magic for d20 games based on taking power from the land. To complement this new magic, the book presents new spells, familiars, prestige classes, feats, and creatures. The retail price is \$11.95.

BETWEEN THE COVERS

The first part of the book introduces blight magic. This is magic where the caster gains power by stripping the land of life. What's left after a blight ritual will never be fertile again. This power is stored in a "pool" that the caster can subsequently draw upon to power his spells. Blight magic can power both arcane and divine spells.

Spells powered by blight magic are more powerful than their non-blight counterparts. The blight magic pool can be used to add meta-magic feats to a spell, adding spells to the known spell list, or cast special blight spells.

This additional power comes at a cost – the caster

runs the risk of corruption. As a caster draws on the blight pool, he must make Corruption tests. A failure of this test results in the spellcaster being corrupted in some degree. Subsequent failures increase the corruption, leading to a possibility of madness or death.

The rest of the book builds upon this basic idea. There are blighted familiars – regular familiars who are ensorcelled by blight magic to become more powerful and to take some of the corruption from their master. There are also spells and magic feats that use the blight magic pool to great effect.

Finally there are six prestige classes that include both those who use blight magic and those who struggle against them. There are also templates for blighted versions of regular monsters as well as a special blighted Treant.

Finally, the book presents some examples of blighted locations. These can be used to introduce the blight magic into any campaign.

VALUE

This is another fine publication from Mystic Eye. Like so many of their other works, this one is very dark. The concept of blight magic reminds me of magic in the d20 Call of Cthulhu, a spell caster pays a price for his powers. This, and the "cocaine effect" of needing more blight magic just to resist the corruption, makes for a very interesting twist on normal magic.

Since blight magic gives spell casters a lot of power quickly and takes its toll as they advance, I think that it should be limited to NPC's. However, if you have some experienced players who are good with role-play and don't mind their characters degenerating before their eyes, blighted characters could be very fun to play.

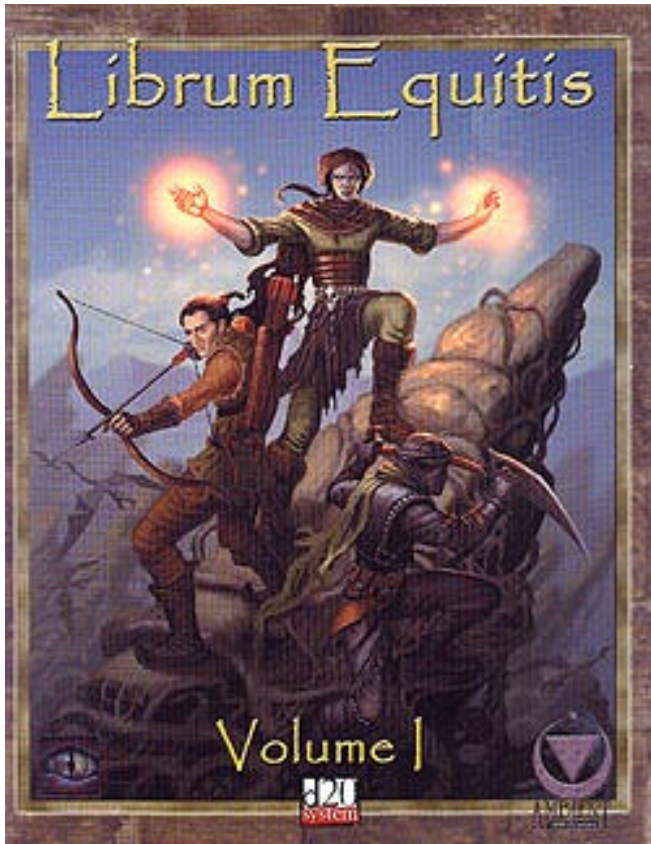
From the DM's point of view, Blight Magic is a wonderful way to provide a dark and unusual campaign or series of adventures. Just imagine the effect on your players, especially druids and rangers, who enter into a lifeless area where blight magic has been cast.

Personally, I will be using bits of this book in both my Dungeons and Dragons and Call of Cthulhu campaigns

www.mysticeyegames.com

D20 PRODUCT REVIEW

by J. Michael Tisdell



BASICS

Librum Equities, Volume 1, 64-page soft cover book published by Mystic Eye games. The front and back covers are full color, but the illustrations inside are all black and white. The book presents 23 prestige classes along with new feats and items for some of the classes. The retail price is \$12.95.

BETWEEN THE COVERS

The prestige classes presented in this book run the full spectrum from sword swingers to spell slingers. Each prestige class is introduced with a short dramatic vignette. This is then followed by the standard class description, including hit die type, requirements, class skills, class features, and the advancement table. Finally, each class has an NPC which serves as an introduction to the class.

The list of prestige classes include: the Bounty Hunter, the Chosen Warlord (a "paladin-lite" for war gods), the Collegiate Bard (a bard/diplomat),

the Corpulent (priests to gods of greed), the Imperial Crossbowman, the Military Archer, and the Lords of Sorcery (a sorcerer equivalent of the arch mage from Forgotten Realms).

This volume also introduces eleven new feats. While these are introduced with certain classes, they are, of course, available to almost any character. The feats also cover the whole range of play, from combat to interaction feats.

To fully round out the classes, this volume also provides a new deity, a new psionic power, and new magic items.

VALUE

The purpose of the prestige class is to explore different facets of the basic character classes, and the ones presented in this volume certainly do. The wide variety of the classes ensures that one can find something that is interesting.

This is another fine publication from Mystic Eye. Unlike so many of their other works, this one is not dark. I think the reason is this volume is for players where as the others, such as Blight Magic, are more for game masters. Most players enjoy a dark realm where they are struggling for the light.

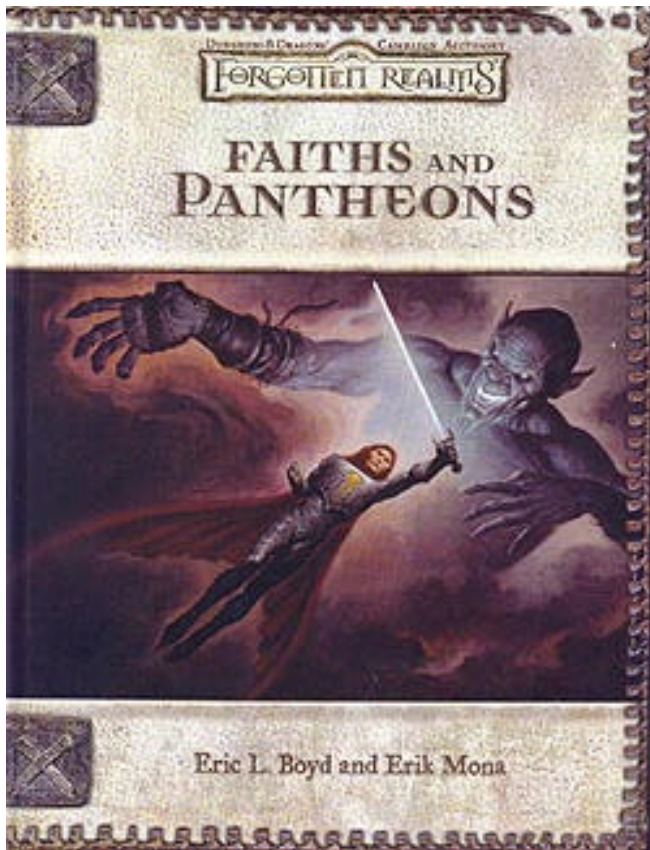
From a player's point of view, this gives even more opportunities to find an interesting angle to play – to find the perfect prestige class to fit in with the party. The extra feats are bonus even if the prestige classes aren't used.

From the DM's point of view, Librum Equities provides enough NPC's to fill in almost any adventure.

For the price, this is a good investment for players. The DM would want a copy if any of his players choose to use these prestige classes. Personally, I look forward to my next druid character becoming a New Treant.

www.mysticeyegames.com

D20 PRODUCT REVIEW



BASICS

Faiths and Pantheons 224-page full color hardback book from Wizards of the Coast that gives details and descriptions on the gods of the Forgotten Realms campaign setting for Dungeons & Dragons. In addition to over one hundred deities you will also get twenty prestige classes and a handful of temple maps. The book retails for \$32.95 USD.

BETWEEN THE COVERS

As is standard for WOTC hardback books the interior art is wonderful. I spent one complete sitting doing nothing but looking over the artwork and ended up liking it all. The binding seemed very sturdy and should hold up well even with lots of use. The book is divided into three main sections; Deities (Major and Other), Places of Worship, and Prestige Classes. There are also several new feats, weapon abilities and magic items scattered throughout the book, but are cataloged as part of the table of contents to make them easy to find.

While there is some duplicated information from Deities and Demigods it's not just a new version of that book. While Deities and Demigods gives you

About two pages for each god Faiths and Pantheons is put together a bit differently. Each 'major' god (30 of them) is given about two pages, each 'other' god about a half-page and then pantheon, like the elf gods, gets several pages for the whole group. Only the 'major' gods have full-blown stat blocks. You get the basics for the rest, but even with less information on each individual deity I found the pantheon section to be the most interesting.

The Places of Worship chapter has some very nice maps and each location is detailed with encounters and NPC's.

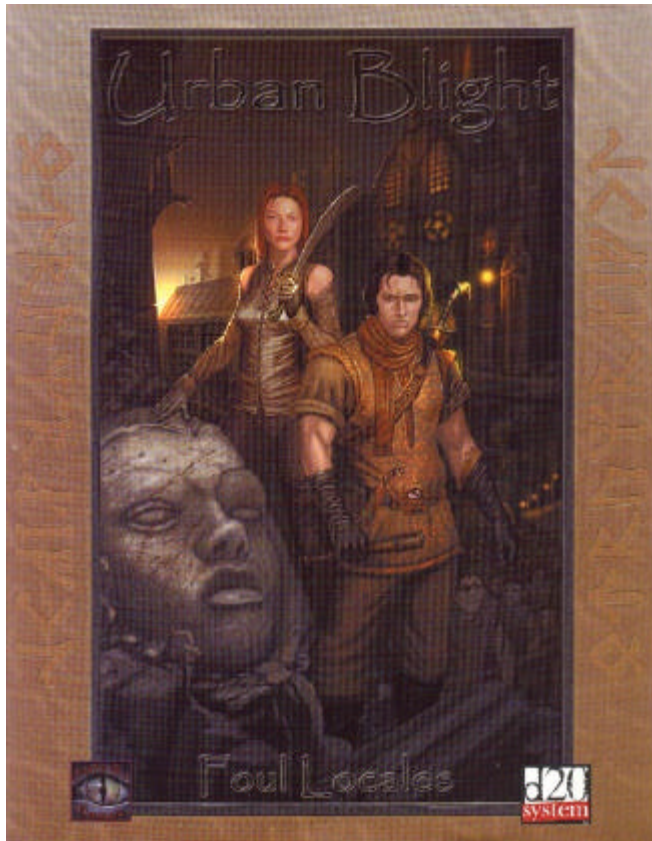
All of the prestige classes are of the 10-level variety and range from the mundane (Strifeleader – followers of Cyric that spread dissension, murder and strife; and the Goldeye – worshipers of Waukeen that can be frequently be found as the head of a merchant's guild) to the spectacular (Ocular Adept – who wants to be accepted by Beholders so badly that he'll accept the eye from an eyeball beholderkin being implanted into his forehead). Almost all of the prestige classes have a patron requirement, which limits their use a bit. There is also a Chosen of Bane template, which is quite cool and would make for a nasty villain.

VALUE

Faiths and Pantheons is a beautiful book with a lot of good information about the gods of the Forgotten Realms. Like Deities and Demigods it's not a required book. Heck, you could get by just using the guidelines of the gods as presented in the Player's Handbook if you wanted to. The book is really of maximum value to two groups. First, players of paladins, clerics and druids will get a lot of useful information from within this tome and second, Dungeon Masters can really flesh out their campaign world. The price has crept up a bit since Deities and Demigods came out, but it's a sturdy hardback book in full color that is loaded with information. If you fall into one of the two categories above then you'll find Faiths and Pantheons a very worthwhile addition to your Dungeons and Dragons library.

www.wizards.com/dnd

D20 PRODUCT REVIEW



BASICS

Urban Blight: Foul Locales is a 128-page soft cover book published by Mystic Eye Games. The front cover features color artwork, but all of the interior is black and white. The book details several locations that can fit into any generic fantasy d20 campaign, along with some new feats, spells, magic items, NPC's and more. Retail price is \$16.95 USD.

BETWEEN THE COVERS

Inside Foul Locales you'll find almost twenty businesses and locations that you can use to flesh out a fantasy city. I see it best used to add some, actually lots, of character to what might be the base of operations of a group of PC's. Foul Locales are pretty much just that, foul. You will not find the local quaint little bakery or nursery in this book. You will find several shops that look normal but have some sort of seedy underside to them that is waiting to be exposed by, or onto, your players. If you know the tale of Sweeney Todd you'll know the kind of places that I'm talking about. If you don't then point your browser over to www.google.com, or your favorite search engine and spend a few minutes looking over the gruesome details. Each location entry has

a listing for what type of establishment it is (Government, Entertainment, Residence, etc), in what part of town you'll find it (Poor, Wealthy, etc) and what Encounter Level the place is considered if you run afoul of the proprietor or owner. None of the locations are full-blown adventures though. They all have a hook that can be used as a side trek or as a seed to build an adventure around though.

Each location is also detailed with maps (more building projects), location keys, and some have multiple scenarios for use of the location. The NPC's are all nicely fleshed out with detailed backgrounds that explain some of their more demented natures.

There's also a handful of new feats, spells, magic items and skills presented in the book, but the main attractions really are the locations. There is also a little bit of non-MEG Open Content, but it has been credited appropriately back to the original product.

To give you just a little taste of some of the locations without ruining them if you end up at their front door you'll find a slaughterhouse that dumps its waste material into the sewers, a gambling house where you can get into all sorts of trouble, and a furniture maker that has a much more sinister background. Now, you wouldn't want each and every shop in your town to have some kind of underworld connection, but if even only 10% have something about them that just isn't right you could stock a good sized city with the contents of this book.

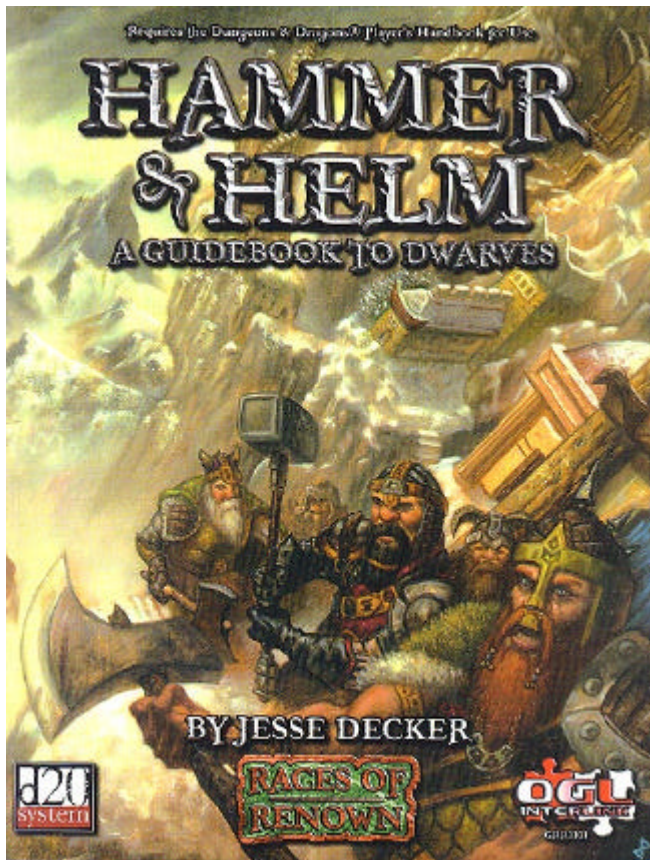
VALUE

This book is great. There are so many great ideas here that I'll probably use half of them and leave the other half for the DM of our second Dungeons and Dragons campaign. All of the text is easy on the eyes and the artwork on par with Mystic Eye Games' campaign book, The Hunt: Rise of Evil. This feels like a \$20 or \$25 dollar book wrapped around a \$17 price tag. There is a bit of graphic (gory) artwork, but nothing that most RPG'ers haven't already seen and there are also a few locations that present more grown-up situations or people if you know what I mean.

There are four more upcoming Foul Locale books coming in the future and if each of them is this good then they'll be really good.

www.mysticeyegames.com

D20 PRODUCT REVIEW



BASICS

Hammer & Helm, by Green Ronin Publishing, is a source book for Dungeons and Dragons focuses on dwarf culture and their place in the game. It is a perfect-bound soft back book with a page count of 112. The covers are full cover and all of the interior artwork is black & white. It has a retail price of \$19.95 USD. Hammer & Helm is part of series of books, Races of Renown, that are made to fit in with Paradigm Concepts Races of Legend series. What it looks like is that you have two, and possibly more to come, d20 publishers all creating source books that should all fit together fairly well.

BETWEEN THE COVERS

Inside you'll find an introduction, six chapters (The Way of the Mountain, Feats, Prestige Classes, Creatures, Spells & Magic and Equipment) and an Appendix. The first chapter is only seven pages long, but goes a long way into bringing dwarves into your campaign. In addition to some fairly standard dwarven themes you also get several other dwarven themes to use. Heck, you could go hog-wild and use them all to create all sorts of dwarves in your campaign world. There are a lot of good 'seeds' here for the Dungeon Master to fully, or not,

incorporate into his world as he sees fit. The Feat chapter clocks in at 10 pages long and brings You three new types of Feats, Bloodgifts, Bonding and Spell Channelling Feats. About two-thirds of the feats are in these three new classifications so there's a lot of new material to sink your teeth into. The twenty-six pages of prestige classes is actually the first section I turned to seeing as I am a big sucker for PrC's. Most are 5 level PrC's, but there are a good number of 10 level and even a 3 level PrC, the Caversgaarder. My favorites out of the group were the Ironbound (the classic immovable object) and the Thunderthrower (pitches axes and hammers at opponents until they are out of axes and hammers and then charges in). Overall, the creature section is ok, but what I found most attractive about it was the few pages devoted to Mar-Namor. They are undead dwarves that were created through necromancy and were used to repel an Illithid invasion. These three pages could serve as the basis of a source book of their own, very cool. The magic section gives you 58 new spells with many focused on the animation of objects, armor enchantments, and combat spells. That's not to say that there are not non-combat spells included because there are several of those too. The equipment section is very nice. Several new types of armor and weapons along with many magic armors (Golem Plate is to drool over unless if course you're fighting the guy that just transformed into an Iron Golem). Oh goodie, siege engines! I sometimes have a tendency to start fights with lots and lots of creatures. Ok, more precisely, I tend to drop lots and lots of creatures on my PC's. I've already got plans to fight a major battle, with hundreds of miniatures, using the regular D&D rules so everyone gets the full advantages of their character. A major battle like that not only could include, but should include siege engines. The list presented here is not exhaustive, but gives you a good start and even lists magical improvements. The Appendix is very, very welcome to my eyes. It lists several NPC's, fully kitted out for levels 1-20.

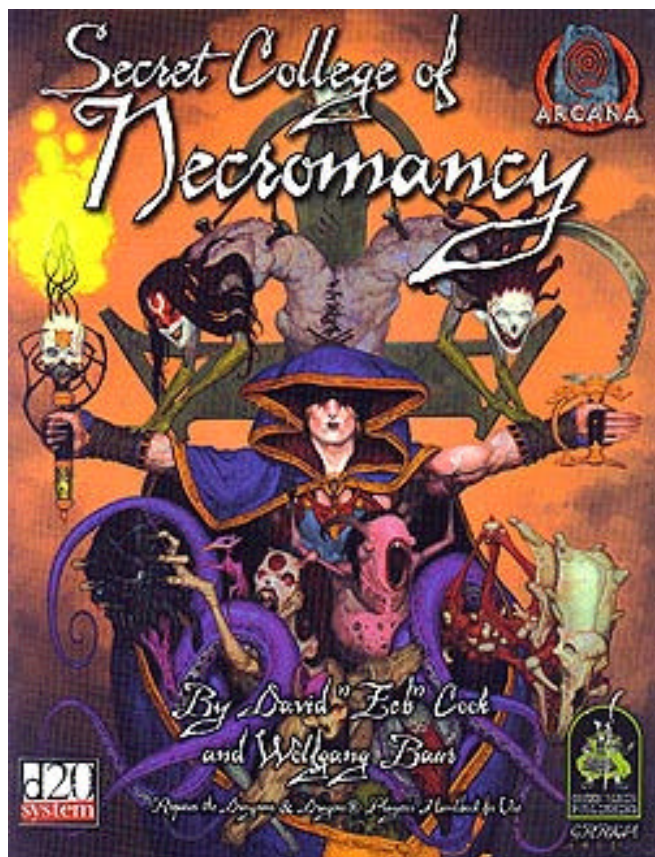
VALUE

The interior artwork is very clean and looks quite good. I didn't wince at any of it and liked it all. All of the text and charts were clear and easy to read and I found the book quite to my liking. For a player of dwarves this book is super. You're twenty bucks is well spent. For a DM it would be easy to use this book as a base for an all-dwarf campaign.

www.greenronin.com

D20 PRODUCT REVIEW

by Brian Ahrens



Overview

The Secret College of Necromancy, from Green Ronin Publishing, provides insight into the dark, magical arts that deal with death and undeath. This is Green Ronin's second volume in their *arcana* series. This sourcebook is full of essential information and rules on necromancy for both the players and gamemasters of Dungeons and Dragons. The writers of Secret College of Necromancy are two names that veterans of previous editions of Dungeons and Dragons will be sure to recognize: David "Zeb" Cook and Wolfgang Baur. So, this tome comes with a proven pedigree.

Presentation

Let's get the negatives of this book out of the way first. They are few and, for the most part, trivial. Firstly, if you will be keeping this supplement on a shelf you will need a magnifying glass to read the title printed on the spine of the book. The spinal text is smaller than it should be and there is room on the spine for a larger type. Secondly, the artwork is of a slightly lower quality than Green Ronin's other publications that I have perused. The interior

artwork is the usual black and white drawings they are, at best, average in appearance. The color cover, along with a good number of the interior illustrations are a bit on the esoteric side. These artworks do not seem too much out of place considering the theme of this tome. Lastly, there is a printing error in the description of a new monster called the Skin Cloak. Part of the first paragraph in its description is missing, though no crucial rules information is lost.

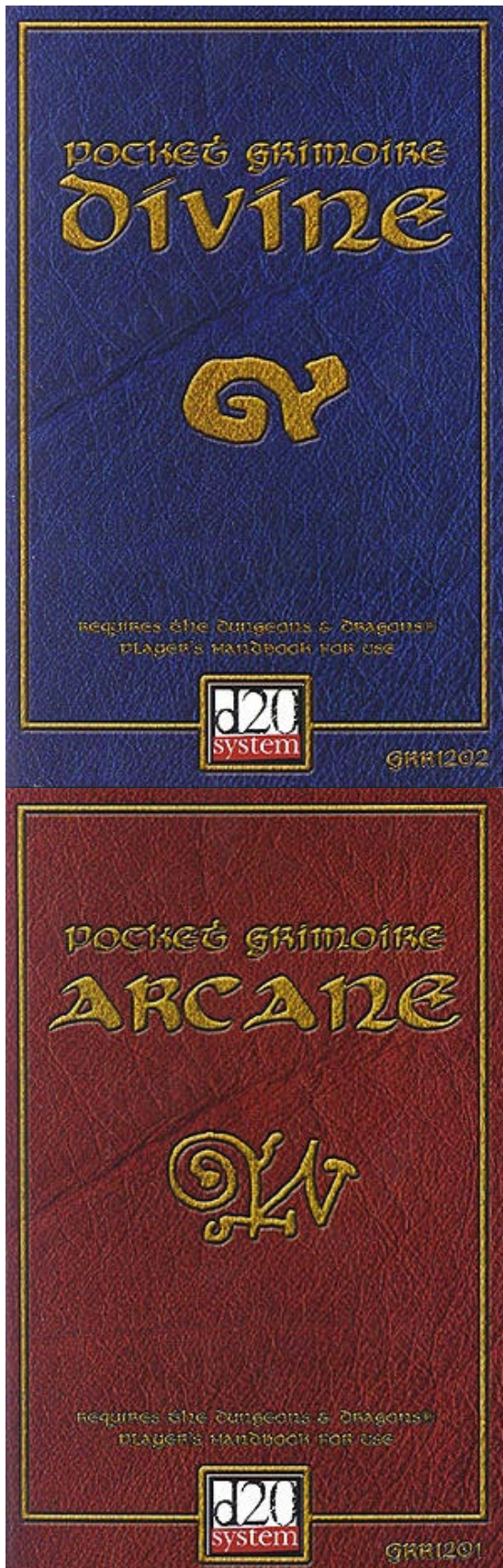
Now, for the good stuff: in these unholy pages the purchaser will find two, new core classes for use in the d20 version of Dungeons and Dragons: the necromancer and the death knight. These two classes are not for the faint of heart...or the predominately good-aligned campaign. A gamemaster will find the necromancer and the death knight make for formidable adversaries for any group of adventurers. To flesh out (pun intended) these two potential villains, Secret College of Necromancy contains seventy-four new necromantic spells, including mortal curses and dark pacts. Descriptions of new feats, skills and (my personal favorite) creation of undead are included for use by these new classes as well as classes from The Player's Handbook. A couple of areas of this book will appeal to the gamemaster with a sadistic side: the eight new monsters (The Flayed Man being another favorite of mine. The name says it all) and a complete necromantic organization, The Secret College, along with complete stats for it's key members.

Value

For the MSRP of \$19.95 a buyer receives 110 pages of evil, wicked, bad nastiness in a perfect-bound soft back book. The book is of the same high quality construction as other Green Ronin publications. This tome is a bit more versatile than the title implies. A good portion of the information contained in Secret College of Necromancy will be usable by character classes other than the necromancer and the death knight. The seventy-four new spells are, by themselves, well worth the price of admission.

www.greenronin.com

D20 PRODUCT REVIEW



Green Ronin Publishing has really taken the concept of the d20 Open Gaming License and put it to good use. The pocket Grimoires, Divine and Arcane, are small versions (5.5" x 8.5") of all of the spells in the Dungeons & Dragons Players Handbook plus spells from fourteen other d20 products. They are each over 250 pages in length and retail for \$14.95 USD.

My first thought after reading the back cover of each book, where you get a brief description of its contents, was "This is absolutely awesome!". Then a bit of level-headedness crept in and I had two more thoughts. 1) That would be a lot of spells, a whole lot. or 2) It's not ALL of the spells from each of the sources. Number 2 turns out to be the correct thought. To be completely fair to the product it only says that 'ALL' of the spells from the PHB are listed and selected spells from the other products. One of the products listed, which is a very good one by the way, is Relics & Rituals from Sword and Sorcery Studios, has a ton of spells and to include each and every spell from the PHB and the other fourteen sources would have produced a massive tome. So, from a buyers perspective realize that you won't be getting *EVERYTHING*.

What you do get is quite nice though. The Arcane book has Assassin, Bard, Sorcerer and Wizard listings and the Divine book gets you listings for the Adept, Blackguard, Cleric, Druid, Paladin and Ranger. The interior text is all very easy to read and the page borders are nice without being gaudy or distracting. The first section of each book are the spell lists organized by level and class and then a full alphabetical listing follows. The half-size of the book makes it very easy to flip through pages to get where you're going and the lack of artwork is welcome in this product as it leaves more room for spells.

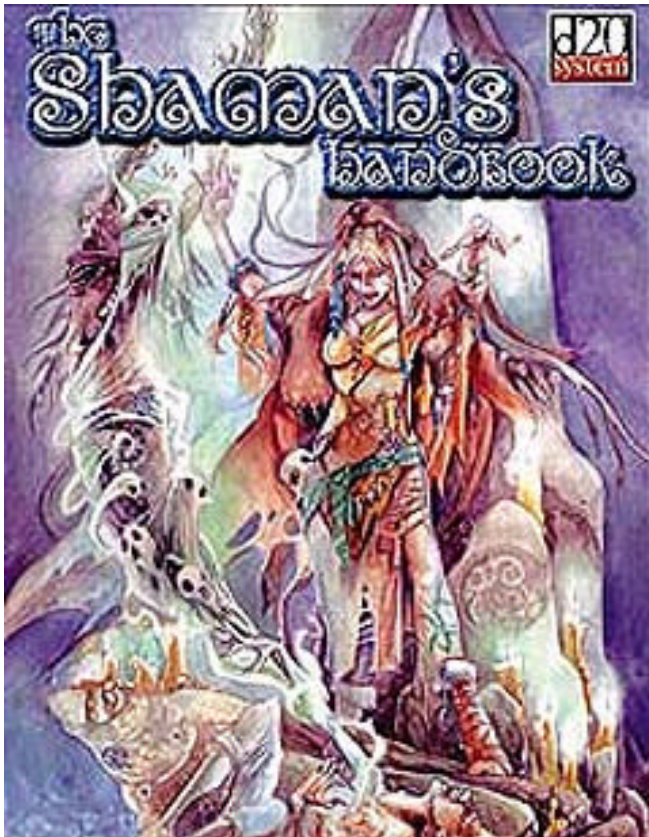
One thing I really would have liked to see in these mini-compilations are referenced as to which product the spell came from. That way if I find out that I really like all of the spells from one particular source I could go pick up that book to get the rest. A listing of how many spells out of the total that appear in the base book might also help players decide if they want to pick up the original volume.

Players of spell casters will find these books to be quite useful, not only as a tool to select new spells, but also during games as they are much easier to flip through in the middle of a game to get the specifics of a particular spell. At about \$15 they are very affordable considering the amount of information that you get. I counted a difference of approximately 300 spells between the PHB/DMG arcane character class spell lists and those contained in Pocket Grimoire Arcane. Of course, there will be a bit of cross-over, but that is to be expected.

Overall, I'd have to say that I like these books. In fact, I like them very much. I'm just not in love with them. They are a very good value and will certainly benefit players of spell casters.

D20 PRODUCT REVIEW

by Brian Ahrens



Basics – The Shaman's Handbook is the first in an ongoing line of "Master Class" books published by Green Ronin Publishing. The Shaman's Handbook provides rules and information on how to create and play a shaman character in the d20 system of Dungeons and Dragons. The shaman has some similarities to a cleric in that the shaman chooses spell domains and the shaman deals with the spiritual world in a similar manner that a cleric interacts with the physical world. Unlike a cleric, shamans do not have to prepare their spells ahead of time. Like a sorcerer or bard they may spontaneously cast their spells. Also, like a sorcerer or bard the shaman depends on charisma as a primary attribute to gain the ability to cast bonus spells. Unfortunately, like sorcerers and bards, shamans only learn a limited number of spells.

