

FICTIONAL REALITY

Issue 13

September 2003

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Hello, and welcome to the lucky thirteenth issue of *Fictional Reality*. Okay, since we started with issue 0, this is actually the fourteenth issue, but being this close to October, we'll go with Lucky Thirteen! And, what an issue it is - not only do we have our usual collection of game, miniature, and RPG supplement reviews, but we've also got a few special articles.

The first these special articles is one for which a lot of people have been asking. Here at *FR*, we have often published articles and battle reports for Rackham's **Confrontation**. This time we're publishing a complete example of play. The **Confrontation** game mechanics are vastly different from most other miniature games and this causes quite a bit of confusion. We hope that this article helps new players (and maybe old hands) understand the game a little bit better.

Hot off the presses from Excelsior, we've got the *Ultimate Warzone Primer* - so you can get ready to take your Megacorp troops out to face the forces of the Dark Apostles. Me? My Brotherhood army is ready to see some action again after an extended R&R. As Gunny R. Lee Ermy says, "Oo-rah!"

The **d20 Modern** RPG brought orcs to New York in a way we've not seen before. So, what to do for miniatures? Where can you find a roller-blading gnoll? We've got the answer in a little article on figures for d20 modern. [Ok, maybe not a roller-blading gnoll. Mark]

Before you read any further, go find a deck of cards - because you'll need 'em. No, not collectable cards or even oil change discount cards, I mean playing cards - you know, the ones with spades, hearts, diamonds, and clubs. You'll need 'em for two of our featured articles. First off we have part one of an adventure for Pinnacle's **Savage Worlds** RPG. *Dangerous Dealings and Marvelous Maidens* is an adventure in the style of the 1930's movie serials - that borrows heavily from both Flash Gordon and Sam Spade.

The other featured article is a battle report for Reaper's new fantasy miniatures skirmish game **Warlord**. Mark and I played in a 3-way game of Warlord with Ed Pugh and Anne Foerster of Reaper. This is a brand new game for Reaper - and we had the opportunity to play on the table Reaper used for the pictures in the rule book. Who won? Was it the Reaper home team or the visitors from *FR*? Read the BatRep to find out!

Now, I bet your wondering what a deck of playing cards has to do with **Savage Worlds** and **Warlord**? Well, both systems use decks of cards to determine who moves when during the round. These games didn't invent this mechanic, heck it's as old as miniature games themselves. I wouldn't be surprised if H.G. Wells used it in his **Little Wars** book waaaay back when. Personally, I like the mechanic. It's much better than rolling a die - you get randomness without the you-go-I-go monotony of other systems.

I won't take up any more of your time - I'm sure you're anxious to see what all we've crammed into this collection of bits and bytes. Take a good look at what we've brought you - and then take a moment to let us know what you liked and what you didn't like. We take that kind of input and use it to make a better magazine.

And remember, while you're reading this magazine, those of us here in the *FR* cloister are already hard at work on the December issue. I won't say what we have in store for issue 14 - you'll just have to look at the previews page on the Fictional Reality web site.

So, until next time, have a safe and happy Fall - and try to get in a few games between now and December . 8)

Michael Tisdell

In this article I'll be talking about and showing you my picks for the most usable miniatures in a d20 Modern game. None of them are Wizards of the Coast figures as they do not produce a line of miniatures for that game. I do hope that this changes in the future though. Ok, so without further ado we'll get started with the least, in my opinion, usable of the most usable figures. Ok, maybe I need to clarify that last statement a bit. I think that all of the figures presented in this article are perfectly acceptable for use in a d20 Modern game, but this will be sort of a countdown to what I consider the most usable line of figures for that game. Alrighty then, off we go...

Games Workshop

To keep from having the GW-police come and beat me about the head and shoulders (and to make sure that we're not violating any of their rules concerning any of their images) you'll have to check out www.games-workshop.com for pics of any of the figs in this article.

Necromunda – My personal picks for most usable figures in d20 Modern would be either the Van Saar (all of them), which would work marvelously for a covert spy force or just a kick-ass bunch of mercenaries and the chicks from the House Escher range. The weapons are going to seem a bit large when compared to many other figure lines but I'm really ok with this. The rest of the Necromunda range could probably find a home in your d20 Modern game, especially if you decide to screw with them and drop them into a post-apocalyptic setting.

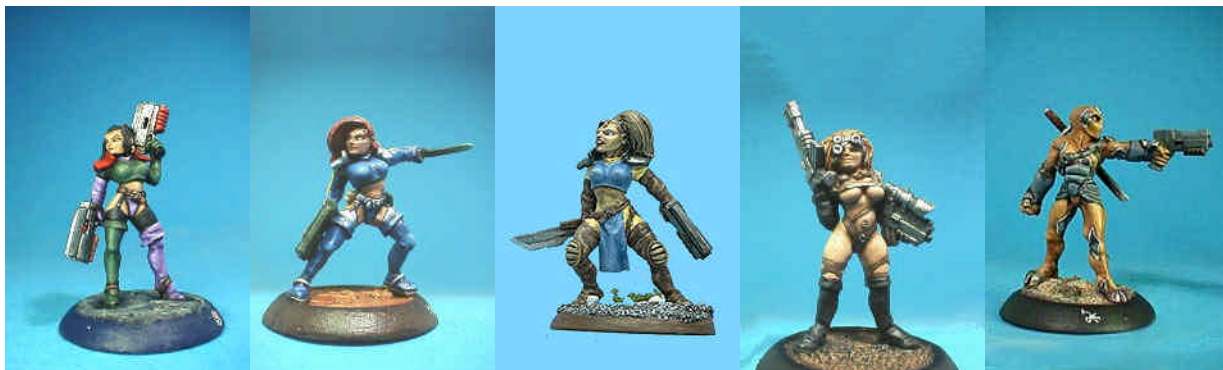
Warhammer 40K – Some of the Imperial Guard figures would do well as single characters or as a police/security force and there are figures from the Tyranid range that would scare the bejeezus out of a party of PC's if they ran into them in some military installation that was messing around with genetics.

Excalibur Miniaturen

Excalibur has a line of Sci-Fi miniatures with many single figures that would be very usable in d20 Modern as player-characters. Below you can see a selection of five and yes, four of them are females of the scantily clad variety. You'll end up paying a couple of bucks each for these figures and they are of limited availability here in the USA but they are worth checking out.

Many of them have some kind of cybernetic augmentation so they'll also work in a slightly futuristic game or one where you've gone for a whole-hog d20 Shadowrun kind of thing using the d20 Modern rules.

As a final note, there is a section of their website that features erotic miniatures. If this is not your thing or if you're a parent please be aware of this.



All above pictures from www.excalibur-miniaturen.com

Em4

Em4 also produces fantasy and science fiction miniatures, but has a line of pre-painted figures that will definitely be of interest to the d20 Modern GM that is looking for a very quick way to drop some figures on the table for a shoot-out.

The figures come 5 to a pack and the most immediately applicable ones are a police unit and a band of scummy scavenger types. Each set (seen at the top

of this column) will set you back about \$17.50 USD and comes painted to a very respectable level. They are certainly worthy of being used in a game. If you really want to you could strip them and repaint them yourself though.

They also produce standard unpainted figures that are worth checking out.



Above pictures from www.em4miniatures.com

I-Kore

Several ranges from the Void 1.1 game would make suitable characters or enemies in d20 Modern. The single best figures from this game is probably the VASA Militia, below. For around \$8 - \$9 you get packs of three males or females (there is also a 7-figure pack), unpainted, that would take care of a whole party of player characters perfectly.



Regular Viridian Marines (below) could be used as enemy agents or military type characters. You can get them in packs of two for around \$5 USD or a box of five for twelve dollars. Not bad at all.



On the vehicle end of things you'll want to at least take a look at the

Junker jeep that we reviewed in the previous issue of Fictional Reality.

It's a multi-piece vehicle that is really worth every penny of the \$17.50 USD that you'll end up paying for it. It comes with a driver and gunner and while it's most suitable in a post-apocalyptic setting I would have no problem at all using

it as part of a regular game in the hopes of making my players hate life just a little bit more. The pictures in this section were taken from www.I-Kore.com

Excelsior Entertainment

Ultimate Warzone

There are so many figures in the Warzone range and there are literally dozens of them that would be suitable in one fashion or another in a d20 Modern game. Here are just a few, actually a bunch...

Capitol: Free Marines are certainly usable as military troops, as are the Light and Heavy Infantry, but they'll be a bit out of place as player characters most of the time. At \$9.95 for a blister of 4 figures they come in at right around \$2.50 per figure, which is not too bad at all.



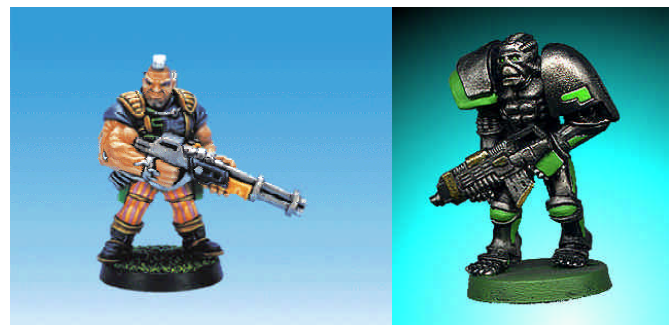
If you need a force of heavily armored jump-capable security officers the Martian Banshee Airborne Squads probably can't be beat. A blister of four figures will set you back \$12.95 and singles are \$4.95 each.



Cartel: The Cartel Agents have a pretty seamless entry into d20 Modern and at \$9.95 for the set of four figures they're right on target.



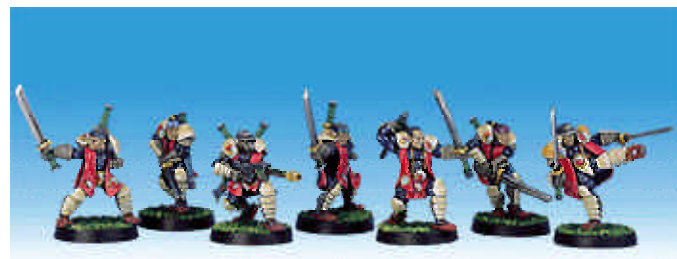
Cybertronic: The Attila units and Vince Diamond would be great for cyber-enhanced guards or shock troops, but not so great for PC's unless yours can get that big and bad. At \$4.95 for the Attila's and 3.95 for Vince they are not bad at all for a couple of bad-asses.



Imperial: My first, and really only, choice from the Imperial roster of troops are the Blood Berets. They're more in line of military troops, but are too cool to pass up. The box set of seven troops retails for \$16.95 (less than \$2.50 per figure) and is a great deal. I'm sure that you can find a way to harass your PC's with a group of highly trained soldiers. Or you could run a game where the PC's are the Blood Berets.

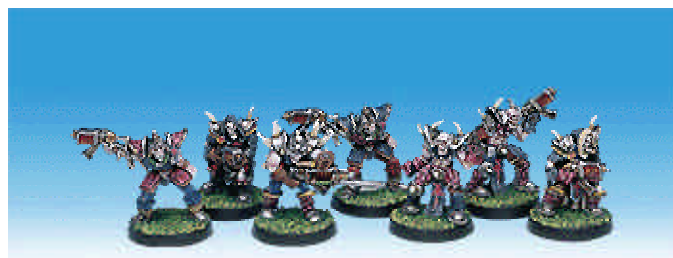


Mishima: Security troops with an oriental flair is what I'd use the Mishima Samurai and/or Ashigaru for. The Bushido Samurai would make for great kung-fu fighters, either as a PC or as enemies. At \$16.95 for a box of seven figures it's hard to go too wrong here.



Dark Legion: Need zombies with guns?

Well, grab the Undead Legionnaires box set and you'll get seven of them for \$16.95 or you can get them in packs of four figures for \$9.95. For cultists you could use troops from the Acolytes, Initiates and Sacristans to represent all sorts of human-sacrificing bad-guys. Also, if you're looking for lots of bio-mechanical monstrosities there are plenty to go around in the Dark Legion catalog pages. With the Ultimate Warzone line you'll get some figures that are usable, but in a somewhat singular sense. Most are going to fit in best as GM-run security forces or as specialty PC's.



Shadowforge Miniatures

While Shadowforge, out of Australia, has a plentiful range of figures, it's made up entirely of females. Now, I have nothing against females, but this is a limiting factor unless you're playing a Charlie's Angels kind of game or something like that. The Science Fiction and Manga sections of the catalog is where you'll find the most d20 Modern usable figures from Shadowforge.

Individual figures will set you back \$4.00 AUS (about \$2.68 USD) and a few samples can be seen below.



The Manga line of girls run about \$5.00 AUS (about \$3.24 USD) and pretty much all of them are afflicted with the big-eyes-small-mouth disease. Even with that said there are plenty that are usable as female PC's, but many of them are very scantily clad.



In the Characters section (see the top of the next page) you'll find plenty of football chicks, but also a decent number that would work just fine in d20



Modern. Again, don't expect a whole lot in the way of conservative clothes, but I didn't see any that would not pass in a PG-13 rated movie. They also do full lines of female football teams that are perfectly suited for Bloodbowl. The full lines of Shadowforge miniatures can be found at www.shadowforge.com.au

Tactical Miniatures

Reviewed in this issue of Fictional Reality are the first two sets of figures from Tactical Miniatures. Check them out to see a nice set of very reasonably priced cops and crooks. Possible future releases, be sure to read that word "possible" again, stuff like paramedics, beat cops, and bystanders would catapult them upwards several spots on my list. Check them out at www.tacticalminiatures.com

Devil Dog Design

Jeff Valent has produced a nice set of US and British military (and several opposing forces) miniatures that would do great justice to any military-based campaign of mercenaries or a full-blown soldiering game. They are all reasonably priced and I'm sure that an industrious GM can find room for soldiers on ATV's in his game. As with Tactical Miniatures there is a selection of figures reviewed in this issue of Fictional Reality and you can check out more at www.devildogdesign.com

The Assault Group

Based out of the UK The Assault Group also does modern military miniatures that are suited, like the figures from Devil Dog Design, for any military style d20 Modern game. I'd rank these two at just about even, but the sculpts that I've seen from The Assault Group are impeccable and give them the slightest edge. They are also reviewed in this issue and you can check out the rest at www.theassaultgroup.com

Bobby Jackson's Thugz

Their limited availability is certainly not a 'plus' for these guys but they are magnificent looking miniatures that will fit perfectly into a modern game in an urban setting. These guys are definitely straight outta Compton! They retail for \$9.99 USD per set of 4 figures (about \$2.50 USD) each which is not bad at all. Their politically-incorrect nature makes me like them even more. There's one of a crack-ho carrying her baby in one hand and a gun in the other. They are rather limited in nature right now, but their 'cool' factor and the fact that they are from the 'modern' era keeps them high on my list. A selection of homies can be seen below. Bust a cap!

I was going to do a list of just ten miniature lines but I ended up with eleven, just like in Spinal Tap. "But these go to eleven."

Foundry

Street Violence

The Street Violence range of figures from Foundry is a great set of figures that are all usable as part of a d20 Modern game. The sets range from SWAT teams to street punks to mobsters and pretty much everything in between. The female figures are amongst the best that you'll find anywhere. There are a couple of things to make note of, however. They are not the easiest figures to get a hold of if you're in the US. There are some online stores that stock the line though and I hope that their availability will increase soon. The figures come with molded bases as part of the model. I've mounted all of mine on plastic bases and used putty to level things out. This is a personal preference and you may be fine with them just like they are. They come 5 to a pack for \$18.00, which comes out to \$3.60 per figure. Certainly not the cheapest around, but probably the most usable and are my number 1 pick for miniatures to use in d20 Modern. I've been able to amass a sizable collection off of eBay. www.foundryfantasy.com will get you a look at all of them.



Above pictures taken from www.foundryfantasy.com



Pics of these figures were taken from www.newwavegames.com

There has been much discussion on various forums on how combat works in Rackham's Confrontation game. This article provides a detailed combat example using the rules from the Confrontation and Incantation books.

Forces

Devourer Force (117 points)

The Devourer force is composed of:

- 1 Flesh Eater (Born Killer, Possessed)
- 2 Voracious Warriors (Born Killer)

The Born Killer ability gives the Devourers an extra combat die and a 1 on a Courage test is not an automatic failure. The Possessed ability means the Flesh Eater treats the effects of wounds at one level lower - so a Serious wound gives a -1 to Attack, Defense, Shooting, and Initiative rolls rather than a -2.

Griffon Force (125 points)

The Griffon force is composed of:

- 3 Templars (Fanaticism, Bravery, War Fury)
- 1 Fusilier (Fanaticism)
- 1 Inquisitor (Fanaticism, Warrior-Mage, Fire Initiate/ Redemption) with Incandescent Chastiment [sic] spell.

The Fanaticism ability allows the Griffons to treat a 5 as a 6 when making Discipline tests - such as the Approach and Tactical rolls. It also provides a second chance of sorts on failed Courage tests. The Bravery ability means that the Templars do not automatically fail a Courage test when they roll a 1. The War Fury ability means that the Templars may go berserk in combat and gain an additional attack die but all combat dice must be put into attack. The Incandescent Chastiment spell allows the Inquisitor to roll 3 dice for damage in close combat and a triple results in a Killed Outright.

Caveat

The forces were chosen from my personal collection with an eye toward presenting certain combat situations. That being said, the forces were picked with a similar point total, with the Griffon force having a slight advantage due to the number of models, the presence of missile unit, and the presence of a Warrior Mage. Having said that, the example that follows is how it actually worked out - die rolls and all!

The Approach

Battlefield Setup

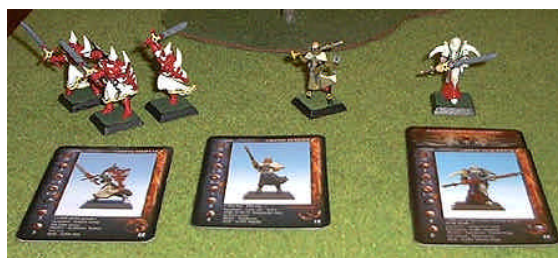
The battle was fought on a 3' x 3' table with two copses of trees to provide some cover. Movement inside a copse of trees is at half rate, but the trees copse does not block line of sight. Since there are no terrain rules in the Confrontation rulebook, so these are the rules for this combat example. The players each roll a d6 and the player with the higher score chooses his side for deployment. The Devourer player rolls a 4 and the Griffon player rolls a 2. The Devourer chooses the east side of the table; the Griffon gets the west.

Approach Roll

Next both players make the Approach Roll. Each player rolls a d6 and adds his highest Discipline characteristic. The winner of the approach roll may:

- Draw the first card for deployment
- Hold up to two cards in his hand

The Devourer's best Discipline characteristic is the 2 of the Flesh Eater. The Griffon's best Discipline characteristic is the 6 of the Inquisitor. The Inquisitor also has the Fanaticism ability, so he will treat a roll of a 5 as a 6. This means that if he rolls a 5 he adds 6 to his Discipline characteristic and has the option to roll again.



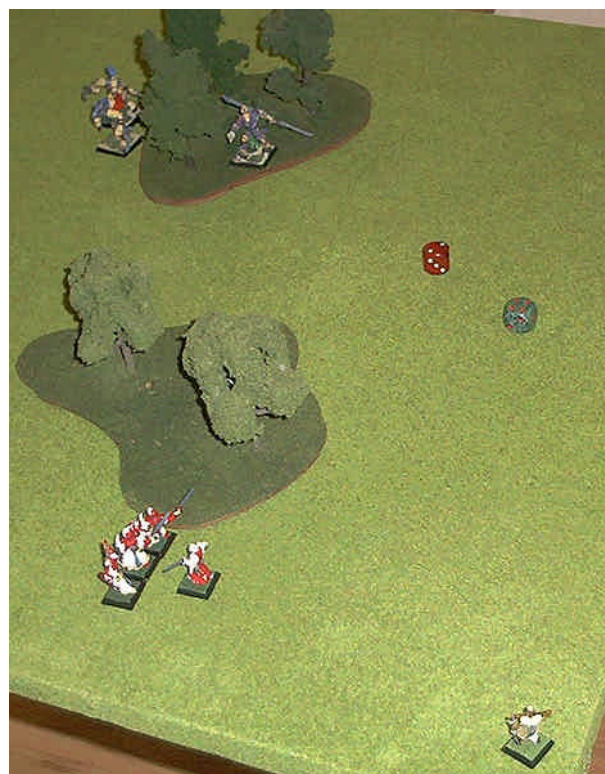
Deployment

The unit cards are shuffled together. The Griffon won the approach roll, and draws first. The draw sequence is given below the picture.

1. The Griffon draws the Inquisitor unit card and holds it in reserve.
2. The Devourer draws the Voracious Warrior card and holds it in reserve.
3. The Griffon player draws the Flesh Eater card and hands it to his opponent. The Devourer deploys the Flesh Eater in the copse of trees on the east side of the table.
4. The Devourer player draws the Fusilier card and hands it to his opponent. The Griffon player deploys the Fusilier in the open at the extreme southwest corner.
5. The Griffon player draws the last card, the Templar unit card, and holds it in reserve.
6. The Devourer now deploys the Voracious Warriors with the hand he held in reserve. The models are deployed just to the north of the copse of trees in which the Flesh Eater is deployed.
7. The Griffon player now deploys his two cards held in reserve. He places the three Templars in a line to the west of the copse of trees on his side of the board. The Inquisitor is placed behind this line.

The Devourer has deployed his forces to minimize the effectiveness of the Griffon

Fusilier. The Griffon has deployed his forces to protect his North flank, trusting the Fusilier to cover the East approach. After deployment, the Griffon places two fire gems next to the Inquisitor as his starting mana.



Model	Discipline	Roll(s)	Total
Flesh Eater	2	5	7
Inquisitor	6	6,4	16

Turn One

Tactical Roll

First, both players make the Tactical roll. This is handled in the same way as the Approach roll. Each player rolls a d6 and adds his highest Discipline characteristic. The winner of the Tactical roll may:

- Draw the first card for deployment
- Hold up to two cards in his hand
- Act first in the case of a tie in Initiative Characteristics in the Shooting Phase.
- Split combats and decide the order.

The Devourer's best Discipline characteristic is the 2 of the Flesh Eater. The Griffon's best Discipline characteristic is the 6 of the Inquisitor. The Inquisitor also has the Fanaticism ability, so he will treat a roll of a 5 as a 6. This means that if he rolls a 5 he adds 6 to his Discipline characteristic and has the option to roll again.

<i>Model</i>	<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Roll(s)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Flesh Eater	2	2	4
Inquisitor	6	2	8

The rolls are as follows:

The unit cards are shuffled together. The Griffon won the Tactical roll, and draws first.