Presentation – The Shaman's Handbook is printed solely in black and white with the only color to the book being the front and rear covers. The interior artwork is plentiful. For the most part these drawings range from above average to good in quality. This book is divided into five chapters covering The Way of the Shaman, Skills and Feats, Shamanic Magic,

Shamanic Worlds and Spirits and Monsters. These chapters introduce the shaman class, their abilities and the backgrounds of different shamanic cultures from the real world. Some areas will appear familiar as some of the sections are designed to mirror The Players Handbook from Dungeons and Dragons. The set up allows the reader to know what he or she is looking at just as in the PHB. Beginning shaman packages are provided to allow a player to jump right in to playing a shaman. Also included are a variety of prestige classes. These prestige classes seem to be slanted towards the shaman player, but they are available and just might prove appealing to players of the "regular" player character classes from Dungeons and Dragons.

Also, there are new skills and feats to help flesh out shaman player characters. One of the more interesting sections is the one on the creation of magical charms, fetishes and tattoos. Because of the shaman's affinity with the spirit world, he or she may call a spirit animal to act as a companion in much the same way as a druid, wizard or sorcerer calls a pet or familiar. Staying with the spirit theme, The Shaman's Handbook provides a game master with a new template: the spirit template, to use in the creation of spirit animals or spirit creatures. The chapter dealing with shamanic worlds is a nice supplement to The Manual of the Planes. Locations in the spirit realms are described, in this chapter, as well as the ways of traveling to and around these realms and the hazards of doing so.

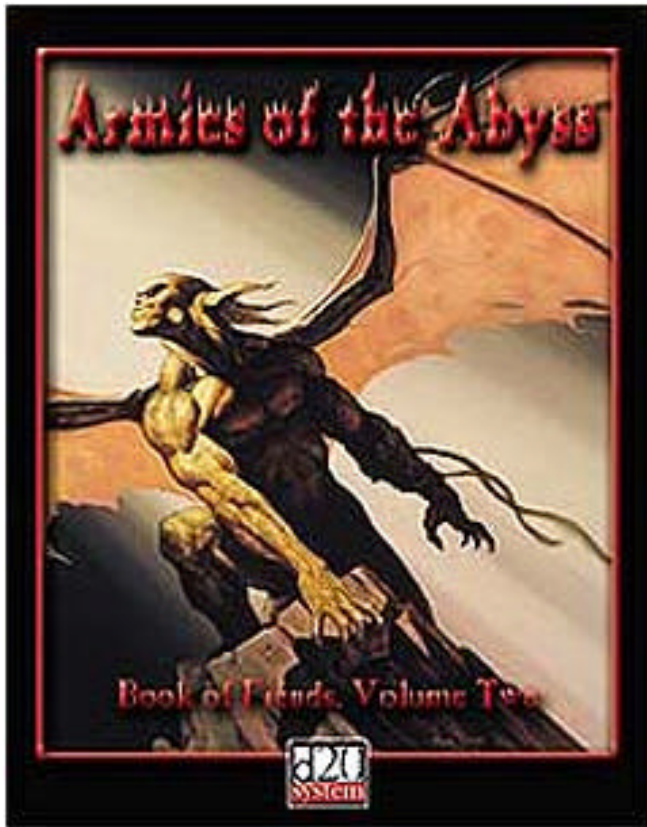
Value – The Shaman's Handbook has a very high dollar to value ratio. This tome adds even more variety to the current edition of Dungeons and Dragons. And, as everyone knows, variety is the spice of life. For the outlay of a MSRP of \$16.95 the purchaser receives a seventy-eight page, perfect bound, soft covered book. This book is touted as being the first volume in Green Ronin's new "Master Class" series. Each volume is supposed to introduce a new, core class to d20 Dungeons and Dragons.

The book does exactly what it is written to do. It adds even more variety to an already versatile game system. Variety and versatility are good and \$16.95 will supply a D&D player with even more of those two things. Two thumbs up!

www.greenronin.com

D20 PRODUCT REVIEW

by Brian Ahrens



Overview

Armies of the Abyss is Green Ronin Publishing's follow-up guide to *Legions of Hell*, their tome on Devils. Volume two brings the reader all sorts of evil, chaotic nastiness from the lower regions. There are complete descriptions of twenty-two demon princes, their realms and their spell domains. Over two dozen new demons are included along with a new race, the Qlipthoth. Last, but certainly not least, there is a new character class for the player that is tired of playing a goody-goody (and that has a permissive GM). To go along with this new class and to benefit all the evil clerics out there, there are a bevy of new spells from such domains as Fear, the ever-popular Pain domain, Pleasure, Prophecy and Subterfuge. A good chunk of new information resides in this book.

Presentation

Armies of the Abyss will appear familiar to anyone that has read any of the other fine supplements that Green Ronin Publishing has put out for *Dungeons and Dragons*. The artwork in this tome was a nice surprise. It is a higher quality than some of the

other publications that Green Ronin has graced the gaming community and that I have perused. Not that the other books had bad artwork. Just that this book has better. As usual, the interior artwork is in a black and white format while the front and back covers have color illustrations. The pictures are suitably esoteric and gruesome. Just the way one would expect visual renderings of demons to appear.

The book is laid out in four chapters. The first gives an overview of the abyssal planes and a description of "life" there. Following this up is a chapter on the servants of the demons, including a new class, the thaumaturge. The thaumaturge gains enhanced power, from a demon, in exchange for his or her immortal soul. A thaumaturge can cast divine spells much like a traditional cleric ("infernal" is probably a better descriptor of the thaumaturges' spells). Understandably the thaumaturge character must of an evil or chaotic neutral alignment. To help out the budding thaumaturge, Green Ronin Publishing has included four new feats in this chapter. Next chapter, Those Who Rule: (you guessed it) twenty-two demon princes. My personal favorite is Abraxas. You have to see the picture of this "guy". "He" has the head of a rooster, the bare torso of a man and the lower body made up of a bunch of writhing snakes. Yep, Abraxas walks around on snakes. The final chapter is comprised of denizens of the infernal realms. Twenty-six creatures are described in detail. From an Alastor to the Stygian Interloper, each critter has specific statistics and descriptions as one would find in the *D&D Monster Manual*.

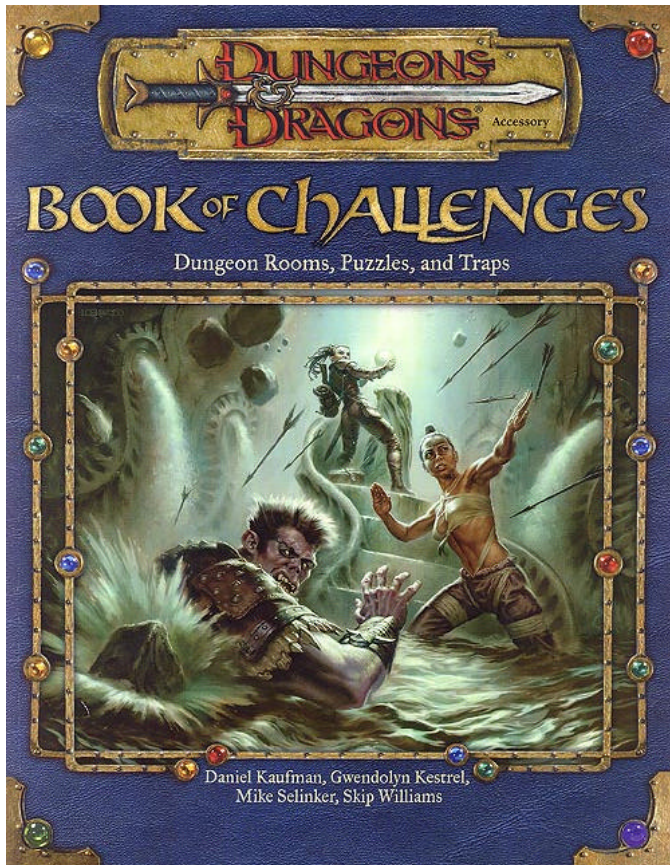
Value

With a m.s.r.p. of \$14.95 a purchaser receives a sixty-four page, soft back, perfect bound tome full of pure evil. This book comes with a very high nastiness factor that any game master can use to torment his or her players. And what GM worth his or her salt is not entertained by the thought of tormenting the players in their game. There is a good variety in the degree of danger that the creatures of *Armies of the Abyss* present. That way game masters can abuse their players from first level on. To all semi-sadistic GMs: pick up this book and pick on your players. They'll thank you for it.

www.greenronin.com

D20 PRODUCT REVIEW

by J. Michael Tisdell



BASICS

The Book of Challenges is a 128-page soft cover book published by Wizards of the Coast. The front and back covers are full color, but the illustrations inside are all black and white. The book describes different encounters for d20 games ranging from Encounter Level 1 to 22. The retail price is \$21.95.

BETWEEN THE COVERS

The book begins with some excellent advice to Dungeon Masters. The advice covers how to run a clever dungeon, how to run a clever trap, and the ten indispensable spells.

After that the book presents its 53 encounters arranged in increasing encounter level. Each encounter is complete with description, map, trap

and or monster characteristics, tactics for how the monsters react, and how to scale up or down the encounter.

For some encounter levels, there are multiple entry points; others have only one.

In addition, informative sidebars are sprinkled through out the book.

VALUE

First and foremost, this book is written for dungeon masters. There isn't a page in here that is for the consumption of players. The reason is clear after skimming the book – it's full of devious encounters, tricks, and traps. The book is great reading; I found myself playing out the encounters in my head, giggling maniacally. I especially enjoyed the Beholder Dome - a circular room with a tipping floor and a Beholder to keep everyone honest.

There are two ways to use this book: as a reference for devising your own encounters and to drop into existing adventures to liven them up, or reduce your own preparation time.

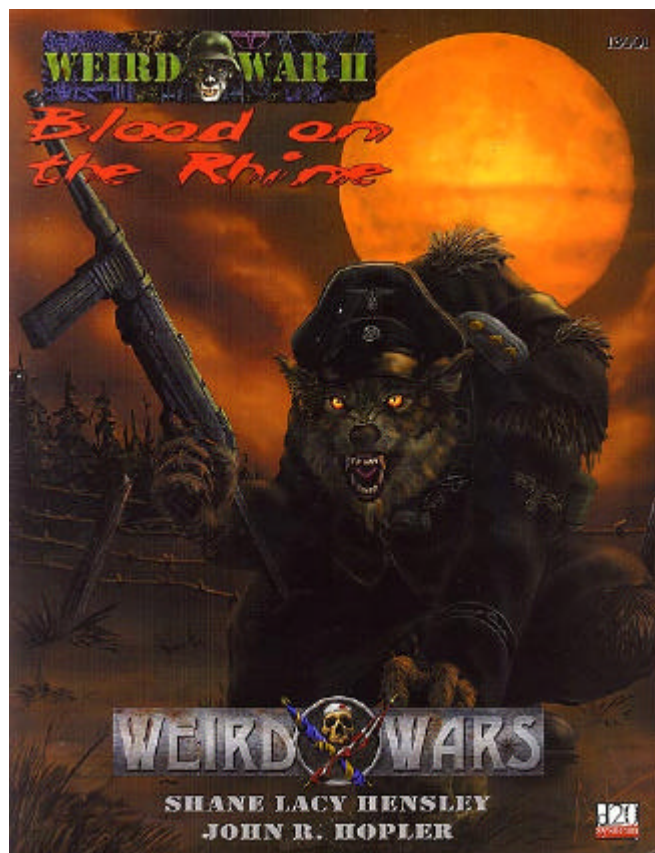
The book is worth is for the later alone – especially if, like me, you tend to create your own adventures more often than run pre-published ones. However, the book really comes into its own when you use it to spark ideas of your own.

The real bonus of the book and what I feel is its best feature is the advice to the DM section. Where the DM's guide provides a good basic introduction on how to run and adventure, this book is a master class on the finer points. I've been DM'ing since the original game came out in the seventies and much of what is written here I had to learn "in the dark corridors". Even this graybeard learned something new from this section.

All in all, this is an excellent book, a must for DM's both young and long in the tooth.

www.wizards.com/dnd

D20 PRODUCT REVIEW



BASICS

Weird War II: Blood on the Rhine is a 192-page soft cover book by Pinnacle Entertainment Group that describes the world of World War II gone nightmarishly wrong. Being a d20 based game book you'll need the Player's Handbook to play and Dungeon Master's Guide to run the game. The cover is full-color and the interior artwork is a mix of black & white drawings that remind me a lot of army comic books like Sgt. Rock and actual photographs from the WWII era. Using the photographs was a very cool idea and goes a long way to bring you into the time period. In the game, players take the roll of various Allied classes to combat the evil Nazis and other creatures bent on the destruction of humanity.

BETWEEN THE COVERS

Inside you'll find nine chapters (Introduction, Characters, Skills & Feats, Equipment, Combat, Prestige Classes, Magic, Haunted Vehicles, and Officer's Country) which will get you ready to let the lead fly. The introduction lays a very nice groundwork for the setting. The Nazis are evil, but they are not the only bad guys out there. Creatures

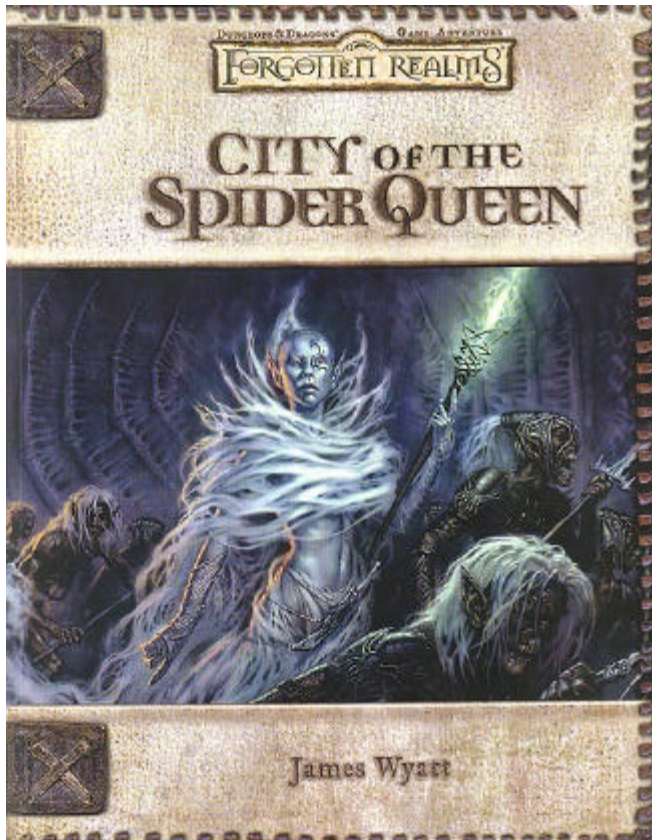
of legend have also risen to plague the land. In the Character chapter you get some pretty standard choices (Grunt, Officer, Medic, Resistance Fighter, and Scout) which will let you round out a good starting party. The Character section also does a great job in setting up the bad guys for you to knock down. Lots of good background information here. All of the new Skills & Feats are based around what you'd need to survive in the war, stuff like demolitions, flame-thrower, and mortar proficiency to name just a few. Guns, bombs, C-rations, and more make up the Equipment section. Everything you'd need to hit the field. Combat is brutal in Weird War II, as it should be! The game uses the standard hit point rules and considering that a shotgun up close can deliver 4d6 damage you can get into lots of trouble very quickly. To save your butt (sometimes) you'll earn 'Bennies'. These can be used to make a re-roll, recover 1d6 hit points immediately, etc. Oh, if a grenade lands next to you throw it back! Yup, rules for returning grenades are here...hot potato! There are five prestige classes (Commando, Sniper, Adept, Chaplain, and Operative), but there's no reason you can't stay a grunt through all of your career if you want to. The Magic section is thorough, but not overly so. Weird War II is an alternate-history war RPG and the magic that is presented doesn't overshadow that fact, which it easily could have. Officer's Country is really for the Dungeon, err, War Master only and gives plenty of additional information on running the game.

VALUE

Unless you just don't want to play in an alternate-history game that is set during World War II (and it's ok if you don't) this game is an absolute 'Yes' in my book. The setting is very cool and you can easily modify it to run a game with more fantastic creatures from the Monster Manual or bring in Call of Cthulhu elements or other storylines like the Illuminati or even run a Weird War II version of 'Reign of Fire'. You could even play in a light-hearted 'Kelly's Heroes' kind of campaign. I really like the fact that players are the good guys and that's pretty much the end of the story. Good decision from the guys at Pinnacle. Also, a short adventure ends the book and will get you started in short order. Weird War II has a retail price of \$25.00, looks like a lot of fun to play, and is recommended. Check it out!

www.peginc.com

D20 PRODUCT REVIEW



BASICS

City of the Spider Queen is a Dungeons and Dragons mega-adventure for characters of 10th from Wizards of the Coast. It is a 160-page softback book with a full-color interior and separate pull-out map section. It is designed to take player characters, if they survive of course, as high as 18th level.

BETWEEN THE COVERS

The adventure is divided into three sections, but don't let this fool you as each is quite involved and there is plenty to do. As you can guess by the title Drow are involved in the adventure so your players can rightly expect lots of creatures that are associated with these less than pleasant variety of elves, but you'll also find others to keep things from getting monotonous.

Player Characters are dropped into the adventure in a fairly standard way as recent Drow raids need investigating. Guess what, there's more going on

Than simple raids and the PC's get knee deep in the poop pretty quickly, with many encounters being at party level or higher. There are some that are lower though and even several opportunities for encounters to not take place based upon previous party actions. Harsh language will not be all the characters need to live through this adventure. They better be ready to get down and dirty and kick major butt.

The DM's job is none too easy either. Several reading of the adventure might be needed to make sure that things run as smoothly as possible as there is a large roster of Non-Player Characters to deal with and a timeline that will affect the adventure. It's certainly not like juggling cats, but some decent prep work will be needed. That's not a bad thing as DM's should always be prepared (or at least be able to bluff their way through something if they're not sufficiently prepared), but this isn't really a module for a novice DM.

The interior artwork is great as I've come to expect from WOTC products. The pull-out section of maps is truly marvelous. Having them separate from the rest of the book will help out every DM out there.

The two appendices are a lot of help also. The first details new monsters, 13 of them, and new magic items, also 13 of these, and the second gives the stats for NPC's and monsters.

VALUE

Thirty dollars for an adventure may seem a bit steep at first glance, but if you figure that regular, non-mega, adventures usually run from ten to fifteen dollars you are certainly getting at least, if not more than, 2-3 times the amount of content and play time. The adventure is tough and has lots of good combat, but there is more to it than that. Diplomacy will not go unused. Interestingly, the latest issue of Dungeon magazine has a tie-in adventure that can be inserted as part of City of the Spider Queen if your PC's just aren't getting enough Underdark goodness, or is that badness.

I found City of the Spider Queen to be a good challenging adventure with a very good cost to play time ratio.

www.wizards.com/dnd

BATTLE REPORT

WARHAMMER SKIRMISH

After a couple of test games to get a better feel for the Warhammer Skirmish rules Christopher and I decided to sit down and put together a battle report. The first agenda item was to decide upon a scenario. We found the "Ogres for Hire" scenario to be something that we could both agree on and could provide for lots of butt kicking.

The scenario had a point limit of 200 and required that you bring a hero. I decided to try out some new Chaos forces, but found that an Aspiring Hero (with an extra hand weapon) was going to cost me a heck of a lot of points so I didn't look any higher on the list. I also grabbed two Bloodletters, two Flesh Hounds, three Chaos Warriors (all with shields), and two Chaos Marauders on Horseback (with spears). Christopher's Empire list consisted of a Captain (on a warhorse, with a great weapon, full plate armor, and a shield), five Swordsmen, five Free Company Militiamen, five Halberdiers, and five Archers.

We sat down to talk about a few issues before getting figures on the table. We decided to go with a 24" x 24" battlefield, but went ahead and deployed the Ogres first instead of last because they need to be at least 8" away from other models and it would actually be quite easy to leave them no place to go on such a small board. We also decided that individual Ogres are not considered 'enemies' until they are hired by your opponent. We set up the terrain, deployed the ogres and then got to the business of dropping our troops onto the table.

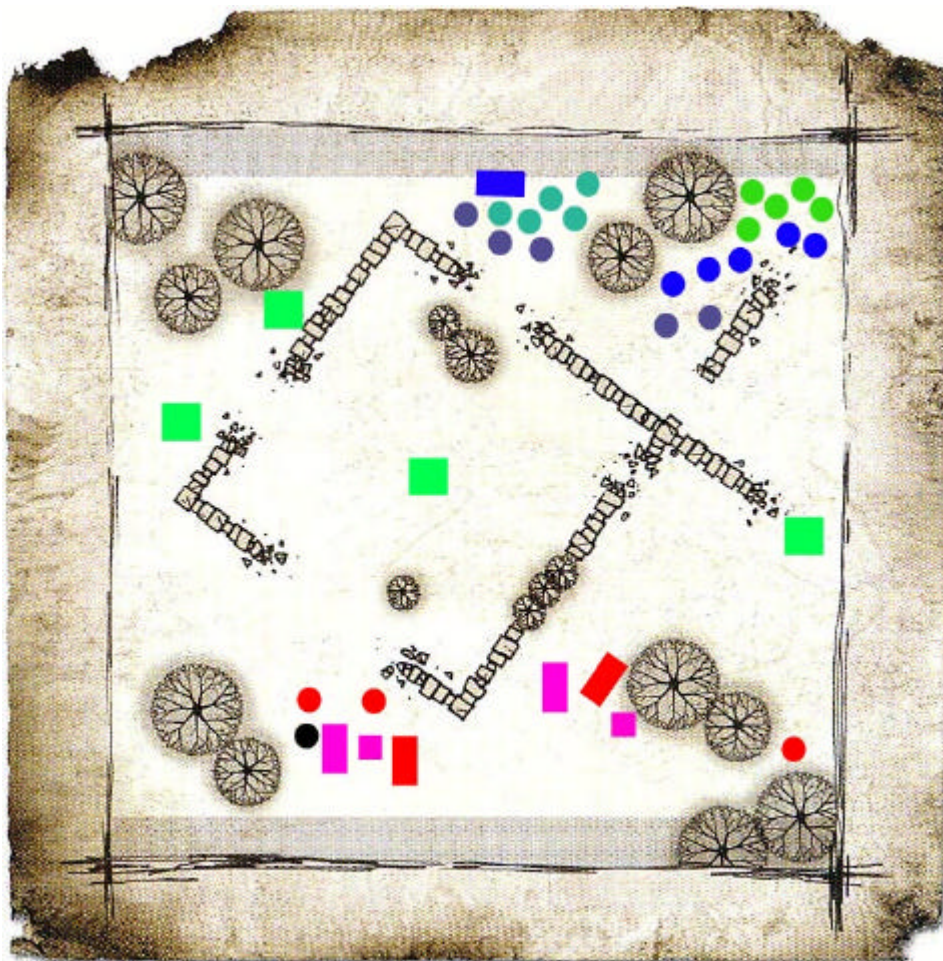
Full details of the scenario can be found on page 35 of the Warhammer Skirmish book or at www.games-workshop.com/warhammerworld/warhammer/skirmish/introduction.htm in the scenario section.

Our deployment can be seen on the map to the right. Christopher ended up having to deploy first and was somewhat

limited by where we placed the ogres. He basically put together two block of troops, one supported by his Captain.

My troops were also broken into two groups, one being lead by the Aspiring Hero.

- Ogre Mercenary
- Chaos Aspiring Hero
- Bloodletter
- Flesh Hound
- Chaos Warrior
- Mtd. Chaos Marauder
- Empire Captain
- Empire Militia
- Empire Swordsman
- Empire Halberdier
- Empire Archer





TURN 1 (above)

I won the roll to go first and surged forward. I was unable to contact any of Christopher's troops and my leader found himself too far away from the closest ogre to get into contact.

As you can see, Christopher's troops scattered about and started working into a proper battle line. The Empire Captain tried to make conversation with an ogre and got smacked in the head for his troubles (no wounds though). His archers got all jiggy and took a shot at an ogre (could not penetrate his thick hide), three shots at a Mounted Chaos Marauder (killed him right off the bat) and a single shot at a Flesh Hound (that missed).

After our movement we each got to control two of the ogres. Mostly a lot of movement, but nothing to write home about.

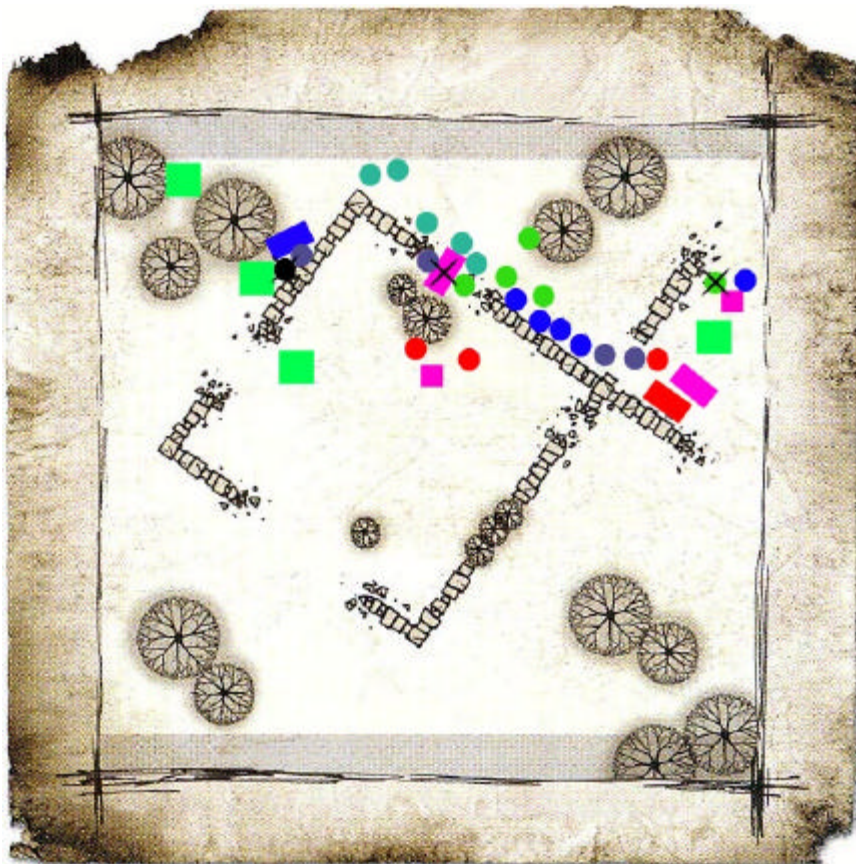
TURN 2 (right)

Here's where we get stuck in! As you can see a decent amount of contact was made, including my Aspiring Hero taking

off towards Chris' captain and crashed through a window on his charge. More charges included a Chaos Warrior on a Militiaman, a Bloodletter on an Archer and Halberdier, and a Flesh Hound into a Militiaman (who got scared and ran off-board) and Swordsman. The remaining Chaos troops moved up into positions of hopeful attack next turn.

The Bloodletter in combat reduced his opponents to being just the Archer as the Halberdier fell dead at his feet. The archer ended up with his bell quite rung, but still alive. The Chaos Warrior crashed into his opponent (Militiaman) and sent him to the ground while the Flesh Hound stunned his opponent (Swordsman). The Aspiring Hero hit the startled Empire Captain several times but caused no wounds. The Captain was unable to hit his foe.

On Chris' turn his archers moved up to firing positions along some windows and a lowly Militiaman joined the Captain in fighting the Aspiring Hero of Chaos. A total of four troops tried to charge the centrally located Flesh Hound and three passed their Fear tests. A Swordsman, Militiaman, and Halberdier all joined the



Fray. The knocked-over Militiaman stood up and four Archers took aim at a single un-engaged Chaos Warrior, managed to hit him twice, but could not drop him.

Back in the fighting a Chaos Warrior sent his Militia opponent back to the ground and the combined efforts of several Empire warriors sent the demonic Flesh Hound back into the netherworld. In what was the most unexpected turn of events for the game the Militiaman that charged the Aspiring Hero not only hit him twice, but killed him on the spot.

We again split control of the Ogres, but neither of us had good enough positioning to get them into the fight the way we would like so they mostly got moved out of the way.

My problems went from being serious (outnumbered) to being critical (losing my command model). The game could now end at the start of any single turn. Not good at all.

TURN 3 (below-right)

OK, do we get to play another turn? Yes, I made my roll and the fight keeps on going. The game is at the point where I need to force Chris into a situation similar to mine. As I'm unable to get to his Captain I need to kill as many people as fast as I can. That's not much different than my regular battle plan, but it just seems a lot more critical right now.

Charges were a plenty with a Bloodletter going after a Militiaman (who failed his Fear test), Chaos Warriors going after Empire Swordsmen, and the remaining Flesh Hound targeting a Militiaman.

The fight between the Archer and Bloodletter on the East side of the board continued with another stunning blow to the Archer. Several Empire warriors were sent to the afterlife as a Flesh Hound devoured a Militiaman, a Chaos Warrior decapitated a Swordsman and a Bloodletter killed a Halberdier.

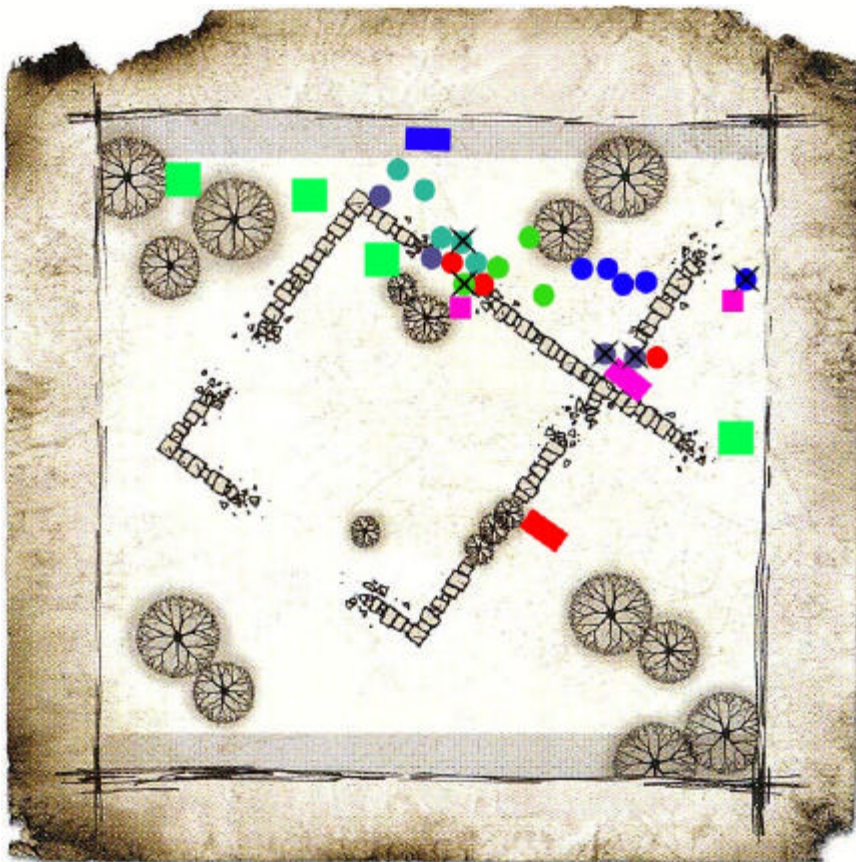
On Chris' turn pretty much anyone that could get into the melee did so. The Chaos Warriors got swamped by two more Militiamen, a Halberdier, and a Swordsman. The recently victorious Captain and Militiaman came back around to the main area of fighting and the Archers pulled back away from the main line.

The fighting was furious and actually fell in favor of the Chaos troops.

The Bloodletter finally put his nemesis, the Archer, to rest. Two Militiamen found their Chaos Warrior opponent a bit much to handle as he split one of them in half. The other Chaos Warriors held their own against double their number of opponents and once again the Ogres really didn't get to do much except watch a fight without having to pay the price of admission.

TURN 4

What, no map? Yup, you guessed it. After having a rather good showing on turn three my troops ran away. We talked a little bit after the game about the Daemonic Instability and how it's different from just running away, but in the end my army ran away and I have to be able to live with that. I'd have expected Chris to do the same and I have no doubt that he would have.

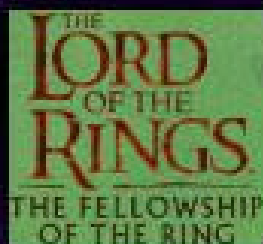




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IN CONCLUSION

Ok, well it did stink to have my army run away just as they were making a serious offensive push into the Empire forces. I don't get the feeling that things would have been radically different had we tried to make more use of the ogres. They seemed more like an interesting distraction rather than a real part of the game. That could be attributed to the fact that we both pretty much gave up on using them very early in the game though.

Except for my Aspiring Champion getting torn apart by a lowly militiaman my troops did about as well as I had expected. The Chaos Warriors held their own and the demons did ok. Looking back I would get rid of the Mounted Marauders and either buy as many standard Marauders as possible to make up their points or just a few more Chaos Warriors that could put together a serious block of hand-to-hand butt kicking.

As much as I like the Warhammer Skirmish book and the scenarios contained therein I'm not convinced that the skirmish rules for Warhammer are the best way to go for small scale games. It still has a lot of the 'my turn' and 'your turn' feel that works fine for Warhammer Fantasy in mass combats with block of troops moving in formation, but with just a handful or two of troops I'd favor more flexibility. I'd say that Mordheim is the better way to go.

Mark

When writing my army lists I look at my opponent and the scenario being played to lend a direction to my choices. As an Empire player I realize that there are very few troops that I can take that can go toe to toe against a Chaos warrior, much less one of the demons. With the smaller points values of Warhammer skirmish a player has to put more thought into what each purchase would do. With only 200 points to work with the first choice must be the required hero figure. Knowing that I would be outclassed I developed a strategy that revolved around convincing the ogres that they were my friends. To this effect I placed a captain on a warhorse. This added speed would allow him to reach the ogres as fast as possible. He set me back a total of 78 points armored up and ready to go. The next thing to work with was the horde to follow. Mark's theories of quantity versus quality in our two practice games showed a distinct disadvantage to the outnumbered war bands. I chose 5 swordsmen for 35 points to be my backbone. I feel the common swordsman is the most underrated troop in the Empire army. With a weapon skill and initiative of four and a 4+ armor save in hand to hand they can survive surprising amounts of damage. Free company are dirt cheap and get two attacks so 5 of these fellow humans, at 25 points will be conscripted to stem the

Chaos troops. With decent armor & toughness, 5 halberdiers should hopefully be able to lend their support of the swordsmen making up for the pitiful human strength of 3. This put me down another 30 points. To plink from afar I need some form of missile troop. As tempting as the handgunners are, skirmish tends to be a game of movement, and their static position that's needed to be effective would be to my disadvantage. Archers would be it then. Five bowmen top me off with another 30 points. Twenty-one models on the board ensure that I will have to lose 6 guys before testing to rout. This should hopefully compensate for leadership 8. My goal is for my Captain to rush ahead and convince an ogre or two to fight for my side. My troops with the aid of the ogres should be able to slug through the chaos force.

Well, a few things right off the bat threw me for a loop. We were going to play on a two foot by two-foot board. Close quarter means we will get right into action quick. As Mark pulled out his chaos models, only half of his troops were foot troops. A big percentage of his troops also caused fear. Yipe!! So much for the run in front of the troops routine, as the Captain would quickly be surrounded, and his leadership is desperately needed. The other drawback of playing on such a small table was the density of the terrain. Line of sight was dramatically reduced as we matched the map in the book to the letter. After deployment I made one feeble attempt to sway the ogre. It failed. From that point on the ogres were a moot point. When I was able to move an ogre I placed it in a way to try to block charges from the enemy. My lack of cavalry was felt when within turn two Mark's chaos war band was within 8 inches and almost none of my guys could move more than 4 inches. I was really hampered in any attempt to reposition. Inevitably I settled into a waiting game and let him come to me. Using natural bottlenecks I was able to grind him down and force him to begin taking rout checks. By the end of the game we were both testing on leadership 8 and waiting to see who blew the roll first. Fortunately it was Mark. I will stand by my assertion that numbers matter in Warhammer Skirmish. The 5 point guys with two attacks are ruthless. The 66.66% chance that you will not be out of action makes low armor saves not as much of a detriment, and the critical hits rules almost cancels out the effects of any sort of heavy armor. The Daemons are rough in skirmish! Their fear lends to their survivability and they are the only regular troops that get a save against critical hits. Even heroes normally do not get ward saves. I was fortunate that poor rolling on Mark's part kept one of his daemons tied up for 3 turns. That 5-point body (he refused to admit his death) held up a flank and allowed me to bring his war band to that all-important break point. This game, although a win, will teach me to read the scenario better. I might have come up with a different strategy if I had realized that we were so close together. Good game Mark!

Chris

GAME SCENARIO

INQUISITOR

by Christopher Carr

Men of Iron

Revolutionary captain Jacques Danton assumed control of Vexel VI in a bloody revolt late last week. He convinced the populace that the planets' nobles and governors were wasting away million of imperial credits, and were doing nothing to benefit inhabitants of this once loyal planet. "Even the Emperor," he decreed, "has not stepped foot on our planet, but rules from his Golden Throne reaping the benefits of our labor!"

According to sources on the planet, Danton is an extremely charismatic leader, and is holding the new the revolutionary government together by sheer force of will. Reports show that without him the factions of Danton's "Glorious Revolution" will turn upon themselves, leaving a shattered force that will be easy for Imperial troops to subdue. Unfortunately, these same reports state that a renegade Techno Magus, Johann Gauss, has allied himself with the Danton and is lending his formidable skills and resources to the cause.

Gauss, by studying forbidden and heretical tomes, has located a reliquary of machines from the Golden Age of Technology. Our spies report Gauss has managed to activate at least one of these ***EXPUNGED*** and bring it to the new capitol via a nearby portal. Although no match for the power of the Imperium, a force of these ***EXPUNGED*** could causes heavy losses if the planet is assaulted.

The Imperial commanders in the area have dispatched two seek and destroy teams to the area. The teams will work in tandem to eliminate Danton and the ***EXPUNGED*** to open Vexel VI for re-assimilation into the Imperium.

Scenario Rules:

This scenario is written to played on a four foot by eight foot board or larger, and to be played with 28mm figures for better use of range. Although this scenario is written and worded for a GM, it can easily be used as a multiplayer game. Simply assign a player one of the four forces at play in this scenario: Capture and Destroy team 1, Kill team 1, Johann's men and servitors, and Jacques' revolutionary troops.

Under the cover of darkness – The first 5 turns of the game will occur at dusk. Count the entire table as being covered in smoke. On the first turn there is a –50% to hit or to spot a character during this time.

Grave chute attacks – Kill team 1 will be after Jacques and will attempt to take the fort. Prior to the game and before the player is "aware" of enemy troop positions, the player using Kill team 1 will write down what turn they will arrive and where. Like in the real world timing is an issue. On the turn they arrive every team member gets a free grenade throw before they move. Since the grenades were tossed as they came down it does not count against their actions for the turn.

Awareness with an Auspex – Use counters of some sort to mark troops who are detected. Poker chips are very close to the size of an Inquisitor base and work very well for this. Detected troops can move and react to noises and patrols without identifying exactly what they are. An Auspex cannot determine the difference between an imperial guardsman and a highly trained assassin in hiding.

Undetermined game length – The game ends two turns after both teams call for extraction. Two turns after a team calls for extraction a vehicle will land centered on the troop member who called in. Upon arrival everyone within a 10-yard (centimeter) radius is picked up. Injured troops or casualties can be dragged by a team member at a walking speed with a strength test taken upon every dragging action. The landing zone must be outside. The teams may call for extraction on different turns. When both teams have been evacuated or are dead the game is over. Check for completed mission objectives. The side with the most victory points wins.

Sounding the alarm – An alarm is located at the door of each of the two barracks, at the portal, and by the door of the fort. Two turns after sounding the alarm d6 rebel troops run on from one of five areas randomly determined. All rebels for that turn arrive at the same place.

Capturing Johann or Jacques – If either of these criminals loses consciousness because of system shock or $\frac{1}{2}$ of their toughness value is exceeded then they may be dragged to the landing zone as per the rules for injured comrades. If they are stunned from a blow in close combat or are charged while stunned then they are subdued, and will walk with one of the insertion team members who may not shoot. The captured model no longer rolls for actions, but follows his escort.

Capturing Imperial troops – Captured Imperial troops are great form of propaganda for rebel forces. They

are commonly dragged through the street and displayed where the most people can view the bodies of the enemies. Imperial troops can be captured as described above, and any troops left behind after the two extractions are automatically captured. Well-trained troops – All members of the insertion teams are well trained. They may forgo rolling for actions to automatically gain ½ their speed value's actions rounded down. This allows them to ensure that they will not fumble, trip, etc.

Imperial Troops Mission:

Capture and Destroy Team 1's orders are simple. Consisting of an Inquisitor Lord, an Imperial Guard Veteran Sergeant (any non Lord character), and three imperial guard troopers, the team will enter the warzone from the western edge. They should arm themselves with silent weapons as they will proceed to the portal and past the two barracks. Using the element of surprise they are to capture Johann Gauss, destroy the working ***Expunged***, and destroy the portal. Expect heavy resistance from the ***Expunged***, and the team should outfit with at least one weapon that can pierce heavy armor. This blasphemy was constructed at the height of the Age of Technology and will not go down easily. Once the team's position is occupied, engage any hostiles at will. Above all, do not leave anyone behind. Drag all captives and casualties to the landing zone. Another team will arrive to cover your mission and to deal with the rebel menace. Coordinate timing prior to the mission.

Kill Team 1's orders are equally easy to follow. This team consisting of similar troops will Grav chute in from a low-flying transport. The drop zone is chosen before the mission without the knowledge of the success of Capture and Destroy Team 1's mission. Timing will be critical. Kill Team 1 is to locate and neutralize Jacques Danton, silence the two machine gun nests, support the Capture and Destroy Team by holding up resistance, and getting out with all members. Above all, do not leave anyone behind. Both teams will be outnumbered in enemy territory. Kill Team one should be armed with at least a few grenades to drop upon landing. For a quiet drop gas grenades are encouraged. For a lightening strike at the fort, maximum carnage in minimum time is encouraged. This team needs to be able to lay out large amounts of firepower to counteract the opposition.

Rebel Forces:

Jacques Danton – Revolutionary leader

WS	BS	S	T	I	Wp	Sg	Nv	Ld
75	65	60	65	70	75	75	85	95

Skills: Leader, Dodge, True Grit

Equipment: Bolt pistol w/ 2 reloads, Flak Armour on all locations but head, Refractor Field, Rebreather, and Commlink

Pyoter Kryptkin – Rebel Second in command

WS	BS	S	T	I	Wp	Sg	Nv	Ld
45	70	55	60	65	70	60	75	60

Skills: Leader, Heroic, Deadeye Shot

Equipment: Bolter w/ sickle mag, bolter reload, Revolver, 12 revolver shells, 6 dum dum rounds, 12 manstoppers, a knife, carpace armor on the groin, chest, and abdomen, flak armor on the arms and legs, and a commlink.

Johann Gauss

WS	BS	S	T	I	Wp	Sg	Nv	Ld
60	70	45 (185)	65	65	70	85	70	60

Skills: Dodge, Hipshooting, Heroic

Equipment: Heavy Stubber with 1 reload, bolt pistol, 2 advanced bionic arms (+ 2 armor on arms), carpace armor on all locations, and advanced bionic eyes with rangefinder and a motion predictor.

Robotic Warrior – ***Expunged***

WS	BS	S	T	I	Wp	Sg	Nv	Ld
60	75	150	100	65	75	50	95	95

Skills: Ambidextrous, Gunfighter, Hipshooting, Nerves of Steel, True Grit, Nerves of Steel

Equipment: Assault cannon, multi laser, average bionic brain, power armor on all locations, ammo drums (will not run out of ammo, but the ***Expunged*** will still have to switch drums and reload), and a passive motion detector.

Rebel Troopers

WS	BS	S	T	I	Wp	Sg	Nv	Ld
60	60	60	60	55	60	60	60	60

Skills: None

Equipment: Mars pattern lasgun and flak armor on all locations except head

Heavy Weapon Teams – 2 men to each heavy bolter

WS	BS	S	T	I	Wp	Sg	Nv	Ld
60	60	60	60	55	60	60	60	60

Skills: none

Equipment: Tripod mounted heavy bolter with 2 reloads (always counts as rested, but cannot be moved except to rotate), Mars pattern lasgun and flak armor on all locations except head.

Layout:

The Barracks each have 5 rebel troopers asleep inside.

The fort is manned by 5 rebel troopers and Pyoter Kryptkin. The five rebel troopers are on the walls guarding the fort. Pyoter is either on the walls or is in a small building in the fort. Jacques Danton is somewhere within 20 cm of the fort in a building asleep.

The robotic warrior is within 10 cm of the portal and may be set on a patrol loop. Johann is placed within 30 cm of the portal. He is writing down his findings and is not paying attention.

Two heavy bolter nests are stationed in between the portal and the fort and are not within 30 cm of each other. They should be sand bagged or fortified in some way.

Please see the below suggested map for building and troop placement.

Rebel Actions:

Johann Gauss is not a courageous person. Upon him becoming aware of a threat (gunfire or some other threatening action) he will ready his heavy stubber and

attempt to make it back to the fort or exit the table if the fort is not manned by friendly troops. He will proceed with a fighting withdrawal and will evade, but will not run or sprint. He is too concerned with self-preservation to open himself up to a shot in the back. He will pause behind cover to spray his opponents with fire.

Jacques Danton will wake up upon hearing the ensuing racket. He will be aware of everything that Pyoter and Johann are doing due to his commlink. He will try to motivate his men, but he is a political leader not a fighter. Expect a fighting withdrawal upon realization that that he is outgunned.

Pyoter is a fanatic and will not withdraw. He will fight to the death.

The robot will spray the nearest threat with as many shots as possible on semi auto. With an average brain he has a 10% chance of not working right every turn. See the rulebook page 87 for details. The robot does not distinguish between threats. He will not target a rocket launcher over the nearest enemy.

When the troops rush from the barracks they will rush towards the noise with little regard for cover until fired upon. One will always waste an action to "sound the alarm". Troops coming on from offboard will react the same way.

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Victory Conditions

Victory Points

Capture and Destroy Team 1

Destroy the working robot	1 vp
Destroy the portal	1 vp
Capture the Johann Gauss	2 vp
Extraction team evacuated intact	2 vp

Kill Team 1

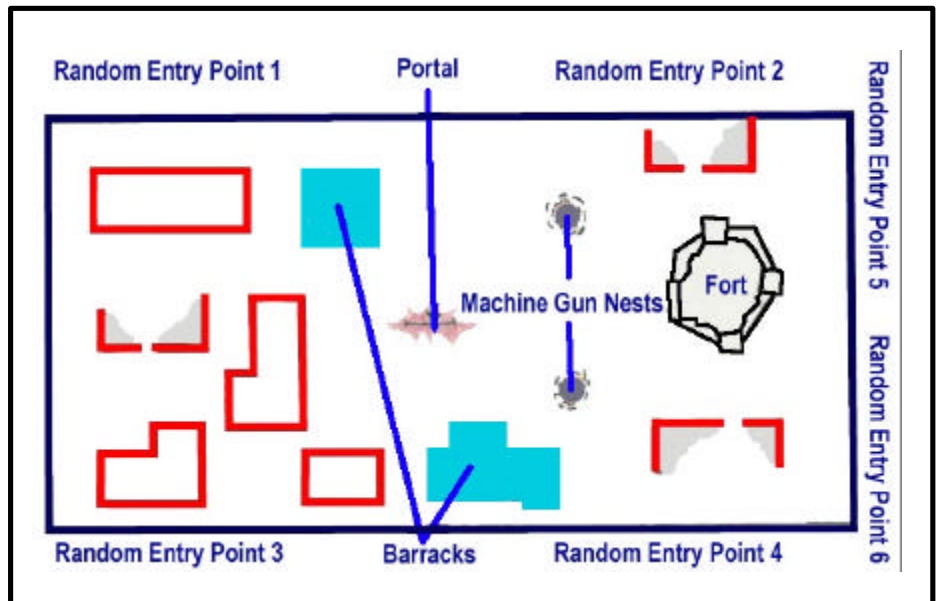
Silence the gun nests	1 vp per nest
Capture or kill Jacques Danton	2 vp / 1 vp
Extraction team evacuated intact	2 vp

Johann's Troops

Johann survives and is free	2 vp
Portal intact	1 vp
Robot is still operational	1 vp
Captured Imperial troops	1 vp per

Jacques' Troops

Jacques survives and is free	2 vp
Operational gun nests	1 vp per nest
Captured Imperial troops	1 vp per



Playing Inquisitor in 28 mm

When Inquisitor first came out there were many complaints about Games Workshop's decision to change the scale from 28 mm to 54 mm. Throughout game stores and across the Internet people cried foul for all sorts of reasons. In actuality I believe it was that a game of this detail and magnitude required figures that could be modeled to the same level of detail. Upon the release of Inquisitor I searched online miniature stores and found that although not the standard, 54-mm is not an uncommon figure size.

I say this to explain that I did not begin using 28-mm figures to play Inquisitor to escape the large-scale figures. I started playing in this scale to enable a broader use of the rules. My gaming group does not use Inquisitor in a roleplaying sense. If we wanted a roleplaying game we would pick up a D20 system and play. Many times we do not even use a GM when we crank out the Inquisitor rules. Instead of reveling in the roleplaying possibilities of Inquisitor, we enjoy the detail of the combat system.

Using Inquisitor as a combat system alone has a few flaws in my opinion, that miraculously level out with the slight change of scale. When converting to 28-mm scale simply use a centimeter to represent each yard instead of an inch. Now a 4' x 4' table does not allow one-turn charges by an Archoflagellant on crack. Even better, one can use a 4' x 8' table and actually try a scenario of sneaking. Sniper rifles, hunting rifles, and finding sniping positions have an impact on the game.

Also, the terrain that you already have that is now usable for a more cinematic clash. Your miniature selection for warbands increases tenfold. Another important change

that switching scales allows is the sheer scope of the game. Now twenty or thirty guys a side can run around. An imperial guard weapons team manning a heavy is a fearful sight indeed.

Playing without a GM is a little easier in 28-mm than it is in the full 54-mm scale. Due to the fact that the ready reckoner points in the back of the book are more than a little funky, a group will have to come up with a way of balancing the warbands. We decided that 1 Lord character, 1 henchman, and 3 imperial guardsmen (WS and BS of 60) are the basics of a warband. We set a limit on the number of skills per guy (5 per lord and 4 per henchmen) to keep things even, and outlawed certain items (Fields, power armor, etc). Then we enforce a strict policy of WYSIWYG. You want combat drugs; show me the vials on the fig. Hmm...that doesn't look like a plasma pistol to me. A miniature from any science fiction game will work, but stay true to the miniature. Make all the imperial guardsmen have identical stats, and only arm them with basic weapons, and voila. It will not be perfectly balance, but you would be surprised how hard it is to go insane when it is not on there he does not carry it. It also helps to condense the character sheets so that all of them fit on to one page. That way there is less page flipping and character sheets getting lost.

If you object to playing Inquisitor in 28 mm then don't. I thoroughly enjoy painting and converting 54 mm figures, but my Texas sense of bigger is better also lends itself to numbers. Inquisitor takes on an entirely new feel when it becomes small squad skirmish action instead of a limited warband.

D20 ADVENTURE

Call of CthulhuTM ROLEPLAYING GAME

by J. Michael Tisdell

Celestia Marie

Introduction

This adventure is set onboard the tramp steamer *Celestia Marie*. The story is designed to pick up after the events in **General Hospital** and **War Buddy**¹ (<http://www.chaosium.com/cthulhu/celaenococ/warbuddy.pdf>). Alternatively, it can be brought in at a later time.

This adventure is set in Texas in the early 1930's. With minor modifications, the story could be moved to the 1920's or to the modern day.

Adventure Summary

After their harrowing experience in at the General Hospital, the adventurers are once again on the trail of the murder of Jack Meredith. They have taken the train to San Antonio to meet with Charles Meredith, Jack's father.

From this interview, the investigators determine that the Order of the Ancient Stone have an office in down town. Visiting the office, the Investigators find it ransacked. However, they find evidence that the members have taken passage on the tramp steamer *Celestia Marie*. The investigators book passage on the same ship to corner the fiends; but their quarry is aware of them.

Background Information

See **War Buddy** for background information.

Dramatis Personae

Harvey Acres

Harvey Acres was a member of the affluent Acres family. Harvey got into a little trouble back in Plymouth and was sent to Galveston to avoid embarrassing the family. Harvey wound up enjoying the climate of Galveston and decided to stay. He was able to build up a good trade in shipping cotton.

The Order of the Stone was interested in clandestine moving people and cargo between England and Texas. They were able to put Samson Calloway in as Harvey's assistant and, using Sam, were able to conduct their business.

Harvey started noticing some strange entries in the books and, after a quick investigation; he uncovered what Sam and the Order were doing. When he threatened to go to the police, Lance Blake killed him.

Lance Blake

Lance Blake is the head of the Order of the Stone in Texas. He is the friend who met up with Jack Meredith and had him killed. He is also the one who sent Karl LeBlanc after Father Henesey.

Samson Calloway

Sam is a minor member of the Order of the Stone. Before he joined the order, Sam was a petty criminal. He met members of the order in the count jail and parleyed his connections into a good job at Livingston and Acres. Sam likes his new job and wants to go straight; but is afraid of the Order and what it would do to him. As such, Sam does just what he has to, and does so unwillingly.

The Order has done a good job of burying Sam's record. A **Research** check (DC 30) is required to uncover his criminal record.

Samson Calloway (Novitiate, 2nd Level)

S: 14; D: 10; C: 10; I: 12; W: 10; Ch: 17

HP: 7; Initiative: +0; AC: 10; Attack; Pistol @ +2 (1d10); Fort: +0, Reflex: +3, Will: +0.

Bluff +4, Gather Info +5, Innuendo +4, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (Occult) +6, Knowledge (history) +5, Knowledge (streetwise) +7, Listen +4, Move silently +2, Search +5, Sense Motive: +6, Spot +6.

Point Blank Shot (+1 within 30'), Precise Shot (shoot into melee w/o penalty)

José Dominguez

José is an elder member of the Order of the Stone. He is the ranking member of the Order in Galveston. He works for Longfellow and Acres Shipping, Ltd, which is the front company for the order in Galveston.

José family has lived in the Galveston area since before the Texas Revolution. During that time they have been members of the Cult of the Yellow King. José joined the Order to add it to the existing cult in this part of Texas.

José Dominguez (Cultist 5th Level)

S: 12; D: 8; C: 15; I: 14; W: 12; Ch: 14

HP: 33 (5d6+10); Initiative: +3 (-1 Dex, +4 improved Initiative); Speed: 30; AC: 14 (+5 armor, -1 Dex); Attack: Pistol @ +3 (1d10); Fort: +6; Will: +0; Reflex: +2.

Bluff +6, Cthulhu Mythos +5, Gather Information: +7, Innuendo +6, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (Biology) +10, Knowledge (Occult) +8, Knowledge (History) +7, Knowledge (Religion) +7, Listen +6, Move Silently +4, Search +7, Sense Motive +7, Spot +6.

Point Blank Shot (+1 within 30'), Precise Shot (Shoot into melee w/o penalty), Improved Initiative.

They say that Mr. Lance Blake, the man in the back office, was a quiet tenet. He was pleasant but not outgoing – he kept to himself. Mr. Alfonso hasn't been seen in the past few days.

Office 412

Inside the office is a shambles. The desks have been overturned and the file cabinets have been emptied out. A bookshelf lies across the floor, its contents spilled all over the floor. A quick search (DC 15) will show that most of the papers are the usual charity type of paperwork – names and addresses of donors. A thorough search (DC 20) will reveal a torn up ticket stub for passage to Plymouth on the *Monkey Business*. An extensive search (DC 30) will reveal that the mess was intentionally made.

Spell	Cost	Cast	Range	Duration	Effect
Raise Night Fog	3 Int, 1d6 San	1a	150'	5 hrs	Pg. 147
Red Sign of Shudde M'Eil	2 Str/target, 1d8 San	1a	35'	Concentration	1d6+5/rnd
Power of Nyambie	1 Con (permanent)	1h	Self	Instantaneous	2d6 ability
Black Binding	3 Int, 1d6 San	1a	Touch	Instantaneous	Pg. 131

Captain John Englebert

John Englebert, a balding man in his late fifties, is the captain of the *Celestia Maria*. John has sailed the ship since she was launched in 1920. John is unaware of the activities of the Order, but he is familiar with Lance Blake; and he doesn't like the man. "He's alright as far as you know, but he strikes me as the kind o' man that dogs would bark at."

Events

The following is a rough outline of events that can occur. The events occur in the order given. The pacing of the events should be handled by the Keeper to keep the game moving but **do not overpower the players**. They should have time to investigate. The sequence is set such that the events will happen in the order listed if the investigators do nothing to move the story along. Their actions may change how things happen.

San Antonio

The Order of the Stone kept an office in downtown San Antonio, just north of Alamo Plaza. The office is located on the fourth floor of the building; office 412. The Order masqueraded as a charity for widows and orphans.

Alamo Plaza Building

The office itself is composed of two rooms: a reception area and an actual office. When the investigators arrive, the door to the office is locked. No one answers knocking.

The offices to either side of 412 are vacant. Across the hall from 412 is a janitor's closet. The only occupied office on the fourth floor is 414. This is the office of an accountant (Mr. Pitney) and his secretary (Mrs. Bowes)

After the party finds the ticket stub, a **Spectral Hunter**, which has been lurking in the room invisibly, will attack a random party member. If one of the adventurers has the shard (from adventure 1), the Hunter will attack him.

Spectral Hunter (Monstrous Humanoid)

S: 23; D: 13; C: 8; I: 18; W: 17; Ch: 10

HP: 15 (3d8); Initiative: +1 (Dex); Speed: 30; AC: 13 (+2 natural, +1 Dex); Attack: 2 Claws @ +9 (1d6+6) or 1 Bite @ +9 (1d4+6) (+11 when invisible); Fort: 0; Will: +6; Reflex: +6.

SAN: 0/1 (invisible), 1/1d3 (leaving traces), 1/1d6+2 (when visible).

Disable Device +9; Hide +9 (+5 againsts those who can see invisible); Listen +9, Move Silently +7; Search +10; Sense Motive +8; Spot +9, Wilderness Lore: +7.

Dodge (+1 AC against one opponent), Lightning Reflexes (+2 Reflex), Mobility (+4 Dodge bonus to AoO), Run (top speed is 150), Track.

Invisible at Will (target loses Dex bonus to AC, all attacks against invisible target miss 50% of the time); Incorporeal at Will; Make Invisible (grapple target, make Will save DC20 – target fades from view – and can see the Spectral Hunter in its own element); Darkvision 60'

Monkey Business

The *Monkey Business* is a steamer that left Galveston for Plymouth, England three days ago. The manifest does have a passenger named Lance Blake.

The Longfellow and Acres Shipping, Ltd (LAS) of Plymouth own the steamer. The *Monkey Business* is one of a fleet of four steamers that run between Galveston and Plymouth. The other ships are *Celestia Maria*, *Marlowe's Luck*, and *Sunrise Angel*. They mainly run freight – cotton to be exact – but they also have room for a few passengers.

Longfellow and Acres Shipping, Ltd. have a small office on pier 13 in Galveston. A check of the newspaper archives (**Research** DC 15) will show that Longfellow and Acres Shipping opened their Galveston office in 1920. Further digging (**Research** DC 20) will reveal that the original manager of the Galveston office, Harvey Acres, died in January under mysterious circumstances. His obituary from the Galveston Paper is:

Sunday, 16 January 1932

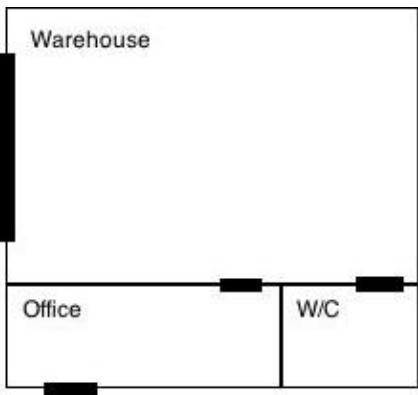
Shipping Manager Found Dead on Pier

Harvey Acres, manager of Longfellow and Acres Shipping, was found dead yesterday morning in his office on Pier 13. Mr. Acres body was found decapitated with his head sitting on his desk. The police have no leads on the murder. Harvey Acres had no family in the Galveston area, but leaves a sister and younger brother in Plymouth England.

Galveston
Pier 13

Pier 13 is a busy place in Galveston. When the party arrives, there are two shrimp boats (*Monica's Prize* and *Daddy Warbucks*) are moored and are off loading their catch onto handcarts. The area is quite noisy and crowded. A player who makes a successful **Spot** check (DC 20) will notice that there is a short, fat man with an eye patch over his left eye is watching the party. If anyone moves towards the man, he will disappear into the crowd.

Longfellow and Acres Shipping, Ltd.



The office sits about two-thirds of the way down the pier. It's a shabby looking building, with peeling white paint and rusty lamps on the outside. Moored behind the office is the steamer *Celestia Maria*.