Movement Phase

The draw sequence is given below:

1. The Griffon player draws the Templar unit card and holds it in reserve.
2. The Devourer player draws the Inquisitor and hands it to the Griffon player. The Griffon player runs the Inquisitor into the woods.
3. The Griffon player draws the Fusilier card and holds it in reserve.
4. The Devourer player draws the Flesh Eater card and holds it in reserve.
5. The Griffon player draws the last card, the Voracious Warriors, and gives it to the Devourer. The Devourer activates both the Voracious Warriors and the Flesh Eater at the same time. The Flesh Eater runs directly toward the Fusilier while the Voracious Warriors run up behind him.
6. The Griffon player activates the Fusilier from reserve. The Fusilier does not move.
7. The Griffon player activates the Templars and moves them into a line on the south side of the woods. He is careful to place them so as to not block the Fusilier's line of sight to the Flesh Eater.

Shooting Phase

Only the Fusilier and the Inquisitor may take part in this phase as one has a missile weapon and the other has a spell. Since shooting is resolved in order from the highest

Initiative characteristic to the lowest, here is the shooting phase sequence by Initiative score.

<i>Initiative</i>	<i>Model</i>	<i>Action</i>
3	Inquisitor	No action
2	Fusilier	Precision Firing
0	Fusilier	Shoots at Flesh Eater

The Fusilier chooses to take Precision Firing, or aiming. This reduces his Initiative score for shooting by 2 but gives him a +1 on his hit roll. The target difficulty for the aim number is based on the range of the shot. The distance from the Fusilier to the Flesh Eater is 35.5 cm from edge of base to edge of base. The range bands for the Fusilier's Long Rifle are:

<i>Range</i>	<i>Distance</i>	<i>Difficulty</i>
Short	25cm	4
Medium	50 cm	7
Long	75 cm	10

The list of modifiers to the aiming difficulty for the Fusilier targeting the Flesh Eater is:

- -1 for Precision Firing
- -1 for Large Target

Therefore, the difficulty for the Fusilier to shoot the Flesh Eater is 7 (base for medium range) -1 (precision firing) -1 (large target) = 5.

To make a shooting attack, the Griffon rolls a d6 and adds the Fusilier's Aim characteristic of 3. If the result is equal or higher than the difficulty, then the shot hit.

The Griffon player rolls a 1, which is an automatic failure.

Close Combat Phase

Since no models are engaged, there is no close combat phase.

Mana Recovery Phase

The Inquisitor has his maximum number of gems, so there is no mana recovery phase.

The picture to the right shows the positions of the models at the end of turn one.



Turn Two

Tactical Roll

The conditions for the Tactical roll are the same as in turn one. The rolls are as follows:

<i>Model</i>	<i>Discipline</i>	<i>Roll(s)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Flesh Eater	2	4	6
Inquisitor	6	5,1	Failure

Due to his Fanaticism ability, the Inquisitor treats a 5 as a 6 and therefore may re-roll. In an actual game, the Griffon player would probably not have re-rolled in this case. But if he had, and the result was as above, the Devourer player would probably be doing a happy dance right about now.

The unit cards are shuffled together. The Devourer won the Tactical roll, and draws first.

Movement Phase

The draw sequence is given below:

1. The Devourer draws Voracious Warriors and holds them in reserve. The Voracious Warriors appear to be too far away to engage a Griffon model since they would have to move around the Flesh Eater.
2. The Griffon player draws the Flesh Eater card and gives it to the Devourer. The Devourer activates both the Flesh Eater and the Voracious Warriors.

The Flesh Eater charges the southern most Templar. The Flesh Eater has a Fear characteristic of 7, so the Templar must make a Courage Test. The Templar rolls a d6 and adds the result to his Courage Characteristic of 3. The roll is a 1, which would be an automatic failure, except for the Templar's Bravery ability. However the total of his Courage test is 3 + 1 = 4 which is less than the Fear characteristic of the Flesh Eater, so the Templar fails the test.

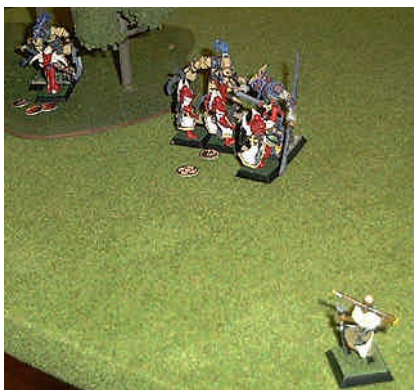
Due to his Fanaticism ability, the Templar must now make a Discipline test against the Fear of 7. He rolls a d6 and adds his Discipline characteristic of 5. The result is an 8 and he passes the test. The Templar does not run away, but he does suffer the effects of Fear (-1 to his Attack, Defense, and Initiative Characteristics).

One of the Voracious Warriors charges the Inquisitor while the other engages the Templar just north of the one engaged by the Flesh Eater.

The Inquisitor must make a Courage Test against the Voracious Warrior's Fear of 5. The Inquisitor has a Courage Characteristic of 4, to which he adds a d6 roll of 2 for a total of 6. He is not afraid.

The second Templar must make a Courage Test against the Voracious Warrior's Fear of 5. The Templar has a Courage Characteristic of 3, to which he adds a d6 roll of 6, and a subsequent d6 roll of 6, and a subsequent d6 roll of 4 for a grand total of 25. He passes easily and gives his opponent a well-deserved smirk.

3. The Devourer draws the Fusilier card and hands it to the Griffon. He activates but does not move the Fusilier.
4. The Griffon draws the Inquisitor card. Since the Inquisitor was charged this turn, he may not attempt to disengage, so he does nothing during the movement phase.
5. The Devourer draws the last card, the Templar unit card, and gives it to the Griffon. Two of the three Templars were engaged this turn and may not melee. The Griffon has the third engage the Flesh Eater. Note that the Templar may not charge the Flesh Eater as it is out of his line of sight.



To engage the Flesh Eater, the third Templar must pass a Courage Test. The Flesh Eater's Fear characteristic is 7. The Templar has a Courage characteristic of 3 and rolls a 6, 6, and a 2 for a total of 17. He also passes his Courage test.

The picture to the left shows the positions of the models after the movement phase.

Shooting Phase

Once again, only the Fusilier and the Inquisitor may take part in this phase. Here is the shooting phase sequence by Initiative score.

The Inquisitor chooses to take Prolonged Incantation. This reduces his Initiative score for casting by 2 but gives him a +1 on his casting roll.

The spell costs 2 gems, so the Inquisitor must spell his entire mana reserve to cast it. The difficulty of the spell is 6. The Inquisitor's Power characteristic is a 2. To successfully cast the spell, the Inquisitor must equal or exceed the spell's difficulty with his Power characteristic plus 1, for prolonged incantation, plus the result of a d6.

The Inquisitor rolls a 3 for a total of $2 + 1 + 3 = 6$. The spell is successfully cast. The spell allows the Inquisitor to roll 3 dice for determining damage in melee and take the best 2. A triple means the Inquisitor's opponent is Killed Outright.

The Fusilier chooses to take Precision Firing, or aiming. This reduces his Initiative score for shooting by 2 but gives him a +1 on his to hit roll.

The distance from the Fusilier to the Flesh Eater is 18.5 cm - well within close range. The list of modifiers to the aiming difficulty for the Fusilier targeting the Flesh Eater is:

- -1 for Precision Firing
- -1 for Large Target

Therefore, the difficulty for the Fusilier to shoot the Flesh Eater is 4 (base for short range) -1 (precision firing) -1 (large target) = 2.

To make a shooting attack, the Griffon rolls a d6 and adds the Fusiliers Aim characteristic of 3. If the result is equal or higher than the difficulty, then the shot hit. The Griffon player rolls a 4, for a total of 7, which is a hit.

Since the Griffon fired into a melee, his shot is randomized among the models involved. The size of the model weights its chance for being hit. There are two models in this melee, the Flesh Eater (large size counts as 3) and the Templar (normal size counts as two). The Griffon player rolls a d6 to see who is hit. The possibilities are given in the table.

D6	Result
1-3	Flesh Eater is hit.
4-5	Templar is hit.
6	Roll again.

The Griffon rolls a 6 and must roll again. He then rolls a 2 and hits the Flesh Eater. The Griffon rolls 2d6 for damage. The lower of the two dice selects the location of the hit. The severity of the damage is determined by the total of the two dice plus 6, the Force characteristic of the Fusilier's Long Rifle, minus 10, the Resilience characteristic of the Flesh Eater. The Griffon rolls double 6 with the result that the Flesh Eater is Killed Outright! Ouch!

Close Combat Phase

With the death of the Flesh Eater, there are only two combats to resolve:

- Voracious Warrior versus Templar
- Voracious Warrior versus Inquisitor

Since the Devourer won the Tactical roll, he chooses to resolve the Voracious Warrior/Templar combat first.

Since the Templar has the War Fury ability, the Griffon player must declare if he will use it before rolling for Initiative. The Templar will use War Fury - he gains an extra combat die, but all dice must go into attack.

The Griffon makes his Initiative test. He rolls a d6 and adds the result to the Templar's Initiative characteristic of 3 for a total of 6. The Devourer rolls a d6 and adds the Voracious Warrior's Initiative characteristic of 4 for a total of 8. The Voracious Warrior has won the initiative.

Since the Griffon lost the Initiative test, he must declare where he is assigning his combat dice. Since he already chosen to use his War Fury Ability, all three dice will go into Attack.

The Devourer won the Initiative test, and declares that all his dice will go into attack. He has an additional die for his Born Killer ability.

Since the Templar has no dice in Defense, the Devourer may set his mark at any value. Since his Attack characteristic is 4, he sets the mark to 6, since only a roll of a 1 will be a failure. The Devourer rolls three dice and scores 2, 2, and 5. All three are hits.

The Devourer now makes three damage rolls. He rolls 2d6 for damage. The lower of the two dice selects the location of the hit. The severity of the damage is determined by the total of the two dice plus 7, the Voracious Warrior's Force characteristic, minus 9, the Resilience characteristic of the Templar.

The first roll is $2 + 5 + 7 - 9 = 5$. The lower of the two dice is a 2, so the location of the hit is the Arm. The total is a 5, which on the 2-column of the damage table, is a Light wound.

The Templar now has a -1 die roll modifier to all Attack, Defense, and Initiative rolls. Note that this modifier is applied to the die roll and not to the difficulty as other modifiers are.

The Voracious Warrior's second roll is a double 5. The Templar suffers a Critical wound. Since this wound is greater than his current wound level, takes over. With a critical wound, the Templar has a -3 die roll modifier instead of -1.

The Voracious Warrior's third roll is $3 + 4 + 7 - 9 = 5$. The lower of the two dice is 3, so the location of the hit is the torso. The total is a 5, which on the 3-column is a Light wound. Since the wound is less than the Templar's current wound level, his wound level is increased by one. The next step up from a critical wound is killed outright. The Templar model is removed from play.

Since the Voracious Warrior eliminated all his opponents in combat, he may follow up into an unengaged model. He follows up into the Templar that was charged by the Flesh Eater. The Templar is still under the effects of Fear and Charge as these last until the end of the turn.

Since this combat is the result of a follow up move, it must be resolved next. Since the Templar has the War Fury ability, the Griffon player must declare if he will use it before rolling for Initiative. The Templar will use War Fury - he gains an extra combat die, but all dice must go into attack.

The Griffon makes his Initiative test. He rolls a d6 and adds the result to the Templar's Initiative characteristic of 3 minus 1 for being charged by the Flesh Eater and -1 for being afraid of the Flesh Eater. The Griffon rolls a 1, which is an automatic failure. The Devourer rolls a d6 and also rolls a one. Since both players failed, they re-roll the Initiative test.

On the second attempt, the Griffon player rolls a $6 + 6 + 6 + 4 + 3 - 1 - 1 = 23$. The Devourer player rolls a $3 + 4 = 7$.

Since the Devourer lost the combat, he places one die into defense and two into attack. Since the Griffon had already chosen to use his War Fury Ability, all three dice will go into Attack.

The Voracious Warrior placed one die into defense. As such, the minimum difficulty of the attack roll must be 5, which is his Defense characteristic. The Griffon Templar's Attack characteristic is 3 -1 for being charged by the Flesh Eater and -1 for being afraid of the Flesh Eater for a total of 2.

The Griffon sets the mark at 5 and rolls 2, 4, 4 = which results in 3, 5, 5, - two hits.

The Voracious Warrior now makes his Defense test. He has one die to roll and he adds his Defense characteristic of a 5 to it. The result is 5 + 4 = 9, which saves the wound.

The Templar now makes one damage roll. He rolls 2d6 for damage. The lower of the two dice selects the location of the hit. The severity of the damage is determined by the total of the two dice plus 4, the Templar's Force characteristic, minus 7, the Resilience characteristic of the Voracious Warrior. The roll is 1 + 3 + 4 - 7 = 1. The lower of the two dice is a 2, so the location of the hit is the Leg. The total is a 5, which on the 1-column is a stun. The Voracious Warrior has a -1 die roll modifier to all Attack, Defense, and Initiative rolls until the end of the turn.

It is now time for the Voracious Warrior to strike back. Since the Templar has no dice in Defense, the Devourer may set his mark at any value. Since his Attack characteristic is 4, he sets the mark to 7, since only a roll of a 1 or 2 will be a failure. The Devourer rolls two dice and scores 2 and 3. Only one is a hit.

The Devourer rolls 2d6 for damage. The lower of the two dice selects the location of the hit. The severity of the damage is determined by the total of the two dice plus 7, the Voracious Warrior's Force characteristic, minus 9, the Resilience characteristic of the Templar.

The roll is 5 + 6 + 7 - 9 = 9. The lower of the two dice is 5, so the location of the hit is the head. The total is a 9, which on the 5-column is a Critical wound. With a critical wound, the Templar has a -3 die roll modifier to all Attack, Defense, and Initiative rolls.

The final combat is the Voracious Warrior versus the Inquisitor.

The Griffon makes his Initiative test. He rolls a d6 and adds the result to the Inquisitor's Initiative characteristic of 3 minus 1 for being charged. The total is 3 -1 +3 = 5. The Devourer rolls a d6 and adds the Voracious Warrior's Initiative characteristic of 4. The total is 4 + 6 + 3 = 13. The Voracious Warrior has won the initiative.

The Inquisitor has 2 combat dice. He places one in attack and one in defense. The Devourer has 3 combat dice; he places one in defense and two in attack.

Since the Inquisitor placed one die into defense, the minimum difficulty of the attack roll must be 5, which is his Defense characteristic. The Voracious Warrior's Attack characteristic is 4. The Devourer sets the mark to be 5 and rolls his two dice. The results are 2+4 = 6 and 6 + 3 + 4 = 13. Both are hits.

The Inquisitor now makes his defense test. He has one die to roll and he adds his Defense characteristic of a 5, minus 1 for being charged, to it. The result is 5 + 5 - 1 = 9, which saves the wound.

The Voracious Warrior makes one wound roll. He rolls 2d6 for damage. The lower of the two dice selects the location of the hit. The severity of the damage is determined by the total of the two dice plus 7, the Voracious Warrior's Force characteristic, minus 9, the Resilience characteristic of the Inquisitor.

The roll is 2 + 5 + 7 - 9 = 5. The lower of the two dice is 2, so the location of the hit is the arm. The total is a 5, which on the 2-column is a Light wound. With a light wound, the Inquisitor has a -1 die roll modifier to all Attack, Defense, and Initiative rolls.

It is now time for the Inquisitor to strike back. Since the Devourer has one die in Defense, the Inquisitor must set his mark to at least 5, the Voracious Warrior's Defense Characteristic.

The Inquisitor's Attack characteristic is 4 minus 1 for being charged. Also, his Attack die roll is modified by -1 for his Light wound. The Inquisitor really wants to score the hit, so he will set the mark to 9. The Inquisitor must roll a 6 to hit but the Voracious Warrior will need to roll a 5 or 6 to defend. The Inquisitor rolls a 4 and misses.

Mana Recovery

The Inquisitor has less than his maximum number of gems, so he may attempt a recovery. He rolls a d6 and adds his Power characteristic of 2 and subtracts off the number of gems he currently has (0). The result is 3 + 2 - 0 = 5. A 5 on the Initiate column means the Inquisitor recovers both of his gems.

The picture below shows the positions of the models at the end of turn two.



Turn Three

Tactical Roll

The conditions for the Tactical roll are different from the previous turns. Both players rolled a 1 for the Tactical roll. Since both rolls resulted in failures, the players roll again.

Model	Discipline	Roll(s)	Total
Voracious Warrior	0	2	2
Inquisitor	6	2	8

The unit cards are shuffled together. The Griffon won the Tactical roll, and draws first.

Movement Phase

The draw sequence is given below:

1. The Griffon draws the Inquisitor card and places it in reserve.
2. The Devourer draws the Voracious Warrior Card and activates the unit. The Voracious Warrior in combat with the Templar attempts to disengage. He must make a Initiative test against a difficulty of 4 + 2 times the number of models he is engaged with. Since he is only engaged with the Inquisitor, the Difficulty is a 6. He rolls a d6 and adds his Initiative Characteristic of 4 to the result. The total is 4 + 2 = 6. Since this is equal to the difficulty, he successfully disengages. The Voracious Warrior moves his normal movement into the woods. The other Voracious Warrior stays in combat with the Inquisitor.
3. The Griffon draws the Fusilier card and activates him with out moving him.
4. The Devourer draws the Templar card, the last in the deck, and hands it tot the Griffon. The Griffon first makes a Rally test for the frightened Templar. He rolls a d6 and adds the Courage characteristic of 3 for a total of 5 + 3 = 8. This is greater than the Fear rating of the Flesh Eater, so the Templar may act as normal. The Templar charges the Voracious Warrior that disengaged and barely reaches him. The second Templar moves to the edge of the wood.

Shooting Phase

Once again, only the Fusilier and the Inquisitor may take part in this phase. Here is the shooting phase sequence by Initiative score.

The Inquisitor chooses to take Prolonged Incantation. This reduces his Initiative score for casting by 2 but gives him a +1 on his casting roll. The spell costs 2 gems, so the Inquisitor must spell his entire mana reserve to cast it. The difficulty of the spell is 6. The Inquisitor's Power characteristic is a 2. To successfully cast the spell, the Inquisitor must equal or exceed the spell's difficulty with his Power characteristic plus 1, for prolonged incantation, plus the result of a d6

The Inquisitor rolls a 3 for a total of $2 + 1 + 3 = 6$. The spell is successfully cast. The spell allows the Inquisitor to roll 3 dice for determining damage in melee and take the best 2. A triple means the Inquisitor's opponent is Killed Outright.

Initiative		Action
3	Inquisitor	Prolonged Incantation
2	Fusilier	Precision Firing
1	Inquisitor	Cast <i>Incandescent Chastiment</i> .
0	Fusilier	Shoots at Voracious Warrior in melee with Templar

The Fusilier chooses to take Precision Firing, or aiming. This reduces his Initiative score for shooting by 2 but gives him a +1 on his to hit roll.

The distance from the Fusilier to the Voracious Warrior is 36 cm, which is medium range. The list of modifiers to the aiming difficulty for the Fusilier targeting the Flesh Eater is:

- -1 for Precision Firing
- -1 for Large Target

Therefore, the difficulty for the Fusilier to shoot the Flesh Eater is 7 (base for short range) -1 (precision firing) -1 (large target) = 5.

To make a shooting attack, the Griffon rolls a d6 and adds the Fusiliers Aim characteristic of 3. If the result is equal or higher than the difficulty, then the shot hit. The Griffon player rolls a 2, for a total of 5, which is a hit.

Since the Griffon fired into a melee, his shot is randomized among the models involved. The size of the model weights its chance for being hit. There are two models in this melee, the Flesh Eater (large size counts as 3) and the Templar (normal size counts as two). The Griffon player rolls a d6 to see who is hit. The possibilities are given in the table below.

D6	Result
1-3	Voracious Warrior is hit.
4-5	Templar is hit.
6	Roll again.

The Griffon rolls a 3 and hits the Flesh Eater.

The Griffon rolls 2d6 for damage. The lower of the two dice selects the location of the hit. The severity of the damage is determined by the total of the two dice plus 6, the

Force characteristic of the Fusilier's Long Rifle, minus 7, the Resilience characteristic of the Voracious Warrior.

The damage roll is $1 + 4 + 6 - 7 = 4$. The lower of the two dice is 1, so the location of the hit is the leg. The total is a 4, which on the 1-column is a Stun. With a stun, the Voracious Warrior has a -1 die roll modifier to all Attack, Defense, and Initiative rolls until the end of the turn.

Close Combat Phase

There are two combats to resolve. These are shown in the picture to the right from the point of view of the Griffon Fusilier.

- Voracious Warrior versus Templar
- Voracious Warrior versus Inquisitor

Since the Griffon won the Tactical roll, he chooses to resolve the Voracious Warrior/Templar combat first.

Since the Templar has the War Fury ability, the Griffon player must declare if he will use it before rolling for Initiative. The Templar will use War Fury - he gains an extra combat die, but all dice must go into attack.

The Griffon makes his Initiative test. He rolls a d6 and adds the result to the Templar's Initiative characteristic of 3 for a total of 6. The Devourer rolls a d6 and adds the Voracious Warrior's Initiative characteristic of 4 minus 1 for being charged. In addition, -1 for the stun applied the die result. The roll is $6 + 6 + 3 - 1 + 4 - 1 = 17$ for a total of 17. The Voracious Warrior has won the initiative.

Since the Griffon lost the Initiative test, he must declare where he is assigning his combat dice. Since he already chosen to use his War Fury Ability, all three dice will go into Attack.

The Devourer won the Initiative test, and declares that all his dice will go into attack. He has an additional die for his Born Killer ability.

Since the Templar has no dice in Defense, the Devourer may set his mark at any value. Since his Attack characteristic is 4, -1 (charge) he sets the mark to 3, since only a roll of a 1 or 2 will be a failure, because of the stun. The Devourer rolls three dice and scores 2, 2, and 6; only one hit.

The Voracious Warrior makes one wound roll. He rolls 2d6 for damage. The lower of the two dice selects the location of the hit. The severity of the damage is determined by the total of the two dice plus 7, the Voracious Warrior's Force characteristic, minus 9, the Resilience characteristic of the Templar.

The roll is $2 + 5 + 7 - 9 = 5$. The lower of the two dice is 2, so the location of the hit is the arm. The total is a 5, which on the 2-column is a Light wound. With a light wound, the Inquisitor has a -1 die roll modifier to all Attack, Defense, and Initiative rolls. It is now time for the Templar to strike back. He has 3 dice to attack with. His Attack characteristic is a 3 but he has a -1 to his die rolls because of his Light wound. There is no minimum for his attack roll since the Voracious Warrior has no dice in Defense, so the Griffon sets the mark to be 3.

The Templar rolls 4, 4, and 2 for two hits. He makes two wound rolls. He rolls 2d6 for damage. The lower of the two dice selects the location of the hit.

The severity of the damage is determined by the total of the two dice plus 4, the Templar's Force characteristic, minus 7, the Resilience characteristic of the Voracious Warrior.

The first roll is double 3 which results in a Light wound. The stun result that the Voracious Warrior already had has no effect on this result since it is not considered a wound.

The second roll is $1 + 3 + 4 - 7 = 1$. The lower of the two dice is 1, so the location of the hit is the leg. The total is a 1, which on the 1-column is a Stun. Since the Voracious Warrior is already wounded, the stun has no effect.

The next combat is the one between the Inquisitor and the Voracious Warrior.

The Griffon makes his Initiative test. He rolls a d6 and adds the result to the Inquisitor's Initiative characteristic of 3 minus 1 for his light wound. The total is $3 - 1 + 6 + 1 = 9$. Since he rolled a 1 on his subsequent die roll (after the 6) the Inquisitor has failed the Initiative test. The Devourer rolls a d6 and adds the Voracious Warrior's Initiative characteristic of 4. The total is $4 + 6 + 2 = 12$. The Voracious Warrior has won the initiative.

The Inquisitor has 2 combat dice. He places one in attack and one in defense. The Devourer has 3 combat dice; he places one in defense and two in attack.

Since the Inquisitor placed one die into defense, the minimum difficulty of the attack roll must be 5, which is his Defense characteristic. The Voracious Warrior's Attack characteristic is 4. The Devourer sets the mark to be 5 and rolls his two dice. The results are $4+4 = 8$ and a 1, which is a failure.

The Inquisitor now makes his defense test. He has one die to roll and he adds his Defense characteristic of a 5, minus 1 for his light wound, to it. The result is $5 + 3 - 1 = 7$, which saves the wound.

It is now time for the Inquisitor to strike back. Since the Devourer has one die in Defense, the Inquisitor must set his mark to at least 5, the Voracious Warrior's Defense Characteristic.

The Inquisitor's Attack characteristic is 4 and, 1 for his Light wound modifies his Attack die roll. The Inquisitor really wants to score the hit, so he will set the mark to 6. The Inquisitor rolls a $5 - 1 + 4 = 9$ and hits.

The Voracious Warrior has a Defense Characteristic of 5. He rolls a d6 and scores $5 + 4 = 9$. He successfully blocks the attack.

Mana Recovery

The Inquisitor has less than his maximum number of gems, so he may attempt a recovery. He rolls a d6 and adds his Power characteristic of 2 and subtracts off the number of gems he currently has (0). The result is $3 + 2 - 0 = 5$. A 5 on the Initiative column means the Inquisitor recovers both of his gems.

Turn Three

Tactical Roll

The conditions for the Tactical roll are the same as turn three. The players make their Tactical roll and the results are shown in the table.

Model	Discipline	Roll(s)	Total
Voracious Warrior	0	6,3	9
Inquisitor	6	5	11

The unit cards are shuffled together. The Griffon won the Tactical roll, and draws first.

Movement Phase

The draw sequence is given below:

1. The Griffon draws the Inquisitor card and places it in reserve.
2. The Devourer draws the Voracious Warrior Card and activates the unit. The Voracious Warrior in combat with the Templar attempts to disengage. He must make an Initiative test against a difficulty of 4 + 2 times the number of models he is engaged with. Since he is only engaged with the Inquisitor, the Difficulty is a 6. He rolls a d6 and adds his Initiative Characteristic of 4 to the result. The total is 4 + 2 = 6. Since this is equal to the difficulty, he successfully disengages. The Voracious Warrior moves his normal movement into the woods. The other Voracious Warrior stays in combat with the Inquisitor.
3. The Griffon draws the Fusilier card and activates him without moving him.
4. The Devourer draws the Templar card, the last in the deck, and hands it to the Griffon. The Griffon first makes a Rally test for the frightened Templar. He rolls a d6 and adds the Courage characteristic of 3 for a total of 5 + 3 = 8. This is greater than the Fear rating of the Flesh Eater, so the Templar may act as normal. The Templar charges the Voracious Warrior that disengaged and barely reaches him. The second Templar moves to the edge of the wood.

Shooting Phase

Once again, only the Fusilier and the Inquisitor may take part in this phase. Here is the shooting phase sequence by Initiative score.

The Inquisitor chooses to take Prolonged Incantation. This reduces his Initiative score for casting by 2 but gives him a +1 on his casting roll.	Initiative		Action
	3	Inquisitor	Prolonged Incantation
	2	Fusilier	Precision Firing
	1	Inquisitor	Cast <i>Incandescent Chastiment</i> .
The spell costs 2 gems, so the Inquisitor must spell his entire mana reserve to cast it. The difficulty of the spell is 6. The Inquisitor's Power characteristic is a 2. To successfully cast the spell, the Inquisitor must equal or exceed the spell's difficulty with his Power characteristic plus 1, for prolonged incantation, plus the result of a d6.	0	Fusilier	Shoots at Voracious Warrior in melee with Templar

The spell costs 2 gems, so the Inquisitor must spell his entire mana reserve to cast it. The difficulty of the spell is 6. The Inquisitor's Power characteristic is a 2. To successfully cast the spell, the Inquisitor must equal or exceed the spell's difficulty with his Power characteristic plus 1, for prolonged incantation, plus the result of a d6.

The Inquisitor rolls a 3 for a total of 2 + 1 + 3 = 6. The spell is successfully cast. The spell allows the Inquisitor to roll 3 dice for determining damage in melee and take the best 2. A triple means the Inquisitor's opponent is Killed Outright.

The Fusilier chooses to take Precision Firing, or aiming. This reduces his Initiative score for shooting by 2 but gives him a +1 on his hit roll.

The distance from the Fusilier to the Voracious Warrior is 36 cm, which is medium range. The list of modifiers to the aiming difficulty for the Fusilier targeting the Flesh Eater is:

- -1 for Precision Firing
- -1 for Large Target

Therefore, the difficulty for the Fusilier to shoot the Flesh Eater is 7 (base for short range) - 1 (precision firing) - 1 (large target) = 5.

To make a shooting attack, the Griffon rolls a d6 and adds the Fusilier's Aim characteristic of 3. If the result is equal or higher than the difficulty, then the shot hits. The Griffon player rolls a 2, for a total of 5, which is a hit.

Since the Griffon fired into a melee, his shot is randomized among the models involved. The size of the model weights its chance for being hit. There are two models in this melee, the Flesh Eater (large size counts as 3) and the Templar (normal size counts as two). The Griffon player rolls a d6 to see who is hit. The possibilities are given in the table at the top of the next column.

The Griffon rolls a 3 and hits the Flesh Eater.

D6	Result
1-3	Voracious Warrior is hit.
4-5	Templar is hit.
6	Roll again.

The Griffon rolls 2d6 for damage. The lower of the two dice selects the location of the hit. The severity of the damage is determined by the total of the two dice plus 6, the Force characteristic of the Fusilier's Long Rifle, minus 7, the Resilience characteristic of the Voracious Warrior.

The damage roll is 1 + 4 + 6 - 7 = 4. The lower of the two dice is 1, so the location of the hit is the leg. The total is a 4, which on the 1-column is a Stun. With a stun, the Voracious Warrior has a -1 die roll modifier to all Attack, Defense, and Initiative rolls until the end of the turn.

Close Combat Phase

There are two combats to resolve. These are shown in the picture to the right from the point of view of the Griffon Fusilier.

- Voracious Warrior versus Templar
- Voracious Warrior versus Inquisitor



Since the Griffon won the Tactical roll, he chooses to resolve the Voracious Warrior/Templar combat first.

Since the Templar has the War Fury ability, the Griffon player must declare if he will use it before rolling for Initiative. The Templar will use War Fury – he gains an extra combat die, but all dice must go into attack.

The Griffon makes his Initiative test. He rolls a d6 and adds the result to the Templar's Initiative characteristic of 3 for a total of 6. The Devourer rolls a d6 and adds the Voracious Warrior's Initiative characteristic of 4 minus 1 for being charged. In addition, -1 for the stun applied the die result. The roll is 6 + 6 + 3 - 1 + 4 - 1 = 17 for a total of 17. The Voracious Warrior has won the initiative.

Since the Griffon lost the Initiative test, he must declare where he is assigning his combat dice. Since he already chosen to use his War Fury Ability, all three dice will go into Attack.

The Devourer won the Initiative test, and declares that all his dice will go into attack. He has an additional die for his Born Killer ability.

Since the Templar has no dice in Defense, the Devourer may set his mark at any value. Since his Attack characteristic is 4, - 1 (charge) he sets the mark to 3, since only a roll of a 1 or 2 will be a failure, because of the stun. The Devourer rolls three dice and scores 2, 2, and 6; only one hit.

The Voracious Warrior makes one wound roll. He rolls 2d6 for damage. The lower of the two dice selects the location of the hit. The severity of the damage is determined by the total of the two dice plus 7, the Voracious Warrior's Force characteristic, minus 9, the Resilience characteristic of the Templar.

The roll is 2 + 5 + 7 - 9 = 5. The lower of the two dice is 2, so the location of the hit is the arm. The total is a 5, which on the 2-column is a Light wound. With a light wound, the Inquisitor has a -1 die roll modifier to all Attack, Defense, and Initiative rolls.

It is now time for the Templar to strike back. He has 3 dice to attack with. His Attack characteristic is a 3 but he has a -1 to his die rolls because of his Light wound. There is no minimum for his attack roll since the Voracious Warrior has no dice in Defense, so the Griffon sets the mark to be 3.

The Templar rolls 4, 4, and 2 for two hits. He makes two wound rolls. He rolls 2d6 for damage. The lower of the two dice selects the location of the hit. The severity of the damage is determined by the total of the two dice plus 4, the

Templar's Force characteristic, minus 7, the Resilience characteristic of the Voracious Warrior.

The first roll is double 3 which results in a Light wound. The stun result that the Voracious Warrior already had has no effect on this result since it is not considered a wound.

The second roll is $1 + 3 + 4 - 7 = 1$. The lower of the two dice is 1, so the location of the hit is the leg. The total is a 1, which on the 1-column is a Stun. Since the Voracious Warrior is already wounded, the stun has no effect.

The next combat is the one between the Inquisitor and the Voracious Warrior. The Griffon makes his Initiative test. He rolls a d6 and adds the result to the Inquisitor's Initiative characteristic of 3 minus 1 for his light wound. The total is $3 - 1 + 6 + 1 = 9$. Since he rolled a 1 on his subsequent die roll (after the 6) the Inquisitor has failed the Initiative test. The Devourer rolls a d6 and adds the Voracious Warrior's Initiative characteristic of 4. The total is $4 + 6 + 2 = 12$. The Voracious Warrior has won the initiative.

The Inquisitor has 2 combat dice. He places one in attack and one in defense. The Devourer has 3 combat dice; he places one in defense and two in attack. Since the Inquisitor placed one die into defense, the minimum difficulty of the attack roll must be 5, which is his Defense characteristic. The Voracious Warrior's Attack characteristic is 4. The Devourer sets the mark to be 5 and rolls his two dice. The results are $4+4 = 8$ and a 1 which is a failure.

The Inquisitor now makes his defense test. He has one die to roll and he adds his Defense characteristic of a 5, minus 1 for his light wound, to it. The result is $5 + 3 - 1 = 7$, which saves the wound.

It is now time for the Inquisitor to strike back. Since the Devourer has one die in Defense, the Inquisitor must set his mark to at least 5, the Voracious Warrior's Defense Characteristic.

The Inquisitor's Attack characteristic is 4 and, 1 for his Light wound modifies his Attack die roll. The Inquisitor really wants to score the hit, so he will set the mark to 6. The Inquisitor rolls a $5 - 1 + 4 = 9$ and hits.

The Voracious Warrior has a Defense Characteristic of 5. He rolls a d6 and scores $5 + 4 = 9$. He successfully blocks the attack.

Mana Recovery

The Inquisitor has less than his maximum number of gems, so he may attempt a recovery. He rolls a d6 and adds his Power characteristic of 2 and subtracts off the number of gems he currently has (0). The result is $3 + 2 - 0 = 5$. A 5 on the Initiate column means the Inquisitor recovers both of his gems.

Turn Four

Tactical Roll

The conditions for the Tactical roll are the same as turn three. The players make their Tactical roll and the results are shown in the table.

Model	Discipline	Roll(s)	Total
Voracious Warrior	0	6,3	9
Inquisitor	6	5	11

The unit cards are shuffled together. The Griffon won the Tactical roll, and draws first.

Movement Phase

The draw sequence is given below:

1. The Griffon draws the Templar card and activates the unit. The unengaged Templar charges the Voracious Warrior in combat with the Inquisitor. The other Templar stays engaged with his Voracious Warrior.
2. The Devourer draws the Inquisitor and hands it to the Griffon. He activates it but leaves him engaged with the Voracious Warrior.
3. The Griffon draws the Voracious Warrior card. He attempts to disengage the Voracious Warrior that is engaged with the Templar. He must make an Initiative test with a difficulty of 6 (base 4 plus 2 for the Templar). He rolls a d6. The result is 3, which added to his Initiative Characteristic of 4 is a 7. He successfully disengages and moves the Voracious warrior out of the woods to the east. The other Voracious Warrior cannot move as he was charged this turn.
4. The Devourer draws the Fusilier card, the last in the deck, and hands it to the Griffon. The Griffon does not move the Fusilier.

Shooting Phase

Only the Fusilier and the Inquisitor may take part in this phase. Here is the shooting phase sequence by Initiative score.

The Inquisitor chooses to take Prolonged Incantation. This reduces his Initiative score for casting by 2 but gives him a +1 on his casting roll.

The spell costs 2 gems, so the Inquisitor must spell his entire mana

reserve to cast it. The difficulty of the spell is 6. The Inquisitor's Power characteristic is a 2. To successfully cast the spell, the Inquisitor must equal or exceed the spell's difficulty with his Power characteristic plus 1, for prolonged incantation, plus the result of a d6.

The Inquisitor rolls a 2 for a total of $2 + 1 + 2 = 6$. The spell is not cast.

The Fusilier chooses to take Precision Firing, or aiming. This reduces his Initiative score for shooting by 2 but gives him a +1 on his to hit roll. The distance from the Fusilier to the Voracious Warrior is 40 cm; medium range. The list of modifiers to the aiming difficulty for the Fusilier targeting the Flesh Eater is:

- -1 for Precision Firing
- -1 for Large Target

Therefore, the difficulty for the Fusilier to shoot the Voracious Warrior is 7 (base for short range) -1 (precision firing) -1 (large target) = 5. To make a shooting attack, the Griffon rolls a d6 and adds the Fusilier's Aim characteristic of 3. If the result is equal or higher than the difficulty, then the shot hit. The Griffon player rolls a 3, for a total of 6, which is a hit.

The Fusilier rolls 2d6 for damage. The result is 3 and 6. The lower value, 3, means that the hit location is the chest. The severity of the wound is $3 + 6 + 6$ (the force of the long rifle) $- 7$ (the Resilience of the Voracious Warrior) = 8. An 8 on the 3-column is a Serious wound. The Voracious Warrior has a -2 die roll modifier for all Attack, Defense, Aim, and Initiative tests.

Close Combat Phase

There is only one combat to resolve: Voracious Warrior versus Templar and Inquisitor.

Since the Templar has the War Fury ability, the Griffon player must declare if he will use it before rolling for Initiative. The Templar will use War Fury – he gains an extra combat die, but all dice must go into attack.

The Griffon makes his Initiative test. He rolls a d6 and adds the result to the Inquisitor's Initiative characteristic of 4. The Inquisitor gets a +1 for the Templar being in the combat but also has his die roll modified by a -1 as a result of his light wound. The Griffon rolls $3 + 4 + 1 - 1 = 7$. The Devourer rolls a d6 and adds the Voracious Warrior's Initiative characteristic of 4 minus 1 for being charged. The roll is $6 + 6 + 5 + 4 - 1 = 20$. The Voracious Warrior has won the initiative.

Since the Griffon lost the Initiative test, he must declare where he is assigning his combat dice. Since he already chosen to use his War Fury Ability, all three of the Templar's dice will go into Attack. The Inquisitor gets two dice and both will go into defense.

The Voracious Warrior gets a total of 4 combat dice: one for each participant in the combat plus one for his Born Killer ability. He places three dice into attack and one into defense.

Model	Dice in Attack	Dice in Defense
Voracious Warrior	3	1
Templar	3	0
Inquisitor	0	2

Since the Voracious Warrior has the Initiative, he attacks first. The Inquisitor has dice in defense, so the minimum mark must be 5, the Inquisitor's Defense characteristic. The Voracious Warrior sets the mark to be 5, since he will fail on a one. The Devourer rolls 2, 2, and 2 and scores three hits. (Attack characteristic 4 – 1 for being charged + 2 for the die roll = 5).

The Inquisitor rolls 2 dice to try and block two attacks. His Defense Characteristic is a 5, but his light wound modifies his die rolls by –1. The Griffon rolls a 1 and a 2 – both are failures.

Notice that Voracious Warrior did not designate a target for his attack dice. The target is only declared when wound are rolled.

The Devourer declares that two wounds will go against the Templar and one against the Inquisitor. The Devourer rolls 2d6 and adds 7, for the Voracious Warrior's Strength, and subtracts 9 for the Templar's Resilience characteristic. The first roll is a 5 and a 6. This results in a Critical wound (5 + 6 + 7 – 9 = 9 to the head). The second roll is a 2 and a 4. This kills the Templar (2 + 4 + 7 – 9 = 4 to the arm which is a light wound. The light wound bumps the critical wound up to killed).

The third wound is rolled against the Inquisitor, who has the same Resilience characteristic as the Templar. The roll is a 2 and a 3, which results in a Serious wound for the Inquisitor (2 + 3 + 7 – 9 = 3 on the Arm, which is a light wound. A light wound bumps the Inquisitor's existing light wound to serious).



Mana Recovery

The Inquisitor has less than his maximum number of gems, so he may attempt a recovery. He rolls a d6 and adds his Power characteristic of 2 and subtracts off the number of gems he currently has (0). The result is 6 + 6 + 5 + 2 – 0 = 19. A 5 on the Initiate column means the Inquisitor would recover 8 gems, but his maximum is 2.

The positions of the models at the end of turn 4 are shown in the picture above.

Turn Five

Tactical Roll

The conditions for the Tactical roll are the same as turn three. The players make their Tactical roll and the results are shown in the table.

Model	Discipline	Roll(s)	Total
Voracious Warrior	0	6,5	11
Inquisitor	6	2	8

The unit cards a shuffled together. The Devourer won the Tactical roll, and draws first.

Movement Phase

The draw sequence is given below:

1. The Devourer draws the Inquisitor's card and hands it to the Griffon. The Inquisitor does not move.
2. The Griffon draws the Fusilier card and places it in reserve.
3. The Devourer draws the Templar card and hands it to the Griffon. The Griffon activates the Templar and charges the Voracious Warrior engaged with the Inquisitor.
4. The Griffon draws the last card and hands the Voracious Warrior card to the Devourer. The unengaged Devourer runs towards the Fusilier.
5. The Devourer plays the Fusilier card from reserve and has it do nothing.

Shooting Phase

Only the Fusilier and the Inquisitor may take part in this phase. Here is the shooting phase sequence by Initiative score.

Initiative		Action
3	Inquisitor	Prolonged Incantation
2	Fusilier	Precision Firing
1	Inquisitor	Cast <i>Incandescent Chastiment</i> .
0	Fusilier	Shoots at Voracious Warrior melee.

The Inquisitor chooses to take Prolonged Incantation. This reduces his Initiative score for casting by 2 but gives him a +1 on his casting roll.

The spell costs 2 gems, so the Inquisitor must

spell his entire mana reserve to cast it. The difficulty of the spell is 6. The Inquisitor's Power characteristic is a 2. To successfully cast the spell, the Inquisitor must equal or exceed the spell's difficulty with his Power characteristic plus 1, for prolonged incantation, plus the result of a d6.

The Inquisitor rolls a 5 for a total of 5 + 1 + 2 = 8. The spell is cast.

The Fusilier chooses to take Precision Firing, or aiming. This reduces his Initiative score for shooting by 2 but gives him a +1 on his hit roll. The distance from the Fusilier to the Voracious Warrior is 9cm; short range. The list of modifiers to the aiming difficulty for the Fusilier targeting the Flesh Eater is:

- –1 for Precision Firing
- –1 for Large Target

Therefore, the difficulty for the Fusilier to shoot the Voracious Warrior is 4 (base for short range) –1 (precision firing) –1 (large target) = 2. To make a shooting attack, the Griffon rolls a d6 and adds the Fusiliers Aim Characteristic of 3. If the result is equal or higher than the difficulty, then the shot hit. The Griffon player rolls a 6 and a 4, for a total of 13, which is a hit.

The Fusilier rolls 2d6 for damage. The result is 1 and 3. The lower value, 1, means that the hit location is the leg. The severity of the wound is 1 + 2 + 6 (the force of the long rifle) – 7 (the Resilience of the Voracious Warrior) = 2. A 2 on the 1-column is a Stun, which does not change the Voracious Warrior's serious wound level.

Close Combat Phase

There is only one combat to resolve: Voracious Warrior versus Templar and Inquisitor.

Since the Templar has the War Fury ability, the Griffon player must declare if he will use it before rolling for Initiative. The Templar will use War Fury – he gains an extra combat die, but all dice must go into attack.

The Griffon makes his Initiative test. He rolls a d6 and adds the result to the Inquisitor's Initiative characteristic of 4. The Inquisitor gets a +1 for the Templar being in the combat but also has his die roll modified by a –1 as a result of his light wound. The Griffon rolls a 1, which is an automatic failure. The Devourer rolls a d6 and adds the Voracious Warrior's Initiative characteristic of 4 minus 1 for being charged. The roll is 6 + 3 + 4 – 1 = 12. The Voracious Warrior has won the initiative.

Since the Griffon lost the Initiative test, he must declare where he is assigning his combat dice. Since he already chosen to use his War Fury Ability, all three of the Templar's dice will go into Attack. The Inquisitor gets two dice and both will go into defense.

The Voracious Warrior gets a total of 4 combat dice: one for each participant in the combat plus one for his Born Killer ability. He places three dice into attack and one into defense.

Model	Dice in Attack	Dice in Defense
Voracious Warrior	3	1
Templar	3	0
Inquisitor	0	2

Since the Voracious Warrior has the Initiative, he attacks first. The Inquisitor has dice in defense, so the minimum mark must be 5, the Inquisitor's Defense characteristic. The Voracious Warrior sets the mark to be 5, since he will fail on a one. The Devourer rolls 1, 4, and 5 and scores two hits.