When the party arrives and knocks on the door, it swings open. The office inside is empty. The office has a single wooden desk against the west wall with two filing cabinets behind it. Hanging on the south wall are photographs of the company's four steamers. A chalkboard on the east wall lists information about each of the ships (arrival times, sailing times, cargo, captain, etc). A quick glance (**Spot** DC 5) at the chalkboard shows that the *Celestia Maria* is currently set to sail tomorrow morning at seven a.m.

Water Closet

The water closet is clean. It has the normal fixtures and a small bureau on the south wall. A **search** of the room (DC 20) will reveal a small journal in the bottom of the bureau. The book is written in a fine, spidery hand. It is Harvey Acre's diary and some pages have been torn out (April 30, 1931, July 9, 1931, and January 14, 1932). Samson Calloway is mentioned in the book as a friend and confidant. The diary will reveal no more information.

Warehouse

The warehouse is a busy place. Longshoremen are bustling around, loading bales of cotton on to the *Celestia Maria*. The warehouse is about half full of cotton bales. The players may **spot** (DC 20) the one-eyed man near the warehouse door. If the players move toward him, he will again disappear into the crowd on the pier.

Samson Calloway

Shortly after the party enters the office, the door from the warehouse will open and Samson Calloway will come in. Samson is a tall, thin man with white hair and a salt-and-pepper moustache. He will greet the party and ask to help. Samson worked for Harvey Acres and took over after his untimely death. In fact, it was Samson who found the body. Sam will be helpful to the party, though he is quite busy getting the *Maria* ready to sail. Sam will be glad to book passage on the ship for the party. If asked about Lance Blake, Sam will say he remembers the man, and the fact that he was in a hurry to book passage on the first ship out. A successful **Sense Motive** (DC 20) check will show that Sam is not telling the whole truth. Sam won't reveal anything more. Sam is a member of the Order of the Ancient Stone. Though he didn't kill Harvey Acres, he was an accessory. Lance Blake did the deed. Sam will alert Blake by radio that the party is asking after him. Lance will instruct Sam to send José Dominguez, the one-eyed man, as a passenger with the party.

Boarding

The *Celestia Maria* begins boarding at 4:00 a.m. and weighs anchor at 7:00 a.m. The passage to Plymouth will take seven days, barring bad weather. When the party arrives, Captain John Englebert meets them. He will welcome them aboard and show them to their cabins (Staterooms 1 and 2). He will offer them the run

of the ship, as long as they keep out of the way of the crew, and will ask them to dine with him this evening. After answering some questions, Captain Englebert will take his leave to set sail.

There are four other passengers on the *Celestia Maria*:

- José Dominguez – sent by the Order of the Stone to stop the party reaching Plymouth.
- Anna Fleming – an elderly widow returning to England after fifty years in the States.
- Laura Gooseberry – Anna Fleming's nurse.
- Jacob Hallmark – A civil servant for the Ministry of Trade. He is traveling on the *Celestia Maria* while checking the operations of Longfellow and Acres, Ltd.

Day One

The first day out of Galveston, the ship bears eastward following the coast. During this journey, the party will meet Anna Fleming and Laura Gooseberry, her Nurse as well as Jacob Hallmark. They will hear of the fourth passenger, José Dominguez, but will not see him. If they ask, they will discover that José is suffering from seasickness and hopes to join the others for dinner. Needless to say, José doesn't make it.

Day Two

The second day out of Galveston, the ship passes the Florida peninsula and heads out into the Atlantic. The ship's bearing will take it just north of Bermuda. That night, José does appear for dinner, but he doesn't eat. If the party successfully spotted José earlier in the adventure, have them make an **Intelligence** test (DC 20) to see if they recognize José. If asked about the earlier appearances, he'll make some excuses.

Sometime prior to dinner, José got into the galley and laced the passenger's soup with a strong sleeping potion (Fort DC 30, sleep 5+1d4 hours). About an hour after dinner, everyone will start feeling tired and will want to turn in.

The Death of the Crew

After the party is asleep, José makes his move. He first summons a night fog and then moves through the ship, killing everyone he can find. He then animates the corpses and sets them to attack anyone that comes close.

José doesn't get a chance to kill the party because he runs out of stamina before he gets to them. He then runs to Cargo Hold 2 and hides out in a place he has prepared. He is certain the zombies will take care of the remaining people.

Awaken to the Horror

Randomly determine which one of the party awakens. Four hours have passed since they went to sleep. It is dark outside and the fog still surrounds the ship. A **Listen** check (DC 15) will detect that the engines have stopped.

The party is alone on a ghost ship in the middle of the Atlantic. Now what?

Aftermath

Resolution

As they party explore the ship, they realize that they can't radio for help (as the radio is destroyed) nor start up the ship again. If they locate José, they can use his radio to call for help, or, wait for the cigarette boat that José has called to arrive.

Experience and Sanity Awards

This is a very direct adventure – survive the zombies and escape the boat. Doing so will earn each Investigator 3,000 XPS.

Consequences

Radioing for Help

If the party uses José's radio, a Coast Guard Cutter will get their message and pick them up within 30 minutes. Otherwise, the cigarette boat out of Bermuda will arrive three hours after the party awakens.

Cigarette Boat Arrives

Two men pilot the Cigarette Boat. They have orders to take José back to Bermuda and to kill any other survivors.

Juan Gomez and Joel Enrique (Novitiates, 1st Level)

S: 14; D: 10; C: 10; I: 12; W: 10; Ch: 17

HP: 7,8; Initiative: +0; AC: 10; Attack; Pistol @ +2 (1d10); Fort: +0, Reflex: +3, Will: +0.

Bluff +4, Gather Info +5, Innuendo +4, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (Occult) +6, Knowledge (history) +5, Knowledge (streetwise) +7, Listen +4, Move silently +2, Search +5, Sense Motive: +6, Spot +6.

Point Blank Shot (+1 within 30'), Precise Shot (shoot into melee w/o penalty)

On board the Cigarette Boat are charts and a sextant of the area. There is enough fuel for the return trip to Bermuda. There is also a working radio.

The Celestia Maria

Some of the entries for the rooms on the *Celestia Maria* have two entries: one that covers the room normally (labeled "Before") and a second that covers the room after José works his mischief (labeled "After").

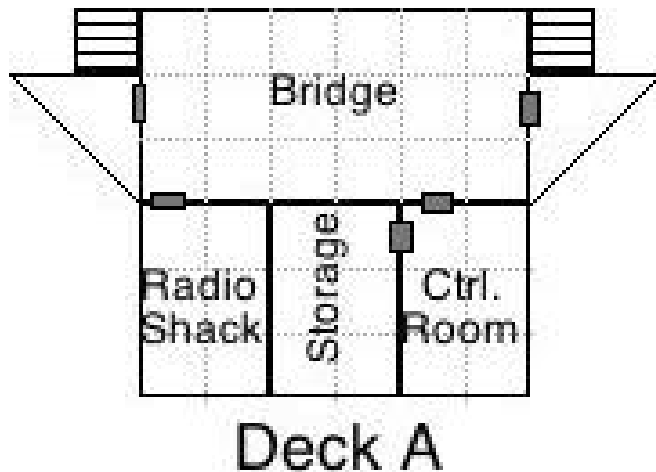
DECK A

Bridge

Before: The bridge of the *Celestia Maria* is a modern bridge. There is always one seaman here at the ships wheel. The mate, Chris Colombo, keeps the watch.

Chris is a very friendly, outgoing type – and quite talkative. Originally from Sicily, his accent is very thick.

After: Standing at the wheel is what's left of Chris Colombo and he's still talking; or, at least trying to. His jaws move up and down as he tries to sail the boat. When the party enters, Chris will turn toward them and advance. His voice is now a raspy hiss. A loud knocking can be heard from the door to the Control Room.



Animated Corpse (Medium-sized Undead)

HP: 16 (2d12+3), Initiative: -1 (Dex), Speed: 30, AC: 11 (-1 Dex, +2 natural), Attacks: Slam @ +2 (1d6+1), Damage Reduction 5/+1, Darkvision 60', Undead, Fort: +0, Ref: -1, Will: +3, Listen: +5, Spot +4. San: 1/1d6.

Radio Shack

The radio shack is a crowded little room that is the home of Sparks. Originally from Houston, Sparks has worked on the *Celestia Maria* since she was launched. The radio has both a telegraph key and microphone. Sparks, who likes music a lot, usually has the radio tuned to a local music station.

The radio shack is a shambles; the radio has been wrecked and set afire. Sitting in the chair is the burned corpse of Sparks. As the party enters, it lurches to its feet and attacks.

Animated Corpse (Medium-sized Undead)

HP: 16 (2d12+3), Initiative: -1 (Dex), Speed: 30, AC: 11 (-1 Dex, +2 natural), Attacks: Slam @ +2 (1d6+1), Damage Reduction 5/+1, Darkvision 60', Undead, Fort: +0, Ref: -1, Will: +3, Listen: +5, Spot +4. San: 1/1d6.

Control Room

The control room is filled with charts and tables. Captain Englebert is found here pouring over the charts for the journey. In a cabinet under the map table are a compass and sextant – both of them are very well made.

The zombie of Captain Englebert is bashing his arms against the door. His hands lay in a pool of blood on the chart table. The charts have been taken.

Animated Corpse (Medium-sized Undead)

HP: 16 (2d12+3), Initiative: -1 (Dex), Speed: 30, AC: 11 (-1 Dex, +2 natural), Attacks: Slam @ +2 (1d6+1), Damage Reduction 5/+1, Darkvision 60', Undead, Fort: +0, Ref: -1, Will: +3, Listen: +5, Spot +4. San: 1/1d6.

Storage

This room contains various spare parts, odds, and ends. In a very nice oak box is a spyglass. In an oaken box are a Very pistol (flare gun) and 4 flares.

Weapon	Damage	Crit	Cap	Range Inc	RoF
Very Pistol	1d10	x4	1	30'	Single

Since the Very pistol isn't a direct-fire weapon. There is a -4 To Hit modifier. A Critical Hit with a Very pistol indicates that the flare has detonated on impact.

DECK B

Port and Starboard Storm Room

These rooms contain the storm fittings (slickers, deck ropes, and lashings) that are pulled out when heavy weather is due. A concerted **search** (DC 20) here will uncover 4 dry cell batteries wrapped in oilcloth

Recreation Room 1

Before: This room has a small game table in the middle with four chairs. In shelves on one wall are various board and card games. There is also a small but well-stocked dry bar on one wall.

After: Sitting at the table are the corpses of Anna Fleming and Laura Gooseberry. Their throats were slit in the middle of their game of whist. Blood covers the tables. A successful **spot** check (DC 20) will reveal bloody footprints that lead to the stairs down to C deck.

Recreation Room 2

Before: This room has four sitting chairs and two small tables. The walls are lined with bookcases filled with a wide selection of books. This is Jacob Hallmark's favorite room. He has made quite a few trips on the *Celestia Maria* and has almost worked his way through the books here. Jacob has a fondness for Victorian Romance novels, and the ships of Longfellow and Acres are well stocked with these.

A successful **search** (DC 20) will uncover a copy of *The King in Yellow*. It is a thin book with a black cover. The front has a Yellow Sign embossed on it (SAN 0/1d6). Examination period: 1 week (DC 22); Spells: None; Sanity Loss: 1d3 initial, 1d6+1 on completion. Cthulhu Mythos: +1 rank.

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After: This room appears unaffected by what ever occurred. A **listening** check (DC 15) will reveal the muffled sounds of sobbing coming from behind one of the sitting chairs. Jacob is hiding here, cradling a broken arm (left). He is muffling his sobs with a pillow. Jacob woke shortly before the party and noticed that the engine had stopped. He ran into the zombies and he sanity snapped along with his arm. He fled back to this room and has been cowering here ever since. He heard the party approaching and, thinking they were the zombies, he hid behind the chair.

Jacob is suffering from amnesia – he doesn't remember anything from the time he boarded the ship until he woke up. He is terrified and does not easily trust anyone.

Deck

Before: The *Celestia Maria* is a working cargo ship and, as such, the decks are not pleasant places to be when the ship is in port. However, while sailing in clear weather, the holds are covered with sailcloth and chairs are set out. There is also rigging to set up a volleyball court or a pair of basketball goals.

There are two large masts that are used to hoist cargo out of the *Celestia Maria*'s holds. A wireless antenna is strung between the masts.

The stairwell at the bow of the ship leads down into the larger of the two holds. It is usually locked (**disable device** DC 20) and the first mate has the key.

After: The lock on the stairwell has been broken off. A successful **spot** check (DC 20) will show that a wire leading from the antenna goes down the stairwell into the cargo hold.

DECK C

Galley Mess

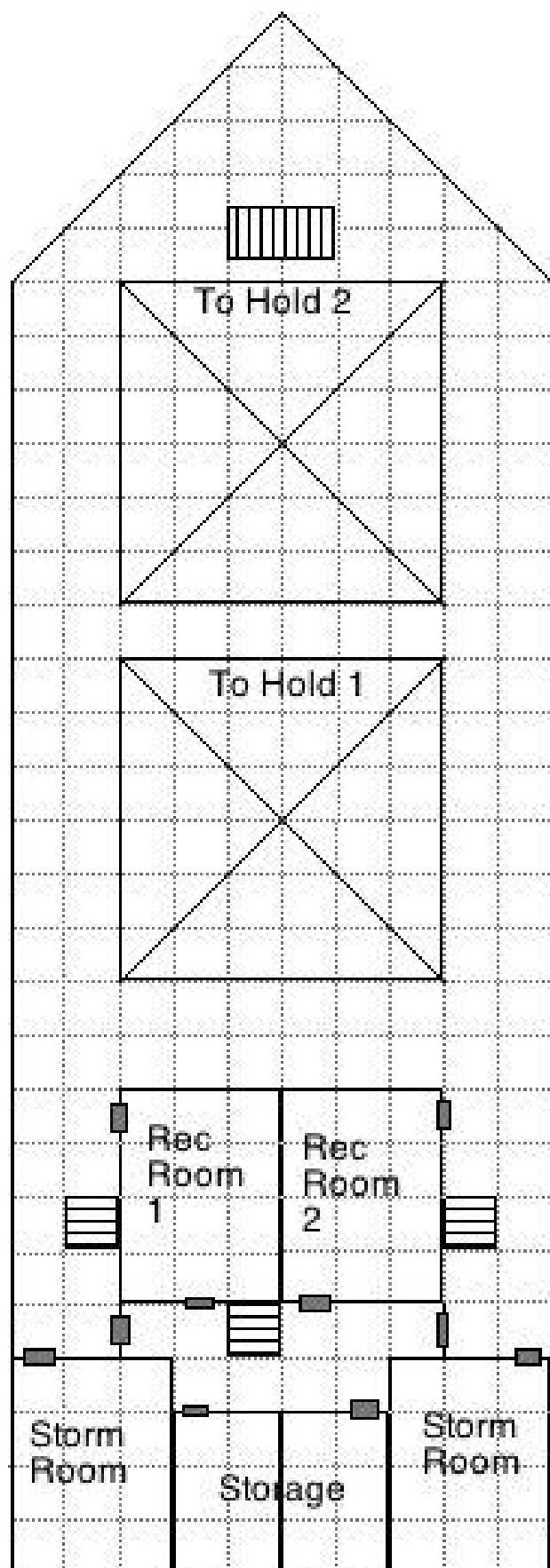
Before: Three metal tables are bolted to the wall and there are benches on either side of each. Three people can sit comfortably on each bench. Two of the tables and their benches can fold up flat against the bulkhead.

All three tables are used when the crew is eating. When the passengers are eating, two of the tables are folded up against the wall.

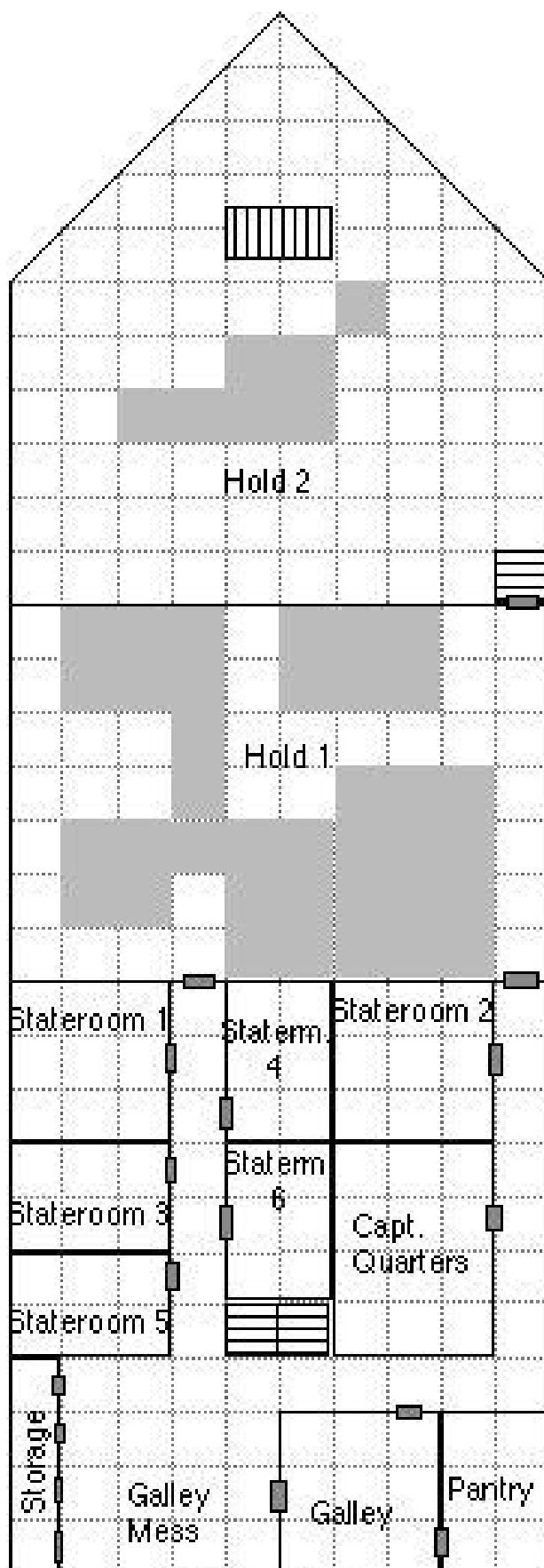
There are always at least two crewmen here, "inspecting the galley" or having a cup of coffee. The cook has a magnetized chess set that is used by almost everyone of the crew.

After: The bodies of two crewmen lean over the stationary table – they were apparently playing a game of chess when they were killed. Both men have been stabbed multiple times with a butcher knife. The knife is nowhere to be found.

A **Spot** check (DC 15) will reveal a foul odor coming from the galley



Deck B



Deck C

Galley

Before: Alonzo is the cook, and he spends most of his time here. The galley itself has six gas burners and two gas ovens. In addition, there is a large (2 gallon) coffee pot that is kept full and fresh. Crockery and utensils are stored under a chopping block.

After: As with the galley mess, the galley is a charnel house. There is blood all over the walls and appliances. On the stove is a large pot of boiling water. Inside it is the head of the cook. A successful **search** (DC 20) is required to find the rest of the cook's dismembered body in the two ovens.

Pantry

Before: The walk-in pantry includes a large icebox filled with meats and vegetables. This is Alonzo's pride and joy.

After: Inside the pantry is the zombie of one of the crewmen. The missing cutlery is still stuck in his body. This zombie will burst in on the party while they are searching the galley.

Animated Corpse (Medium-sized Undead)

HP: 16 (2d12+3), Initiative: -1 (Dex), Speed: 30, AC: 11 (-1 Dex, +2 natural), Attacks: Slam @ +2 (1d6+1), Damage Reduction 5/+1, Darkvision 60', Undead, Fort: +0, Ref: -1, Will: +3, Listen: +5, Spot +4. San: 1/1d6.

Galley Storage

The galley storage contains canned food, flour, lard, and dried foods.

Hold 1

The smaller of the two holds as bales of cotton stack in it. The air is musty. A successfully **Listen** check (DC 20) reveals the scurrying sound of rats. A small warren of them has taken up residence in one of the bales of hay (to the port side). The baggage of the passengers is also in this hold.

Staterooms

There are five staterooms on board the Celestia Maria. Each has a single bunk, small wardrobe, dressing table, and water closet. The two largest, numbers 1 and 2, have two bunks instead of one. Each outside room has one porthole.

Stateroom 3

This is Jacob Hallmarks' stateroom. A successful **search** (DC 20) will uncover his books. In one is the draft of his report on Livingston and Acre. He has apparently uncovered a discrepancy in the company's books. Not only are there missing funds, there are some fraudulent manifests. Jacob is looking further, but all that he has found is that all of the fraudulent manifests are associated with something called the Brotherhood of the Stone. Some research revealed

that the **Brotherhood** is a quarry company in Wales.

Stateroom 4

This is Anna Fleming's stateroom. It is full of the effects of a well to do widow.

Stateroom 5

This is the stateroom of Laura Gooseberry. Laura is inordinately fond of the mysteries of Agatha Christie. She even fancies herself a sleuth. A successful **search** (DC 20) will uncover her journal. She has a most interesting entry dated the day before:

Second Day out from Galveston
Early in the morning, after helping Anna on deck, I went to the Galley to get a second cup of coffee. While I was getting the coffee, a man who I later found out was José Dominguez, came out of the pantry. It was obvious that I had startled him because of the look on his face. My how piercing his one eye was. I saw him slip what appeared to be a bottle into his jacket pocket. He didn't appear to notice. We made small talk for a few minutes and then he left.
The man bears watching – he feels like he's up to mischief.

Captains Quarters

The Captain's quarters are furnished in the same way as the staterooms. In addition, it has a chart table with a few extra charts.

A successful search of his cabin reveals that the Captain has a shard of stone similar to that found at the cabin. However, this shard is in a locked wooden box. The box is sealed with wax and there is an unusual symbol on the wax seal (Cthulhu Mythos check DC 20 reveals that this is the sign of the Yellow King).

Purser's Storage

This storage closet includes the entertainment equipment as well as the liquor. Needless to say, there is a lock and the Captain has the only key.

DECK D

Engine Room

Before: The engine room is a dirty, oil place where the only sound is that of the throbbing engine. To be heard, you must shout. The great diesel engine occupies most of the room, but there is a workbench along the inside bulkhead. The engineer and his two mates spend most of their time here. They are grimy and covered in oil.

After: With the engine stopped, this room is unnaturally quiet. There is a noisome smell of burned flesh about the place. Three zombies, the engineer and his mates, are here. Apparently the engine caused their deaths as they are all badly mangled.

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Animated Corpse (Medium-sized Undead)

HP: 16, 17, 18 (2d12+3), Initiative: -1 (Dex), Speed: 30, AC: 11 (-1 Dex, +2 natural), Attacks: Slam @ +2 (1d6+1), Damage Reduction 5/+1, Darkvision 60', Undead, Fort: +0, Ref: -1, Will: +3, Listen: +5, Spot +4. San: 1/1d6.

Crew Cabins

The crew cabins are similar to the staterooms, though not as nicely furnished.

Storage 1-3

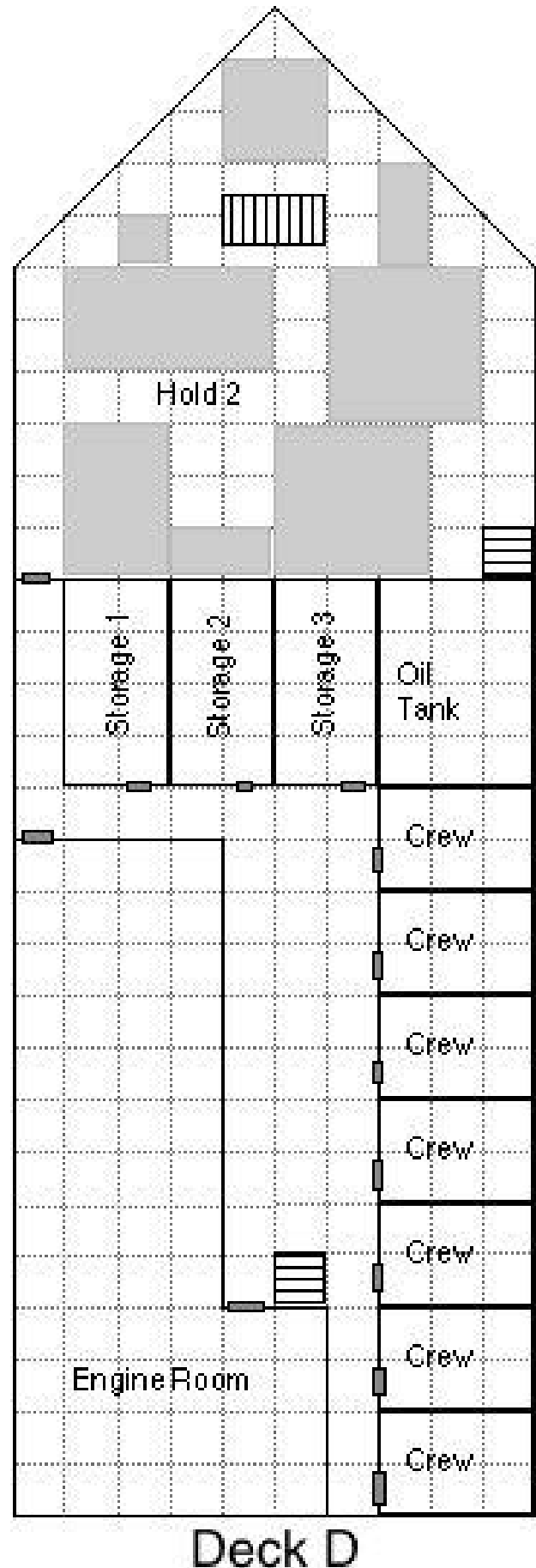
The storage rooms are filled with various odds and ends needed by the engineering crew. One has a nice selection of very large hardware.

Cargo Hold 2

Before: This larger of the two cargo holds is full of cotton. The gangway from the deck leads down to the bow portion of this hold. Steel rods from the roof suspend it. A successful **spot** check (DC 25) reveals that rods have rusted. A successful strength check (DC 30) would be enough to cause the stairway to collapse.

After: José is hiding here waiting for the cigarette boat to arrive. He has a small wireless (30#) that he has connected to the ship's antenna. If José hears the party coming, he will cast *Power of Nyambie* and then use *Red Sign of Shudde M'Ell*. If the spells fail, he will fall back on his pistol.

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FICTION

Ghost Ship

by Ben Burns

I.

Sergeant Sam Hawkins awoke from his sleep, and rolled over. He rubbed his eyes and swung his feet onto the floor. "Wow", he exclaimed quickly as his bare feet hit the unexpected cold metal floor. "Damn," he said as he stood up and headed for his locker. The memories of his mission briefing came flooding back to him now. His squad was going to try and board a ghost ship for crying out loud. What idiot came up with this mission, were the thoughts running through his mind as he began to get his cameos on?

A ghost ship was a starship that had been lost into the warp. They reappeared occasionally and then disappeared back into the warp. When they did this it would often reorganize the layout of the ship. Another problem was that you never knew how long one of these ghost ships would stick around in regular space before it would fade back out again. If you were in one, he shook his head; no he didn't want to even think about that. Sam had never been on a ghost ship before, hell only a handful a people had and lived, he just wanted to get on, do the job and get off again. Time to wake the troops, he thought to himself.

Sam went from pod to pod turning the sleep mode off. Whenever a ship went into hyperspace for more than a day or two all, non-essential personnel are put to sleep to avoid some of the bad side effects hyper-travel can cause. This had been a short hop for Sam and his squad but the commander had insisted they sleep through it. As the squad got dressed Sam spoke up. "Alright crew lets move it. PT down on the hanger-bay in five minutes." Sam liked to go through a workout after a deep sleep; it helped ease the muscles. There was some grumbling in the group, but they began to move a little faster.

Sam was down on the deck already running when the first squad member arrived, it was Tom. Tom was their M-73 heavy machinegunner. An M-73 could put out enough lead in five seconds to drop a Carnathian land worm before it could strike. Unfortunately the M-73 was extremely heavy, so an average marine couldn't carry it. Tom of course had the bio-mechanical implants that enabled him to carry one. Sue was the next through the door, and took up pace with Tom. Sam smirked a little, as he knew she couldn't keep pace with him for long, but she always tried. Sue was the squad's electronics specialist. Sam hadn't seen a computer or electronic lock yet that Sue couldn't break into in a matter of minutes.

Sam turned to make another lap when Jeff and Steve jogged in as well. Jeff was filling in as his scout but really had no experience at it. He couldn't track a river down its bed, but he gave it all he had and Sam couldn't ask or

anymore than that. Luckily, in their line of work, tracking wasn't needed very often, besides he liked Jeff. Steve was just a good soldier; all he did was fight, and grunt. Never talked much and always obeyed orders without a word. He had thought to make Steve his corporal, but he turned it down. He just wanted to do his time and move on.

Liz, Harold and Fred finally showed up. Liz was getting them to move a little quicker. Liz was Sam's second. He had just made her corporal before this mission, and she had deserved it, she always kept her cool in a battle and had saved his neck at least twice before. Harold was the medic and always seemed to be complaining about something, if not himself, one of the others. He was a little overweight for a marine, but could hold his own under a firefight. And finally Fred, well no one called him Fred, they called him Hotstuff. It was a running joke, since he took up using a flamer and loved it. He stopped even bothering to carry extra ammo for his blaster as he could holster it and carry an extra tank of fuel for the flamer.

After the group had run three kliks, Sam called them to a halt and ran through some other exercises. Finally, he could see the group was getting anxious, they wanted to know what the mission was this time. Liz gave him a signal and Sam knew what it meant. "... and stop. Ok guys, I guess you are wandering about the mission this time. I know we had to leave quickly before we had time to go through a briefing. But we have been sent here on a critical mission for the Empire."

Before Sam could go on, he was cut off, "are we going after more Eldorians, Sarg? Because if we are lets just head back, what a pain they were.." Harold had jumped in.

"No, now shut up and listen," Sam snapped back. "There is no easy way to say this, so I am just going to put it out. We are waiting to board a ghost ship as soon as it.."

"What the hell, a ghost ship are you crazy, do you think I, am crazy..." Harold again cut in, but there was other mutterings within the group.

"Enough of that crap soldier. We are here to do a job and we are going to do it." Sam took control again. He knew the squad trusted and respected him, but he knew how they felt about suicide missions and he couldn't help but feel a little bit that way also. "The full mission briefing is on disk in your folders back at your stations. A psyker saw a ghost ship showing up here at these coordinates in about six hours at 1800. I suggest you get something to

eat, watch the briefing and get your gear ready by 1700 hours in case it shows up early. You know we are on a time schedule once it gets here."

"What are we going on it for, Sarge?" Sue spoke up.