The Inquisitor rolls 2 dice to try and block two attacks. His Defense Characteristic is a 5, but his serious wound modifies his die rolls by –2. The Griffon rolls a 3 and a 3 – both are failures.

Notice that Voracious Warrior did not designate a target for his attack dice. The target is only declared when wound are rolled.

The Devourer declares that both wounds will go against the Templar. The Devourer rolls 2d6 and adds 7, for the Voracious Warrior's Strength, and subtracts 9 for the Templar's Resilience characteristic. The first roll is a 1 and a 2. This results in a stun, which doesn't affect the lightly wounded Templar. The second roll is a 3 and a 6. This results in a Serious wound fore the Templar.

The wounded Templar fights back. Since the Voracious Warrior has one die in Defense, the minimum mark is 5, the Voracious Warrior's Defense characteristic. The Templar sets the mark to this value and rolls his 3 dice. The results are 3, 6, and 6. The Templar does not re-roll the sixes. The Templar scores two hits.

The Voracious Warrior rolls his single die to defend, needing anything but a 1. He rolls a 6 and blocks one attack. Since the Voracious Warrior is outnumbered, he declares that he will use Sustained Defense. The mark he must roll is now a 7, two higher than the original mark. The Devourer rolls a 4 that results in a 9 and successfully blocks the attack.

End of Example

I will end the example at this point as I've covered all the cases I wanted to. However, for those who are interested, the Devours won in turn 9 after the Fusilier managed to kill one Voracious Warrior and the Inquisitor



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Miniature Reviews



More modern miniatures from Devil Dog Designs for us to look at this issue, starting off with the CIA Operative (right). This is a single-piece miniature (DOW3002) that has a regular retail price of \$3.95 USD.

He's wearing combat gear and is not the 'suit' kind of CIA guy that you might think of. In addition to his rifle he's carrying two canteens and multiple pouches on his belt. His hair is grown out much longer than any regular military trooper and also sports a pretty full beard and moustache. Completing his look is a pair of sunglasses. He has a little bit of a Chuck Norris look to him.



The sculpt was done well and this figure has uses beyond just in Dogs of War. I'd use him in d20 Modern, a modern Call of Cthulhu game, or even as an agent leader in a supers game. He could also make a very passable Cartel agent in Warzone.

There was some cleaning needed, but this took just a few minutes and then he was ready to be primed and painted. I found no flaws on the figure. For around four dollars this is a nice quality figure that will be quite useful if you're playing in the modern era.



Ok, on to some troops from across the big pond. Above is a 4-man blister of British Marine Commandos (DOW4001) which has a price of \$10.95 USD. In the blister you get four different models, all of which are single-piece miniatures.

Three of them are armed with assault rifles and the fourth is carrying an assault rifle with a bi-pod mounted under the barrel. All four of them are dressed for combat with multiple pouches all over the place and plenty of gear. Two are wearing helmets and the other two are in berets.

These guys required more cleaning than the CIA Operative as all of them had either flash, a visible mold line or a webbing of thin metal in places like between their arms and/or legs. None of the figures had defects and after a couple of minutes they were ready to be based and this brought me to a slight problem. The metal tabs at the bottom of the figures, on all four of them, was thicker than the opening on the plastic base. You have a couple of choices here; 1) cut away the tabs and glue the guys feet directly down to the base or 2) apply suitable force and 'make' the figure fit into the base. I went with option two and while I didn't break any of the bases it was certainly running through my head. Also, be careful of the gun barrels as they might have become bent in the blister. Take care in bending them back in to place so you don't break them.

The variety of poses here is very good. One is standing and firing, one is waling forward, one is kneeling and firing and the squad leader is standing with his rifle in a resting position. This variety does not, however, take away from the group being a solid unit. Nobody looks out of place to me. At less than \$3.00 per figure for a group of four non-duplicating figures makes this a very good buy for modern combat or role-playing games.



The British Marine Fire Team (DOW4002) below also comes with four different figures but with a lower retail price of \$8.95 USD which puts your per-figure price under \$2.25 USD. Additionally, all four of these guys are completely different than the four in the Command pack. The tab/base issue that was present with the British Command pack was much less prominent with these four figures. There was one that needed a little coaxing to get into the base, but the rest fit pretty easily and without any elbow grease.

These are dressed in fatigues similar to the previous group but you're not duplicating any figures here. Again, you have two with helmets and two with berets and three are carrying assault rifles and there is one with a heavy gun in the group. All four guys have a different sense of movement with one standing still and the other three all moving forward but in different poses. No simple head swaps here. They are all individuals. Cleaning consisted mostly of taking care of a visible mold line and maybe bending a gun barrel back into place and cleaning off a 'web' of thin metal that might have formed between to larger pieces of the model. Detail on the faces and hands was good and I might even say that it's better than the US models that I've previously reviewed. All can play on my table anytime.

Kryomek, the game and miniatures are back in regular production and we'll look at both in this issue. Later on you'll see a review of the game and the Hivestone supplement, but here we'll start off with a look at two resin structures.

The first (right) is a Cluster Rocket Defense Tower (NBO-021) that sells for \$15.95 USD. It comes in four resin pieces and has three metal parts, two rocket launcher parts and an antenna. The resin parts needed to be trimmed just a little and washed off. I'd recommend washing all of your resin pieces before assembling or priming them.



The picture of the tower is at about half-size. The assembled model is about 6" tall and has a span of about 2.5" at its widest points. The model came together very easily and I'd have no trouble dropping it into any sci-fi game, especially Kryomek. My only issue is with the doors. They are about two-thirds the size that you would expect when compared to the infantry models that will be used along side it. This is a fairly minor thing as the most use of this model will come in the form of a static artillery/defense piece so I can let it slide for the most part.

The second structure is a bit more squat in appearance. It's a Heavy Gun Bunker with a HAK 2000 (NBO-004) and also retails for \$15.95 USD. The same washing suggestion applies with this piece as the tower above. The bunker comes in just two resin pieces and two metal ones, an antenna and a radar dish to track enemies.



Cleanup consisted of a bit of trimming of some edges and that was about it. The two pieces went together fine and on both of these models you could choose to drill out a hole where a wood or metal rod could be inserted to help simulate rotation of the weapon. Of course, you could just glue the whole thing together and go with that. The picture above shows the bunker at about half its regular size. It suffers from small-door-itis like the tower and here it's just a tad more on my mind. As a bunker, with or without a gun, I'd expect it to serve as a rallying point for troops and the discrepancy on sizes would be more noticeable. Just a thought that came into my head. If you're not worried about it then don't worry about it.

Both of these buildings were solid, quality productions that could see use in any sci-fi game; Kryomek, Warzone, Warhammer 40K, Stargrunt, whatever. They are priced very reasonably and should hold up very well under lots of use. Treat them like your miniatures and they should hold up at least as well, in fact they should do even better.

Moving on to some Kryomek troops we'll take a look at what I consider the main alien species of the game, the Kryomek themselves. They are bio-mechanical monsters and as you'll see later they sometimes incorporate human 'parts' into their creations. First up are two Warmasters. These guys are bad mo-fo's bent on lots of death and destruction.

The Warmaster with Corroder Lance (KK-09) and Warmaster with Plasmid Cloud Duster and Sword (KK-07) both have a price of \$6.95 USD and they each come in four pieces.

On the right is the fellow with the Corroder Lance (cool name for a weapon by the way) and you'll need both hands free for assembly to really get his (her, it?) arms into proper weapon-holding position. I was able to do so without gluing myself to the model, so it can be done ;)



Prior to assembly every piece did need some cleaning attention as the mold line was visible and flash needed to be cleaned off of the model and the bottom of the base.

Armed with a Plasmid Cloud Launcher and a sword the guy to the right needed a little less cleaning than his brother above, but I still needed to take the hobby knife to him a little. Since his arms don't both hold the same weapon he came together a bit easier too.



As you can see, the Warmasters have long snake-like bodies that end in a large crested head that looks like a very solid chunk of armor. I like that the body was not just duplicated on both models as it could have been. In fact, the second one has a much thinner body with a different pattern than the first, which looks like it has armored plates along its back. Both heads are identical though, which was ok. Probably the only thing that I do not like about these figures are the bases. Each is on a long thin pre-molded base that fits the footprint of the model just fine, but unless you are playing on a flat battlefield they will run into trouble in the form of maintaining their upright stance. Hills, valleys, and steps will give them fits.

Next are the Drones which come two to a pack for \$6.95 USD. On the next page you'll see two sets of them, one (KD-01) armed with an Acid Pistol and the other (KD-03) armed with a Bio-Acid Jet.

All of the Drones, regardless of which pack they came out of, needed about as much cleaning work as the Warmasters. Flash and mold lines needed to be trimmed but, as with the others, no defects were found. For molds that date back to 1990 they seem to be doing ok. The mold line was probably the most time consuming thing to clean as there are plenty of bends and crevices on the figures and the mold line ran through many of them.

The bases on the Drones are much more appealing to me than those on the Warmasters. These are also pre-molded and cast as part of the figure but they are round and are just about the exact same size as your standard plastic slotta-base. They will do much better on hills and such.



Above (left) is the Drone with the Bio-Acid Jet and to the right of it is the one armed with the Acid Pistol. The right arm of the first one has a thin piece of what I would describe as tubing that goes from its hand to the gun itself. It's either a stabilizing rod or it feeds some of the ammo into the weapon. You'll need to be careful when cleaning these and when bending them into place as one of mine broke during the process. It was easy enough to glue back together, but just save yourself the trouble and be more careful than I was.

All of the arms fit onto the body without trouble and you can see that the upper torso of these guys, well at least the head but I'd say that some of their insides too, are human. Well, they used to be. The rest is definitely not. Their uses are right on par with the Warmasters and they could also serve as a nice alien race in a super hero game.

Our parade of creepy-crawlies comes to an end for this issue with a pack of Hellions (KK-14). Three of these little buggers (below) come in a pack for \$6.95 USD and all are single-piece models but none are duplicates.



These little nightmarish creatures will swarm the enemy and crew on their bones. I liked very much that all three are different poses of the same creature and these are actually Beta and Gamma Hellions. There are Alpha, Beta and Gamma Hellions in the game and some have legs, some don't. These all do but you can see that some of them are in the process of growing a tail and are getting larger.

Out of all of the Kryomek figures (the monsters we've seen so far) these required the least amount of cleanup and were almost ready to go right under the primer as soon as I got them.

They are armed with large nasty claws and long rows of razor sharp teeth and even though they are probably the 'scrubs' of the army they appear to have a pretty nice carapace shell which will give them a bit of survivability.

After looking at all of these Kryomek entries you'd be correct in thinking that they have at least a passing resemblance to the aliens in Alien, but no more so than the Tiranids in Warhammer 40K and the human-Kryomek crossbreed is very cool in my book.



Ok, on to some of the human forces in the game. The first group of three are called Cyberleggers (KGC-003) and retail for \$6.95 USD. Each of the models is unique and all three are easily recognizable as being very enhanced with cybernetics.

Two are carrying rifles and the third has a pistol. All are very likely as much machine as man and their enhancements are out there for everyone to see. All three have a lot of augmentation on their head, including eyes, ears and whole sections of their heads. Each one also has at least one fully cybernetic arm and there's an easily identifiable cybernetic leg on one.



Cleaning was similar to that of the Hellions, meaning that it was needed but didn't take too long. In addition to Kryomek these guys just beg to be dropped into a game of Traveller²⁰, Star Wars d20, Shadowrun or any other futuristic game. They are highly cross-platform usable.

Directly above is a Predator Marine that come two to a pack for \$6.95 USD. They are wearing armored exo-skeletons, but still have a lot of bare flesh. Flash on these guys needed to be cleaned and the mold line was easily visible.

From the waist down they are wearing power-armored leggings and boots. There is a powered rigging that goes up their back and over their shoulders that houses a gun (an autocannon in this case I think) that is in addition to the two others that they carry, an assault rifle and a heavy pistol. These guys are a walking curtain of lead.

They are bare headed (with a nice buzz cut) and have a respirator over their mouth and nose and wear protective ear coverings. Two of these guys for \$6.95 makes them about \$3.50 USD per figure which is not bad, but it's definitely higher than \$6.95 for a pack of four, which is what the 'regular' guys go for. Also, two different models would make them a lot more attractive.

At the bottom of the page are my personal picks for all-time favorite Kryomek miniatures and it's what sucked me into the game when it first came out about a decade ago; the Talos units. These are artificially intelligent robots that know no fear or mercy and simply do as they are told. On top of that they are

some awfully cool miniatures and you get two of them for \$6.95 USD which makes things even better. In the pictures above the leftmost unit is carrying a heavy flamer and twin light machineguns with a rotary machine pistol mounted in its head. The middle one is carrying the same basic weaponry as the first but has a shotgun in its head mount and the third has a twin combat rifle and twin light machineguns. Damn, that's a lot of lovin'!

All of them needed a bit of cleaning but they were all ready to get hit with primer in just a few minutes. As much as I love these figures, which is a whole lot, I just really don't like their pre-molded bases. They will make going up or down hills very frustrating and mine are all being based on large round plastic bases and then I'll be using some putty to level things out. Even with my gripe about the bases they are still great models with lots of uses outside of Kryomek. Using them as security robots in 28mm games of Inquisitor would be great.

Nexus Predator Marine Officer (PDO-004, \$6.95) – This blister contains two of the same miniature – single-piece 28mm humanoid in full power armor wearing a cape. The models are standing on an integrated smooth base. Neither model has any flash, but there are noticeable mold lines. Both pieces have a strong mold link that runs from the right elbow up and over the back of the head and down to the left shoulder. On one model, this line continues down the left edge of the cloak.



The models are sculpted with their guns across their chest and the capes covering their back. They are slightly hunched forward in a pose that strongly resembles the pose of the plastic Space Marines included in Games Workshop's **Warhammer 40,000** second edition boxed set.

The models are sculpted with very angular armor that has a few details – mostly in the form of seams where different armor plates intersect. These are not diorama quality models but they are excellent gaming pieces. The stand easily and are balanced on their bases so they won't tumble down a sloped hillside.

Security Troops IV (KMC-008, \$6.95) – This blister contains three miniatures (bottom of page) of 28mm human troops armed with a shotgun, rocket launcher, and a submachine gun. All three models are standing on an integrated smooth base. Two of the three models are a single piece – the third has a separate arm holding the automatic shotgun. All three models have a little flash on the bottom of their bases. There are slight mould lines on each figure as well –most often on the right rear of their heads.

All three models are dressed in fatigues with various bits of armor plate in strategic spots. The model with the shotgun has a full helmet with pipes leading from his faceplate over his shoulders to his backpack. The hand that is not holding the shotgun is clinched into a fist. The arm with the weapon has a small pin that inserts into a hold in the shoulder of the main figure. The pin is too long for the hole. The other two models have open-faced headgear – one with a forage cap and the other with a helmet.



As with the Nexus Marine officers there is not a lot of detail, but the fatigues are covered with pockets and belt pouches. The faces on the two models with open helmets have well defined features. Like the Nexus Marine officers, these three models are very good gaming pieces. They would also work very well as colonial marines for a hard SF RPG.

Eridani (KGW-001, \$6.95) – This blister contains three identical 28mm Eridani troops armed with swords and rifles slung over their back. The models are standing on an integrated oval base with minor texturing on its surface. Of all the Kryomek models reviewed so far, these have by far the most flash and noticeable mold lines. On each model there is a large mold line along the bottom of the base, along the left and right edges of the cloaks, and along the left side of the towering mowhawk. Small pieces of flash occur on each at the point of the swords and the end of the rifle barrels.



These figures are holding their swords on the right side with both hands. Their rifle points up from between the back of the figure and its cloak. They have a snarl on their face as they stand at attention. The style of these models makes me think of **Warzone** Imperial Wolfbane Commandos as rendered by the French artist Moebius. There is quite a bit of detail in their armor for both leather parts and metal plates. These figures will serve as good gaming pieces, but their use in a SF RPG would be limited.

Gemini (KGW-008, \$6.95) – This package contains a single 40mm Gemini model with integrated base. Unlike the earlier Kryomek figures reviewed, this one came in a plastic bag stapled to its backing card.

The model has numerous small pieces of flash that extrude from various points all over the body. The only noticeable mold line occurs on the bottom of the base. The figure is sculpted with a rough textured skin with various points on his upper arms and upper back. There is a line of small horns running down the center of his skull from the back to just above his eyebrows. This texture tends to obscure slightly the detail in the musculature of the model. This model will definitely do well with a dry brush technique to emphasize the texture.

In the Kryomek universe, the Gemini race is described as 12' tall silicone-based aliens who like to carry huge maces. As such the model can be used as a trooper for Kryomek or as an excellent Stone Golem for a fantasy RPG.

Cyclos Infantry in Enviro Battle Suits I (CYO-006, \$6.95) – This package contains three 28mm female figures with integrated bases in various poses as well as two large shields. Like the Gemini model, these came in a plastic bag stapled to the backing card.



Gemini

These models have some flash on them – usually on the bottom of the bases, but also around the helmets – and very noticeable mold lines along the legs and arms. The two shields have an indentation where they are secured to lugs on the forearms of the models. The models are sculpted with bulky armor and helmets that completely cover their faces. The style here is also reminiscent of Moebius.

The first model is of a leader type armed with a pistol and a shield. The sculpting is well done in that the shield fits snugly up against the body,



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conforming to the chest and arm of the model. The second model is that of a kneeling soldier firing an automatic shotgun. The shield placement here is also well done as the barrel of the weapon fits into a notch on the shield. The third model, which has no shield, is carrying a mini gun.

These are the best of all the Kryomek sculpts reviewed (for Michael) so far. They are simple in composition but dynamic in pose and the execution is well done. These would make excellent colonial marines for a hard SF RPG.



Miniature Reviews



Even more “modern” miniatures, but this time from a company called Tactical Miniatures. The first two sets of figures that we got a look at are five high-tech crooks (right) and a SWAT team (below).

The high-tech crooks are very reminiscent of the bad guys in the movie Heat. They are wearing full body suits, like you might find on a car mechanic, bullet-proof vests, heavy boots and hockey masks. Each is armed with an assault rifle and for \$10.00 USD you get five different poses. They are also a little bit more individualized as two of them have long hair coming out from under their masks. Speaking of their masks, I had a notion that it would be cool to paint them up each with a mask exactly (or as close as I can get) to that of five different hockey goalies.

All five models needed some cleaning, but none of the flash was excessive and none of the figures were miscast, but the mold line was visible on all of them. The one running (bottom row, left) needed to have a metal tab cut off from his shoe, but I did like the final pose very much. Some of them needed a bit of help in getting their tab to fit into the slot on the base. The one needed the most ‘coaxing’ was the leader (bottom row, right. At least in my opinion he’s the leader) but they all got glued down and were ready to prime before too long.

Each of them also carries extra clips and a pistol in a holster. I do very much like getting five different poses and for two bucks each there’s not much room to complain but one of the guys (top row, left) might be mistaken for trying to let a bowling ball roll between his legs if looked at from the wrong angle. Ok, he’s running but it looked just a tiny bit ‘off’ to me. These five would make a great addition to a modern GM’s gallery of bad-guys. They’ll make perfect would-be bank robbers in my next game of Mutants & Masterminds.



Ok, enough with the anti-social types and on to some good guys that are trained to bring them down. The SWAT team is also made up of five different models, all in similar dress but with different poses. These guys are also ready for some heavy action and are all wearing body armor, including vests, knee and elbow pads, helmets and shoulder pads. They are in very “at the ready” poses. Four are armed with MP5A3’s and have double magazines to ensure that whatever they are shooting at gets filled really full of lead. The fifth is carrying a shotgun to make short work of any bolted doors or some poor slob who happens to have a date with the afterlife. Also, none of the weapons looked oversized or out of proportion. In addition to lots of gear all five of the cops are also carrying a handgun on their right thigh, just in case. Cleaning was about the same as with the crooks. Meaning it was needed but not out of hand. As far as the poses go they were all very good and nobody was dodging any sporting equipment ;)

I did have the same issue with the bases and the bottom tabs on the models. This was more of an annoyance than a flaw, but having thinner tabs on future releases would solve the problem entirely. Both sets should paint up nicely as each has bunches of folds in the clothing and plenty of room for shading and highlights.

Out of the two sets the high-tech crooks were my favorite, but both are a bargain at just \$10.00 USD each. The guys at Tactical Miniatures have two other sets of figures that you might want to take a look at, Aliens (grays) and a group of MIB/FBI Agents. I hope that more “modern” miniatures are in the works as they’ll have an audience with both spy/modern rpg’s and super hero games as lackeys and cops to get in the way of the heroes. In fact, I wouldn’t mind seeing them do some super hero figures too. All told, these were two really good sets at a super reasonable price and I hope to see more from Tactical Miniatures in the near future.

This batch of miniatures from Excalibur-Miniaturen starts off with what is probably the coolest of what I would call a 'novelty' miniature that I've seen in a really long time. To the right are two views of Little Martin (9265), designed for the Fearless game. It comes five pieces (two mini-guns, a front wheel, the carriage/baby itself and the sun visor/carriage handle) and a plastic slotta-base. There was a bit of cleaning that needed to be done but the figure went together very easily and there were no defects. Flash was really at a minimum and the mold lines were really the only thing that needed to be taken care of before priming the figure.

Ok, so what's so cool about a baby in a carriage with two big-ass guns? Do you even need to ask?!? This reminded me so much of Baby Herman from 'Who Framed Roger Rabbit' it's not even funny. The little guy even has on a cute little ruffled baby hat. If there's one thing that I could change, and I probably will, is that the 'baby' is sporting a moustache so it's really not a baby but a small guy in a carriage. Ok, so he has some kind of diaper fetish. For me, a baby would just be cooler so I'll be 'shaving' the little bugger.

As far as uses go he's built for Fearless, but a sadistic Call of Cthulhu GM could toss him at the party or, here's my plan, you could use him in a super hero game (whichever you like but right now it's Mutants & Masterminds for me) as some kind of evil genius trapped in the body of a 9-month old baby. With a retail price of 9.50 Euro (about \$10.71 USD, it's a special edition model) this figure is not the cheapest you'll pick up this year, but it's probably one of the coolest.

Over on the right is an Ogre with a captured goblin (3013) that comes in two pieces and a separate metal base. The front (head and belly) and rear (everything else) of the model came together pretty well, but there will be some putty work needed to fill in a few gaps. As with Little Martin, above, there was really no flash but the mold line was visible and needed to be trimmed.