"In the last ten years, we have begun putting tracking devices on the ships to record what happens to them in warp space, we are to gain access to the ship, retrieve the recordings and place in a new memory chip. Everyone got it, a simple in-out mission..." Sam was saying.

"Yea, like Harold on his last date," Tom jumped in with the smart remark, which drew a little laughter from even Steve.

"Ok, that's enough. I don't have to tell you guys what is at stake here. This isn't as easy as strolling through the Eldorian fields and sniping at a few Glotechs. We are going to have to be sharp, move quick and get the job done before..." Sam let it off with that. He knew everyone could finish it and he wanted them to think about that now, so they would be focused when they got on board the ghost ship. "Anymore questions? Good, you're on your own, until 1700 hours, and then report to the Ops room. Dismissed." Sam watched as the group broke into their usual 3 smaller groups and walked off talking. But he also, knew what was going through their minds. They had been on some tough missions before but this might be the worse one yet.

II.

Sam walked into the ops room at about ten minutes before the 1700 hour, the entire team was already there. They were stripping down their weapons and putting them back together. The last thing you wanted was to have your blaster jam while in a firefight. Same thought they looked a little tight, he couldn't blame them, he was feeling a little tight. "Damn, what a bunch of bad asses I have here. You guys ready to go kick some ass!" Sam let out.

"YEA!" they all screamed back.

That made him feel better. He didn't know why yelling at each other stopped some of the inadequate feeling people get, but it does. He smiled and checked his own gear. Sam checked his power armor and the power cells. After he felt good he walked over to the space-

port and looked out. Nothing but black space for as far as he could see. The door opened and the ship's commander walked in. "Attention on deck." Sam called out and his squad jumped to attention.

"At ease. Is your team ready sergeant?" The commander asked.

"Yes, sir." Sam replied.

"Good, we are at the right coordinates, now we just have to wait and see if this mind freak knew what he was

talking about. Once we see it fading in, we will head for it and dock up. As soon as the dock pod is in place you can go in. We will pull back until you give the signal to be picked up. I want you to stay in communication the whole time. Don't mess around I don't make it a practice to lose personnel under my command. Any questions?" The commander said.

"No sir," Sam replied again. He had everything he needed, but Sam also knew there was no way to know exactly what they would be walking into. He was going to have to be thinking on the run.

Just then a silver form came out of nowhere, just a hundred clicks off the starboard side. The commander looked out and ran off quickly. "Okay team lets go." Sam grabbed his gear and ran to the docking bay. When they ran into the room the docking team was already there and ready. A huge see through port showed how close they were drawing to the huge ship in front of them. The ship had originally been of Empire construction, but looked like it had been sliced up and put back together. Sam knew this would make his floor schematics almost useless. He had spent most of his few hours memorizing the passages he wanted to take, but now knew they would have to just stumble around, till they found the area they wanted.

"What the hell is that?" Harold spoke up.

Sam could see what his medic was talking about. It wasn't Empire made. Another ship was grafted to the Empire ship. Sam couldn't figure out how they were put together, but there it was. Perhaps another ship had tried to board it and got caught into the warp as well, when it faded out again. Sam didn't like this new variable being thrown in.

"Commander you seeing this?" Sam asked over the comm link.

"Yes, sergeant. It doesn't change your mission at all," came back over the comm receiver in his ears.

"Ok team, time to saddle up. Air breathers on. Lets go." Sam ordered and switched his suit to feed him air. It was good for about fifteen to twenty minutes. He hoped to only use five here and save the rest for later.

The ships docking bars hit the huge ship and encircled the docking door for the ghost ship. Sam and his team moved into the docking bay and they sealed the door behind them. They could hear the pressurizing around them and they unlocked the door to the ship. Fred fired up the flamer and the door slid open.

It was dark on the other side and they stepped in. Their suit lights kicked in and they shut the door behind them. "Check the air, Sue" Sam ordered.

Sue pulled out a small monitor and replied "Atmosphere present, some oxygen, should be ok

Sarg.”

“Switch to filters team. Form up and let's go. We will follow the map until it doesn't match up to where we are. Who knows, maybe it's our lucky day. Jeff you have point. Lets move people.” Sam spoke quickly.

“Thanks a lot Sarg,” Jeff replied, but he knew it was his job. He turned his beams on high and moved to the door. “Sue can you measure the atmosphere on the other side?”

“Yea let me check it out.” Sue replied and again messed with some dials and gadgets. “Yea all's good, go for it.”

Jeff turned the manual release and the door opened a lot easier than he thought it would. It was a corridor on the other side going in three directions. “Straight” came over the comm link from the sergeant. Jeff moved on ahead slowly, checking the corners. The ship was a mess, clutter everywhere, it looked as if someone shook it from side to side and then turned it upside down. “Looks like a fire-fight in here, Sarg.” Jeff saw the burn marks and some of the holes in the wall. Someone had definitely been shooting in here, but no signs of any bodies.

“Take a right up here at the next corner.” Sam was looking at the names on the doors and then checking that with his plan layout. No changes yet, things were going well. “Time” Sam called to the home ship.

“Forty-Five” came back over the comm link and everyone knew the ghost ship had been in real space for forty-five minutes. Sixty minutes was considered extremely safe, things dropped dramatically after that.

“Roger that, base. I am getting some static on the line see if you can clear it,” Sam replied.

Jeff turned the corner and proceeded on down. Tom followed with the M-73 and then the rest with Sam and Fred bringing up the rear. Jeff just opened the next hatch, and looked in. Nothing moved it was dark, nothing seemed to be working on the ship. He was starting to wonder how this recorder was going to do anything. He turned down the next corridor, as it was the only way to go. Sam slowly put away the ship layout, as there was not supposed to be a turn there. He knew they were in parts of the ship that had been sliced up. Sam called the main ship again, “Can you pick up any energy readings over there?”

“Int...ding..you..aking..life..” then it went dead.

“Home base are you there? Home base reply.” Sam called into his comm link but there was nothing but static replying. “Alright team it looks like we are on our own. Let's pick up the pace.”

Jeff had come to another intersection, but you could tell by the colors that these corridors were not supposed to be coming together. In addition, the walls and floors were no longer always lining up. Clutter was everywhere, but still

no sign of life. “Which way Sarg?” Jeff asked.

“Not sure guys, map no longer shows the way. Use that tracker instinct of yours.” Sam replied trying to loosen things up a little.

“Your better at that Hotstuff, which way?” Jeff asked.

“Go right young man, go right.” Came from the back where Fred was holding his flamer in case anything came up from behind them.

III.

Sam came up with a new idea. “Sue, this thing has to be running on some sort of power supply, can you get a lock on it?”

“Well, I can try, but it will be really small compared to the engines.” She replied and pulled out another small device and started to fiddle with the buttons and blinking lights on it.

Jeff opened the next door and moved in. “Damnnnn!!” was all the others heard before his blaster was firing away. The rest of the squad was about sixty feet back. “Report.” Sam screamed into the comm link trying to find out what was going on, over the sound of the blaster going off. All the squad could see was smoke coming from the room ahead. Finally, the shooting stopped and the screaming started. It wasn't coming through the comm link that had already been severed. They could see a dozen large ant like creatures stabbing into the body they held up between them. Jeff was still moaning, and Sam could see there were still life signs, but he knew it was hopeless to try a rescue at this point.

“Hotstuff, burn it, quick.” Sam ordered.

“But Sarg, Jeff is still alive.” Fred looked torn between following the order and his friend, he had known for two years.

“Just do it now, the rest of you back up.” Sam again yelled.

A couple of the ant creatures, standing about 5 feet tall began to come through the doorway and Fred let loose with the flamer. The bugs screamed and melted away back into the room, which was now engulfed in flames.

“Sue, you got anything yet.” Sam looked at his watch and saw it had now been sixty minutes. “Were living on borrowed time folks, lets do this quickly.”

“Yea, I got something. Go down this corridor we passed up a minute ago.” Sue called back.

“Steve, you got point, Fred watch for those bugs behind us. Let's move out.” Sam called and the team moved like a well oiled machine. “Sue keep Steve updated on where to go.”

Steve never said a word, just ran forward and stood back and opened the door. Looked in and moved to the next one. Sue had started creeping closer to the front, and Tom dropped back to cover the rear with Fred. Sometimes a flamer isn't as reliable as a heavy machinegun.

Several of the large ant like creatures were coming down the hall after them. Tom let loose with the M-73, the noise was deafening. Everyone else began to move on, Fred hung about 30 feet from him watching as he unloaded a thousand rounds from the large gun in less than a few minutes. Tom let the large gun drop to the ground, as it was now useless. He couldn't help but notice the end of the gun had started to melt from the heat. He pulled out the smaller blaster and began to backup. The hallway was full of the dead bugs, and he didn't see anymore coming for now.

"I think we got them on the run Sarg," Tom said laughing as he ran to catch up with Fred. They shut the door and hoped the creatures couldn't come through. They ran to catch up with the rest of the squad. As they turned the corner they saw them holding up, behind some boxes and quickly jumped down.

Steve crawled back and raised his hand indicating only four of the bugs up ahead. Sam pointed to Steve and Liz to take them out, and Fred to hold the rear in case more came from that direction. A few seconds and a few blaster shots later and the team was on the move again. Sam again looked at his watch, plus fifteen minutes. He had started the timer after they hit one hour. His goal was to find this thing and get out before the two-hour mark. "Which way now Sue?"

"Not sure, a damn homing device on these things would be nice. I am getting signs of readings all over the place. According to this we could be right on top of it." Sue replied.

"Damn, that's it, down the cargo shaft, were on the wrong deck," Sam pointed at a cargo hatch that led to a ladder down. Steve slung his weapon and slid down the ladder quickly, and took a defensive position at the bottom. The rest of the team followed and within a minute they were ready to go again. The cold from the ship was beginning to seep into the power suits.

Steve ran up to another door and quickly opened it. As soon as he did, he regretted it. Luckily he was holding onto the handle, as it opened into deep space. The area began to quickly depressurize and junk of all sorts was blowing out the hatch. The team all tried to quickly grab onto something, and everyone did except for Tom.

Tom flew through the air and grabbed onto the hatch edge just as he got to the opening. Hanging out into space, Steve put out his hand. "Grab hold." He yelled through the comm link. It was all Tom could do to hold onto the edge of the doorway while boxes and junk, continued to fly past him.

Sam yelled over the comm link, "switch to breather," he said since the oxygen in the room was thinning quickly. Tom lurched his arm forward and grabbed a hold of Steve's hand.

"I got him," Steve yelled.

"Look out," Screamed Liz, as a large crate flew by, hitting Tom right in the center of the chest and sending him flying into space and away from the ship. Steve looked out one last time and pushed the door shut again.

"Damn, were on the edge of the ship. Where is that monitor Sue? And is everyone alright?" Sam questioned. They had come all the way through the ghost ship and were on the opposite side of the home ship. They would never see them come out on this side.

"Not sure, Sarg, give me a minute." Sue was a little blurry eyed as blood began to run down her face. Something had hit her in the middle of the wind tunnel. Harold ran over quickly and began to probe around.

"I'm not sure but I think it's through that bulkhead Sarg." Sue said, not looking real sure of herself.

IV.

Sam looked at the watch again, plus thirty minutes. This was going to be close. "Is their air on the other side of that wall?" He asked Sue.

"Yes, there is air there," Sue replied.

"Good, Steve, you and Liz cut through it. Sue, you and Hotstuff cover them when they kick it in." Sam knew they were close, he was just going to make a shortcut. He didn't have time to screw around, looking for a way around.

The two began to cut through the wall with miniature welders. When they were done, everyone held their guns ready as they kicked in the wall. The room was full of the beasts, and they looked pissed. Sam could see the monitor sensor on the far wall.

"Hotstuff, no flame, the rest of you, unleash hell." Sam said it and the rest let loose with all the firepower they had. The noise was deafening as the ant creatures began to pour through the newly made opening. Most of them were cut down before they got through the wall, but a couple made it through. They had razor sharp claws with small appendages that came out from their chest with hands on them.

One of the beasts jumped onto Fred and sliced into him. The whole time he was firing away with his blaster. Finally, the beast fell off, but Fred was in bad shape, bleeding from three different stabs. "Medic" he called out, and Harold came running to him.

The firefight didn't last long as the ants backed up and out of the room through another hatch. They littered the entrance and Sam didn't trust the dead ones. He rattled off a few more shots into the dead pile and none moved.

"Steve you and Sue are with me, let's go." Sam began to climb over the pile and Steve and Sue followed. "The rest of you get patched up and keep the exit clear. Sue, do your thing on the monitor. Steve watch that door." Sam kept looking between the door, Sue and the hole in the wall. This was a bad spot and he knew it. Those things could come back in any minute and he doubted if Steve and him could hold them off.

"I got it, let's get the hell out of here." Sue exclaimed. Just then the door opened again and the bugs came poring in. Steve opened up with his blaster and began to fire. Sam and Sue started to as well.

"Sue, get that chip out of here, start heading for the exit." Sam yelled at her to get moving. As she did, Steve and Sam backed up to the opening. Steve changed clips and motioned for Sam to go through as well. There seemed to be no end to the bugs that were pouring through the doorway. Sam's clip ran out and climbed through the hole. Just as he was about to jump clear, a spike came up from one of the creatures in the pile and ran it into his leg.

Sam screamed out in pain and several rounds of blaster shot slammed into the pile and the limb went limp. Sam pulled out the spike and stumbled out of the pile. Steve was still pouring lead into the oncoming creatures but they were way too close to him. And then Steve's gun jammed.

"Noooo," Sam screamed out as Steve fell under a pile of the aliens. Fred let loose with the flamer and the whole room burst into a burning mess. The squad began to head to the ladder. Fred and the Sarg needed help getting up but when they did, Fred saw another surge of bugs coming towards the base of the ladder. He again emptied his tank of fuel into the room, and this time threw down the flamer as well. Fred shut the hatch and bolted it just in time to feel the explosion below them.

"Let's go people," Sam yelled as they began to stumble their way towards the exit. They didn't see anymore bugs except for a few dead ones they had killed on the way in. Sam smiled a little, he knew it wouldn't be much longer. He looked at his watch again, plus sixty-three minutes. The ship had already been in real space over two hours and there was no guarantee it was going to be there any longer.

Fred was the worse injury wise and was leaning on Harold; who was trying to stop the bleeding as the stumbled down the hall. Fred leaned against a wall and his hand went through it. "Shit, it's fading out." Harold yelled. They began to run.

"Home base can you hear me? Home base,

we're coming out." Sam was yelling, hoping that yelling into the

comm link would make the home ship hear them easier. They stumbled into the last room and Sam saw the entrance to the docking bay. They were almost there, he thought to himself. "Home base come in, can you read me?"

"Affirmative team, were moving into dock now." Came back on the head set.

A sigh of relief came from the sergeant. "Negative on that home base. The ghost ship is fading out, just come close. Team, switch back to oxygen, we got about five minutes left, and tether up."

The team obeyed the commands without question, but they knew what he was thinking was crazy. Too much could go wrong. The team stumbled their way to the outer door. "Seal up and let's go." Sam cried and opened the door and jumped into space. As soon as they cleared the door they just began to float towards the home ship. There was no way their air would last till a rescue squad could make it out. "Home base, we need help fast. Our air won't last much longer." Sam called out, but trying to hold his breath.

"No problem team, a deep rescue team is already coming for you. I had them stay out after they snatched up your other crewman. He is doing fine, by the way. Welcome back. Damn would you look at that." It was the commander's voice on the other end.

Sam turned around and saw the huge ship fade out and just disappear. They had made it just in time. He turned and saw the rescue team coming towards them. It was a good thing the power-suits they wore sealed up, or most of them would be dead right now. He let the rescue team haul them into their small craft and head for the home ship.

He had lost two fine men today. He won't forget them anytime soon. Damn, now he just had to worry that the Empire would consider him the expert on boarding ghost ships in the future.

Ben Burns

Scythe Worms

The swamps of the Fallen Lands are not only home to the swamp goblins and their insectoid mounts, but also to much stranger beings. In ancient times, when the Stygians were just at beginnings of their first empire, Scythe Worms already inhabited the swamplands of Chronopia. Part reptile, part insect - maybe a race of its own as they don't seem to be indigenous to this world, possibly a world that has many more than its share of monsters and strange beings. Their slender but also surprisingly strong bodies lend a deadly elegance to their attacks. Their attacks become even more horrible by the fact that there seems to be no structure in their behavior. At one time they burrow out of the ground right under their victims and at other times they shoot out of swamps or fall from trees. Even the dreaded tree devils know to fear the high-pitched sound of scythe claws, which are capable of cutting through nearly anything in fractions of a second. Although blind in the way we understand the world but nevertheless outfitted with an excellent but alien sense of their surrounding the Scythe Worms come close to being the ultimate swamp predator. Strangely there was never found even the tiniest trace of a Scythe Worm culture. We should consider ourselves fortunate that sightings report only single worms. Fortunate because a single worm could lay waste to an entire unit of fighting men. Warbands attacked by these worms, and many had to die before even the slightest bits of information about their existence got to our ears, relay stories about their incredibly advanced capability to regenerate body parts. Scythe claws that were recently severed from the body started to regenerate after only a few minutes, even while those abominations feasted on the ravaged bodies of our comrades. Rumors about that even the armies of the prophets avoid areas reported to be inhabited by scythe worms.

Worming through the game

Even with the first time I had a look at the Red Terror in the Tyranid Codex I had fallen in love with it. Compared to the rest of the Tyranids this sculpt has something truly natural to it. One could look at it and say, "Yes, something like this could live somewhere in the universe!" It does not have that overdrawn design many GW products do have. At that time I had already

designed a swamp-scape for my Swamp Goblins it was quite easy to determine where and how that beastie would be deployed. The whole miniature yelled, "Take me to the jungle!" Aware of Chronopia's balanced rule system I did not desire to unhinge it and there was no sense in introducing a monster that would give a single army an unfair advantage. Even alone it could play in the same league as the Sisters of Tiamat, but the design was more inspired by Alien rather than by the Stygian reptiles. My first decision was to let it be run by all players and second it had to be connected to the landscape. The Scythe Worm has to be experienced as a force of nature, meaning nature became the balancing element at the table that interfered with the plans of every player. By creating a table of reactions it was possible to give control in succession to the players. This allowed for a not too random behavior but also avoided giving too much power to a single player. In fact, the worm can even turn against the player running it. Since the worm is quite powerful I would suggest that you have no more than one in any single game, but there are no limits to the scenarios in which it can be used. One interesting scenario is to have all the players have orders to destroy the other player, but to ultimately be successful they first have to cooperate to get rid of that nasty worm. A good way to avoid the usual last-man-standing fights.

Hatching the worm

After determining how the Scythe Worm could be integrated into Chronopia I got a copy of the stats from the Tyranid Codex and a Red Terror miniature. Cleaning up was a bit more significant than with products from Excelsior or FASA, but nothing to shy away from, like the Balrog from GW that caused me some problems. The lower half of the worm is a little bit tricky to clean up as the mold lines could have been placed better than along the most structured part of the miniature. The upper half is a breeze to clean up though. Pining would be an option but the shape of some parts prohibits it and all of the part fit together snugly anyway. I really liked that the joints made it easy to position the claws in nearly any position imaginable. This allowed me to create a less static appearance. But be warned, the Red Terror picture GW shows would take you claws from two Red Terrors to make it look like it is in the picture, it's not possible to create this look with the parts included in a single kit. After one day of cleaning up and filling some gaps the worm was ready to get a black base color. I have not decided which colors to paint it since at the moment I'm paying more attention to getting my Elves painted

but it will be a paint scheme like those seen in the swamp goblins book, the Tyranid codex picture and various natural insects.

Game Stats

CC	MW	PW	LD	AC	W	ST	MV	A	DEF	Cost	SZ
13	-	-	13	3	3	2	Spec	25	-1	92	2

Special Abilities

- Immune to Panic and Fear
- Causes Fear
- Leap
- Sense Presence
- Ferocity
- Unseen Assailant, Stealth
- Feast

Special Rules

- Once per turn, as part of a regular attack action, a Scythe Worm can attack with its tail in addition to either a Bite or Scythe attack.
- Across open ground it moves 6, below with 1d4 inches. For two actions it can shoot towards its target at 1d6+6 and gets one free claw attack. This rushing attack cannot be combined with the tail attack above.
- Appendage Sacrifices. A Scythe Worm has four large claws or scythes, which are used in close combat. Even though they are mainly used for attacking, and then only one claw is used during an attack action, a Scythe Worm can choose to lose two of their four claws instead of suffering a single wound from close combat. Basically, the Scythe Worm deflects the blow away from its body using its claws, which are severed in the process. In the long term the claws will eventually grow back, but during an encounter they can be used to prolong its life.

Weapons

- Scythe Claws (Dam12*2)
- Bite (Dam 13)
- Tail (Dam 12)

The Scythe Worm cannot be purchased by any army and a more appropriate 'owner' for the beast would be the land itself. Cost is included to account for victory points or if you want to match an army of Scythe Worms against a regular army.

Deployment:

After all player troops are deployed the game table should be sectioned off into areas of equal size that do not include any standard deployment zones and the Scythe Worm should be randomly assigned a starting position.



Control:

Each turn a randomly determined player takes control of the Scythe Worm.

Movement:

If there are any models within 9" and LOS of the Scythe Worm it will consider that its target and will move directly towards it using a randomly determined movement method (See below) for each action until it is in contact and then will use attack actions until the model is dead. If there are no models within 9" and LOS of the Scythe Worm roll on the deviation table to determine its facing and roll for movement method (see below) for each action until it is within 9" and LOS of an enemy.

Movement Table: d10

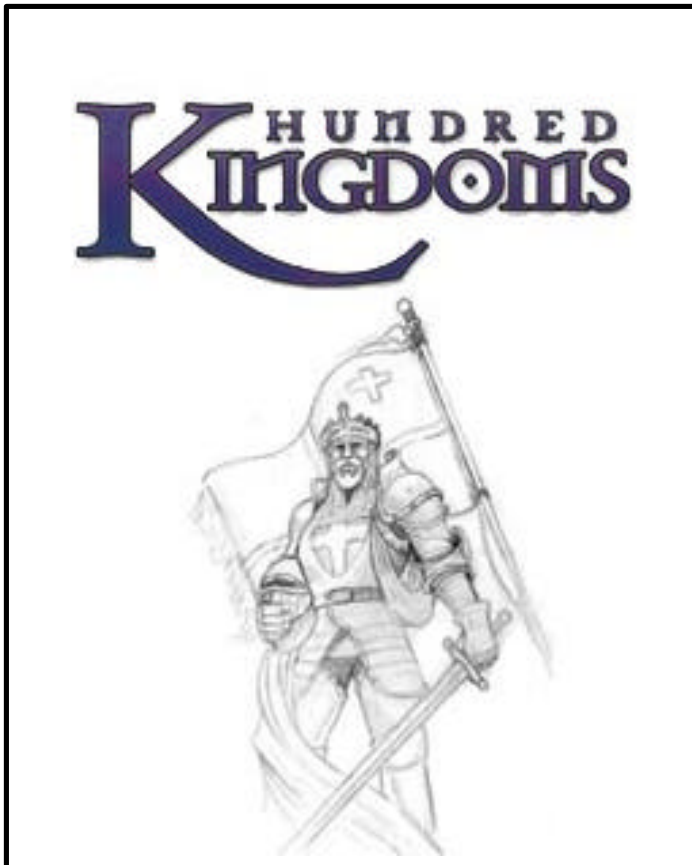
- 1-2 Below Ground
- 3-4 In the Trees (If available, otherwise ground)
- 5-9 Ground Level Movement
- 10 No Movement (action wasted)

If a Scythe Worm attacks from Below ground or from In the Trees they receive an additional +2 to their CC score for their first attack from that position.

Victory Points are scored for the player that successfully kills the Scythe Worm.

STANDING ORDERS

BY DEANO C. WARE



Welcome to another installment of **Standing Orders**. For those of you new to **Fictional Reality**, **Standing Orders** is a column I bring to you every issue in **Fictional Reality**. **Standing Orders** grew out of my hobby within a hobby of collecting miniature gaming rules and other rules very close to miniature gaming rules (usually board games that use miniatures). Being the type of person who has never seen a set of rules he didn't like (which doesn't mean I've never "bought" a set of rules I didn't like) I try to summarize and/or profile the different types and sets of rules that I have collected over the years in order to make it easier for me (and now you) to refer back to them many months later.

After writing this column for over one year for **Fictional Reality** most of our regular readers should have a fairly good size file of **Standing Orders** columns to refer to when contemplating whether or not to buy an old or new wargame. For those of you who haven't been with us for all of the last year, you've picked the perfect time to join us. Using the Archives link on the Fictional Reality website, individual articles from past issues can be downloaded quickly and conveniently from the

same site where you get the full magazine. This is an ideal way to get your hands on all of the past **Standing Orders** articles and put them together in a single volume for your personal reference.

Finally, since it has been over a year since we last published it, I have reprinted the short synopsis included in the first article of **Standing Orders** that explains exactly what each section of article is intended to convey:

Profile Synopsis

Each profile will contain the following sections:

1. **What You Get** - this section will let you know what the miniature rules contain such as charts, maps and background fiction.
2. **What You Need** - this section of the profile will let you know what dice, rulers, and templates are required to play the game. In many cases, I will simply indicate that the "standard" dice and rulers are used.
3. **What You Are Told** - this section of the profile will let you know what the author claims is unique or different about the set of rules.
4. **What You Will Discover** - this section of the profile will let you know what actually comes across when you play the game or at least test it out.
5. **What's Old** - this section of the profile details what I believe to be game mechanics that have been tried before and have failed.
6. **What's New** - this section of the profile details what, if anything is new about the rules and possibly deserves further investigation on your part.
7. **What's Familiar** - this section of the profile actually details what aspects of the game will be familiar to most miniature gamers and neither intended to infer that it is good or bad.
8. **What's Good** - this section of the profile will probably be the meat and potatoes of **Standing Orders** for most readers and will obviously detail parts of the game I liked the most.
9. **What's Bad** - this section of the profile will detail the parts of the game that just don't work, whether it is the background world, the fiction, the rules or the art! For some reason I just didn't like it.
10. **What I'm Going to Do with These Rules** - this is my favorite part of the profile. This is where I tell you what I intend to do with the rules now that I have profiled them. This could run the gambit from letting my daughter 'color' them, to selling them on ebay or starting my own egrouop to promote and support them.

Hundred Kingdoms

This month we take a look at the much-talked about new game by **Black Orc Games** called **Hundred Kingdoms**. **Hundred Kingdoms** was created by Rick Jensen and is set in the medieval/fantasy game world of Avalon. I had the good pleasure of playing a demo game of **Hundred Kingdoms** at GENCON this year and at the time of this article a picture of me and my son playing the demo was posted at the **Hundred Kingdoms** website at www.100Kingdoms.com/main.cfm.

What You Get - First and foremost, you get the rules FREE!! All of the rules and Army books are available at the **Hundred Kingdoms** website as a free download. Currently there are five Kingdoms available including: Avalon, The Simian Empire, The Panthera Tribe, The Bushido Clan and The Hive. The rulebook is 42 pages and is a 1.14MB download. There are 30 pages of Basic Rules and the rest of the book consists of some Advanced Rules and short army lists for both the kingdom of Avalon and the Panthera Tribe. The only art in the online version consists of digital portraits of characters and places in Avalon, which you can take or leave. In addition each chapter is preceded by some short fiction chronicling the World of Avalon. Oddly enough the only "chart" in the rules is the "Weather Chart" included in the Advanced Rules section. So there is no "to hit" chart, no "to wound" chart, no "to save" chart and no "modifiers" chart. All by design according to the authors who set out to make a set of rules that were "simple and easy to remember". Other than the online material, the game is also sold in a box set containing a printed rules manual, 10 Avalon archers, 10 Avalon Templar Knights, King Thomas



Simian Javelin

Killian, 10 Panthera Archers, 10 Panthera Spearman, Rashaka Leao and five d20 dice. All for only \$60.00!

What You Need - **Hundred Kingdoms** is a 28mm game that requires: the rulebook, miniatures, an army roster, a flat playing surface, measuring tape, and at least one 20 sided dice (you actually need a lot of these).

What You Are Told - According to its author: "*The Hundred Kingdoms is a tabletop war game that is simple enough for novice players to learn yet provides enough depth for even the most experienced of gamers. Simple, easy to remember rules have been developed so that gamers of all levels can play together. The Hundred Kingdoms provides a unique combination of elements that set it apart from other tabletop war games. Our fast paced game can be learned in a very short period of time allowing players to start battling right away. And because it's so simple, you will be able to concentrate on conquering your enemies instead of constantly looking up rules in the manual. The top sculptors in the industry have already crafted unique races of miniatures, and new units are being constantly developed.*"

What You Will Discover - Most of what you are told about **Hundred Kingdoms** is actually what comes through when you play the game. Combat is resolved based on rolling a d20 die for each figure in the unit and scoring hits for any roll equal to or BELOW the unit's Attack Value. The defending unit is then allowed a single save roll based on its Defense Value. Any hits not saved are removed as wounds with most miniatures having only one wound. Each unit has a Movement value, Number of Attacks, Combat Attack Value, Missile Attack Value, Missile Range, Defensive Rating, Leadership Value, Hit Points, a standard Unit formation and a Unit cost. However, the real "catch" to **Hundred Kingdoms** is that the object of each battle is to kill the opposing players Warlord. This may seem straightforward enough but in battle it winds up being quite precarious, as it is all too easy to get distracted in annihilating your opponents troops only to leave your Warlord exposed to a game winning direct attack. The other wrinkle this causes in game play is that Warlords are quite powerful characters on the battlefield (though no overly powerful) and no matter how tempted you are to "hide" them behind the lines sooner or later you will have to use them to turn the tide of battle. In most games, like the demo I played in, this will usually result in an "individual challenge" between the Warlords where the entire battle literally hinges on the outcome of that combat! Overall combat is very quick and very bloody when it begins, with losses accruing very fast.

What's Old - Most of the movement and 'formation' rules in **Hundred Kingdoms** really don't bear on the battles. One reason for this is in combat no matter how many units are in base-to-base contact, "ALL" the figures in the unit fight. This means even if only two



Hive General

figures in a 10 man unit are in contact all ten of the figures take part in the fight. Another reason the movement and formation rules have no real value is because units in **Hundred Kingdoms** move from "center point" to "center point" meaning once you locate the center of the unit and move it, all the remaining figures in that unit are simply reformed back around that center point in the same formation they had before or a new one if desired. This does speed up and simplify play but tends to negate the traditional advantage of skirmish units like those employed by the Panthera tribe. The authors tried to account for this by allowing skirmish units to "disengage" from combat much easier than other units and by giving them a very fast movement rate. For example, Jaguar Spearmen can move 8" per turn compared to 4" for Avalonian Templar Knights. In addition they can automatically disengage from combat while Avalonians must pass a Leadership check.