The ogre has his mouth open and is letting out a huge yell and the goblin (see inset picture) is also letting loose with a bellow of his own, but for entirely different reasons. The ogre is probably letting his mates know what is for dinner and the goblin is none too thrilled to hear that it's him. The ogre is armed with a small, for him anyway, axe and tatters of clothes and armor and reminds me a lot of the old Citadel ogres that had so much character. The goblin has come loose from some of the ropes that had bound him but is still firmly in the grasp of his captor. At 12.90 Euro (about \$14.55 USD) he's not out of the range of other models his size and pack a whole lot of character, and he's bringing dinner!

Below Little Martin in the next column is Gandaal (7016), yes he's very Gandalf-ish even down to his name, a human wizard that is carrying a staff and sword. He's a rather tall miniature coming in at just about 2.25" from the bottom of his base to the tip of his sword. Detail on his robes is very clean and he should paint up very nicely. Even though he's wearing a big floppy hat and has a very full and flowing beard his facial detail still came out well and is not obscured. His pose is good and for 3.55 Euro (about \$4.00 USD) he would make a very good player character model or a human wizard for any miniature combat game.

Dwarf Wizard from *Dwarf Squad* (right/middle, EX8401, €25,00) – This figure is part of the Dwarf squad box for Excalibur's wizard duel game *Magic Challenge*. The figure is a single-piece 28mm dwarf wizard. The model is tabbed and is supplied with a round slotted base.



The model is very clean – there is no flash and only a slight mold line on the right side of the skull helmet.

The model is sculpted as if the wizard is reading a book. He is holding his staff away from his body to the right. His fur cloak is wrapped around the staff. This simple feature gives the model depth and keeps it from appearing as a 2 dimensional sculpt. The detail on this model is very impressive. The model has plate armor layered over chain mail, which in turn hangs over a wide tabard. On top of these are numerous bags and pouches.



The book has detailed corners and pages. The skull helmet and a prodigious beard frame the face. The face itself is well sculpted with a strong nose and eyes. This wizard lives up to the excellent quality that has become the norm for Excalibur Miniatures. This model makes an excellent wizard for an RPG or as a Rune Priest for Warhammer.

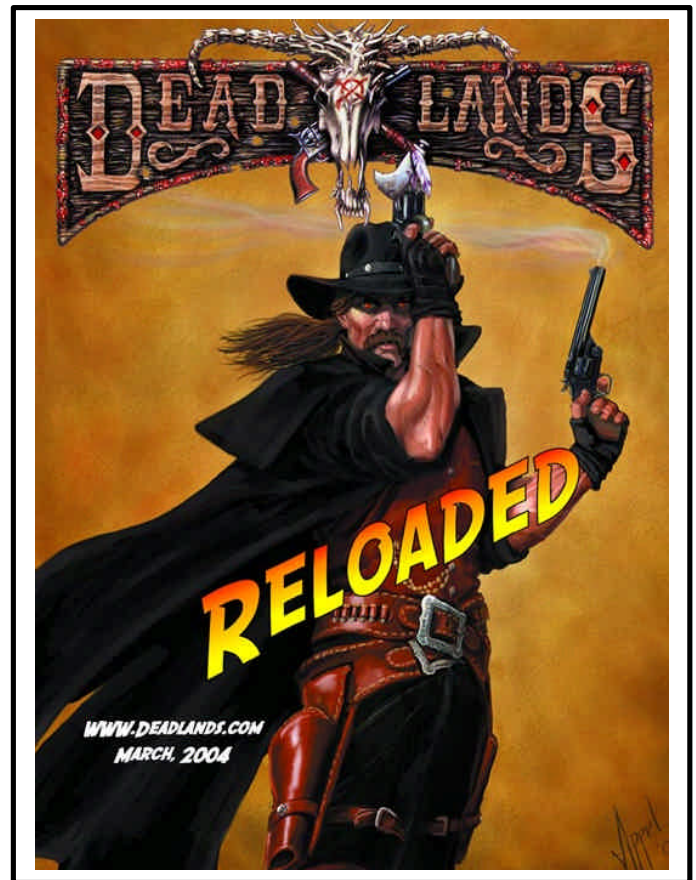


Chaos Squad (previous page, EX8421, €25,00) – This boxed set includes nine warriors, six are armed with hand weapons and three armed with bows, plus a wizard. All models are single piece 28mm size with a tab that fits into a supplied round slotted base. The molds had no flash and no visible mold lines. There are 5 different poses among the ten models.

The first is the wizard. He is your archetypal tall hat wizard with a large lizard on his shoulder. The lizard's hangs down the wizard's back, giving some much-needed interest to the rather drab robes. The archers all have the same pose – they are holding a double crossbow pistol with the bow perpendicular to the ground. The model is wearing a chain mail skirt with a plate mail breastplate. The left shoulder is sculpted to be a lion's head with mane. The helmet covers the top half of the face and sprouts large curving horns.

There are two of each sculpt for the hand weapon knights. The first is carrying a two-handed axe. It has a smooth breastplate with scale mail shoulders and skirt. The helmet is pointed with only one ram's horn on the left side. The second knight is armed with a sword and dressed in plate mail. His helmet features two down-curving rams horns. The model is sculpted in an advancing position with his open left hand extended. The last sculpt is of a knight with his sword upraised. He is dressed in plate mail with a skull or skull-shaped helmet.

These models are all thin, almost spindly in design. They resemble the chaos warriors produced by Games Workshop in the late eighties. At the same time, the models are all in dynamic poses. This boxed set works well for the Magic Challenge game – or with a simple base swap it makes an excellent start to a regiment of Chaos Warriors for **Warhammer**.





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Our look into the world of 100 Kingdoms for this issue starts off with a new character model that is actually made up of five different models. The Simian Slave Master sits on a pillow atop an uncovered wooden palanquin that is borne by four (identical models) human slaves. He is carrying a whip and a mace and looks to be having a rather good time of things (he's sporting a very broad smile) despite wearing an eye-patch that is probably out of necessity rather than making a fashion statement. The slaves look good and don't appear to have missed too many meals at all. Gotta keep up their strength to carry around that heavy-ass monkey! Detail on the Slave Master is also very good and I was initially surprised to see him as a single-piece model.

A bit of flash did need to be cleaned off of each of the pieces but all were without flaw. Assembly was really not tricky at all and each bearer fit easily underneath the palanquin without too difficult of a balancing act by me. The only thing that I'm not thrilled about is the basing of the complete model. I think it would have been better to have the whole lot on a single large round or square base, similar to how the Giant Gor is based. I plan on doing this with mine as I think it will add a bit of stability to the model. Another modification that I plan on doing, purely cosmetic and not necessary at all, is to cut off part of the mace and extend its pole about an inch and a half and then have it end in a parasol. To keep the blazing sun from beating down on him of course. I will need to paint the slaves as being sunburned though. At \$10.00 USD this is really an inexpensive set of figures that I liked very much. If you're looking for some double-duty here you could also use the slaves as drugged in a Stygian army.

Karix the Cold-Blooded (center) is a massive T-Rex who will set you back \$15.00 USD. The figure is based on a 40mm plastic base and is still quite tall even with his hunched over stance.

The model comes in size pieces (head, skull helmet, body, two arms, body, and tail armor). He also comes with an alternate weapon, a two handed double-bladed sword if you're looking for something out of the ordinary.

There was very little flash on the model and it went together easily enough but you can see in the picture that where the head fits into the body either needs to be trimmed or some putty will be needed to fill in the void. I'll probably pull the head back off and trim the tab so it fits better.

Karix fits in perfectly with the rest of the Outkast army and I could even drop him into a super hero game as a strange villain. For that I might replace his swords with guns though. Nothing like a giant intelligent T-Rex with guns!



Rapten Berserkers (\$6.50) – This blister contains two identical 35mm multi-part models of Velociraptor-type dinosaurs. The models are made up of three pieces – body, left arm and right arm. The models are supplied with round slotted plastic bases. The model is sculpted with its mouth open and its left leg elevated as if to scratch its opponent. This gives the body piece a two-dimensional feeling that is dispelled once the arms are attached. There is little flash and no apparent mold lines on the models. The model assembles easily, though there is enough of a gap that filler might be needed. This is a good sculpt of an interesting idea. These would make great draconic soldiers or bandits for a fantasy RPG – or exceptional berserker elite troops for 100 Kingdoms.



Allon War Chief (center/bottom \$8.00) – This is a 54mm multi-part miniature of an Allosaurus-type dinosaur. The model is made up of four pieces – legs, body, left arm and right arm – and three optional pieces. The model is supplied with a slotted plastic base. The additional pieces are extra ornamentation for the model – a spiked “helmet”, a tortoise-shell armor plate, and a stone “banner”. These extra pieces all fit on the back of the model in such a way as to prohibit the attachment of the other two. So, you must pick your favorite. Personally, I think the banner has more character than the other pieces. The quality of the model was very high. The only piece of flash was on the models tail. The only visible mold line was along the blade of the right arm sword. The pieces of the model fit together easily, but there is enough of a gap that some filler will be required – especially between the legs and the body. The arms have rounded lugs that fit into indentations in the body. The legs wrap around the torso to hold it secure. As with the other armies for 100 Kingdoms, the dinosaur Outkast is an intriguing idea. This model is up to their high standards and will make an excellent force commander. For those who don't play 100 Kingdoms, this model would make a great Dinosaur villain for a fantasy or – thinking of Sauron – super hero RPG.

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From way over in Australia we have a bunch of new figures from Maidenhead Miniatures. It bears telling you up front that *all* of the figures I've seen so far from Maidenhead are of women (ok, you could probably guess that) and are topless. Ok, take a minute or longer if you need to get over it and read the rest of this review or move on to the next review. Ok, nice to have you back. It's not like having bare-breasted female miniatures is really all that new and if you've played Chronopia or Warhammer Fantasy Battles, not to mention tons of historical games, you've seen various number of topless miniatures or those that are bottomless too. Anyway, Maidenhead Miniatures, so far, produces a line of savage females that are sort of a cross between barbarians and amazons in my book.

First up is a group of giant flightless bird riders that have a retail price of \$15.00 Australian (about \$9.95 USD) and contain one big bird and either an archer or spear-thrower (command miniatures are also available). The birds come as single miniatures and the riders are multi-piece models consisting of upper and lower body pieces and weapons/shield in the case of the spear-thrower.



The birds are very nicely detailed and had a surprisingly minute amount of cleaning needed. The mold lines were very faint and there was not flash that needed trimming. The riders' legs fit on to the backs of the birds perfectly and their upper torso glued into place easily. The mold line was a little more visible on the riders and a bit more cleaning was needed.

Detail was clean but not exaggerated. Most of the figures don't have a lot of muscle tone but had more of a thin and slightly toned look to them. East German Weightlifting Women these are not!

From the section of Lightly Armored Infantry there are five that we got a look at. First are the leader (bottom-left) and champion (bottom-right). Both have about the same in terms of clothing/armor, little to none. They are both wearing a loincloth and some kind of protection on their arms and legs in addition to helmets that really stand out as the focal point, well sort of, of the models.



The leader's helmet is made from the skull of a large bird and the champion's looks like the hollowed out skull of some demonic beastie. Their weapons are bladed and spiked two-handed affairs and look very much like those that a primitive, or at least barbaric, race would use. No extra weapons or equipment is present.



Each had a minor, but visible, mold line that required cleaning and the champion had a bit of flash that needed attending to. The infantry were supplied with 1" plastic bases so if you're looking to use them in Warhammer Fantasy Battles, which is a perfectly good use for them, you'll need to trim their tabs and get some 20mm plastic bases. Since I brought up how to use these figures I'd bet that most people will pick them up for player-character models, but I'll be dropping them right into my Sons of Kronos army for Chronopia. They might be a bit underdressed for the tribes that make their homes in the frozen lands all year round, but for the more temperate forest regions that also provide homes to the barbarians of Chronopia they'll do perfectly. Like their muscle detail, their faces were not exaggerated or overblown, but it was also not lacking.



Next is a warrior maiden, another champion, who is carrying a rather large club with which to bonk her enemies squarely on the head. Her vambraces and leggings are made out of bones and I thought it was pretty cool to use (presumably) the bones of your dead enemies to protect you. She also has more armor than the two previous girls and it looks like woven reeds or maybe wicker or something like that. Probably the equivalent of regular or padded leather. Cleaning consisted of taking care of a faint mold line and while very passable, her facial detail was a bit less than the first two.

Archer Firing - This is a single 25mm model of a primitive woman dressed in a loincloth, boots, and a cowl holding a bow. The model is tabbed and is supplied with a 1" square slotted base. The model stands easily in the base. The model is cast as a single piece. There is some flash at the upper tip of the bow. There is a slight mold line along the outside of the right leg. The model is sculpted with a static and two-dimensional pose. But the sculpt is of the archer as she has just released her arrow, so the pose appears natural. The model has few details on it, but then it is mostly flesh. The majority of the details are on the archer's wrist protectors and quiver. The model's breasts are not exaggerated. The model has a ponytail that sticks directly out behind her head and connects with the upraised right arm. This model would work well in an Amazon army for either an RPG or miniature game.



Warrior Stone Axe Striking - This is a single 25mm model of a primitive woman dressed in a loincloth and wielding a flint axe. The model is tabbed and is supplied with a 1" square slotted base. The model is cast as a single piece. There is no flash, but there is a slight mold line along the outside of the right leg and on the underside of the axe handle. The model is sculpted in a dynamic, striking pose with the axe raised above her head. Though in a two-dimensional pose, the model looks natural. Like the archer, this model has few details on it being mostly flesh. The majority of the

details are on the wrist guards, the axe, and a swag bag. The face is detailed but the eyebrows are exaggerated. Unlike the archer, the breasts on this model are overly large. The axe itself is well executed - especially the flint axe head. As with the archer, this model would work well as an Amazon for an RPG or miniature game.

Sabertooth Tiger Rider with Axe 1 - This single 25mm model of a primitive woman riding a Sabertooth Tiger and wielding a flint axe consists of 5 parts: the tiger, a shield, flint machete, legs, and torso. The tiger is about 2" long and 1" high at the shoulders. When ordering this model, a random tiger is included in the packing.





All of the foot troops on the previous page have a regular retail price of \$4.25 AUS, which comes out to around \$2.73 USD. The Sabertooth Tiger Riders cost \$7.50 AUS for one cat and rider. This comes out to about \$4.82 USD. These are very reasonable prices but remember to think about postage from Australia.

The tiger is cast as a single piece with a little flash running from the front right paw to the underside of the cat. The cat is sculpted as if it is running along the ground. The mouth is open to display the fangs and the front paws are curved inward as if to grab its prey. Of all the models by Maidenhead Miniatures, this is the best sculpt. The rider has no flash on any of its parts but there is a slight mold line at the base of the torso. The assembly of the model is simple. The legs have a cup where the rounded bottom of the torso fits in. This cup is free of flash and smooth so the torso makes a tight fit. The shield has two lugs that fit around the left hand of the rider. The flint knife has a small hole that fits over a post on the left side of the legs. The legs fit snugly on the back of the tiger. The rider is sculpted with a toothed helmet and shoulder pads. This model, like the Stone Axe Warrior, has oversized breasts. The model has good detail in the face and helmet. This is a neat model – the concept of a Sabertooth-riding Amazon Warrior fits in well as a character for an RPG or as a cavalry leader for a miniature game.

Sabertooth Tiger Archer 1 - This single 25mm model of a primitive woman riding a Sabertooth Tiger and drawing a bow consists of 4 parts: the tiger, a quiver, legs, and torso. The tiger is about 1.5" long and 1" high at the shoulders. When ordering this model, a random tiger is included in the packing. As in the previous model, this tiger is cast as a single piece. It has no flash, but a slight mold line on the right rear paw. This tiger has also been sculpted as if it's running, but in this pose its legs are gathered under its body. The tiger's mouth is open here as well. The rider also has no flash, but a slight mold line on the top of her left arm. This model assembles in the same manner as the Rider with Axe. The torso fits into a cup on the legs. The cup is slightly smaller than the diameter of the torso, so some filing of the torso is required to make it fit. The quiver has a hole into which a post on the legs fits. The rider is sculpted with a toothed helmet and wrist protectors. The detail on this model is about the same as on the others in this series. Like the other Sabertooth Tiger rider, this model would make an excellent cavalry model for a miniature game or for a character or NPC in an RPG.



Miniature Reviews



The Assault Group produces a line of modern military figures and we're fortunate enough to get a nice batch of them to look at in this issue of Fictional Reality.

To the right is a 4-man set of "American Heroes" (LFX-015) that is made up of four different Marines firing M4's. They are all wearing helmets and are either in poses firing their weapons or ready to do so. They are all 1-piece models that require no assembly, but each needed just a tiny bit of cleaning. The mold line was visible, but faint, and some of the bases had a bit of flash. None were defective however.



Two of them are wearing covers over their faces, presumably to deal with sand, but facial detail on the other two was quite good as were the hands. Around their waists are canteens, pouches and packs, all nicely done. Their guns are proportioned well against the rest of the body and don't look oversized. In fact, the weapons are a bit big (check out the Assault Group website for details) as are the heads, but they are intended to be. Anyway, it all looked good to me.

This set retails for £4.95 (about \$8.25 USD and less than \$2.07 per figure!) which is an outstanding value for four different figures. They come on pre-formed bases and you'll need to attach them to plastic bases if that's your thing. All four of these stood up just fine without the addition of a plastic base. If you're playing a modern era miniatures game these are great figures and they also have group deals if you're picking up several packs of figures.

On the next page are five figures from new ranges being put together by the Assault Group. They appear to be more US Marines in various poses and with assault rifles (some with grenade launchers) and one with a shotgun. These also had little need for cleaning, but there was some, and I found no

defects on the models. For the most part the pre-molded (attached) bases are ok but I think that going up and down hills could pose a problem so mine are probably going to get glued to a plastic base, especially the middle guy in the picture above. The running pose is great and figures with more animation and appearance of movement are welcome, but this guy is very top heavy when you take into consideration how small his base is.

Detail on this set group was as good as the first, which means it was excellent and having lots of the same type of figure in different poses is always something that I'll welcome. I'd use any/all of these guys in miniature games like Dogs of War or in rpg's like d20 Modern or super hero games as soldiers and super cops.

The prices are excellent and the quality of these miniatures is outstanding. Ok, on to Michael and his look at some Taliban and African troops.



Taliban Skirmishing: This set (right) includes four 25mm models in Fundamentalist Islamic dress and are armed with AK-47 assault rifles. Each model is in a different pose. And the models are shipped in a 1-1/2" x 1-1/2" heavy cardboard box. All four models are cast as a single piece with a minimal base connecting their feet. On all four models the only flash present is on the bottom of the base. There are slight mold lines on the figures, but most of these occur along the pants legs.



In general, the models are sculpted with a flattened turban, a cloak and a rifle. Three of the four have bandanas covering their faces below the eyes. The fourth has a full beard. Each model has good detailing, especially on the rifles and the hands. Most of the models are sculpted with layers of loose fitting clothes. The execution of these clothes is very good for this size of model. The models have dynamic though not unreasonable poses. These are exceptional pieces for a modern game.

Masked Militia : This set (below) includes four 25mm models in western dress armed with AK-47 assault rifles. Each model is a different pose. Like Taliban Skirmishing, the models are shipping in a 1-1/2" x 1-1/2" heavy cardboard box. All four models are cast as a single piece with a minimal base connecting their feet. On three of the four models the only flash present is on the bottom of the base. The fourth, the model armed with a pistol and rifle, has a large amount of flash extending from the sight on the rifle. Once again, there are slight mold lines on the figures, but most of these occur along the pants legs. The models are sculpted wearing a suit and carrying an AK-47. All models have a bandana obscuring their face just below the eyes. All but one model has a head covering of some kind – either a dew rag to a forage cap. Again the detail work on the rifles is very good. In addition, there are more facial details on these models than on the Taliban ones. This includes one model with dreadlocks and another with sunglasses. As with the Taliban, the poses of the models are dynamic though not cartoonish. These would make exceptional models for a *Blackhawk Down* modern skirmish game.



GAMES WORKSHOP Miniature Reviews GAMES WORKSHOP

From Games Workshop we've got two blisters of figures to take a look at and we start with a set of two Death Cultists for the Warhammer 40K Daemonhunters army.

These two bad girls form as single piece miniatures in a blister (of two) for \$10.00 USD, which is actually cheaper than I had expected them to be. They are not 'bargain' miniatures but they are supremely detailed and are certainly worth the price if you have a use for them. Not sure if they are "impulse buy" figures though.



Anyway, both are very good 28mm representations of the 54mm Inquisitor figures, and while they are not just smaller versions of the big ones they are great figures nonetheless. If you look carefully you'll notice that the figures are duplicates of each other. From the neck down there is only a very slight difference in the two, mostly in cosmetic bits of their armor. They are each wearing different masks and as is plainly visible one is carrying two swords while the other has a single two-handed blade. There are also some cosmetic differences from the neck up but they are very close to being twins, and not of pleasure I'd wager. I'm not running a Daemonhunter army and really have no plans of starting one, but I grabbed these two ladies to use as bad guys, err girls, in Mutants & Masterminds. Cybernetic Ninja Ho's attack! I could also

easily drop them into a 'modern' game as, well, Cybernetic Ninja Ho's, and could even use them as villains (maybe heroes) in a sci-fi game...like playing Inquisitor with 28mm figures!

Ok, from sci-fi we move to fantasy, specifically a pack of three new dwarves for the Lord of the Rings strategy battle game. The three stout gents below do come in a bit shorter than their Warhammer counterparts but they are really not any less detailed or usable. In fact, if your not a LOTR player they would make very passable rank and file troops in a dwarven army for Warhammer Fantasy Battle or you could even drop them into a Chronopia army without too much trouble. They could also be used for slightly tall, and bearded halflings or even gnomes if you like. Two carry hand axes and shields while the third is armed with a 2-handed axe. Each are in different



erent poses and two of them are wearing chain shirts while the other has one what looks like padded leather or maybe banded mail. For \$9.00 this is a nice pack of three dwarves that actually have a lot of potential uses and are up to GW's regular high standards.

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Our selection of Reaper miniatures starts off with several guys from the Dark Heaven line.

The brute to the right is a Clay Golem (2706, \$4.99 USD) and I can't help thinking that he might look good painted green. Of course, he wouldn't be wearing purple pants but you can't win them all. Actually, the big guy is wearing shorts, clay shorts I'd guess, and you could paint them green.



Being hunched over he's a bit shorter than human-sized models but he's easily twice as thick as any human. The mold line was just about invisible on him and the only cleaning that I needed to do was on the base. He is muscles on top of muscles and the facial detail is awesome! He's either really pissed off because he wanted to remain that little ball of clay or his master just told him to go smash something. Great monster miniature that many GM's could probably use multiples of.



Let the games begin. The Gladiator to the left (2694, \$2.99 USD) is carrying a trident and is very likely about to ram it through some poor sap. He's wearing a mix of leather and chain armor with a steel helmet.

He's not overly muscular but the detail is good and even though his helmet has protection for his eyes his facial detail (mouth and teeth) is quite good.

There were a few places on the model where flash needed to be trimmed/cleaned but overall it was not too bad.

If you're playing Habet Hoch Habet! or some other gladiatorial combat game he'll fit right in and the price is very nice also. Additionally, using him as a fighter player-character in Dungeons & Dragons is also high on my list for him.

As a D&D player there were definitely many things that could scare me but none really made my bowels release like a beholder. Quite a while ago we looked at a miniature from Reaper called 'Conjunctivius' who was a beholder-like model but now the Eye Beast, below, is here and woo-doggy I'd have a very bad feeling in my tummy if I saw him slapped down on the game map.

The Eye Beast (2712, \$8.99 USD) is a three-piece model (top, middle, and bottom section of the great eye and maw) that went together easily and there really is no need for putty or pins.

I really like how the bottom tentacles are floating / dragging on the ground instead of putting him on a clear flying base.

Inside his mouth is a big nasty tongue along with good inside-the-mouth detail like the ridges on the roof of its mouth. There are seven tentacles that end in eyes on the top of its head and the three below do also. As you can see it has a whole mouth full of teeth and definitely got hit with the ugly stick. Awesome miniature that is well worth every penny of its price!



Above are two heroes of legend, Hercules (right, 2702, \$4.99 USD) and Thor (left, 2701, \$4.99 USD). Both figures need a bit of assembly, which is not the norm for most Dark Heaven figures and is more common with their Warlord cousins. Hercules comes with a large metal studded war club (separate piece along with his two hands), a bow and quiver that is glued on to his back and a lion's tail that is glued on to his cloak, which is actually the hide of a lion.

His cloak is magnificent and includes the head and all four paws of the beast. It's easily the focal point of the miniature. He sports a mess of hair and full beard but his eyes and cheeks stand out well. I had to do exactly zero cleaning on the figure itself and only clean up a tiny bit of flash off of the base.

Thor needed both hands (one carrying his hammer) glued into place and while he's not fully armored he is wearing considerably more than Hercules. A very nice helmet, gauntlets, boots and some chainmail is all this god of thunder really needs. His flowing cape looks good and he also bears a very full beard and a long mane of hair. Both models had good muscle definition, and they are strong looking lads, and Thor's face is really well done.

Thor's hammer (with several runes on it) and helmet are what stand out the most to me on the model. Thor did need some cleaning up as the mold line was visible in a couple of places and there was a bit of flash, but it was taken care of easily enough.

These are two outstanding models that are destined to become part of my Sons of Kronos army for Chronopia but they could also do well as player-characters in any fantasy game or could be worked in as leaders in other mass combat games.



Charon, boatman of the river Styx (above, 2696, \$8.99 USD) is a multiple piece model that, in my opinion, is better suited as part of a diorama than something that your DM would drop on the table in an encounter with your party.

If you wanted to you could use the boat in a diorama and use Charon by himself by slapping him on a base and using him as a wight or maybe a necromancer. The boat also comes with two lanterns for the rear of the boat and one on a pole that fits on to the front. If you're going to use Charon without the boat you'll also probably want to swap out his pole for a more suitable weapon. Awesome detail on this figure but there's a bit less usability here than with many of their other releases. Personally, I'll be taking him off the boat and using him as a Necromancer or Warped Lord in my Devout army for Chronopia.



Over on the left is a Fungus Patch (2695, \$3.99 USD) that will mainly serve as a terrain feature, perfect for a Warlord tabletop by the way, or could be used to decorate the base of a suitably large creature like a giant or dragon. The skull at the base leads me to think that these are not the kind of mushrooms that you'll sauté in a pan and are best avoided.

There was a little flash that needed to be cleaned but if you're looking for a quick base decoration (for a large base though) or just want to decorate your battlefield then have at it.



Toxanimer (2700, \$3.99 USD) is a human wizard and the first thing I noticed about the figure is how much it weighs. He comes in heavier than some Warlord figures of the same size.

Tox is an older man with a bald head and a long flowing beard. He is wearing long robes and a large cloak that has a dragon on the back for you to paint instead of trying to do it freehand like me, which would end up looking like a stick-dragon. Many thanks to the sculptor and their talented hands for making this figure really user-friendly.

One hand carries a crystal ball and the other bears a staff that is topped by what look like dragon claws holding, guess what, a dragon egg. At least it looks like a dragon egg to me and with the prevalent dragon motif flowing all over this figure it's not too much of a stretch. There is also a small and nicely detailed dragon familiar sitting on Tox's shoulder to add some more flavor to the figure.

The mold line on Tox was visible but not bad and the only other flash that needed to be cleaned was on the base. I'd easily use him as a player-character (probably not a low-level one though) or as a wizard for a human army in Warhammer Fantasy Battle. Of course, you could also port him over for use in Warlord once it is fully released.



First a human wizard and now a dwarf one. Odom Rumblebeard (2707, \$2.99 USD) is a dwarf spellcaster of the arcane variety and he's not afraid to wear a bit of armor to increase his chances of survival.

He's carrying a staff and scroll and would fit in well with other dwarves from Chronopia but could also be used in other games with ease.

The mold line on Odom was more visible than on previous figures but not enough that the figure was marred or anything after trimming it.

Even though Odom is billed as a wizard he would also fit nicely into the role of a druid or cleric. In fact, I think he may actually be better suited in one of those roles. Being a dwarf you expect, and get, a beard and his is tied into two braids. He's also carrying a ton of gear in the form of pouches and trinkets.

Extra personality is brought to the model in his staff, which is topped with a ram's head and his cloak that appears to be the skin of an alligator or crocodile. A very good character model here.



To the left you'll see my favorite miniature from this group of Dark Heaven figs. It's Manganaw, Lord of the Gnolls (2704, \$8.99 USD) and he comes in three pieces (right and left arm and the rest of his body). Manganaw's arms went into place very easily and I don't think that they needed to be pinned.

He's carrying a large flail and not much else except a snarl that would (should) make you think twice about messing with him. He's also wearing about zero in terms of armor, but a loincloth covers up his unmentionables.

Detail is very good, especially his muscles and face/snout, and he should paint up very well.

Oh, why is he \$8.99? Well, he's twice the size of a normal gnoll, which also makes him about twice the size of a human. I have huge plans for him in a gnoll army once the 'build' rules for Warlord eventually come out. Of course, using him as the leader of a band of gnolls in Dungeons & Dragons is how most people are likely to use him and that works great too.



Ok, into the Warlord realm for a bit before Michael takes over with a bunch of figs to look at. Above are two new orcs (Sergeant, xxxx, \$4.99 USD and Warlord, xxxx, \$4.99 USD) for Warlord and they each come in three pieces with their arms/hands separate from the rest of the body. Actually, the Sergeant (left) has his head as a separate piece also.

Assembly went pretty easy with these guys but I noticed that more cleaning time needed to be given to both of them than with the Dark Heaven figures we looked at earlier. Each had a bit more flash and visible mold lines than the others but it resulted in maybe a few more minutes of attention each, nothing more.

The Sergeant's whip is bendable and if you're careful you can probably get it into almost any position you like. He's also carrying a large dagger but he seems more of a motivator than a full-time combatant. He's wearing lots of heavy plate and a bit of chain mail armor but has no gear.

The Warlord is simply awesome and if you're not going to play Warlord then he deserves a seat at the table in your Confrontation or Warhammer orc army. The magnificence of this model just can't be refused, it's great and just looking at him will plainly tell you so.

He's got massive tusks, dreadlocks and skulls on his shoulder pad and axe. The head of the axe is a bit big for the top part of the shaft so be careful not to bend it as it could break. He has very little bare flesh and is close to being a tank with all of the metal plate that he's wearing. The straining of his jaw is visible as he's barking out some order or threat and if you didn't figure it out before I love this model, absolutely top notch!

WARLORD

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Orba Sinhan (10462, \$3.99 USD) is a human Mercenary Warlord that carries his helmet in one hand and a big frickin' sword in the other. I mean really big! It's one of those 'cleave you from stem to stern' kind of big swords that he probably carries around for looks almost as much as actual use.

Orba has not-quite shoulder length hair that is parted in the middle and a long moustache and small beard that really make his face stand out well. He's wearing animal pelts and plate armor and has foregone a shield, probably to get

some extra chopping action in with that sword. He needed considerably less cleaning than the orcs we just looked at and his sword hand (separate piece) glued easily into place.

He'd be an easy pick to be used as a fighter player-character in any fantasy rpg and I could even see being used as a leader for a unit of Firstborn Swordsmen in Chronopia.

Valandil the High Mage to the right is another model, like Orba above, with cool facial hair. He has a neat little mustache and, dare I say it, what look like mutton chops to go along with his long partially braided hair.

He's carrying a sword (on his back) and a spear but he's probably at least as adept in the arcane arts as in fighting. His armor, which is mostly made up of leathers and robes has a swashbuckler feel to it and his cloak is very cool with some buttons going down the back which allow it to open up and flow more and restrict his movement less. Detail abounds on this guy and he has lots of buckles, belts, and gear on him. There was a bit of cleaning to be done and he comes as a single piece model that will see good use in my human Warlord army, but is equally well suited to any fantasy rpg or miniature battle game.



Sir Justin, Templar (2715, \$2.99) – This is a single-piece 25mm model of a knight. The base is part of the figure and textured in the standard Dark Heaven "broccoli" style. The only flash on the model was on the underside of the base and there were no visible mold lines.

The model is sculpted in an advancing pose, with his sword in his right arm held in front while he is stepping forward on his left foot. The model is carrying a medium sized shield with a Maltese-style cross boss. The model is also wearing a full helmet with a T-shaped



opening for his eyes. Finally, the model is kitted out with a full backpack including bedroll and haversack. I get the impression that Sir Justin has just donned his helmet and is advancing toward a strange noise just off the road. This is a well-sculpted model – the detail and pose balance out to make an interesting model. This could easily be painted up as a crusader – with a white tabard and shield offset by a red cross. This would make a great miniature for a paladin or knight in an RPG.

Goblin Wolf (2710, \$6.99) – This blister includes two identical single-piece lupine models on an integrated "broccoli" base. There was a little flash on the tails and rear of the bases, but no visible mold lines. The pose of the model is of a wolf that has paused after advancing near his victim. The model is snarling and has his ears laid back against his body. The interesting thing about this sculpt is the face of the model. As the name implies, the visage is more that of a hairy goblin than the normal



wolf face. The nose is flatter and the mouth wider. This model would make a very good dire wolf or werewolf in full wolf form. I can also see it used as the unnatural form of a shape-changing goblin druid – now there's an interesting adventure seed!

Gothic Archway (2703, \$4.99) – This blister includes a single 25mm scale Gothic archway. The model is flat on one side and sculpted on the other – to allow it to be attached to a terrain piece. The sculpt is clean with no flash and only one visible mold line along the underside of the base.



There is quite a bit of fine detail on this model. The arch itself has beaded rows inside ribs. The arch is supported on two gothic columns with gargoyles above the capitals. The columns appear to be octagonal with a heavy base and finely detailed capital. If you make your own terrain for dungeon crawling or battling in the ruins, this model makes an excellent addition to a gothic or semi-gothic building.

Ilmarin Duskwanderer (2713, \$2.99) – This is another single-piece 25mm model with an integrated "broccoli" base. The model had a little flash on the underside of the base and at the lower point of the upper blade on his twin sword. There were no visible mold lines.



This is an interesting model – it is an elfen warrior in banded mail holding forth a double-headed sword or spear. The model is sculpted in what appears to be a salute position – a "present arms" stance. The model has long hair, which has a braid running down the right side of his face. This leaves the pointed ear visible and emphasized the elfin features. It is the armor, however, that is the most striking part of this model. The shoulder pads, the back of the breastplate, and the sides and rear of the skirt all have a vine and leaf detail. The rest of the armor is sculpted into small plates. The effect of this is of a very ornate suit of armor. I would paint this model in white with an emerald or forest green trim – to emphasize the floral details. The sculptor meant this model to be an elfen or half-elfen ranger figure.

Heavy Infantry Light Mortar (7061, \$7.99) – This blister comes with three hexagonal bases and three identical strips of 4 infantry models. This is enough to make three bases of heavy infantry.

The bases had no flash and a minor mold line along one side. This is normal for the CAV bases. Of the three infantry strips, only one had some minor flash from the ends of two of the guns. Some of the figures had minor mold lines on their bases. The figures on the strips come in three poses – a sergeant, a regular trooper, and two light mortar troopers.

The light mortars are fired from the hip rather than on a tripod. All three poses are fully armored figures with the exception of the sergeant who is not wearing a helmet. The detail on these figures is good for the 10mm size. For players wishing to add infantry to their CAV force, this blister is a very good value. The figures are well sculpted and can be arranged on the base so as not to obscure their details.



KDM Mastodon (center, 7039, \$10.99) – This blister includes the three pieces of the CAV – legs, body, and gun – as well as a hex base. The legs and gun had no flash and slight mold lines. The body, however, had a noticeable amount of flash on both the left and right rear vents. This was very difficult to remove without damaging the grill detail. The model assembled easily – the body balanced on the legs without glue. The weapon was a little front-heavy and had to be held into position until the glue dried. The Mastodon has a good bit of detail for this size model. I spoke with the sculptor, James Burrell, and he said this came from the 3-D printing process they use to make the models. Rather than sculpt them in epoxy putty, the CAV are designed on computer and then rendered in a 3-D printing machine. The result is then made into a metal master for the spin-molds. The Mastodon is the first of the single-weapon CAV that I have seen. The model is well proportioned and, when assembled toward the rear of the base, is balanced. This is a good-looking CAV – a nice departure from the two-fisted standard armament.



model assembled easily, but the torso required a little filing on the post that is designed to fit into the legs. The trick to assembling the “two-fisted” style CAV (i.e. the ones with a gun on each arm) is to glue the arms to the torso before putting the torso on the legs. The Dictator is my favorite CAV – I’ve got three in my own



mercenary unit. This model is basically the same, however the new guns have a more detailed styling. Though this model is for use with the new Dictator variant from the *Journal of Recognition 2*, it can serve well as a regular Dictator. You’ve got to respect any CAV that hurls Volkswagens at you!

Koda Works Dictator II (right/top, 7063, \$9.99) – This blister includes the four pieces of the CAV – legs, body, and arms on a sprue – as well as a hex base. The legs and the body had no flash and slight mold lines. The guns had no flash and only the left one had a noticeable mold line. The guns were easily snapped off the sprue and the flash remaining on the gun was easily cleaned off without damaging any details. The

Grundor House Butcher (right, 7059, \$9.99) – This blister includes the 4 basic pieces of a “two-fisted” CAV – legs, body, left and right arms – as well as a hex base. All the pieces had little flash and slight mold lines. The arms came on a sprue and needed to be snapped off. This caused problems as the rear of the gun, when the sprue was attached, is inset about 1mm. As such it was very difficult to clean of the remnants of the sprue after the arms were freed. I used a knife to shape the left over bit and filed it down flush with the rim so as to appear to be part of the model. The quality of the model, in both detail and assembly, is what I’ve come to expect from the Reaper CAV line. The detail in this model is much greater than in the earlier CAV models – there are small panel only a few millimeters on a side and the missile pods on the shoulders have quite a bit of detail. There is enough detail on the model to reward a careful painter. This, plus its forward hunch stance will make a great addition to any merc company.



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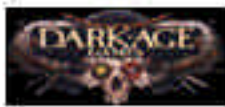
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Miniature Reviews



We received a butt-load (yes, that's an official weights & measures term, but no, I cannot tell you how much it is) of figures in from the guys down in Georgia at Dark Age games and this issue of Fictional Reality will present about half of them, grouped by armies so you can get a decent look at the makeup of what's available for each race and get a feel for the 'look' of the army as a whole. We'll start off with the Brood, which are the most recent addition to the game.

First is the Murtros (center) and he'll set you back a cool \$9.99 USD. This may seem like a hefty price for one miniature but this guy is significantly taller than a standard ogre miniature and is probably around 12' (scale) in height. It's easily made up of the amount of metal of at least 3 standard figures.

Murtros comes in three pieces (bulk of the body, right arm/shield, and tail) and it's definitely worth taking the time to do a slow look-over of the figure before (and after assembly). Not that I was expecting to find any flaws (there were none) but to appreciate how well the sculptor brought Brom's artwork to life as a miniature. Detail is great here, muscle, bone, horns, everything! Murtros is tall and lanky, but not feeble-looking. Definitely a bad ass.

The mold line did need a bit of cleaning but flash was minute and it (he?) went together easily. This is one of those figures that I'm looking forward to painting even if I end up never using him as part of a Brood army. Extra uses for this figure are plenty and include being used as a demon in Dungeons and Dragons (or even in d20 Modern or Call of Cthulhu, imagine the load of crap that your investigators will drop when confronting this guy) or even as a fiendish giant or mutated ogre. Painted properly it could also serve as a nasty Nephrite of Algoth in Ultimate Warzone. Simply, a great figure that starts off our look at Dark Age figures in the right direction.



They have an almost rotted or somewhat zombie-like appearance and could look very cool painted up in that fashion. One cool little extra on these models is the little 'nub' of a tail that they have. Reminds me a lot of the tail that Hal's friend had in the movie "Shallow Hal". Flash was a little more prominent on these guys, but nothing that a hobby knife and 1-2 minutes couldn't take care of.



so you can expect most miniatures in this army to be of the large variety, around the size of ogres or larger like the Brood.

Below (right) is Soul Splitter #1 (of two variants) who comes in three pieces (lower body, upper body, and crossbow/arms). He fit together pretty easily and there is some room for rotation where the upper and lower torso pieces come together so some variation in a group of these models is certainly possible.

The Dragyri have an alien appearance but not at all like the Brood. These are sleek even while being quite muscular and are even almost regal in their looks. Having three fingers and two toes makes them different but they look like a race of proud warriors to me. The Soul Splitter has a retail price of \$8.99 which is not bad at all for such a large model and he does have some uses outside of Dark Age, possibly as an ogre or some sort of giant.

At the bottom of the page is a Dragyri Whisper, a female fighter of about the same height but smaller in mass than the males.



She is all about close combat and carries two Chakram. The same kind of throwing disks made popular by Xena: Warrior Princess.

Whisper comes in three pieces (body and two arms) and she went together very easily. A very minor amount of cleaning was needed and this consisted mostly of taking care of a very faint mold line and a few bits of flash. Detail was excellent without being overdone and she should paint up to look great. Both arms attach just below the shoulder and give you some flexibility on how to position her arms.

This is a superior model and is a bargain at \$6.99. Like the Soul Splitter, and quite a few more Dragyri models, she could pull double-duty as a female ogre that's not ugly as sin...one with just three fingers and two toes though.



Only slightly shorter in stature than Murtros is the Brood Grist who comes in at \$7.99 USD. He also has a strangely alien appearance but is mostly covered in a large flowing cloak (as opposed to Murtros who is basically unarmored) and is carrying some sort of ranged weapon that is attached to a tank on his back.

Grist is a single-piece model and the only real cleanup that was needed was along the mold line. Facial and flesh detail here are very good and the right paint job on the skin could make this guy look downright spooky.

Applications outside of Dark Age are a little different than Murtros because of his gun and backpack but it could be some kind of steam or magic weapon, but fantasy uses are limited. On the other hand, sci-fi and modern uses increase as he could be any sort of space menace or conjured evil entity and that gun could be some kind of life force sucker and shooter-outer.

Rounding out the Brood figures is a pack of two Sawblades, which retail for \$14.99 for the pair. They are not quite as tall as Murtros but they are about 1½ to 2 times taller than most human models and all of the Brood come with large (40mm) round plastic bases.

The Sawblades are another step forward on the nightmare or alien scale and are sculpted exactly as you'd expect Brom miniatures to look. They represent his artwork extremely well. One of their arms has been severed at the elbow and has been replaced with a chainsaw-type weapon. The other arm is intact and holds a battered shield. Clothing is at a minimum but does include a helmet that covers the front part of their head and their eyes and nose.



Taking a short break from the standard Dragyri warriors, don't worry they'll be back in a minute, to gaze at an even larger trooper, the Ice Elemental. Yes, he's almost twenty bucks (\$19.99) and is likely to be the most expensive single model that you'll pick up in a while, but it is just too cool. It comes in five pieces (body, head, two arms, and tail) and needed a bit more cleaning than the previous warriors but after spending a few minutes with each piece it went together easily and each piece has a little play in it for some variety in the pose and if you're handy with putty you can open up even more possibilities.



All of the sharp angles on this model will really be brought out with some dry-brushing and it could turn out marvelous. The rather large head makes it look top-heavy but it really didn't end up having a balance problem at all. The obvious use of this model outside of Dark Age would be as an ice para-elemental in Dungeons and Dragons, but I can see many players building a Dark Age force around a block of one or two of these monsters. Also, if you're not picking it up for Dark Age it could also serve as a nasty summoned monster (probably painted something other than ice blue) or as a golem if painted as stone or even in metallic colors. You'll probably need to come up with a specific reason of your own for this model if it's not going to be part of a Dragyri army, but this is where I'll luck out and get to use it in an rpg and a miniature game.

Another larger model, in fact it's larger than the Ice Elemental, is the Dragyri Soul Warden. The Soul Warden (center) is a spell caster but makes for an impressively large bundle of joy on the battlefield. Coming in at about 4" tall and about as wide he towers over even the Dragyri warriors. He's just plain huge and strangely will only set you back \$14.99.

It's cast as one single piece and still retains a good look of motion and didn't appear very two-dimensional. Some bending did occur in travel as both ends of his staff were bent but did not break. Not sure if mine was packed with less foam than usual but just take a look into the blister and make sure that the one you're about to pick up is either A-OK or just bent like mine was. A little bit of patience and some careful pressure put everything back in place. Some cleaning (flash and mold line) was needed but I actually expected more on a single piece model of this size. It does not have a tab to fit into the plastic base and it did have a tendency to lean back a little bit. A slight bend at the ankles helps this (be careful not to bend too far) and I would suggest attaching him to the base with a nice 5-minute epoxy. That way you'll make sure that he's not going anywhere and you can also do some nice texturing to the base.



Unlike the first two Dragyri warriors that we saw he looks like a much older, wiser, and much more wrinkled variety of their race. Not weak-looking by any means just about a gazillion years old is all. In fact, any fantasy undead players out there could use him as a superb giant mummy spellcaster or lich. The same would hold true for fantasy rpg's. Come to think of it when it's time for me to put the brush to this guy I think I'll paint him up to serve both purposes; a Dragyri mage and a lich. Oh, I can hear the curses of my D&D group already ;)

Ok, back to the Dragyri warriors for us and next is the Cyclone (right). It's another female warrior and she is basically an exact duplicate of Whisper except she's in a totally different pose and carries swords instead of the chakram. The sculptor did an awesome job of duplicating every other aspect of the model. If you wanted to you could switch the weapons of each model and create completely new poses without either looking out of place at all.