What's New - The "newest" innovation in **Hundred Kingdoms** is the game concept itself. *"Chaos has descended upon Avalon. The old empire has now disintegrated into a hundred separate kingdoms and each kingdom battles for control and power. As Warlord of one of these kingdoms you must unite the land by conquering and destroying the other Warlords."* To facilitate this epic struggle **Black Orc Games** has commissioned a range of unique and exciting miniatures to represent each kingdom and its Warlord. The Avalonians are a human kingdom of knights and men-at-arms. They formerly ruled the Empire and would do so again. The Simians are a 'Planet-of-the-Apes' meets the Roman Empire kingdom. They are big, powerful and probably the most feared of all the emerging kingdoms. The Panthera tribe consists of deadly but quick felines led by the most powerful Warlord in the empire, Rashaka Leao. Whatever his

army lacks in hitting power he more than makes up for it in personal combat. Anytime Leao does 3 wounds in combat he attacks again until he doesn't cause at least 3 wounds. The Bushido Clan is a samurai kingdom and is probably the most versatile army of all the kingdoms. The Hive is just that "a hive" of insectoids concerned less about conquest than "prey". They are also the only kingdom with "air" power to emerge so far and as such represent a unique threat to every army. In addition **Black Orc Games** announced at GENCON that a new "undead" or "zombie" type of army is due out next. According to the authors more kingdoms are to be released at the rate of two per year, every six months. When I pointed out that at that rate "it would take 50 years" to release all 100 Kingdoms. **Black Orc Games** simply said they planned to be in business for a long time (note: thankfully they also said the timetable could be sped up as sales grow). Usually when a new war game is released, the last thing you want to hear is that it includes its own range of miniatures. Because these are usually badly sculpted, overpriced and so esoteric that either you waste your money on them just to try the game or you write the game off altogether without buying them. Well nothing could be further from the truth when it comes to **Hundred Kingdoms**. Not only have the publishers lined up the best sculptors in the world today like Sandra Garrity (Panthera Tribe), Jason Weibe (Simian Empire), Drew Williams (Avalon, The Hive), Kevin Contos and Bill Roth but all of the miniatures are very reasonably priced (a Warlord/Leader like Thomas Killian only cost \$4.00!) and all of the armies are so well themed that any one of them can easily be played with proxy miniatures from any other miniature range you collect. This allows you to buy the armies you really like or simply consider unique (i.e. Simian and Panthera) but still play battles between all of the armies like Avalon and the Bushido using miniatures from games like Warhammer and Clan Wars!



Jaguar Archer

What's Familiar - Magic/Sorcery in **Hundred Kingdoms** is very basic at this point in time in the rules and magic works very much like magic in any other fantasy game (i.e. re-roll this, add +1 to that, move here for free, undo this...etc.). This isn't a knock, just a necessary observation for those who like a lot of magic/sorcery in a wargame. Another familiar element of the rules is that army composition is built up using "points" like most wargames use now days for "balance"; so eventually these may need "tweaking" as more and more people play the game and discover to their horror that not every army is perfectly balanced.

What's Good - What's good about **Hundred Kingdoms** is well...."good". "Huh," you say. I mean **Hundred Kingdoms** actually has "good" armies and characters - not just shades of gray where one army is evil but less evil than another army. In fact, the primary motivation for a Warlord in **Hundred Kingdoms** is to be crowned Emperor and "The Hand of God" according to the prophecy that reads: *"From the hundred Kingdoms a Warlord will come and unite the land under the one true God. All shall bow to this chosen one. The Hand of God."* The Kingdom of Avalon can even field such joyous ecclesiastical special characters like battling "friars" and "monks" made popular in such medieval tales like Robin Hood and His Merry Men. Kudos to **Black Orc Games** for giving us gamers a "good", fun game that you don't have to hide from your kids... or your "priest"!

What's Bad - What's bad? Waiting '50' years to get all Hundred Armies - that's very bad!! Actually, the only knock some gamers may have about **Hundred Kingdoms** is that since the object of the game is to kill the other player's Warlord this invites the worst kind of "creative rule interpreting" also known as "cheating". This became evident during demos at GENCON where the missile fire rules were modified to deal with players who were simply bombarding the opposing players Warlord with ranged attacks in order to obtain a quick



Gorla Legionnaire

kill. To make up for this any missile attacks over/through terrain were done at half the units normal Missile Value. However, I found this made most missile units worthless. The bright spot to this problem is since the rules are published online, rule changes to deal with these tactics can be implemented quickly and easily - and I have been assured they will be. In the meantime I would recommend giving your leader a "command group" or "command unit" and using a rule that any missile damage targeted at the Warlord must be taken from his command group/unit first. This will give most armies time to engage the offending missile threat before it can score a cheap and quick kill on your Warlord. On the other hand you could forego the "Warlord" rule altogether and simply play until all the units in one army have been broken or killed.

What I'm Going to Do with These - I'm definitely going to play **Hundred Kingdoms**. I am also going to incorporate the rules into a campaign I am setting up. I also hope to start a fan web page for the game and write up some optional unit stats and army rosters. All in all, this may just be the game most of us have been waiting for!!

Deano C. Ware
September 2002

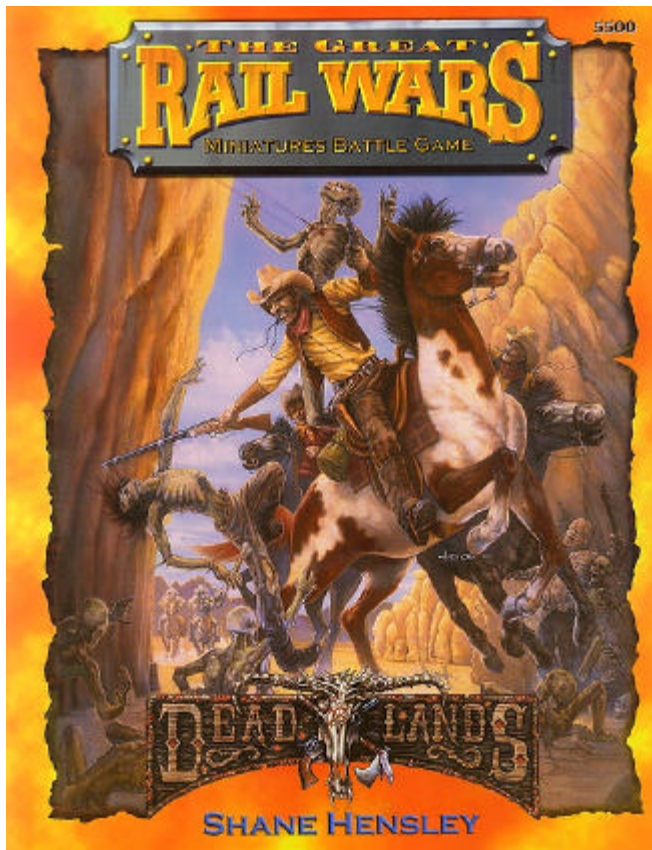


Hive Queen

GAME REVIEW

RAIL WARS

MINIATURES BATTLE GAME



BASICS

The Great Rail Wars is a 144-page softbound rulebook for playing miniature battles in an alternate wild west. The cover is full-color and all interior artwork is black and white. The book is published by Pinnacle Entertainment Group and has a retail price of \$25.00 USD. It is the second edition of The Great Rail Wars miniature battle rules.

PRESENTATION

The first thing you notice is the cover. It's very nicely done and catches your eye. It's the best piece of artwork in the book. The interior artwork is by no means shabby, but the cover really sets a high bar. I found all of the text easy to read and the few charts that are necessary were also quite easy on the eyes. The font size is actually a little bigger than I've seen in some other products and is very easy to read. Overall presentation is very nice.

STORYLINE

The story and background information takes up nineteen pages and gives a good vision of the alternate world you'll be playing in. This is really the

WILD west. Wild beyond anything you've seen on 'Wild Wild West', but easily incorporating any of those themes. There are fantasy (vampires, zombies, and werewolves) and science-fiction (automatons, clockwork machines, and flame throwers) thrown into the Cowboys and Indians that you'd expect. The Civil War is still in full swing with Yankees and southerners battling. The state of California fell into the sea and exposed what is called 'ghost rock', which is a strangely powerful new type of fuel (more stuff to fight over). And then you have the 'reckoning' that awakened all of the scary creepy crawly stuff.

RACES

Either you're breathing or you ain't. Ok, that's an over simplification, but it's essentially true. Just because you're breathing does not automatically put you on the side of the good guys. The Bayou Vermillion have regular gunfighters and the undead variety at their disposal and they definitely fall on the wrong side of the law. Wasatch can also recruit regular cowpokes, but has magnificent automatons to do their bidding and they fall someplace in the middle of the whole good vs. evil debate.



A sample of the interior artwork, an Iron Wagon.

GAME

The basic rules of combat are easy to learn. Each troop type, whether a member of a posse (unit) or a Hero has a set of stats (Strength, Shootin', Smarts, Fightin', Vigor, and Guts). Each stat is rated by a type of die instead of a static number. As an example some guys have a d10 for Shootin' and some have a d6. When shooting at an enemy you have a target number based on range and then roll the appropriate die. If you equal or exceed the target number you have hit them. Determining damage is a comparative roll between the damage roll of your weapon and a Vigor roll by the target.

Initiative is handled via playing cards, which adds a very nice random flavor and hectic feeling to the game. This takes a little extra time than determining play order than some other games, but it's really not cumbersome when you get the hang of it.

There were less than twenty spells in the basic book for the 1st edition of GRW. This is more than made up for by the approximately one hundred spells in this edition. Spells are cast using your Smarts characteristic and then depending on how well, or poorly, you rolled the spell's effects can increase, or decrease.

There are some passages that reference vehicles, but you'll need to pick up the 'Derailed!' supplement to really use things like Velocipedes, Auto-Gyros and the like.

Also, rules for riding and fightin' from horseback are in the book, but the costs for upgrading your posse or Hero got left out. I did speak to Pinnacle and the costs will be released along with the models, but they should be the same as in 1st edition, which is 10 points for a posse and 5 points for a Hero. I'd expect that who can ride horses will also be the same as in 1st edition, but just use common sense if all else fails. It would be very hard for someone to convince me that Automatons could be riding around on regular horses.

ARMY LISTS

There are six armies in Great Rail Wars and each has access to stuff that the others just cannot get. There are some troops that everyone can make use of though. They are Gatling guns, Cannons, Buffalo Gals, Buffalo Hunters, Gunmen (regular and experienced) gunslingers, Hucksters, Mad Scientists, Muckrackers, Preachers, Rail Workers, Sawbones, Sioux Braves and Shaman, and Undead Gunslingers). Whew! That sure is a lot of guys that anyone can hire. Having access to lots of the same

troops might serve to keep one armies special guys from being too overpowering.

- ♦ The Bayou Vermillion are big bad voodoo daddies that can drop a vampire, skin walkers and posses of the Walkin' Dead.
- ♦ Black River generals will get to blow stuff up with Demolitionists, run down enemies with Devil Bats and Wolves along with the magic of Witches and the very shooty Hangin' Judges.
- ♦ Dixie Rails are your southerners who get Confederate soldiers, Sharpshooters and Texas Rangers.
- ♦ The Iron Dragons are from the orient and, like Black River, get to blow stuff up but with a Pyromaster instead of a Demolitionist. They also get some serious hand-to-hand kung fu fightin' guys.
- ♦ Union Blue, yup the Yankees, who are similar in make-up to the southern boys and get USA Troopers, Sharpshooters and Agency Operatives that get cool gizmos.
- ♦ Lastly there is Wasatch that has the heavily Automatons, Clockwork Tarantulas (no, not as huge as in the Wild Wild West movie) and posses of guys with all sorts of gizmos.

Even with the Dixie Rails and Union blue being similar each army does have a different feel.

THEATER OF WAR

Pistols, and bows and arrows, have a range of 24" and rifles get a maximum range of 48". If you really want to get into hand-to-hand combat I expect that you can, but I'd expect it to be a sight harder than just pluggin' away at the other guys. Also, with pieces of artillery and gatling guns blazing away terrain density and placement will play a very important role in the game.

VALUE

At \$25.00 USD I found the 2nd edition of Great Rail Wars to be a real bargain. It's definitely a more light-hearted game, but it has a real fun feeling to it. I like the fact that you can pick up just the book and then build your troops up from there. Boxed sets can be great, but only if you have a real use for all of the figs inside. As much as I like opening up a big box of new toys it's rare that I actually use them all. The game system is innovative, easy to play games can turn one way and then the other before they're through. Being a fan of the old west will certainly make Great Rail Wars appeal to you a bit more, but even though I live in Texas there aren't a whole lot of westerns in my DVD collection and I found Great Rail Wars thoroughly enjoyable.

TWENTY QUESTIONS

EXCELSIOR entertainment

Welcome to another new article in the pages of Fictional Reality. In 'Twenty Questions' we'll get a hold of an industry executive and bounce a bunch, hopefully twenty, questions off of them. For the debut of this article I managed to corner Thom Talamini from Excelsior Entertainment long enough to answer the following...

1. What exactly is Excelsior Entertainment?

Excelsior is a game design and manufacturing company, though this is not how it started out. We began in the area of imports back in 1998 (back then it was a two man job) and spent a few years growing and successfully selling specialty items to the game and specialty retail markets in the USA. After growing the business we were looking at being involved more directly with our first passion, gaming. Many of us have done game industry work over the years and enjoyed the heck out of the experience. Being able to create is a very addictive drug and one not easily overcome. Around this time Target Games was shutting down and we didn't want our favorite games to disappear with the company.

Having worked with Heartbreaker in the past, many of us had prior relations with the owners of the intellectual properties, who had left Target with their IP's months prior to the fall of Target. I contacted the guys and talked with them about relaunching the MC: Warzone and Chronopia brands worldwide. We all believed in the properties and wanted very much to see them continue. Suffice it to say an arrangement was reached and Excelsior was granted stewardship of the properties. We are incredibly honored to be given this opportunity and are working hard every day to turn these brands into something worthy of the trust placed in us.

Since we had come to this agreement with Paradox, we have scaled back all of our non-manufacturing and development efforts to concentrate on this worthy venture. Excelsior now focuses on manufacturing these games and a few related projects in other markets.

2. Who works for Excelsior Entertainment and what do they do?

I suppose we can start with me. My job is to make sure it all happens and to assemble the team to make bring these projects to light, no small feat I can assure you. Because of the way I prefer to do business and



work, our team is more of a family than simply a business. We work together and often hang out after hours together. We are all friends here and I care about the happiness and success of everyone in my family.

As a small family we have a very eclectic way of working in that we all know how to do most of the things that need doing and frequently help out in all areas of the company. Sometimes this means we are all on the phones selling, other times we are in the warehouse packing or in the casting room making little men. Other times we get to sit down and flesh out ideas and expand the games in the studio. Most of us work long after the time clock has shut down for the night, but since we care about what we are doing the extra effort is worth it. It isn't uncommon for many of us to be in the office for 15 hours at a clip.

The rest of the In-House Excelsior Team consists of the following talented and great people, all of whom I am privileged to call colleagues and friends and have as part of the Excelsior family.

Lance Katz heads up our sales office. He is generally found on the phones talking to stores and working with Crusaders. On the design side Lance has been laboring on expanding the Dark Eden universe particularly in the area of the US territory. Lance joined us following his tenure at Target and is often found doing demos in stores and spreading the word.

Tom Rooney, or Dooley as he is referred since we have too many 'Toms' in the family, has been busy heading up the Warzone project core book. In addition to his efforts in this arena, Dooley handles much of the small day-to-day issues that crop up, often acting as my walking memory. Dooley is no stranger to Warzone and Chronopia and had done some work for Heartbreaker back in the old days in a regular freelance capacity.

Peter Flannery, a name well known to fans of Warzone and Chronopia is the latest addition to the family and we all couldn't be happier. He is a talented sculptor and gifted writer whose vision and creativity will be readily apparent beginning this month. Having an in-house sculpting talent was paramount to me and I had been speaking with Pete for many months about a full-time position. In fairness, Pete doesn't actually live stateside though I am sure we will see him over here from time to time.

Dave Jones came on board to spearhead the Chronopia project, having been intimately involved with its design from the early days of Heartbreaker. Dave has done practically everything at one time or another and while we wish he could be with us full time, for now we will make due with what we can from Dave in a part time basis.

Doug Rawley has been with me since the beginning (we go way back). Doug has had a varied career and brings many talents to the production department at Excelsior, which is a deep bag of tricks if you spend any time with him. He is the man that oversees the casting and mold making departments. In addition to this, he also oversees the warehouse and shipping of products. So yes, Doug is perpetually busy.

Andrew Grant, or Andy as we refer to him, helps Lance in sales and also helps out in the warehouse. Andy is our resident Brit, coming to us from Leeds England by way of the University of Pennsylvania. Andy is the chief instigator of games in the shop and helps keep everyone in stitches with his wry English humor. I think I have picked up on quite a lot of slang from Andy and I know that Andy has picked up a whole lot of my choicest expressions.

Kathy Notch is our accounting department and a hell of a great lady. She is only in the office a couple days a week but manages to keep everything in order in spite of my best efforts to lose paperwork.

Tom O'Hagan is our resident handyman and warehouse worker. He is a hell of a great guy who is always eager to lend a hand when needed.

Jimmy Ellis is our resident finisher. This means when I have finished roughing out a sketch I send it to Jimmy to render and finish. To his credit, Jimmy is creative,

intuitive and very capable; an emerging talent, good friend and all around great guy.

And lastly there's Roxanne Reynolds. She replaced Heather as my right hand and her job consists of coming in after five pm and helping out in the office any way she can. There is a surprising amount of filing and such that accumulates during an Excelsior day but she loves working here (at least that's what she tells me).

In addition to this close-knit family, Excelsior has a great assortment of part time help and volunteers that all help us get things moving here. Our Crusaders do an outstanding job interacting with stores and presenting at conventions.

3. Do you run your crew like Tony Soprano or do you just look like him?

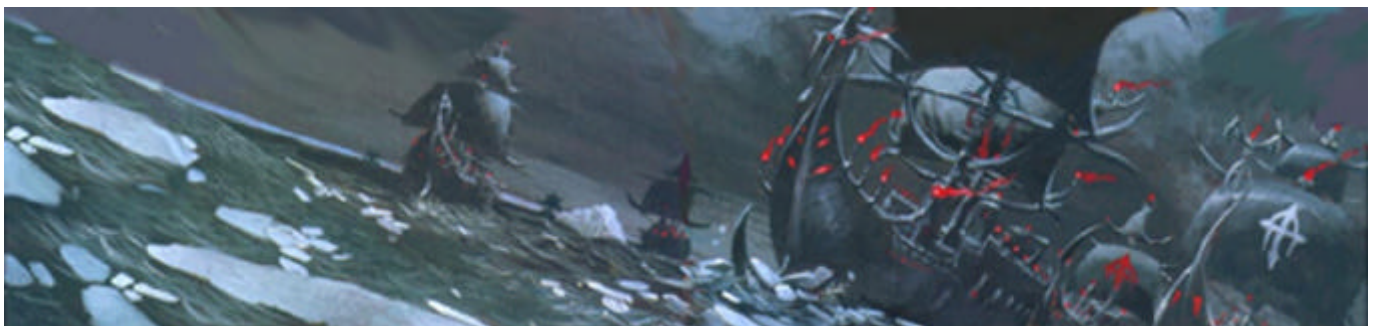
Hmmm...I could answer that but I'd have to kill you. Seriously though, I have been getting this a lot lately. Wonder why? Someone talking out of school?



4. How is Excelsior Entertainment different from Target Games?

Let me first preface my answer by saying that I am not an authority on how Target did things so I will stay with what I know.

Target was a large company, encompassing many divisions of which the adventure games were only a small part. That division, which included the former Heartbreaker Hobbies, maintained a design studio in Scotland, a corporate office in Sweden, and two production facilities in Ireland and the US respectively. Excelsior on the other hand is very small and we have to make do with the resources at our disposal. We are keen to make sure all our talent and resources stay



under one roof where we can make sure things happen with the same vision, where quality can be checked and where a sense of belonging can be realized. This will evolve of course but for now it is how I feel things need to get done. Excelsior works closely with fan feedback and market research (I am making no comment on Target's practices here because I can't) and has been focusing more and more of its resources exclusively to the development of these brands.

We have an esprit de corps here where everyone is free to contribute ideas and suggestions that we consider at the design meetings. Our company is my family, and I am very protective of it and the work we do.

5. What has been going on with Chronopia in the past two years and why did it take so long to get in gamer's hands?

Actually it has only been one year and seven months. In reality there are several factors that have caused the Chronopia book to be released later than we had hoped. The first is the "Target Effect" as I refer to it. From distributors to retailers there have been many that have rejected the notion that the games are back and being supported by a US based company, so angry are they that Target left them suddenly in a lurch as they were committing time and resources to the lines. It's an understandable though unexpected reaction and it has forced our production schedule back almost a full year. It wasn't until recently that a US distributor would even tell their stores about us. In essence we have been almost "punished" because of what happened with Target even though none of us here were directly involved. These are good games and we know they can sell well if given a chance, though it has been arduous, uphill climb.

The state of affairs of Target's dissolution was another obstacle. Many newer figures do not have molds and had to be redone. All the art and painted models were plundered from the beginning and after a few months Paradox itself was able to collect some digital files for

us. Ultimately we had to rebuild all the text and images from scratch, as well as develop a newer look for the games.

The next obstacle was the loss of the first design lead (whose name is omitted) that dropped the ball and no doubt has caused me to personally oversee everything. This is why I found Dave Jones again. After play testing several newer games of Chronopia with Dave, I wanted to make some more changes to the mechanic of the game to improve it. The first thing the design teams were tasked to do was to create a template that would allow for the development of any model in the game, insuring its balance. This had not been done before any other work could commence and is a lot more involved than one would think. This process took over a month of number crunching alone to accomplish.

Lastly, there were some more changes that I wanted to make to the game in essence to improve it, but this took another month of time. What makes it hard to understand is that the game had to be prepared in such a way that future releases could be added seamlessly to the game. Other than a misprint or piece of errata that occurred for an editorial reason, the games must have solid rules and an expandable rubric.

More recently we had learned the ins and outs of book publishing and had various delays in getting the books done. I am confident that we have this issue mastered for the next time. Now that the ball is rolling, I expect a faster and more consistent release schedule.

6. What kind of new sculpts can we expect for Chronopia? Is there a timeline in place to fill the gaps in the figure lines? What's the most exciting Chronopia figure that will soon be available?

There are quite a few new sculpts coming down the pike for Chronopia. We have infused the game with a new level of depth and we need the models to reflect this. Some of what is coming down the pike is:



Black Sister Champion, Novice Shaman, Risen for each race, Ascended, Tunnel Warriors, Forgotten, Goblin Spearmen, Shadowstalker, Carnomancer, Arch Chronomancer, Dragon Skull Warriors, just to name a few.

As for the most exciting figure coming down the pike I'd have to say that is a personal preference. Since you are asking me though, I'd say there were two I am particularly excited about seeing. The first model I am looking forward to is the Ogre Deathseeker, the second is the Funeral Barge for the Devout and of course the Arch Necromancer and Carnomancers will look diabolical as well.

7. Are there any new armies coming to Chronopia?

Yes, there are. The first is coming back with a vengeance from the annals of Chronopia's dark history while the second is simply a new group we are presenting to the tapestry of Chronopia. At this point I would rather not reveal much about them yet though I promise you'll get the scoop when we do.

8. Where does Empire Chronopia fit into the mix?

Empire Chronopia is waiting for the other games to get running smoothly again. We have no Empire resources from Target so we have to start from scratch again.

9. What is going on with Ultimate Warzone?

Now there is a question. While I was busy fleshing out Chronopia, Dooley and Lance have been hard at work getting Warzone ready for development. The game is currently in the last play test phase. We have one team of developers working on the background story and linking it to the current timeline, another team of statisticians working on the point costing rubric, an adaptation of Chronopia's, and a third prepping the layout for the book. Once play testing is wrapped up, a month long period (give or take), we can put the final project together and send it off to print.

What you can expect to see in the Ultimate Edition is a comprehensive game that blends the creativity and rich detail of the Mutant Chronicles setting with the more balanced game play of second edition. You'll see a diversity of models, tactics and options available to

the player as well as role-playing links that will allow a role-player to segue in and out of a miniatures game. I should mention that this is first and foremost a miniatures game, though there is so much information and material that we have assembled that even a role player will enjoy the book.

Each Corporation has been extensively developed with new troop types and abilities. We have added the Cartel back into the game, improved on the powers of the Art and Dark Symmetry, restored the AI component back to Cybertronic, adapting much of the wonderful groundwork laid out by Bill King and Mike Stackpole, and even restored much of the diversity offered by first edition Warzone.

It is important to note that with Warzone we had a metaphorical kitchen full of ingredients painstakingly developed over a long period of time. We wanted to organize this information and blend together these exciting ingredients into a masterpiece that would feed the mind and spirit for years. It was important for us to remain true to the vision of the original game designers' vision, though we have put an Excelsior spin on it. We didn't want to reinvent the wheel with this project; we simply wanted to pay homage to the work done before.

To help us to this we have tied the games setting to an interactive campaign system that links with our Organized Play Leagues and Sanctioned Play Leagues. What this all means is that once the game is released we will be able to allow stores and players during special events to affect the development of the Mutant Chronicles Storyline.

The first story arc, "Let the Universe Burn" centers around the activities of the Nephrite Valpurgius and his gambit to become the sixth apostle to the Dark Soul. His exploits will shape the fabric of the MC Universe though the other Apostles are not too happy about the possibility of sharing power. Players will be able to learn about these events and through their games affect the results for good or ill. Spinning off this storyline is the introduction of the Dark Apostate and the organization simply referred to as the Apostate. This "officially banned" group doesn't exist according to the Brotherhood though in point of fact, they very much do. The Apostate is perceived to be a collection of rouges and criminals when they are



perceived at all, though in reality these criminals all come from the ranks of the Brotherhood. Their tale is told in the Ultimate Edition and further in the Malcontents Supplement.

10. When can we expect it to be released?

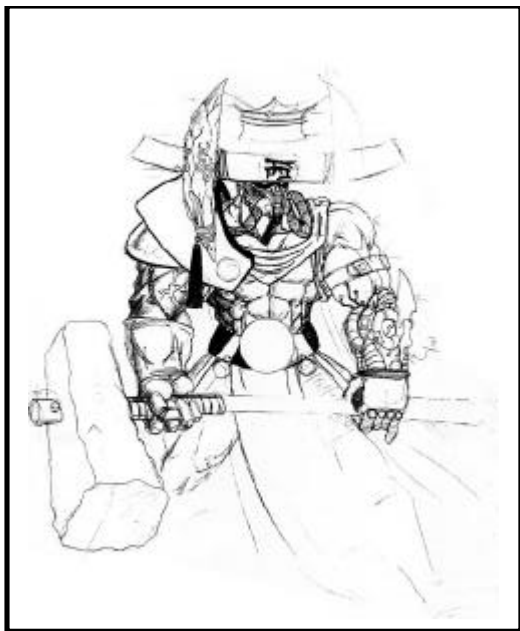
I believe we should see a Fall release for Ultimate. It will not be a boxed set however, but rather a single, massive book.

11. What kind of new sculpts can we expect for Ultimate Warzone? Is there a timeline in place to fill in gaps in the figure lines? What's the most exciting Ultimate Warzone figure that will soon be available?

For new sculpts we are taking the same approach we did for Chronopia in that we felt it important to make sure all the core troops from the books were available first. We are developing many new troops to fill out the armies as well and these will be mixed into the releases over time. Occasionally we will resculpt some of the figures that could use a face-lift and an update.

When new troops or personalities are created and released, should they not be in the book we will have their information on the website for players' immediate download so that they need not wait for a new book to explain their troops. While a monthly magazine would also be a way to proceed with this information share, it is not in the schedule yet.

The most exciting sculpts I am looking forward to seeing are actually in the Mishima line. The Emperors Guard and the Priests of the Four Winds will be dynamic additions to their arsenal whose KI powers will give Mishima a new flavor and range of tactics. I have included some of my sketches of these guys that Pete will be rendering into sculpts.



12. What role will Dark Eden armies have in Ultimate Warzone?

Quite an important one since Valpurgius has taken up residence here and the eyes of the Corporations have turned towards the Dark Planet. We have spent great time and effort to mainstay the established forces on Dark Eden and flesh out their uniqueness. Additionally we had the opportunity to look at the rest of the World and develop the inhabitants of the other continents as well. The Sky Lords of the former Isles of Japan have proven very exciting, as have the Scrap Nomads of the US.

The army composition in Ultimate will be more advanced than it is now. While the status of basic units, elite units and such are still in place and expanded, the game will now offer options for flavoring your army in many new ways. You'll be able to have Dark Eden troops to support your army as well as Cartel, Brotherhood and Doomtroopers. With Dark Eden there will be more of a reason to be there on the planet and more of a reason for the inhabitants of Dark Eden to be off world.

The warriors of Dark Eden will offer players non-conventional gaming options that will certainly add a unique flavor and color to the games. In the tournaments and ranking events I have witnessed their popularity has already started to increase.

13. Will there be a Chronopia role-playing game?

Yes, there will. The seeds of the RPG have been planted in the core rulebook for Chronopia. From here we will introduce a separate book that allows players to take the Miniatures game and convert it into an RPG. In this manner the players can move between the two styles of play seamlessly or simply stick with the style they prefer. While a balanced game is important in any

style and we certainly are careful to examine the mechanic we use, the back-story or fluff we feel is critical to a successful project. Because of this we know that the games will have plenty of appeal to players of either style of play.

15. What is the process that takes place before a miniature is in a blister for sale in a game store?

So you want the dirty little process eh? Fair enough though I know how we work is not necessarily how other companies work. That said the process begins with the storylines coming up and the production schedule. I look at what books will be released or what units we have developed and fit them into a schedule so that the releases are coordinated. The pieces are detailed in the composition in a pack (will they be units or individuals), and assigned a SKU (stock keeping unit).

The next step is to look at design. As I have a very specific vision about what I want for these games so I stay very hands on and generally rough out a concept sketch that I hand to a few illustrators we use to finish. These pieces of art are then sent to Pete for sculpting with attention being paid to make the pieces fluid and dynamic. If the piece doesn't have a reference in a book we then prepare its write up at this point so that it may be used in game play immediately when it is available for sale.

Pete then scans the work in for me to approve and once accepted the greens (the terms for a new sculpt) are sent in for molding. Doug will take these new sculpts and create a master mold and following this process a production series of molds are crafted. This process alone can be quite labor intensive since we want the piece to maintain its detail and design.

Once the molds are finished, casting begins. Once they are finished a proof set are sent to our painters for rendering. At this point the model is ready for sale.

16. What's up with the Chainmail/Chronopia conversion that's going on? Will I be able to use my Chainmail miniatures games of Chronopia?

The Chainmail project was a way to help out players who felt put out by the cancellation of the game. We

know what it is like to have this happen and it is a crappy thing. The Chainmail rules will allow the use of those figures in the game though not in tournaments or sanctioned events. It is merely a chance to help these players out and it adds a bit of diversity as well and allows a new group of players to enjoy the world of Chronopia.

14. Why did you decide to go to the Unit Cards for deployment in Chronopia and Ultimate Warzone?

Funny story that. I had often felt that one of the weaknesses of miniatures gaming was deployment. I had watched too many games get won or lost at the deployment phase and this bothered me. One of the most exciting parts of warfare (if there is such a thing) is the not knowing what you are facing, the mystery of your opponent's composition and exact position.

While at Gen Con 2001 I was in a room trying to sleep while everyone else was playing Warzone (quite loudly I'll add). In the heat of battle and an ensuing debate I was awoken to an exchange between Daniel and Dooley who were reviewing the crushing defeat Dooley just suffered. The premise was that Daniel's deployment was what gave him command of the board early on and hence won him the game. The discussion was quite engaging and served to remind me of my previous objections to playing standard miniatures and made me determined to find a way to add the exciting unknown back to the game, to remove the command of the board during deployment practice.

After careful thought many possibilities were generated. I filled pages of notebooks with ideas. The problem I was then confronted with (since most of the ideas were sound) was how to implement them. I began to focus on logistics and realized I wanted something that would go with the product as it was sold so there wasn't anything more to buy. The Unit Card idea quickly followed and design work began.

One of the early decisions about this design was would the Unit Cards be preprinted or not. I opted for the open, "to be filled out" variety because I envisioned a game played with options, with ways to customize your troops and with ways to advance them in campaigns. I didn't want a game with static stats when it could be so



much more. Having a picture painted on the card also seemed pointless since the Unit Cards provide anonymity to ones forces. This being the case it became obvious what needed to be done.

The final cards designs were created from the various artworks we had to convey the look and feel of the army in question. The backs were set up to allow for the inclusion of as much material as we could get on it. Sure, you'll need to write small but it is worth it. As a record keeping tool the cards also work great since they can be carried with the miniatures in any figure case designed and greatly reduce the amount of paper clutter you have.

When you sit down to play a game of Warzone or Chronopia now you'll have an ominous feeling of nervous tension as you set up the field and have no idea what you are looking at. Making it more tension filled is the use of dummy cards or False Leads, which are essentially blank cards mixed into the composition of your army deployment that allow you to misrepresent the actual disposition of your forces. The larger your games, the more there are making it hard to guess where exactly your opponent is.

17. What's going on with the online version of Warzone?

That is a question best left for Paradox since this is their baby. Our busy schedule doesn't allow us to keep in as constant contact as I'd like so my knowledge of where this is at is limited.

18. What is your favorite army to play in Chronopia / Ultimate Warzone?

In Chronopia I very much like the Swamp Goblins. These are my current favorites though before they were developed it was the Blackbloods. There is just something primal and menacing about the Children of the Gourd that makes me enjoy playing them.

In Warzone it was and has always been the Brotherhood first and foremost. For a change of pace I really enjoy Mishima.

19. What kind of hours do you work?

Hmmm, am I being set up for something? I am generally in the office around 9:30 am and leave around 11:30pm -1:00 am. In the morning I go through paperwork and calls. The afternoon is spent dealing with orders and production issues. The evenings are spent on the phones or in development. The weekends are either times for development work or catch up work from the week before. Often there is too much to do with not enough time to do it.

20. Where do you see Chronopia and Ultimate Warzone a year from now?

I see these two games doing very well in a year. They are superior products that I know will find a home with gamers. I see many new models, supplements and support systems in place. The second half of 2002 and 2003 I see as a great period of growth for the company and the time when we finally overcome the baggage we inherited.

You can run, but you'll only die tired.

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I'd like to take a moment to thank Thom and all of the crew over at Excelsior Entertainment for taking the time to answer each and every one of the questions that I sent them.

Mark Theurer

In addition to the answers Thom was good enough to send along a map that goes along with the Chronopia game and some information about each race. Whether you are an old-school veteran of Chronopia or if this is your first exposure to it I'm sure that you'll find it interesting.



The World of Chronopia is a place of turmoil and hidden dangers. While much beauty and wonder exist in the lands, one must be careful to keep a watchful eye on the shadows. We have turned a corner in the Fourth Age, one of heightened conflict and desperate action. I have penned these thoughts to provide the traveler with some idea of what he may face in the central lands (referred to as the Inner Lands) of Chronopia.

The Blackblood Empire

Capital: Kharabad (Population 75,000)

Population: +/- 7,000,000 (includes satellite provinces)

Race (s): Ogres (1.4m), Orcs (2.3m), Goblins (2.5m), Trolls (@ 800k), Giants (@ 15k), Bokor (1.2m)

Resources: cloth, salt, copper, silver, gold, gemstones, bronze, and foodstuffs.

Current Relations

The Firstborn: The Blackblood Empire as a whole view the Firstborn with open contempt and distrust. Believing the One King to be a dark force that threatens their independence, the Empire will not tolerate any Firstborn incursion into their lands, and they seldom differentiate between human kingdoms. They openly blame the One King for the release of the Devout into the world and further add the Stygian menace to his meddling activities. Emperor Nizar views these two actions as part of a larger military scheme, to ply the One King's enemies with so many threats they will fall easily to his waiting armies once they have been weakened enough. Because of this belief, humans are generally considered spies or advanced scouts and executed on sight, unless of course you are from the Northern Tribes.

While the Blackbloods did not suffer the presence of Firstborn Slaves to the extent that the Elves or Dwarves did following the Great Fall, they now have adjusted their opinion of the Firstborn to reflect a harsher worldview and would prefer to simply kill them all and end their threat for all time.

The Sons of Kronos: Considered to be isolationists and unorganized, the Blackblood Empire does not consider the Untamed to be any concern at all. Their beliefs and practices separate them enough for even the racist Blackbloods to notice the differences between them and the Firstborn. This difference is the only thing that allows them to exist without the ire of the Empire though this by no means indicates a position of friendliness. If anything the Blackbloods recognize that, like themselves, the Sons of Kronos simply wish to be left alone.

The Elves: Former allies in the Triad, the Empire views the Elves with begrudging respect. While the Empire considers the Elven dependence on Lotus plants to be a weakness, their opulence and hedonistic ways a sickness, and their religious views sadly fatalistic, they have found their battle skills and prowess to be worthy of their respect. Emperor Nizar keeps frequent council with Duke Heliac and has placed ambassadors throughout the friendly Elven Houses to make sure relations and support continue, though much of this has since ceased due to the Heliacs position regarding the One King.

Among the Raj's of the Empire there has arisen considerable dissent about the role the Elves are playing in the rebellion of the Swamp Goblins. Previously genial relations have broken down considerably since the secession of the Fallen Lands. Only the current affairs assailing the Empire have prevented direct retaliation against the Elves as a whole for their role in the matter.

With the current state of affairs with the Devout and the Stygian, Nizar has found the need to reassert his friendship and support with the Elves in spite of some of their involvement with the traitorous Swamp Goblins. While he will use his allies in the Elven Court to bolster his Empires defense, he will not forget their involvement in the schism of the Fallen Lands and he will have his revenge.

The Dwarves: While once strong and formidable, the Dwarven race has degenerated with countless blows to its integrity. The loss of their lands and the corruption of their Gods have left the Dwarves far weaker than they were during the days of the Triad. They are isolated and fragmented, a people torn and as dangerous to themselves as they are to their allies.

The Empire is both skeptical and wary of any Dwarven envoy and now prefers to secretly relegate the Dwarves to a buffering position between themselves and the Devout and Stygian threats. Dwarven mining balloons are still found amongst the Empires larger cities bringing the wonders of the deep earth to market.

The Stygian: Released by the meddling schemes of the One King, the Stygians are a swarm of death that the Empire fears for it does not act in any manner they understand. Riches and power do not seem to drive them, and their actual motivations seem to involve only the extinction of all non-Stygian life. Believed to be a summoned menace brought to this plane by the hated Firstborn, the Stygian are reviled and hated throughout the Empire.

The Devout: Another force that was brought into existence by the One King, the Devout are a plague on the face of Chronopia and the Empire will not tolerate its presence at all. It will marshal its might against the Devout wherever they emerge to challenge the Empires borders. The doctrines of the Dark Prophets represent a diametrically opposed viewpoint to that of the Empire, and the Blackbloods find all they stand for an utter affront. Death is a sacred rite and journey for the Blackbloods who view the undead and necromantic practices of the Devout as anathema.

Life in the Empire

The sprawling Blackblood Empire sits proudly on the eastern shores of the Inner Sea and spreads inwards all the way to the Lands of Flame in the Far East and the Frozen Sea to the North. While popular opinion is that the Empire is little more than a collection of humanoid savages, this could not be farther from the truth. Their customs are very different and harsher than many other realms but this merely hides the quite dignity the Empire is filled with. This sense of honor and respect of power however does not mean this is a safe place for the unwary to travel.

The Empire prides itself in having some of the grandest and oldest cities in the world. Although the outlying areas of the cities are flat and sprawling, consisting of mainly single- and double-story clay brick buildings, the central parts are walled behind huge, square, fortress-like structures. These fortresses are extremely wide and contain military barracks and training yards, as well as quarters for officers, stables for war beasts and roadways broad enough to accommodate chariots passing in both directions. Vast crenellated towers are evenly positioned along the walls and contain various types of catapults and armaments. Each face of the fortress features a large rectangular tower inset with a gate leading to the heart of the city. The gates' inner walls are decorated with friezes of heroes and great military leaders who have died in battle as well as scenes of fantastic creatures from Blackblood mythology. In all, the Blackbloods sport the largest freestanding army in the world (though the exact size of the Stygian hordes is unknown).

Vast, diaphanous domed buildings with spires and minarets of alabaster and onyx dominate the inner parts of the cities. Here are the homes and dwellings of the elite in Blackblood society as well as the Halls of Justice, the Great Libraries, and the Royal Merchant Houses. There are immense tropical gardens complete

with fauna, large plazas decorated with mosaics and fountains, and huge open markets where one can find goods from all over the world. Each of the provincial capitals has a small palace for the Emperor as well as a Court and quarters for the Satrap and his retinue.

The Grand Vizier Bukhir has his quarters in the Jade Gates of the fortress wall at Kharabad. These immense jade-faced gates are topped by two golden lions and appear to stretch to the very heavens themselves. Kharabad is also the capital of the Empire and home to the Emperor. His colossal golden-domed palace is situated at the center of the city. Its opulence is renowned throughout the world and marveled at by all who visit. Nizar presides over his court sitting on the legendary Blood Throne, an intricately carved throne made entirely of amber.

Belshazzar, the greatest Blackblood city in the Lands of the Flame, sits before a vast ravine that joins the caravan trails of the North to the Lake of Souls far in the West. This beautiful city faced with glazed tiles of blue, green and yellow and lined with carved alabaster—reflect the sunlight of the desert in a dazzling aura that overwhelms the first-time viewer with its grandeur. Ruled by the Emperor's cousin Tabukhar, Belshazzar occupies an important place in the defense of the Empire's southern trade interests. Unfortunately, with the incursions of the Devout and the Stygians, Belshazzar is now more an armed fortress than a trading city, relying heavily on the support of Kharabad to maintain its walls.

The coastal trading ports along the western seaboard are vital to the Empire's continued prosperity since they provide it with an important gateway to the Inner Sea. The most famous of these are Bezek and Azaghur. The citadel at Bezek is situated on a vast granite stack connected to the coastline via an enormous stone bridge. The land connecting it to the coast fell away nearly a thousand years ago. The harbor and most of the city is spread around the base of this natural pillar. The city is surrounded by a low wall but has large loading jetties and wharves jutting out into the sea. A twisting road with regularly positioned gates spirals around the pillar up to the citadel and the inner city. Bezek is the second city of the Empire. Its citizens boast that their city has never fallen to invaders. In fact, the city has produced some of the Empire's proudest warriors, including the Emperor himself. Azaghur is positioned on the banks of the river Ortyx. The inner city is probably the largest in the Empire, and its market place is famous throughout the known world. Because of its exposed position, the outer walls of Azaghur are constructed similarly to the inner fortress walls of most of the other cities in the Blackblood Empire. Other important cities are Araxus, set in the central plateaus, the lakeside city of Japur, and the Goblin city of Terakan, cut out of the living rock and approachable only by a road built along the knife-edge ridge of a mountain range. Yet, with the coming of the Devout the Blackbloods have lost several cities, including the ancient city Varhorn in the forests of Qatuk. But all roads lead to Kharabad, and Kharabad provides the heart for the Blackblood Empire.

When Negral raised his Dark Citadel amid the Frozen Sea, some of the most northerly settlements of the Blackblood Empire were cut off from the main Empire. Now the Blackbloods must supply these isolated settlements by secret caravan routes across the shifting ice-flows of the Frozen Sea and by their great balloons of silk, which are born aloft by the power of the Alchemists' Accumulators. The Emperor Nizar knows the importance of having watchful eyes at every corner of his realm so he diligently maintains the line of towers that runs between the western coast of the Frozen Sea and the Dragon's Spine which is under the command of one of his most loyal Satraps.

There are a number of trading outposts scattered through the southern deserts that come under the control of the Emperor, however none are greater than the wall-city of Delshazzar. The walled city blocks a deep ravine that joins the caravan trails of the north to the source of the river Sippar, known as the Lake of Souls. Overlooking the city from the high ridges to the southeast is the royal palace that stands as testimony to the Blackblood engineers who constructed it. Its slender azure towers reach to the heavens, resplendent with their inlays of lapis lazuli. Vast friezes of mythical beasts, exquisitely carved in alabaster, decorate the



palace walls. The gates at Delshazzar are also marveled at as they are faced with glazed tiles of blue, green and yellow.

Protecting the borders of the Empire is the greatest and certainly the largest land army of the world. The core of the Emperor's army is stationed at Kharabad, and similarly, the provincial Satraps have armies based in their capitals. In times of war, the Emperor levies forces from these provinces. His army is further augmented with conscripts from the smaller towns throughout the Empire.

All Blackbloods like to wear richly colored and intricately embroidered costumes. The varying colors in their dress often reflect the troops' home provinces. Likewise, their bright silvered armor is elaborately embellished with gold and other precious metals. The Blackbloods believe that if they are going to die, they should be wearing their finest before presenting themselves before their Gods.

The Emperor and his nobility often enter battle atop a large armored palanquin set between four Myrmadons. However it is not unknown for them to enter the fray in less formal ways, as Nizar and his brother did in their younger days, leading from the front with the bloodlust filling them. There is a saying in Blackblood society, "When an Ogre picks up a blade people die. When the Emperor picks up a blade, nations die."

The Cursed Lands of the Devout

Capital: Driaz in Jebel, Korasant in the Storm Peaks, Curak'tal in the Flame Lands and Portantis.

Population: unknown (conservative estimation including demons and undead places this around 3 million)

Race (s): elves, dwarves, humans, orcs, ogres, goblins, trolls, giants, undead, demons, and devils

Resources: unknown

Current Relations

The Firstborn: The Dark Prophets hate the One King and everything the Firstborn society stand for. Their efforts, while fragmented and self-aggrandizing, all center on seeing the One King impaled up on a huge pike above the highest towers of the Dark Citadels. While the hordes of the Devout make no distinction between whom they torture and slay, the Confessors of the Devout do. It is their infernal duty to bring the Gospel of their Dark Master to the hearts of the unbeliever and swell the ranks of the Devout with willing soldiers. Confessors can be found traveling the lands of Chronopia seducing its populace

into joining their unholy crusade. Both Aleha and Lokoth seem to have directed the bulk of their forces against the Firstborn.

The Sons of Kronos: Little distinction is made amongst the Dark Prophets as to the differences between the Untamed and the Firstborn; to them they are all either potential converts or sacrifices meant for their Dark Master. Only Lokoth, who was born of these peoples, has any understanding as to their motivations and powers. At present he has kept this council to himself and allowed the other Prophets to discover what he already knows. Since his defeat at the hands of the Untamed, Negral has elevated them to a prominent place in his genocidal campaigns.

The Elves: The best service an Elf can perform for the Dark Master is to march in his Risen warbands. The Dark Prophets view all things Elven with unilateral contempt; they are a fallen people whose Gods have abandoned them to this place called Chronopia. They are beneath the notice of the Dark Master.

Only Aleha seems to have any fascination with the Elven people and society, though it is with the eyes of a perverse child that she regards them. None amongst the Apostles can forget the role the Elves played in the Triad's formation and the One King's first death, and they are eager to return the deed in kind.

Elves are rarely seen corrupted into the service of the Devout, though it has happened from time to time. The Elven dependence on Lotus seems to be an avenue the Dark Prophet Aleha is determined to exploit in her bit to absorb the Elven Houses. It is this very tactic that has allowed Aleha to insinuate her Confessors into the House of the Topaz Scorpion and bring it almost completely to her service. The rest of the Elven Houses have most recently condemned the actions of the Topaz Scorpion and cast it out from their order. Even the Obsidian Serpent House turned its back on the lesser House.

The Dwarves: The Dwarves are little more than annoying vermin that are too stupid to know when they are beaten and too useless to be converted to the Devout's cause. The Devout have destroyed the Dwarven Gods, taken over many of their most significant Ringholds, and sent the remnants of the Dwarven Clans running fearfully into the Under Realms. To the Dark Apostles, the issue is closed, the threat of the Dwarves is over. While there are Dwarves, like the Jackal Clan, that serve the cause of the Devout, these cases are rare and they are generally treated with only passing notice by the true believers of the Devout.

Until recently the Dwarves were being driven to extinction by the relentless onslaught of the Devout. It was the rise of the Stygians which forced the Dark Apostles to split their attentions from their dark crusade and pull back their assaults. With the respite provided by the Stygians, the Dwarves have mounted a new campaign to retake their homelands and restore their Gods to their former Divinity. By contrast, the Devout plan on sacrificing every Dwarf on the blood soaked altars of their Dark Master.

The Stygian: There are few things that surprise the Dark Apostles of the Devout; few occurrences that go unforeseen by the prophetic meditations of the Devout leaders. The Stygian are just such a surprise, a complete enigma. Their goals are completely alien and unfathomable to the Devout and their spirits seem incorruptible and immune to the Confessors dark promises. They are not interested in attracting converts to their cause or in swelling their coffers with riches, but rather seem simply focused on the extinction of all mammalian life on Chronopia.

When the Stygians first appeared the Devout had known only constant expansion and victory. Following their unannounced appearance the Devout have been forced to regroup and pull back their lines to prevent devastating losses from the Stygian menace.

The Blackbloods: The Blackbloods reject the teachings of the Devout and view the promise of unlife with abject disdain. The Devout therefore have no place for the Blackbloods in their armies, unless

unless it is to bolster the ranks of the Necromancer's Risen.

The Swamp Goblins: Of all the races of Chronopia, only the Swamp Goblins are not even considered in the machinations of the Devout. The secrets of their domain are too small and inconsequential to factor into the great plans of the Devout's Dark Master.

While fallen Swamp Goblins can be found amongst the Risen of the Devout, this sight serves to enrage the Swamp Goblins who consider the walking dead an affront to the cycle of their lives. If the Dark Prophets were to turn their gaze upon the Fallen Lands, many believe the Swamp Goblins would last only a few weeks at best before falling to the Devout's might.

Aleha has recently begun a new campaign that has impacted the Fallen Lands in a most sinister way and is causing the Swamp Goblins great concern. While the focus of her plans revolves around the Jade House of the Elves, the Swamp Goblins are experiencing collateral damage they are both unprepared for and unable to understand. Left unchecked, Aleha may be able to topple the Swamp Goblins without much effort at all, having discovered the intrinsic symbiotic relationship between the Swamp Goblins and the Fallen Lands.

In the Cursed Lands

The lands claimed by the Devout all share one common thing, they are permeated by death and decay. From jungles teeming with foul insects and brackish waters to harsh deserts scorched with heat the lands of the Devout reflect the domains of their dark master beyond the seven Hells; the environment themselves are dangerous. Like a cancerous growth the Cursed Lands seem to spread and grow with the advances of the Devout Host.

Cities, like the land itself, that have fallen to the Devout become places of desolation and ruin. Nothing grows in the wake of a Devout victory and what is not leveled in the actual battle is pulled down by the Devout hosts in their triumph. Some larger cities take on the appearance of the citadels of the four Prophets. Old buildings are pulled down and new structures are raised in reverence to the God of the Devout, the Lord of Darkness. The enslaved are mercilessly goaded on to build these demonic shrines, black as the blackest night, after which they will be cast into the sacrificial pits for the greater glory of Devout's Dark Master.

An impenetrable darkness casts a deadly shadow over both the Dark Lord's cities and lands, interrupted only by the screams of the dead and dying. Few sane beings travel the lands of the Devout for there is nothing to be found there but death and pain.

As if by some sinister design, each Prophet settled in one of the far corners of the inner lands and began to build a deviant dark capital to serve as the center of corruption for the domain. Each citadel is a grim reflection of its master and a focus for the worship of the Dark One. These huge edifices of towering malevolence with their great



walkways and colonnades lined with statues depicting the Dark God and the rest of the Hell-spawned pantheon are built of black marble streaked with blood-red iridescence and are situated at the mouths of each of the Vortexes. Their vast, vitreous pillars pierce the sky in homage to their Dark Lord serving as capitals in the New World, a world of death and decay, the world of the Devout.

Negral's city was the first completed. It is said that the pain-filled groans of the dead echo constantly through its corridors; the souls of all sacrificed there going straight to the Dark One. Built on the island where the Prophets first came together to discuss plans of treachery and rebellion against the One King, the city is a grim and terrifying sight. The Frozen Sea around the city is not nearly as cold as the heart of the island's dark master. Nightmare birds of prey circle the spires looking for fresh victims. Here amid the cold malevolence of this kingdom were born the first of the Necromancers.

To the distant east of Negral's necropolis, in the broken and cracked Lands of the Flame, is the fiery pit that is home to Lokoth, a dark tainted version of his birthplace among the Untamed, its opposite in every way. Here amid the lava and flames of a hell on Earth, Lokoth plans and schemes against the races of the Upper Lands. His fiery demons and dark minions assail the Dwarven Talon Gates and the outer edges of the Blackblood Empire with impunity and relentless drive. Were it not for the sudden and unexpected appearance of the Stygians, Lokoth's forces would have splintered the Eastern arm of the Blackblood Empire by now and sent its forces reeling back to Karabad for succor. Contrasting the tumultuous realm of Lokoth, Nemeth's Citadel is constructed on the remains of a Dwarven Ringhold far in the West, a quiet and dark place where the scent of the dead fills every pore, where a never ending flow of sacrificial victims is being cast into the charnel pit of flesh that lies at the heart of the dark keep. Nemeth has made it a personal mission to become first amongst the Dark Prophets and is aggressive in his efforts to cull the world for his Master. He hates Dwarves most of the races of Chronopia with an unbridled passion and resentful rage. Until the debacle in the north with the Untamed and the Stygian, Nemeth was the only Dark Apostle to know no defeat, a situation that has enraged him to limitless anger. Making his shame worse, he has lost ground about his own citadel, a situation he remains determined to reverse.

Aleha's palace is set deep in the jungles of Jebel, safe from the prying eyes of the other races of Chronopia. Around her fortress, like a vast shadow, all living things have died leaving a vast blackened desolate plain of decayed matter surrounding her on all sides. Aleha is the consummate schemer, a plotter of unmatched duplicity. It was only the unforeseen threat posed by the Stygian that have caused her to ally with her brethren at all. Prior to this event, she has maintained a distant and uncooperative relationship with her fellow Prophets.

Aleha's forces are vast, and she is given to the frequent creation of undead to bolster their numbers and swell her ranks.

The Rhingholds of the Dwarves

Capital: Varies upon the Dwarven Clan

Population: Wolf Clan (750,000), Vulture Clan (920,000), Dark-Tusk (1.2m), Blood-Bone (1.5m), Horned Ones (856,000)

Race (s): dwarves, some Gnom

Resources: Varies upon Ringhold, gold, platinum, gems, pearls, marble.

Current Relations

The Firstborn: The High Council of the Dwarves is concerned for the return of the One King. If this man truly is the leader they had seen slain all those years ago during the time of the Triad, then the Council suspects he will unleash a great revenge upon them. For the most part the Dwarves share a measure of blame for the atrocities committed against the Firstborn by the Jackal and Vulture Clans, a subject they still find distasteful. As the Founders had once taught them though, what you shape in the stone you must forever live with.

The blood bond the Clans share has caused them to internalize this guilt collectively and live with the repercussions of those actions. As a result, humans are traded with and fairly treated.

The Dwarves (most at least) do not blame the Firstborn for the Devout threat as the Blackbloods do, though they do view the Stygian menace as the work of the One King; being the feared revenge he would take on them. In spite of this belief, the Dwarven Council does not retaliate against them. The revenge of the Firstborn is viewed as expected and justified and as such the Council is attempting to deal with the problem at large content in the knowledge that the scales will be balanced once they have overcome it.

The Vulture Clan however does not accept this imposed view and hates the One King and his followers with a passion reserved for few others. Thuul routinely erupts in anti-Firstborn fervor, when they are not fighting against the Stygian menace.

The Sons of Kronos: The Untamed of the northern lands have never been a threat to the Dwarves and as such the current Council has no designs against them. Culn Gul, Overlord of the Elk Clan has on several occasions reported favorable interactions with the north men, a situation the Dwarves are considering looking closely at in terms of formal alliance and mutual defense. According to Culn, there are those within the Untamed who also view the One King with fear and disdain, Tribes that would serve the needs of the Dwarves quite well. With Nemeth entrenched where he is, neither land above or below is safe. In the fullness of the Falling Moon, it is expected that Culn will bring an emissary from Moriath of the Tribe of the Goddess to address the Council.

The Elves: The Dwarves have varying opinions about the Elves, each depending on the House being discussed. Duke Zazen has earned the Council's grudging respect and the High Council receives his ambassadors regularly. The same cannot be said for the House of the Obsidian Serpent, whom the Dwarves view with both suspicion and apprehension. In all, relations with the Elves are infrequent at present as the Dwarves have much to deal with on their own. The current High Council has shunned Elven Houses that enjoyed the benefits of Firstborn slaves captured during the days of the Triad.

Further eroding better relations is the Rogue Duke's present enslavement of Dragon Clan Dwarves, which he uses in the most belittling ways in the armies of the Obsidian Serpent. The Clans cannot forgive nor tolerate this action and the Elven argument is frequently hung up on this point. In some instances open hostilities have erupted where Duke Valimyr's interests are concerned.

All however is not completely bleak. The Wolf and Blood Bone Clans have a much higher regard for Duke Heliac, who has been aiding their efforts against the Devout for numerous cycles. Relations between the Clans and the House of Helios are quite promising to the point where open trade exists and the Duke's word carries some measure of weight.

The Blackbloods: The Blood Throne is a powerful ally and a dangerous enemy. Since the dissolution of the Triad, most Dwarves have had little to do with the Blackbloods, the only issues arising being those of border disputes and trade route rights. At present the High Council has not opened any negotiations with the Emperor as they know they must do so when they are at a position of strength, anything less will cause the Blood throne to react adversely and view them as weak.

The Stygian: The Dwarves view the Stygians as a penance, the results of the actions they took part in following the defeat of the One King. While not all Clans were guilty of this affront, the fate of one is the fate of all, the Dwarves linked inexorably by their Gods and oaths. They will defeat this menace as they will defeat the Devout, and in so doing wash away the sins of their past.

The Devout: The hordes of the Devout have caused the most damage to the Dwarves, displacing their Clans and taking over their sacred Ringholds. The return of their Dark Master to this realm

seems to be predicated upon the destruction of the Caged and their children. With their newly renewed fellowship, the Dwarves are determined to drive the Devout back to the pit they crawled from, no matter the cost.

The Swamp Goblins: The Dwarves do not interact with the former members of the Blackblood Empire and know little of their motives and politics.

Dwarven Ringholds

Carved by their Gods centuries before recorded history, the Ringholds are mysterious and magnificent places concealing a thousand secrets. According to Dwarven legend, the circular structure of the Holds is said to reflect the very shape of the universe and allows energy and good fortune to fill the Hold and all inside.

Massive pits, sometimes miles across are sunk into the earth, at the center of which stands the mighty central column of the Ringhold. This pillar city is linked to the bedrock by countless bridges and walkways and houses many thousands of Dwarves. Barracks, dwellings and workshops rise up beside the great halls, galleries and meeting chambers. At the base of the central column Dwarven society spreads out beneath the earth where farms and stables follow the course of subterranean rivers and dockyards serve ships that navigate the rivers. Some of these rivers lead out to the Inner Sea but the routes are guarded lest the other races learn ways of reaching the Dwarven Ringholds from the Ocean.

Most Dwarven Ringholds are surrounded by a series of smaller holds, some of which are open to the sky and some, which are closed. The most common formation is the Circle of Nine. In this configuration, the first hold lies directly north of the central Ringhold with the others evenly spaced around the core system in a clockwise direction. Surrounding each Ringhold is a network of caves and tunnels that have been fashioned and tamed by the Dwarves over the centuries. These areas are known as the Dwarven labyrinths and they can reach for hundreds of miles beneath the surface of Chronopia, meandering across the land to link an endless expanse of subterranean wilderness known as the Feral Dark. Even the Dwarves must use great caution when moving through the Feral Dark.

The doors of preternatural strength known as Titan Seals protect the heart of each Ringhold. Like the Ringholds, these doors were forged and set in place by the Founders before the Gods were brought low by the tragedy of the Wilding. The Titan Seals guard all major routes into a Ringhold and once they are closed, a Ringhold is almost completely invulnerable. With limited accessibility to these doors, defending them is a simple matter in times when war comes to the Ringhold. Of common design, all the Dwarven Ringholds are situated on mountainous black granite plateaus.

The Dwarfs have mastered technologies foreign to the rest of the world. They have discovered vast loads of ores, minerals and gems never seen on the surface world, making them both rare and precious. These rare gifts they have mastered in their cavernous workshops and put to use with great effect in their factories.

Many of the Dwarf holds are located near the sea and are connected by subterranean tunnels to underground harbors situated at the central core. These harbors are vast, often protected by maze-like waterways, which house the great shipyards. Ringholds are characterized on the surface by a thin tower, built above the central



pillar, surrounded by a simple circular wall with gateways built at regular intervals around its circumference.