The mold line on Cyclone was practically invisible and the only areas that really needed any cleaning were some bits of flash on the swords. When assembling Cyclone there is also some play in the position that you assemble the swords which gives some more pose variants.



Like Whisper, Cyclone is not wearing much at all in the way of armor, really nothing more than clothes that she would wear even when not in battle. Her pose is very reminiscent of a ballet dancer except that she'll gut you and leave your insides on the outside. She's another \$6.99 model which I don't see as overpriced considering the amount of excellent detail on the model and its size.

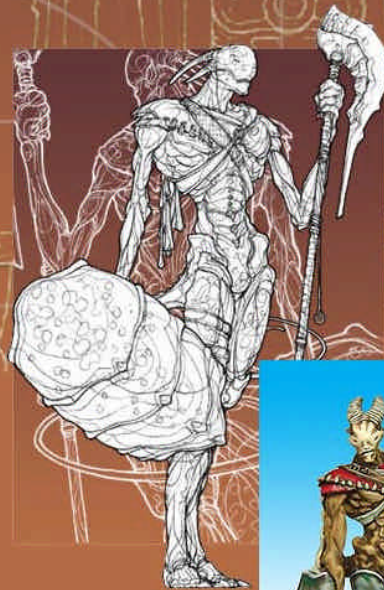
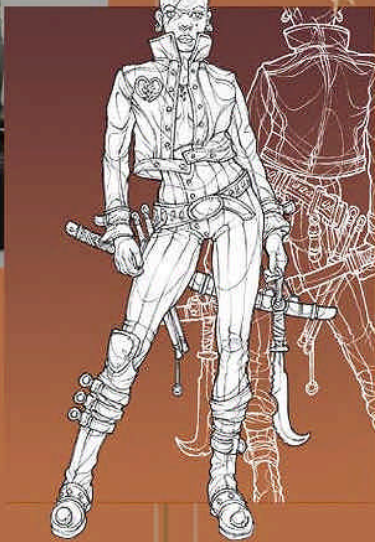
At the bottom of the page are a couple of Dragyri Slave Spearmen that come either three to a blister for \$9.99 or in a 10-man (slave) pack for \$19.99. Since you're essentially getting four free models by purchasing the 10-pack I would suggest going in that direction when putting together your army.

The Slave Spearmen are significantly smaller than the Dragyri warriors but are still taller than human models. They are also less muscular and are not as sleek or regal as the others. They definitely appear as a less evolved offshoot of the same race or type of creature though.

There are two 'flavors' of Slave Spearmen; one with the spear parallel with the ground and the other bringing it down in an overhead strike. Both wear bits of tattered clothing and hoods.

They are all single-piece models and you'll get two of one model and one of the other (random) in each blister. They all required a bit of cleaning but none were broken. A few bent spears was really expected here as they are poking in different directions in the blister. There is a ton of flesh on each model and they look like they'll be very easy to paint with good results. Outside of Dark Age they could also be used for minor demons in Dungeons and Dragons.





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The Dragyri Death's Device and then we'll take a look at a few Forsaken models. Yeah, I know I said we'd wait until next issue for those but I couldn't help myself. More Forsaken and the Skaard will appear in the next issue of Fictional Reality.

The Death's Device (below) is basically the hand-to-hand version of the Dragyri Soul Splitter. He is carrying a sword that is larger than most regular models and is more heavily armored than his ranged counterpart. We're back into \$9.99 territory with this guy but he's significantly larger and bulkier than the female warriors. I've already been able to paint up one of these bad-asses (for my son to use as an ogre fighter in our Dungeons and Dragons campaign) and it looks very imposing standing next to an orc or skeleton. I can only imagine what a couple of complete squads of these guys will look like bearing down on you. Right now, I can only imagine it, soon I'll be able to tell you.



Three pieces (body, sword/hands, and back) make up this model and cleanup was a very short process. It may have been my positioning of the back piece but I had a few gaps that were visible until I painted them in with black paint. You could also use some putty here but that seemed a little overboard to me. Of course, I could have rushed the assembly and created the small (tiny actually) gaps

where you might not have any. Anyway, a little black paint hid them just fine. You have fewer posing options with the Death's Device than the females or even the Soul Splitter. You're really locked into the one pose because of both hands being attached to the sword. Somebody of considerable modeling skill would be needed (not me) to alter the pose of this miniature. More of the Dragyri warriors are being done in second poses now so I'm hoping for a Death's Device #2 sometime in the future. Awesome model!

The first Forsaken model I wanted to show you is by far and away my favorite (so far) of the whole army; Saint Mark. Now, that's not to say that the others are scrubs because that would be giving you the wrong impression. It's just that as soon as I saw the model my jaw just dropped at its pose and, well, just everything about it.

Saint Mark comes in six pieces but you'll only actually use five when assembling the model. The sixth piece is an alternate head that you could use here or swap out on to another model or just stick it on a spike as a piece of terrain if you like. One of the pieces is a rock that he stands on, actually he's jumping off of it ready to bonk someone with his hammer, and it fits into the slot on the base without overlapping the sides. The body needed a bit of cleaning but had no defects and the shield-arm fit into place just fine and gives you a bit



of leeway in its final position. The cape is long and flowing and fits on the back well. You might want to pin it into place but I decided against it because once my figures are painted they seem to have fewer accidents than when they are sitting at my desk waiting in line. That's when they fall off of shelves or get knocked over the most. The peg that goes from his right leg down into the rock needed a bit of trimming to fully hide it from view. \$8.99 for Saint Mark may make you wince but it's a superb model that I'll be using outside of Dark Age more than in as the Dragyri is my army of choice. He's going to make a wonderful character in Mutants and Masterminds, fling around in power armor and smacking evil-do'ers upside the head with his hammer, which by the way has a cross engraved on the head so he'll definitely leave a lasting impression after he brings the pain. If you're the creative type you could even mount him on a flying base to really make him unique.



Above are two more members of the Forsaken army, Reaver (left) and a Banger (right). Reaver is a bald female fighter that looks like she probably doesn't get hassled much about being follically-challenged. This is a thin, single-piece, model that is carrying a sword and a nasty looking hook on a chain. She is wearing tight pants and a biker jacket but has no shirt on, which is extremely obvious, but the figure would still get a PG-13 rating nowadays. There was a fair amount of cleaning needed on Reaver (flash and mold line) but the detail on the model is really good and she's worth the \$3.99 price tag. Other uses for this model are a-plenty as she'd work perfectly in d20 Modern and also just about any other sci-fi rpg that you'd want to drop her into.

Banger is a male gunfighter that comes as a whole body and two separate arms/guns. He has very much of a Road Warrior look to him and while his mold line was a little prominent it was not thick and was easily taken care of. Both arms fit into place easily and while you could alter their pose I think this figure works best with both guns blazing away with arms extended forward. His only real armor is his slotted and spiked helmet but he has several pouches on his belt and a holster on his left hip. Banger is \$4.99 and has similar uses to Ravage outside of the Dark Age world.

Below are three new models that are part of a Forsaken army package. For \$59.99 you'll get 18 models (about \$3.33 per model) which includes a new Bane Grenadier (bottom left), a new female Bane Warrior (bottom center) and a limited edition sculpt of Saint Mark (bottom right) that it significantly different from the standard one that we saw earlier.

The first two models make great additions to a unit of Bane. They had faint mold lines and really no flash to speak of. They are wearing bits of plate armor and have flowing robes as the bulk of their dress. I like very much that the guys at Dark Age have a good representation of female figures in their armies just to break up the monotony of an all-male army.

The real star of this group of three, and the army pack for that matter, is the limited edition sculpt of Saint Mark. He's not wearing a helmet and this head is different from the non-helmeted version from the first sculpt, but is still discernable as being the same guy. Instead of having hair he has six 'studs' protruding from his skull so I'm guessing that some story-related event took place to bring out this change. He's armed with what could pass as a plasma pistol and large circular saw weapon that makes the Skill Saw in my garage look wimpy by comparison. He's still wearing lots of plate armor and a long cloak, but looks very pissed off. A little cleaning was needed, but this was limited mostly to the mold line.

If you're looking to jump into Dark Age with the Forsaken you could do a lot worse than picking up this set. You get a very respectable skirmish-level army that can stand on its own or be used as a base for a larger force. Sixty bucks is not a bad initial investment in an all-metal army for Dark Age and it sports a limited edition figure, nothing bad to say about that.



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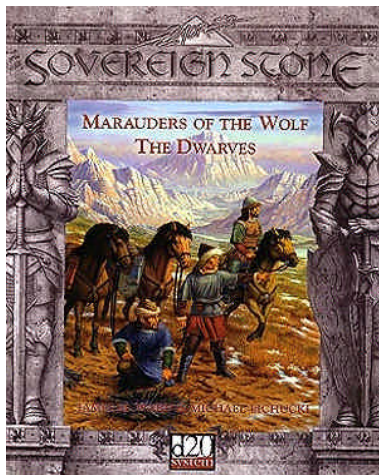
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D20 Product Reviews



BASICS

Marauders of the Wolf: The Dwarves is a 144-page trade paperback source book for the **Sovereign Stone** d20 fantasy campaign setting. This volume has a full color cover and black and white pages. This book presents information about the dwarves in the Sovereign Stone setting. It is published by Sovereign Press and has a retail price of \$24.99.

REVIEW

Chapter one provides a quick introduction to the volume. The second chapter of the volume presents the dwarves as a people. It describes their tight clan affiliation and physical appearance. The mundane life of the dwarves is covered in detail, with information on hunting, raiding, and "leisure activities". The concept of "Unhorsed" is described. Basically, an unhorsed dwarf is one that is no longer part of his clan. More an outcast than a pariah – the unhorsed dwarf no longer rides the steppes but lives and works in city. There is quite a bit of information about the dwarves and the Unhorsed in this chapter. Chapter three begins with a detailed history of the Clan dwarves that covers over a thousand years. Then each major clan is presented with enough information for a player to comfortably run a dwarf character from that clan. Clan Chief NPC's are presented in sidebars with their associated clans. After covering the clans, the different roles or offices in the clan are presented – from Clan Chief to the different types of military units. The Unhorsed then get equal treatment as the Clans. A short geopolitical section covering the relationships between the Clans and the other races follows this. Chapter four's information on the religion of the dwarves is as detailed as chapter three. Not only is the creation myth presented, but there are discussions of dwarven mysticism as well as different cults and religious orders. Chapter five is a detailed description of the dwarven lands, where they are, who lives there, and what goes on. This is great background information for a referee, and wonderful color text for players. The largest section here describes the City of the Unhorsed. Encounter tables and weather are presented for each region. Chapter six is the shortest one, after the introduction. It describes the shamanistic magic of the dwarves and presents new spells, magic items, and relics. The last chapter includes all the information one needs to create a Clan or Unhorsed character. Special dwarven feats are described as well as nine Prestige classes unique to the Clan Dwarves. The book finishes up with information on both the dwarven smithy and armory.

VALUE

Dwarves have been represented in almost every fantasy game since the original *Dungeons and Dragons* back in the mid-seventies. Usually, they are a stout hard working mining people – an image popularized by Wagner and Tolkien. Sovereign Press has definitely broken this mold. In *Marauders of the Wolf*, the dwarves are modeled on the Mongols – stout horse lords rather than dour miners. This originally took me by surprise. I've always liked the King Under the Mountain and a Lord of the Steppes was something new. Too say the least, I was skeptical. Sovereign Press has put quite a bit of work into this book. They have fully fleshed out their interpretation of dwarves with a rich history, society, and geography. They have embedded their dwarves with the rest of their campaign world. The Clan Dwarves and the Unhorsed are a part of this world and not added on. This shows that the authors have taken great pains to lie out their campaign world and are slowly fleshing it out. For the writing or the new take on dwarves alone, this book is worth its cover price. The two together make it a definite bargain for either a referee or a player. Even if you don't play the Sovereign Stone campaign, this makes a wonderful reference work. I'm still fond of my stout fatalistic miners, but I find these horse lords interesting. Right now, my RPG group is concentrating on super heroes, but I will definitely consider a Clan Dwarf when we return to fantasy RPG's.

BASICS

Secrets of the Ancients is a 48-page trade paperback source book for d20 fantasy games. This volume has a full color cover and black and white pages. This book presents two ancient races and five vignettes for levels 5 through 20. It has a retail price of \$12.95 USD and is published by Eden Studios.

CONTENTS

Secrets of the Ancients consists of seven chapters and an appendix. Chapter one introduces the volume and describes its purpose and how to use it. Chapter two provides background on two ancient fallen races, the Logheir and the Tlacamoc. Chapter three introduces a scholar NPC who is learned about the two races in a vignette suitable for any level. Chapters four and five are vignettes about the Logheir. The first is for 12th to 15th level characters while the second is for 15th to 20th level characters. Chapters five and six are vignettes for the Tlacamoc. The first is for 5th to 8th level characters and the second is for 8th to 12th level characters. The appendix provides supplemental information for the vignettes.

REVIEW

All fantasy games need an elder race or races. Without them, who built the lost cities and created the great magical artifacts? Just as they are necessary, creating ancient civilizations is hard work. It's usually bound up tightly with world creation. Eden Studios has stepped in to help with this task with *Secrets of the Ancients*. This volume is written to fit in with Eden Studios' other product *Wonder Out of Time*. However, *Secrets* can be used with any other existing campaign.

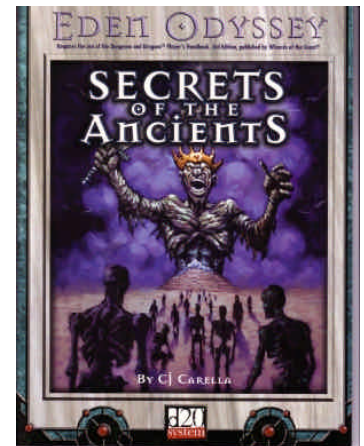
This volume includes everything you need to get started, but they don't do it all. A skeleton is provided for the game master to flesh out. Enough information is provided on both races to assist the GM, but the details are up to him. Each race is described in general along with some adventure hooks. Their artifacts and magic are also described. Actual magic items and relics, as well as new creatures and a prestige class are included in the appendix.

Secrets of the Ancients uses this general background as the basis for the five vignettes. These vignettes are not full adventures in their own right, but need varying degrees of work by the GM to flesh them out. Once again, this allows the seamless introduction of the ancient races into a campaign without forcing it to be the driving force of the campaign. The vignettes are scaled so that a party can bump into the races as they gain levels. The first vignette, where Ervand the Learned is introduced, is suitable for any level. Ervand provides the first introduction of the ancient ones to the party. Though a crafty GM will drop hints in many adventures before this one.

Once Ervand has been introduced, then the players can get involved with the other vignettes. The vignettes get progressively harder and more challenging for the players as they go up in levels. The adventures are not a campaign to move the players forward, but its something that they can keep coming back to as a break from their regular adventures.

VALUE

Creating and running a campaign is not an easy task. Just getting the core material written takes the majority of the time. For GM's who are doing this, *Secrets of the Ancients* is a great resource – a way of giving depth and new challenges to their campaign in addition to the core. For GM's running a third party campaign, this volume provides an easy way to personalize it.



D20 Product Reviews



BASICS

Sundered Reaches is a new fantasy setting from Fast Forward Entertainment. It's a 128-page softcover book with color cover and b/w interior artwork. It requires the use of the standard Dungeons & Dragons books and has a retail price of \$24.99 USD.

INSIDE

Looking at the cover you can tell that something is different about Sundered Reaches. In fact, what is different is everything as it is set on Mars, yes the red planet, which is

full of its own all-new mysteries and dangers for your players to explore, and get killed by. In an interesting change the new races presented in Sundered Empires are a mix of race and class that reminded me of the old races/classes in Basic Dungeons & Dragons from decades ago. Even with this difference Sundered Empires is designed to also be used with existing characters that have somehow found their way there. Of the new PC races two of them are very close to humans, two are more alien in nature and the rest are a mix of the two. Building new characters is fine and all but Sundered Reaches really plays up the "stranger in a strange land" idea which I thought was good and will help bring people to the setting since they can use their existing characters. Dropping a whole party onto Mars is probably how a campaign would begin.

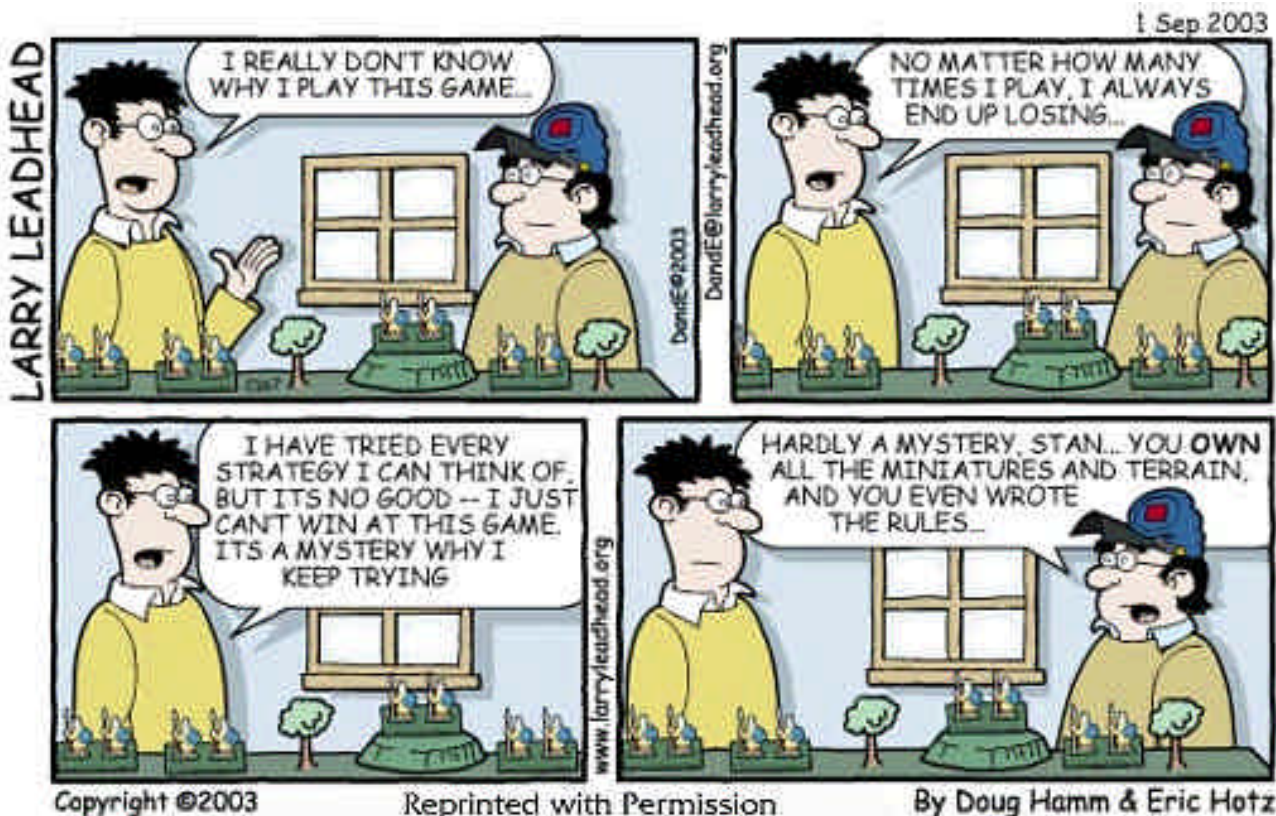
The Skills section is mainly new uses for existing skills but you get lots of new Feats, plenty of which I'd be willing to port over to my standard Dungeons and Dragons campaign. As this is Mars and it was 'seeded' by an ancient race that is now gone but left some of their toys behind there are opportunities for players to figure out and use technological items and maybe only blow off a couple of fingers in the process. Don't expect your players to be suiting up in powered armor or running around with a party full of blaster rifles though.

Mars is a pretty barren planet but the background provided is not. There are plenty of cities and landscapes to be explored and the monsters discussed in the book range from those that you are familiar with (Dragons, but not just recycled information) and wholly new monsters unique to Mars but they struck me as being mostly new, and large, types of animals. I'd have like to see more monsters presented.

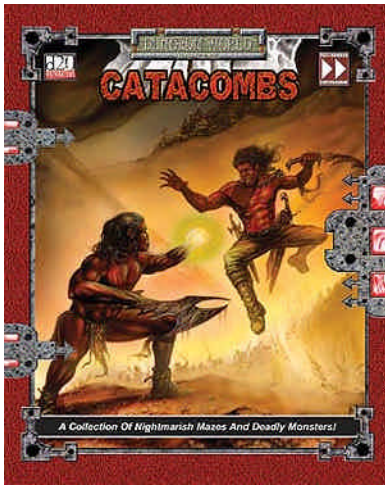
I'd have liked to get a whole mini-adventure but you get the next best thing here in six adventure seeds, each of which is of pretty good size and scope. Like I said, it's the next best thing to getting a pre-made adventure and is a good headstart for a GM.

VALUE

I found Sundered Reaches to be interesting, but I'm not sure if I'm (or my group of players) are ready to adventure there full time. With that said, it's perfectly suited for use as a 'vacation' spot for your games to do some adventuring in a very foreign land. They truly will not know what is coming next or where a clue might lead. Even better, you could use Sundered Reaches for more than just Dungeons and Dragons. It would be ideal for a Forbidden Kingdoms (pulp) game and could even swing its use in d20 Modern with just a bit of tweaking for each. I see getting more use, and fun, out of it in this fashion and would recommend it be used as such. This reminded me a lot of the old D&D module "Expedition to the Barrier Peaks" and if you didn't ever play it shame on you.



D20 Product Reviews



BASICS

Dungeon World: Catacombs is published by Fast Forward Entertainment. It is written for their "Dungeon World" campaign setting, and it is their second published supplement for that setting. It is a standard sized, 8½" x 11", hardbound book of 128 pages. The binding and the cover are both good quality with very nice artwork. The cover alone makes the book hard to pass up when you see it on the shelf. The book starts by giving a basic overview of Dungeon World. Then it details seven

areas called catacombs that each have their own theme and denizens. Finally it ends with several new prestige classes and a section that gives all the characteristics of the twenty-two new monsters that might be encountered. The book's retail price is \$24.99 USD

The Dungeon World Campaign setting looks to be very different than the standard D&D setting. I should preface my comments by saying that I have not read the Dungeon World source books, but from reading this book it would seem that the Dungeon World setting leans heavily in the direction of more role-playing than the typical hack and slash setting. This is important to know since anyone that goes into these catacombs thinking they can brute force their way through is probably not going to stay alive very long. Instead of a party going in and conquering a locale, adventures in Dungeon World are mission based.