The few outsiders to set foot in the Holds have all been stunned by the craft and style involved in their creation. Most assume that Ringholds would reflect Dwarven appearance and be miserable, dark places, yet this could not be farther from the truth. Some, it is true, have darkened, notably the homes of the Vulture Clan and the Horned Ones, who have lost many of their Ringholds to the advance of the Devout. Many are still palatial and splendid. Made for their Gods to inhabit as well as the Dwarves, vast archways with carved histories of Dwarven mythology are everywhere.

The Noble Houses of the Elves

Capital: Varies upon the Elven House

Population: Elves (collectively about 4m), Elementals

Race (s): dwarves, some Gnom

Resources: Varies upon Ringhold, lotus, and spice

Current Relations

The Firstborn: The Elven opinion of the Firstborn is not very favorable, with opinions varying from house to house. Only Duke Zazen seems able to consider working with the One King to thwart the Devout, but this is only due to the dread visions of the future he has had and how their very survival necessitates their working together.

Many of the supporters of Zazen defer to his judgment though they may disagree with it personally. The recent attacks of the Stygian however are making Zazen's case for unity difficult, the other houses believing the Stygian Swarm to be released by the One King expressly to destroy them. This is an opinion loudly proclaimed by Duke Valimyr and a growing area of contention amongst the houses. When Zazen sided with the One King, he created a vindictive enemy in the Obsidian House.

The Jade House and the House of Helios both would prefer the Firstborn removed from the world, but their attentions are focused in other directions by the Stygian and the Devout.

The Sons of Kronos: Seemingly content to stay in their isolated realms, the Elves in general do not interact with the Untamed much and when they do, it is usually unpleasant. Tensions have gotten worse since the fall of the Crystal Caves to the Elves and the Sons of Kronos have a growing resentment for the Elves.

The Dwarves: The former allies of the Triad are in no position to offer help to the Elves, so focused are their attentions inwards. While other houses have slowly stopped trading with them, Duke Zazen has maintained an open dialogue with the Dwarven High Council and routinely has ambassadors carrying messages to the Dwarves. It is Zazen's hope that the Dwarves can rally to a common cause again and join together with the Elves against their mutual enemies. Zazen had been trying to placate the Dwarven High Council by demanding Valimyr release the Dwarven slaves he currently exploits, but these negotiations ended when he took up arms against Valimyr in favor of the hated One King.

Duke Heliac had very favorable relations with the Wolf and Blood Bone Clans and presents the most promising inroad currently available to Zazen's unity agenda. The other houses do not interact with the Dwarves for numerous other reasons.

The Blackbloods: While fragmentation and conflict have weakened the other members of the Triad, the Blackbloods have been consolidating and growing strong. The Elven Court has many fundamental disagreements with the Blood Throne all stemming from views and beliefs. Relations would probably be much worse were it not for the many herbs and minerals the Blackblood Alchemical Guilds garner from Elven trade. This business alone has kept an uneasy peace between the nations, at least for now.

The secession of the Swamp Goblins is currently being blamed on the interference of the Jade House, without whose support the Swamp Goblins could never have withstood Nizar's army, let alone formulated the schemes they had.

The Stygian: The Stygian are simply a scourge upon the face of Chronopia, a blight that there can be no reasoning with. Information gleaned from the captured Tablet of Destiny has shown Duke Zazen that the only way to deal with the Stygian is to exterminate them to the last, a plan he will need a united front to achieve. If his information is correct, the Stygian are but the first wave of an ancient threat that will return to punish the warm-blooded races of Chronopia.

The Devout: The Devout are repellent and the Elven Dukes can trace back most of the catastrophes of their race and the Dwarven race to the Devout's Dark Master. This Lord of Pain the Devout serve is an abhorrent evil long ago banished from the world. The current army that marches to his banner is but the latest weapon he has fashioned to return himself to this plane and end his exile. Duke Zazen is concerned that the timing and execution of this latest effort may just be the one that wins his freedom, a freedom that will spell the end of all living things.

The Swamp Goblins: Since the rise of the Jade House, all Elven eyes have trained their attention to the Fallen Lands and the lucrative lotus trade there. Despite numerous attempts to cajole and steal the Yellow Lotus, the other Houses have not been able to entreat with the Swamp Goblins as successfully as the Jade House.

Currently the other houses view the Swamp Goblins as little more than savages, too long deprived of the luxury of civilization and hence unworthy of attention. Duke Valimyr, in spite of repeated sanctions by the other houses, has mounted repeated expeditions into the Fallen Lands to acquire the elusive plants. On all these occasions, the Duke was confronted not only by crudely armed Swamp Goblins, but goblins defended by the Jade House.

The Elven Lands of the Inner Sea

Most of the Elven cities are described as spiral wonders that climb high into the sky. The cities are built as a series of conical structures, the largest of these being situated in the center containing the royal palace of the ruling Duke. Each structure has a spiral road running to its peak with a myriad of tapering sky bridges connecting them to others. Towers shoot out at a variety of angles creating the illusion that the city has been formed naturally.

Buildings line the streets with the most prestigious houses situated near the top of the city. Sky barge loading platforms and the towers of the Lotus-Eaters are amongst the highest pinnacles in the city. Splendid gardens lie in between the colossal towers and two concentric circular walls surround the entire city. While symbols of the various houses dot the Elven skyline the higher reaches are decorated with only those standards of the ruling house.

Of the notable Elven wonders, the Garden Island of Yynn is one of the most breathtaking. Yynn is a relatively small island surrounded on all sides by steep mountains that prevent access to the central areas by any land force. Contained within the protective confines of these giant ice peaks is the fabled Garden of Yynn. The island is lush with thick and exotic vegetation. The beloved Lotus flower grows profusely here, particularly the blue and silver varieties.

The Lotus Flower is central to all Elvish magic. This makes the House of the Crystal Lotus very powerful as they control the largest supply of the best flowers in the lands. Other Houses have their own gardens to be sure, but nothing to rival the scale or quality of Yynn. The Palace is situated in the center of the island not far from the great processing towers of the Lotus-Keepers and is used as the administrative hub for the distribution of the flowers to the Elven peoples. Huge loading platforms for the sky barges are located on the central tower where their precious cargo is loaded for travel to the mainland.



The mountains surrounding the island are peppered with sentinel towers, which protect the gardens against attack should a determined force try to assail the realm by air. Stationed at the Palace as well as in the surrounding sentinel towers are units drawn from the Lotus Guard.

Elymrir is the crystal jewel in the Lotus Empire. It is a magnificent spiral city built of marble and quartz; its gleaming towers stretch to the sky, shimmering with opalescence. A vast crystalline causeway connects the three major islands that make up the capital city of the House of the Crystal Lotus. The higher levels of the city are shrouded in mist and are set amongst white mountainous peaks, which are permanently wrapped in ice and snow. Its Duke, Zazen, is one of the few people still living who recall the days before the Firstborn and the First wars with the One King. His ancient frame is kept alive by an almost continuous infusion of various lotus plants as he watches over the ministrations of his magnificent city.

Helio is the seat of Duke Heliac's power. It is a vast island spiral city on a horseshoe shaped lake inset in the coast. A breathtaking array of magnificent waterfalls acts as a backdrop to the city. When the sun is at its height, its rays make the water golden, giving the feel that the whole city is ablaze with energy. Heliac has a strong connection to the city, with his early fame coming from leading the Elven forces in its defense. Since then, Heliac has constructed vast fortifications to help in the event of another attack. The island also houses a separate circular military harbor set in the cliff faces behind the waterfalls.

Duke Valimyr of the Obsidian Serpent has his base at Baal-Hazor. Baal-Hazor is a dark spiral city built from black granite and polished obsidian. Its very appearance is sinister and foreboding, which directly mirrors the character of the Rogue Duke. This Neolithic spiral city is the most recently built of all Elven cities and is built upon great death. Beneath it is the remnants of the Ringhold of the Dragon Clan Dwarves. Wiped out by Valimyr and his Obsidian warriors, rumors suggest that some still fight in the deepest pits of the Hold while a few have even sworn allegiance to the Duke and now fight alongside him. The city itself can be seen for miles around and some say it resembles some dark and brooding bird of prey perched on the corpse of the Dragon Clan Hold.

Khal Adrien originally began as a fortified outpost over a thousand years ago. Protected on one side by the formidable Palisades Mountains and on the other by the sheer cliffs of the Fallen Lands, Khal Adrien was the perfect staging area for Elven assaults into the eastern Blackblood Empire. The disposition of the city would change when the Elves here discovered the Yellow Lotus, a new variety of lotus never seen before. When it became apparent that the Swamp Goblins alone knew the secrets of their cultivation, the city entered into formal negotiations with the Goblins and a mutually beneficial alliance has occurred ever since.

Unlike the other varieties of lotus, Yellow Lotus is both the most addictive and the only one that can be ingested by a common elf, not just the elitist Lotus Eaters. Today Duke Ortheus leads the Jade

Elves in their quest to perfect the rare Yellow Lotus and it is his barges alone that carry this potent flower to the other Elven lands.

The Kingdom of the Firstborn

Capital: Chronopia (168,000)

Population: Human (3.1m)

Race (s): Human

Resources: lumber, foodstuffs, fish, clay, gold

Current Relations

The Sons of Kronos: Though it seems difficult to believe, the Sons of Kronos share the same ancestry as the Firstborn. Indeed they are both Firstborn. The One King himself united the tribes of the Untamed, but when Kronos A'Kallach refused to acknowledge his kingship then the paths of the Firstborn and the Untamed went their different ways. Those tribes that followed the One King claimed the title of Firstborn for their own and went on to build the great kingdom that the world of Chronopia hates and fears, even to this day. The tribes of the Untamed however, remained true to their past and to the worship of the Earth Goddess' cycle of life, death and rebirth. But still there remains a strong sense of kinship between these two great peoples.

Their shared history has not been an easy one but friction and conflicts have always fallen short of all out war. Even now the hearts of the Untamed are torn between respect for the One King, who was blood brother to Kronos himself, and condemnation for the disdain he shows for the ancient customs. The Firstborn have no such division in their loyalty to the One King. They have great respect for the Sons of Kronos, but for them the history of the Firstborn began with the birth of the One King. They are content to leave the Wildlands of the Untamed to the Sons of Kronos, knowing they could not have a more dependable wall of flesh and steel at their backs. The Firstborn hate the Shadow Tribe however, and consider them to be no better than the Devout they have joined.

The Elves: The Firstborn still feel great anger and resentment towards the Elves who for so many years abused and tortured their people. While the One King has made it clear to point out that not all Elves are guilty of the atrocities committed against the Firstborn, even he understands the depths of their rage. The recent campaigns in the north were orchestrated to help his people understand the importance of their working together. By allowing the Obsidian Serpents the opportunity to attack him, it both forced Zazen to take his side against his own people and demonstrated to the Firstborn the wisdom of the One King's plans.

While most of the Firstborn still harbor a deep hatred of the Elves, they have come to accept that not all Elves are as unspeakable as the Obsidian Serpents, a calculated move the One King will be using in his future endeavors. The Chronomancers have already begun telling of the homage Duke Zazen has paid the One King in the battle at the Wall of Ages in taking up arms against one of his own to defend the One King.

The Dwarves: Much like the Elves, the Dwarves are painted with the same wide brush strokes of hatred and rage, little discerning the differences between Clans. As far as the Firstborn are concerned, the Dwarves are just as evil as the Elves and they wish them nothing but pain. To date, the One King has made no forays onto their lands to challenge them, though they did seek to impede the One King's progress in the Land of Two Rivers. For this affront and those of the past the Firstborn wish the Dwarves dead.

The Stygian: The secrets of time and the power to shape it are guarded by the Stygian. In dark dreams the One King had learned of this and it was then, seeing this knowledge allowing him to vanquish the Devout that the One King mounted his great desert campaign and entered the Forbidden Dunes where he would ultimately wake the Stygian menace. While the Stygian are a formidable threat, the One King believes that they will allow him to do today what he failed to do centuries before; to claim lordship over the other races.

The Devout: There are none more hated than the Devout. In spite of the torture the Firstborn endured during their years of captivity, there are none that embody all the qualities that the Firstborn hate as much as the Devout. Traitors, sadists and monsters, the Devout are openly attacked whenever they are encountered, and there are none more sought after in all the Firstborn Kingdom than the four Dark Prophets whose moment of weakness and betrayal has led to this present suffering and shame.

The Swamp Goblins: The Firstborn have no direct interaction with the Swamp Goblins of the Fallen Lands. Secretly sending aid to the Jade House, the One King has been fermenting the Swamp Goblin secession for years. By separating the Fallen lands from the Empire, the One King could seriously impede the abilities of the Orc Alchemical Guilds, Guilds who pose a vast threat to later plans the One King has.

The One King has further dispatched an emissary to the Jade House to offer the Swamp Goblins aid against the poison threatening their home, a poison they believe caused by the Devout. This secret activity was done to accomplish two things, to cement another Elven Alliance with the Firstborn and to weaken the Blood Thrones position by aiding the Swamp Goblin secession. Knowing Nizar cannot acknowledge this action for fear of losing face, the One King is reasonably sure this course will yield the desired effects he requires.

The Blackbloods: While the Blackbloods took few slaves compared to the other races, they are treated as equals in the conspiracy to extinct the Firstborn. Most of the kingdom views the Blackbloods as savages and cretins, devoid of honor and kindness. While partially correct, the Blackbloods are hardly savages and fools. Regardless of this, the Firstborn would love to see them all roasting on great spits, their cooked entrails being fed to the dogs and the Dwarves.

The Kingdom

Chronopia is one of the greatest cities of the world. Even the Elves look at its proud towers and wide, paved streets with envious eyes. The fortifications of Chronopia reflect the fear of enslavement that is in the heart of every Firstborn citizen. Huge broad battlements cross the city like an iron grid. Vast gateways link the various quarters of the city together. Huge fortified wharves, bristling with armaments, jut out into the harbor. Beyond these defenses, a double wall of granite and steel surrounds the city.

Upon its completion, the One King divided the land into seven princedoms, each with its own warrior-prince in control. In each of these domains, he constructed one of his legendary Eternal Towers, gigantic tapering columns with the symbol of the One King fixed on their highest battlements.

The first, and by far the largest of these towers is in the heart of the capital and the One King spends as much time in its mysterious walls as he does in the royal palace. It is inside the towers that the Chronomancers learn and practice their art and it is here that seekers of wisdom try to decipher ancient texts and unravel the secrets of creation itself.

All the cities of the Firstborn are heavily fortified with the resolute Iron Guard watching over every aspect of Firstborn life. Since the Great Treachery, they have been joined by the Judges who seek out Devout sympathizers and put them to the axe. While many fear the Judges, they are also viewed as a necessary evil and most prefer them to the possibility of the Devout infiltrating their society. The fortifications of Chronopia reflect the fear of enslavement that is at the heart of every Firstborn citizen. Huge broad battlements cross the city in an iron grid pattern. Vast gateways link the various quarters of the city together. Huge fortified wharves jut out into the harbor bristling with armaments. The city is also surrounded in a double wall curtain of granite and steel.

All the cities in the Firstborn kingdom have had a troubled history but none more so than Aregath, on the borders of Dwarven and Elven lands. All the three races have laid claim to it at some time but it has

been under Firstborn control for the past several decades. Aregath is one of the darker kingdoms and still looked down on by the Untamed who remember the day, centuries before, when the Firstborn therein refused to take up arms against their Elven Dukes when they attacked the city. The Eternal Tower is also the home to one of the toughest Judges in the kingdom, sent there especially by the One King to guard against the influence of the Devout which he feels is stronger in that mountainous and shadowy part of the world than anywhere else. The new walls and towers the Firstborn have constructed there should help them maintain control of this great city for many years to come. To the north, the Sons of Kronos live nomadic and barbaric lives centered on the city of Nuria.



These ancient halls of the Untamed have been strengthened by the One King with the construction of an Eternal Tower and the arrival of Chronomancers to help them fight off the attacking Devout horde.

The Harsh North

Capital: Varies upon Tribe

Population: 2.8m

Race (s): Human (2.4m), Brikier (@300,000), Gnarllach (unknown)

Resources: Varies upon Ringhold, furs.

Current Relations

The Firstborn: The Tribe of the Dawn is currently allied closely with the One King and are considered comrades in arms by the Firstborn. Relations between the two are very genial and openly supportive. The Tribe of the Goddess has only recently forgiven the One King for spurning its Queen and relations between the two are improving as they unite against the Devout and the Stygian. Were the Queen to realize that the One King was responsible for unleashing the reptilian menace that is the Stygian, relations could very well cool off again. By contrast, the Shadow Tribe hates the One King and all the Firstborn that serve him. Given any opportunity they would see the kingdom of the Firstborn razed to the ground, their treasures plundered and their dead defiled.

The Blackbloods: Until recently the Untamed have not had many conflicts with the Blackbloods who seemed content to leave them to their isolated realm. This has changed when the former Satrap of the Northern Province was removed from his long-held post and replaced with a more aggressive ruler. Clashes in the mountain passes of the north are becoming more frequent and both the Tribes of the Mother and the Dawn are reporting escalating aggression from the Ogre leader.

Survivors from small border clans have reported being attacked by Blackblood raiding parties. The motives for these attacks are at present unknown, and because the Untamed are focused on the

problems with the Devout and Stygians, they have not been able to muster the resources to fully deal with this new problem. While the Tribe of the Dawn is petitioning the One King for direction, Moriath has issued an edict that Blackbloods trespassing on the soil of the Mother's sacred land be executed without mercy or parlay.

The Elves: The Elves are meddlesome and intrusive, elitists and without honor. While the Sons of Kronos have always shunned the Elves, their constant encroachment into their lands has brought the problem to a new level. Was it not for the menace of the Devout and the Stygian, there would probably be an all out war between the Elves and the Untamed.

When the Elves ousted the Untamed from the Crystal Caves, the two Tribes declared a Pao' Dhan, or Blood Feud against them and all their allies. According to the tenants of a Pao' Dahn, the warriors of either tribe will kill any Elf that crosses their path. To date, no Elven led expeditionary force has survived more than two days travel into the Wildlands beyond the Caves, some three hundred and forty eight Elven warriors disappearing into the deep forests never to be seen again.

Only the Shadow Tribe do not view this Elven aggression with the same outrage, and delegations from the Shadow Tribe have been seen visiting the Crystal Caves often, a situation that strains their relations with the other Tribes even further.

The Dwarves: The Untamed do not know the Dwarves, a race that has little interest in their remote realm. What little they know has been passed down to them from the days of the Triad. When Moriath's tribe received a visit from a Dwarven emissary from the High Council, the Untamed Queen felt that the Earth Mother had sent her a sign, a promise that the wars begun by the other races would not intrude upon them further.

The Tribe of the Dawn however still harbors an ancient grudge against the Dwarves for their conspiracy against the One King. Their diminutive race is treated with hostile emotions, even today. The Vulture Clan is infamous for their brutal treatment of the Firstborn and the Tribe of the Dawn waits their turn to suffer for their cruelty.

The Stygian: Hated as much as the Devout, the Stygian are a new threat to the Untamed, a threat that has cost them one of their most sacred shrines. While Moriath hates the Stygian swarm, she has come to view them as a challenge sent by the Goddess to strengthen their resolve during the upcoming conflicts. The Tribe's ability to defend the sacred lands of the Earth Goddess must become her primary concern and Moriath is carefully plotting their removal. The cycle of life, death and rebirth will be played out in the Wildlands and the Sons of Kronos will rise to the challenge. That the Stygian must be destroyed is the one thing that all three Tribes agree upon.

The Devout: The Devout are a source of great shame to the Untamed. None deny the betrayal they feel as the Prophets pledged their souls to the Dark Devourer and unleashed upon the world a malignant plague that is slowly consuming everything it touches. The corruption of the Shadow Tribe and the resulting weakening of the Sons of Kronos because of it make the severity of this cancerous taint more noticeable. The untainted Tribes of the Untamed will not rest until both the Shadow Tribe and its corrupted masters are banished from the lands of the Earth Mother.

The Swamp Goblins: The distant Swamp Goblins are considered as



Blackbloods to the Untamed, who make no distinction about their secession from the Empire. They have yet to interact with the Swamp Goblins in any way.

The Deep North

The Sons of Kronos make their homes in the wilderness and the closest things they have to cities are their great High Fortresses. These megalithic structures of dark granite stand on the summit of mountains like a gesture of defiance to the Sky God. They are not visited by unfaithful. Most travelers who brave the hard winds and biting cold trade in friendly villages made of wood and nestled within the confines of the deep wood.

Locked in the inner sanctum of these cities are the Cruachs. Golden idols fashioned in the image of the Earth

Goddess. They are said to be forged by the Fathers of Men and are held in awe by all the Sons of Kronos. One of their greatest treasures, Cruachs are perhaps the most well protected items in the realms. Some even suggest that the High Fortresses are built solely to protect the Cruachs from the unfaithful.

The Land of Two Rivers

Capital: Unknown

Population: unknown

Race (s): Stygian

Resources: Gems, silver, marble, cassia.

Current Relations

Unlike the other races and nations of Chronopia, the Stygian view them all as chattel, fit only as offerings to their great Mistress. If there is any underlying scheme or plan of attack beyond simply overwhelming their enemies, no one has yet to discern it. The Stygian have demonstrated the ability to breed creatures, which will better serve their needs in the different realms of their enemies. Tree Devils and Ophidians are just such intentionally bred aberrations. A more recent abomination, the Tenebrous Crawler forces its way through rocky earth with ease allowing the Stygian Swarms to follow in the tunnel it creates. How they accomplish what evolution takes thousands of years to achieve remains, like so much about the Stygians, a mystery.

The Deep Desert

The Land of Two Rivers, where it all began, is a cruel and merciless place. During the day the sun burns and scorches the land, leaving it parched and broken. At night, even the finest armor offers little protection from the icy winds that scour the desert floor, freezing all living things to the bone. In the failing light of dusk, the crimson sky turns the desert sand the color of burnt umber. No race has laid claim to the interior of this accursed place as a general sense of foreboding and doom accompany any foray into this realm. Even the industrious Dwarves stopped their building on the outer circle of the desert, remembering a subconscious ancestral warning to stay out of this land.

Examination of the historical records of the various races all point to references about this grim and cursed place, references littered with warnings of horrific suffering and cataclysmic effect. Regardless of the particulars that are given to interpretation, all the cultures of Chronopia are clear about one aspect of this place; the desert was formed by the spilling of blood; so much blood that races disappeared in its spilling and the Savannah of Antol became a desert. The time of this myth dates back eons ago, during an era when the Stygian ruled the world and the young races were

butchered on their altars in veneration of the rapacious Goddess, the Great She Serpent, the Mother of all Gods- Tiamat.

As time marched on and the world forgot its bloody past, two great rivers slowly split this sun-baked land, rivers that are today called the Sippar or the River of Time, and the Psamtikj meaning the River of Blood. They both rise from deep in the south and flow north meandering across the central desert to finally spill out over the Great Delta and into the Inner Sea. Between these rivers is a vast, arid and inhospitable tract of land, now referred to as the Plain of Bones.

The main body of the desert is surrounded in the east by high mesas. These pepper the land in ever-increasing size towards the Lands of the Flame where they eventually merge with the high Black Plateaus of the eastern region. To the south the desert rises towards the Thunder Mountains, where lies the Lake of Souls, the source for the Sippar. To the west of this are the Vermilion Peaks, overlooking the Chasms of the Sea God. These ridged mountains hold the source to the River of Blood. Westwards the desert ends abruptly in the Black Plateaus of the Vulture Clan Dwarves. The coastal areas in the north are rich with dense vegetation and in some areas of the Great Delta there are enormous reed swamps as yet unexplored. However, these vivid areas give way quickly to the arid deserts beyond, which are broken only occasionally by an oasis or fortified outpost.

Found protruding from the suffocating sands of the inner desert are the great Chaos Tombs of the Stygian, colossal megaliths of an age long passed and equally forgotten. They appear as pyramids of shimmering stone, piercing the sky as if sacrificing the very heavens themselves to their saurian Goddess. These pyramids are steep-sided with shallow steps allowing access to the distant summits, above while obelisk-like structures are often found surrounding their base like stoic sentries awaiting an order to arise.

These tombs, located deep in the southern desert are wrought from a curious, pristine, milky-white stone unknown to the current races of the world and mighty edifice-like portals emerge from the foot of the pyramids at irregular intervals around the base. Flanking each entranceway are great statues of mighty demons, Lord Guardians to the She-Serpent. There are also dozens of enormous bas-relief facades depicting scenes from the Stygian past lining these gaping portals.

The internal construction of the pyramids is still largely unknown. The central sacrificial altars and the rare chambers housing the Tablets of Destiny have been well documented by the Firstborn; however, the lower crypts and breeding chamber remain the stuff of maze-haunted nightmare.

Many of these pyramids have now been found in the Land of Two Rivers, the most well known are at Ipkur-Kish and Hathor, but others exist often being discovered by the unwary city that finds itself in the path of its Stygian denizens. Over the last several cycles, sweeping hordes of Stygian have appeared all over the land as if the coils of the mighty She Serpent were stretching out and tightening the earth in its crushing grip.

The Fallen Land

Capital: unknown, reputed to be called the Tree of Life

Population: 321,000

Race (s): Swamp Goblins

Resources: Teak, Yellow Lotus, Herbs, Kylite Resin.

Current Relations

The Firstborn: The Swamp Goblins have no present interaction with the Firstborn, their remote lands too distant to be involved in the One King's machinations. Their only knowledge of the Firstborn comes from the visions garnered by their Shaman during their communal meditations in the Spirit World. In these visions the image of the One King has been revealed when trying to

understand the threat of the Stygian, a conundrum the Shaman are trying to understand.

The Sons of Kronos: The tribes of the Fallen Lands do not know the Untamed.

The Elves: For all a Swamp Goblins limitations, they are fairly good judges of character. With the exception of the Jade House of Elves, the rest of that race has no respect for the Fallen Lands, its traditions, the tribes' customs or their dominion. The Swamp Goblins have repelled numerous incursions into their lands by Elven Houses covetous of their Yellow Lotus. While they are hostile to the other Houses, they truly hate the Obsidian House of Elves, the House that was responsible for the abduction, torture and death of two Swamp Goblin Shaman. This action has set in motion a pact of cooperation that exists between the tribes whenever the Obsidian House enters the Fallen Lands. Only the Elves of the Jade House are treated with respect and acceptance, and this is predominately because the Jade House has demonstrated an affinity with the land and a respect for the will of the jungle.

The Dwarves: Dwarven incursions into the Fallen Lands are very rare and the Children of the Gourd seem to view them as they do any intruder, as fertilizer.

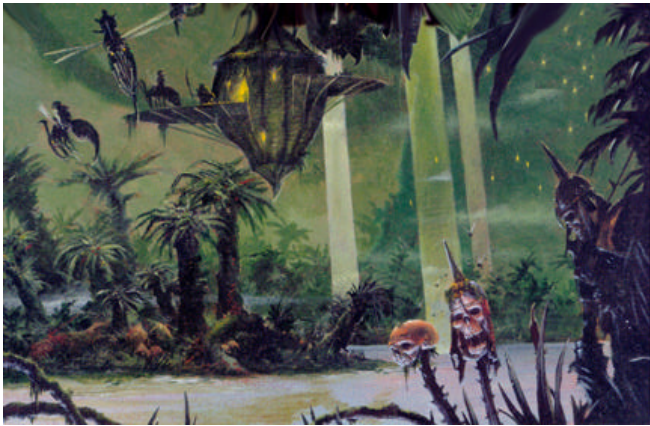
The Stygian: Coming out of an area of the Fallen Lands long considered forbidden to enter, the Stygian are the devourers of Swamp Goblin myth. Unlike the other races, the Stygian do not seem to want to change the Land, so the Swamp Goblins view them as they do any predator and defend themselves against their aggressions. Though they are feared for where they come from, they are not the Devout.

The Devout: The evil of the Devout is something previously unknown to the Swamp Goblins, a corrupting presence that epitomizes the stain of all civilization upon the Fallen Lands. The raising of the dead and the other atrocities of the Devout have struck the Swamp Goblins at the core of their beliefs and for the first time they have felt fear, and they do not like it.

The Blackbloods: Once part of the Blackblood Empire, if only peripherally, the Swamp Goblins view their civilized cousins with distrust and suspicion, and more recently with righteous anger. The relationship deteriorated when the Emperor returned their ambassador to the Blackblood Court to them as a decapitated head and their sacred icon, the Sarukh'ti Nishtar held hostage. The Sarukh'ti Nishtar is a giant emerald fashioned in the shape of the gourds of the Fallen Lands and is one of the Swamp Goblins most cherished relics.

With tensions at an all time high and the Swamp Goblins guarding their borders with a ferocious zeal, the Alchemical Guilds of the Empire are looking at a shortage of many of their most powerful herbs and minerals. At the currently escalating rate of herbal consumption, the Guilds are looking at substantial distillation





problems within six moons. Almost desperate, the Orc Alchemists have been guilty of frequently violating the Swamp Goblin's lands in a quest for their coveted ingredients, a situation that has left the Swamp Goblins with a powerful taste for Orc blood.

The only Blackbloods the Swamp Goblins tolerated were the Goblins of Terakan, though they do not maintain communications with them since the failed coup.

Into the Fallen Lands

Swamp Goblin society is a difficult thing to fathom. The values they place on life is often so alien that they defy understanding by the other races. Life in the Fallen Land revolves around two things; the Gourd Cities and the Yellow Lotus. The Gourd Cities are the vast trees in which the strongest tribes of Swamp Goblins make their homes. These broad trees tower for more than a thousand feet over the jungle and can accommodate many thousands of Goblins. Here,

amid the sanctuary of the trees, the Swamp Goblins are able to command a significant advantage over the ground moving creatures and intruders that may enter their domain.

There are only five Gourd Cities known to the outside world but others surely exist in the depths of the jungle. The name 'Gourd City' is derived from the fruiting bodies that are produced by the huge trees. These take the form of enormous pods, hanging from the branches of the tree like great lanterns, their latter maturation causing them to emit a steady luminescence. They are known as gourds and are hollowed out by the Swamp Goblins and used as dwellings, barracks and other types of buildings. As gourd husks are incredibly resistant to weathering and fire, they make for perfect homes and armaments, the latter being a task the Swamp Goblins are only just learning to exploit.

There are hundreds of Swamp Goblin tribes in the Fallen Land and they live in a constant flux of sporadic wars and shifting territory. The strongest tribes fight for control of the Gourd Cities. The battles for the Gourd Cities are swift and savage and rarely last longer than a day or two. In all the fighting that occurs between tribes, the gourd tree is never harmed. The warring tribes fight around the tree until one emerges victorious and then the fighting stops. The defeated tribe immediately departs the Gourd City leaving it in the hands of the victors. Despite its savagery, the Swamp Goblins have perhaps the most civilized method of warfare of all the other races; the important point being remembered is that the tending of the tree is not to be interrupted.

Highly territorial, any intruder into this deadly swamp will either meet his death at the hands of the swamp or at the poisoned stings of the Children of the Gourd.

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