These missions are called Caretakers Quests and are presumably up to the GM to assign. Sadly the Dungeon Quest Source book is required to go into more detail on these quests, or to get examples. It is also hinted in this book that magic works differently in Dungeon World, but again to get the specifics you must go to the Dungeon World source book. This is a possible stumbling block for those that want to transplant these areas into other campaign settings, and will have to be looked at carefully by the GM.

There is a statement in the introduction that proves to be very true, and if I were a player I would treat it as gospel; "...for there is always someone more powerful and more desperate." Unless your characters are very senior and have god-like powers, they will be bumping into people that they don't have a hope of beating in a fair fight. For instance there is this one Drow that is a challenge rating 30, and in my opinion that is a little on the low side (he is one bad mother... luckily he is neutral rather than evil... so as long as you don't get him too mad you might be ok).

BETWEEN THE COVERS

As mentioned before, the book is divided into ten main parts. Parts two through eight are the details of the seven catacomb areas detailed for adventures. Each of these seven sections average in length of only about twelve pages, and some of that space is dedicated to the statistics of the monsters and the major characters of the region. Some of these characters (and even sometimes the "wandering monster" characters) are very intriguing and can themselves lead to sideline stories. Each of the seven areas also has a single map of the region that shows very little detail, but points out the major areas that are later described in the text. The text itself gives a rough structure of what might be found in each of these areas and the possible monsters that might be encountered. Again, it's left to the GM to fill in most of the specifics. Most of everything needed to run a coherent adventure is given here, even if briefly, but nearly all of the detail work will have to be done prior to running an adventure. The strength of these sections lies in the characterizations of the inhabitants, which are usually very detailed.

Since it is apparent that simply fighting your way out of every encounter is not going to work very well, it seems to me that the GM is going to have to carefully program many of the major characters. The GM is also going to have to decide on a mission for the party, and then set the theme and/or clues as appropriate. These are all things that are notably absent.

Part nine details three new prestige classes. All three are predictably useful only in the Dungeon World setting, and two only in the Catacombs. That being said, I do think that all three can quite easily be adapted to other campaigns with very little difficulty. In fact two of them I like enough to already be contemplating where I will have them show up in my own campaign.

The final section includes twenty-two new monsters (in some cases they are not really new, but variations of old favorites) and a template to create a new type of creature (a type of 'good-guy' undead). The monsters range in challenge rating from ½ to 17, with the average falling in the 4-6 ranges. The monsters themselves range in ingenuity from "OK, that is really odd" to "Hey, that is pretty cool". All the write-ups are well done and in monster manual style with the accompanying ink drawing.

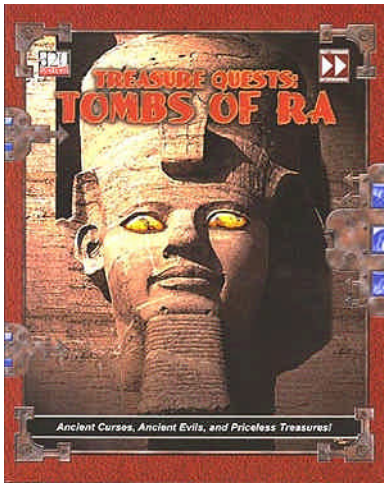
For as nice of a book as this is, I have to say that I was bummed that it has no index. Also missing is any kind of guide for the level of difficulty of the different sections. After getting through the entire book, however, I've decided that giving a difficulty level would mostly be dependent on the party's mission.

This sort of leads me to the conclusion that this book could be used to create adventures with a variety of difficulty levels. The down side of that is whatever difficulty level you target, there will be a lot of monsters that will be "too easy", or "too nasty" for the party to handle. The ones that are too easy are not really an issue except when it comes to wasting game time. The "too nasty" ones however will have to be handled carefully or this can easily become a party killing scenario.

VALUE

I would not recommend this book to beginning GMs since I believe that it will take some skilled orchestrating to insure that players have a successful and enjoyable game. I would on the other hand highly recommend the book for GMs that are interested in running a different kind of campaign where there would be lots of role-playing required by the players. I would however caution GMs that this is not as "canned" as other modules that they might be used to. There will definitely have to be an overall structure and purpose added before it can be used.

D20 Product Reviews



INSIDE

The first thing I did was to flip through and just look at the maps. Not really trying to digest a lot at this point but to check out the maps. They are all very easy on the eyes and are clear and definitely not too dark at all. Some of FFE's previous books had maps that were a tad on the dark side, but these are great. The book starts off with a quick piece of fiction and introduction, including a section on suggestions for use of the information contained therein. The Valley of the Kings is a large stretch of desert that contains thirty-one locations, and generic tomb information is also included so you can build your own. Of the three main valleys in the area (Lower, Side, and Upper) the Lower is supposed to be the least threatening, and in general it is, but that doesn't mean that it's a walk in the park. Be sure to admire the nice scenery while pillaging the tombs, but don't let your guard down and beating a hasty retreat in some circumstances is a good thing. It should be very understood by the PC's that they are not on a site-seeing tour here, but even with that said the GM might want to adjust some of the encounters found because of a fairly wide gap in CR's that comes up from time to time. As an example, the first tomb has a CR 2 trap in it along with a CR 11 monster a few rooms away. As a player I'd be more that a little miffed to run into that as part of a low-level party and if I'm in a considerably higher level party where the CR 11 monster is a good challenge, the CR 2 trap will likely be more of an annoyance than a terrible threat. I'd expect that just about any GM can adjust the encounters as appropriate for his game though. In addition to the many tombs and encounters that are presented there is also a new Prestige Class, the Tomb Finder, a very specialized rogue-like character who would not be bad to have along on an expedition into the desert while in search of buried treasure. There are also six new creatures that range in CR from 2 to 18 (now that's a spread for six creatures) to pester your party with. I expected different kinds of mummies and the like, but was nicely surprised to see not a single undead creature. The author went with appropriate, but not totally stereotypical creatures, which was nice. To close out the look at the book I'll say that all of the text was quite easy to read and the whole layout was great and without flaw in my opinion.

VALUE

For D&D players this could be the start of a rather long treasure-hunting campaign or it could be used as lots of little side treks for a larger campaign that is set in a desert. It will work just fine for that, but there are also three more easy uses for this book which make it even more of a useful tome. These would be using it for a Call of Cthulhu game/campaign or in a Forbidden Kingdoms game/campaign or even as part of a d20 Modern game/campaign. None of these would require extensive re-writes on the part of the GM, but expect at least a little bit, and in my opinion (and that's all it is folks) it might work better in one of these three settings than in D&D. The new Prestige Class and creatures are nice extras, but the tombs alone make the book worthwhile. I'd recommend it to GM's of any of the four games mentioned above even with the need for the GM to make sure that some of the tomb encounters are not too tough or too weak for the party going through them.

BASICS

Treasure Quests: Tombs of Ra is a 128-page softcover book from Fast Forward Entertainment that is designed for use with Dungeons and Dragons. The cover is decorated with an Egyptian-looking stone carving and all of the interior art, while black and white, is mostly good to very good. The back cover blurb describes the book as detailing the Valley of the Kings, an ancient burial ground full of treasure and danger. It has a retail price of \$24.99 USD.

BASICS

Devilish Devices is a 1288-page hardback source book for d20 fantasy games. It is published by Fast Forward Entertainment and has a retail price of \$24.99. This volume has a full color cover and black and white pages. This book presents fifty new magic items of various power levels.

CONTENTS

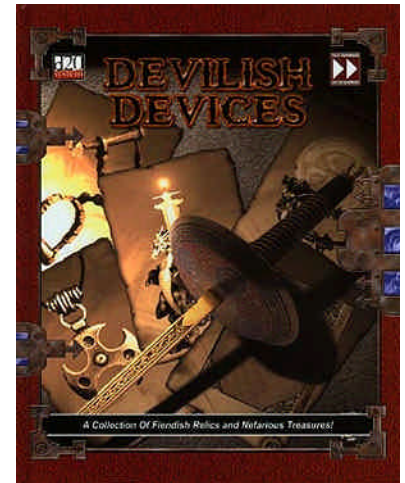
Devilish Devices is the seventh volume from Fast Forward Entertainment covering various magic items. As with other volumes in the series, this one deals with one category of magic item in great detail. As the introduction says, the book includes "...extensive history and detail; every item becomes more than mere treasure – it becomes the focus of genuine adventure."

REVIEW

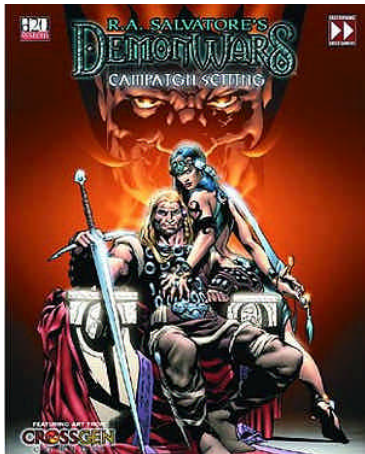
The magic items in *Devilish Devices* are of various types, but are linked together by a theme of darkness. These devices are not the kind of thing your typical goody-two-shoes hero would carry. These arcane implements are, if not evil, carry a certain air of shadow. The book's introduction briefly describes the format of the entries, and then jumps right in to giving suggestions for incorporating the devices into a campaign. As the items in this book are not part of any existing campaign or mythology, they can be dropped with just a modicum of prep work. The introduction gives some good suggestions. The book also includes six general prestige classes. Yes, that does appear to be an oxymoron as most prestige classes are campaign specific, but these classes are outlines of positions that exist in every medieval setting. The list includes Court Seer, Dragon Hunter, Learned Scholar, Life Giver, Religious Elder, and Tribal Lieutenant. There are campaign specific versions of these roles in other books, but having these generalized ones is a bonus. The rest of the book, 105 pages worth, covers the magic items. These are broken down into six sections: Pendants, such as the *Druid's Curse Pendant* or *Star Talisman of Havoc*. Tankards and Glasses such as the *Chalice of Blood Oaths* or the *Tankard of Pure Death*. Jewelry such as the *Mourning Skull Band* or the *Plantagenet*. Implements of Torture such as the *Gallows of St. James* or the guillotine named *Kings Destroyer*. Figurines such as *Dante Uubrun* or *Sir Brodrin*. Miscellany such as *Aroseus Pentagram Hair Stick* or *Wisdom's Crystal Ball*. Each entry starts off with a description of the item in terms of game mechanics, including the caster level, prerequisites, and the Market Price. This is then followed by a background description of the item – presented in a narrative form. There is also a black and white illustration of the item. The sections run from one to over four pages each. The stories alone are worth the price of the volume. They give a much better description than would a more direct "technical manual" description. Several of the items in this volume have monsters or NPC's associated with them and game stats for these are also included.

VALUE

To paraphrase Milton when asked why he make Lucifer so appealing in *Paradise Lost* – "Evil is appealing, Jim-boy". Okay, I don't think Milton every called anyone "Jim-boy", but you get the idea. The items in this book trigger the same fascination you get from watching "Real Police Chases III" on TV. (Wow – Milton and police chases mentioned in the same paragraph!) For referees who are running more mature game sessions – ones where there are shades of good and evil in the world – this book is a must have! The items mentioned in the book can be used to equip your local morally bankrupt Wizards as well as your ambitious Captains of the Palace Guard. They can also be used as great hooks for adventures – such destroying the *Stockade of Pain* before the notorious (and possessed) Witchfinder General can put another village to the torch! As with the rest of the series, Fast Forward Entertainment has done an exceptional job. This entire series is a must have – and *Devilish Devices* is a great place to start!



D20 Product Reviews



BASICS

R.A. Salvatore's *DemonWars Campaign Setting* is a hard cover book published by Fast Forward Entertainment. The front and back covers are full color while internal illustrations are black and white. This 128-page volume is a d20 System campaign setting book that retails for \$24.99.

INSIDE

R.A. Salvatore's *DemonWars Campaign Setting* consists of 11 chapters including an introductory short story that introduces the reader to the world of Corona, the setting for the *DemonWars Campaign*. The Campaign Setting is based in a series of novels writ-

ten by R.A. Salvatore. The last chapter of this tome is a summary of the plot of the first three novels in *The DemonWars Saga*. After the introductory short story, is the Preface written by Thomas M. Reid, one of the authors of the *Campaign Setting*. In the Preface, Thomas talks about the *DemonWars Saga* and the many venues in which R.A. Salvatore has introduced this story. The third chapter is the Introduction to *R.A. Salvatore's DemonWars Campaign Setting* book. The fourth chapter is Characters and discusses the various character classes and races in the *DemonWars campaign*. One thing to note: if you intend on converting existing characters from an existing campaign to a *DemonWars campaign*, several character classes will not convert, namely the Cleric, Druid, Sorcerer and Wizard as they are "simply too reliant on the standard d20 spell system to fit well into this setting and should not be used". Chapter 5 is Skills and Feats and includes the skills and feats to utilize the magic system of the *DemonWars Campaign Setting*. Which brings me to the major difference between life (and rp'ing) on Corona versus the standard d20 Magic System: Gem Magic (which is the 6th chapter). The magic system on Corona is based on Gems. Magic wielders in this campaign setting learn to deploy their magic through the use of these gems and the spells that they are able to cast rely on the number magic points that are willing to spend on a spell and the gem through which they spend those points. For example, a low-level magic user may have 30 magic points to spend at any one time. He/she can elect to spend all or part of that number of points on any one spell through a gem that is in his/her possession. The gem in question and the number of points of magic cast through the gem determine the spell effect and the DC of the spell. Utilizing multiple gems for a single casting can vary the spell effect and these gem combinations are defined in the book. The higher level a magic user attains, the more spell points are available. The next chapter is titled Magic Items and details the handling and creation of magic items on Corona. As you may well understand, gems play a role on all magic item creation. Also discussed are Intelligent Magic Items, Artifacts, and Designing New Items. The 8th chapter is entitled Treasure and contains many tables similar to the DMG regarding the generation of random treasure and weapons with their associated costs. Next is Creatures of Corona and this chapter includes several encounter tables for the types of terrain on Corona, material on various groups that inhabit the planet as well as several pages of creatures and monsters of the world. Chapter 10 discusses The World of Corona including short discussions on how to start a game in this setting. Several of the regions of Corona are discussed (but not in great detail) and the chapter ends with statistics of several of the characters from the books for use in the campaign.

VALUE

R.A. Salvatore's *DemonWars Campaign Setting* has a great deal of detail in it and it is a well conceived world with personality and depth. It is well worth the price if you are interested in alternate settings for your role-playing games. It is especially interesting to those who feel that magic users dominate the gaming world at higher levels and are looking for a way to help curtail magic use. It is a complete guide to the world of Corona and while I have read many of R.A. Salvatore's books, I have not read any of his *DemonWars* material. This campaign setting book is intriguing enough to make me want to read these books.

CAMPAIGN MAGAZINE #7

Checking in with 80-pages and a cover price of \$4.99 USD, Campaign Magazine #7 has been dubbed the "Gangster Issue" but it's not just about Wiseguys.

The gangster stuff is nicely done and features a preview of "Henry Hill's Mafia" which is a new setting for d20 Modern by Citizen Games. Yes, it's *that* Henry Hill, the one whose life was described in the movie *Goodfellas*. OK, if anyone knows about the gangster life and is qualified to help write a d20 book about it, Mr. Hill has got to be the guy. There's also a 1st level adventure and a gangster setting in the 1920's for d20 Modern along with a new villain for Pulp games that could also be used along side the gangsters.

Other d20 material includes the continuation of an adventure from the previous issue and a nice article for GM's on creating tension in your games which is definitely worth a read. There's also a new Prestige Class (The Hand of Gepaleus) a review of *Icwind Dale II* and about a dozen d20 game products from various publishers.

All in all, a nice issue that is worth five bucks and really left me wanting to see "Henry Hill's Mafia" when it comes out.

GAMES UNPLUGGED #25

The 60-page, all color, 25th issue of Games Unplugged features a "definitive" survival guide to *Origins*, which you'll be back from by the time you read this, but it also includes lots of other gaming information that's not solely d20-specific, like what you'll find in Campaign Magazine. Even though I've been to plenty of cons and won't be at *Origins* (but will be at SoCal GenCon) I read through the survival guide and found it informative and amusing. Of course, it advises people to use deodorant, but please do everyone a favor and bathe! Even if your local gaming buds are all in the smelly/dirty club the rest of the population is not, thanks.

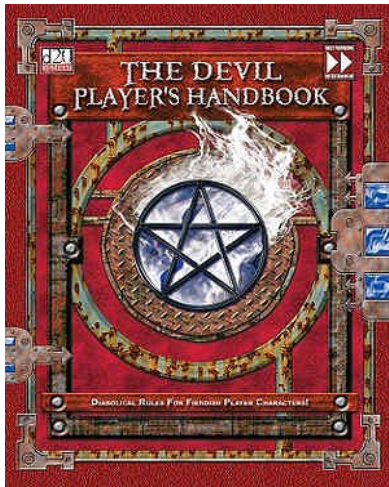
For hero lovers there's a scenario for *HeroClix* (which I've gotten hooked on by the way) and a continuing interview with Steve Long (Hero Games) and Mark Mackinnon (Guardians of Order) which has been, and continues to be a good read. Good reads continue with the editorials.

You get a lot more reviews in Games Unplugged than in Campaign Magazine and they range from a bunch card games (Cannibal Pygmies in the Jungle of Doom to name just one) to historical games to miniature games and miniatures and more.

I find Games Unplugged to be a good "sit down and read" magazine, and while it may not have as much immediately game-useful content as Campaign Magazine, it's a good source of gaming information in a 'whole' sense. It's a nice look at the whole world of gaming and is worth taking a look at unless you've decided on sticking with just miniatures, or just rpg's or just [insert the only thing you play here], which is ok but you'll be missing out on a lot. Games Unplugged gives you a look at the 'lot' that you could be missing.



D20 Product Reviews



BASICS

The Devil's Player Guide is a 126-page softcover d20 fantasy supplement with color cover and black & white interior art. It has a retail price of \$24.99 and details the care and feeding of devil-based PC's, parties, NPC's, villains, etc.

INSIDE

Right after a short introduction the guys at Fast Forward take care of what I consider to be a bit of necessary business with a short blurb about what this book is not. You know from

the name of this book that we're not dealing with 'warm 'n fuzzies' here but they make it plainly clear that playing with imaginary stuff here and this is not a 'how to' guide like you might pick up at Home Depot. If you thought it was, get a life and move on.

This is a book that will primarily have two audiences. A GM/Party that wants to run devil PC's in an evil campaign (I suppose you could make repentant devils too) or a GM that wants to bring new life to monsters (devils) that may have become old-hat to the party.

The book is divided into seven chapters (Campaigns, Races, Classes, Feats, Spells, Magic Items, and Withered Wood) along with an introduction. The Campaign section is very good and helps to bring to light several challenges that the party and GM might (and probably will) face during the course of an evil devil-based campaign. The race section is a good read for players and GMs and will certainly help me add some flavor to my game when I take my players into the dark places on a rescue mission of sorts. Of the eleven new classes many are 'devilish' versions of existing classes and there are also seven Prestige Classes so if you're looking for additions to your catalog of classes this is a good, well evil, assortment.

The Feat section has several dozen feats with some, quite surprisingly, not all are strictly for 'devilish' characters. Some are even for good-aligned characters and many re-create innate abilities that you'll find in the possession of 'standard' devils. The spell list is not quite as extensive as the feats but includes a nice spread of arcane and divine castings of various levels (also with a nice spread amongst the levels of spells represented).

Even shorter than the spell list is that of new magical items, but there are some new weapon/armor abilities (Fearful, Majestic, and Ward Against Good) that can be put to good, err evil, use. The book ends in an adventure location that is done in as good a fashion as in Fast Forward Entertainment's locale books. It can easily be used as a jumping off point for an evil or good campaign or as a place to fall back to for the party.

VALUE

If you fall into one of the two categories outlined above then you'll find The Devil's Player Guide to be a boon to your campaign and it's well worth plunking down your \$25. All of the artwork was good, but I didn't find any of it disturbing or beyond what someone would see in a WOTC book. If it's what you're looking for then it's pretty much exactly what you're looking for and fits the bill. If you're not interested in a devil-based evil campaign then it's probably not close to your cup of tea. For me, it will be used to form the backbone of a series of adventures that find my players journeying into a very undesirable place. Using this book to build several really bad bad-guys to use against your players is also another use.

GAMES UNPLUGGED #26

The latest issue of Games Unplugged marks their departure from the format that had them representing all of the gaming industry to now becoming more of a "house" organ dedicated to the support of the games that Fast Forward Entertainment distributes (their d20 lines, Demon Wars, Shadowrun, Classic BattleTech, etc). I did miss the editorials by the gaming luminaries that it normally had, but this issue really did a great job in terms of giving something to all of their lines, and the highlight for me was a multiple page Q&A session regarding the upcoming d20 edition of the Dragonlance setting. The reviews are also missing, not sure if it's just for this issue or for good though. It's still printed on high quality glossy paper and in full color and while it's focus narrowed its quality did not suffer at all. In fact, I think that with pages devoted to larger articles about their own game systems instead of smaller ones it's probably a better value now than it was before. If you're a player / GM in one of their worlds, of course.



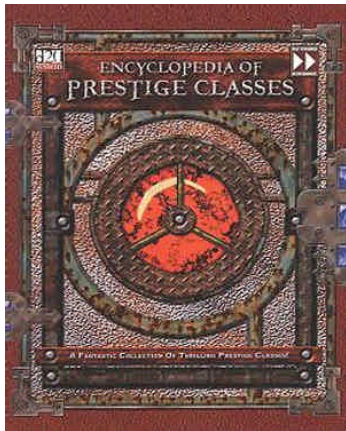
CAMPAIGN MAGAZINE #8

A change to Campaign Magazine has not taken place and this issue has been labeled as the "Arcane Issue!" so I expect to find lots of spell-slinging goodness inside.

If you're a Mage Knight and D&D player you'll be pleased to find some MK conversions and while I'm not a MK player I think it's a good idea and wouldn't mind seeing more of them, anything to spice up the game you know. If you're an 'old-school' D&D player you probably remember Judges Guild. Well, they are back and a nice article details their return. A large spread devoted to Dark Inheritance (a review of which you can find in this very issue of Fictional Reality) was a great read and will give potential players a great preview of the dark modern world that they should want to get into. Two d20 fantasy mini-adventures are included and with each coming in at around 10+ pages they alone really justify the cost of this issue to any D&D, or other d20 fantasy, player. If you're running a once or twice a month campaign I think that you could do so exclusively with the adventures found in Campaign Magazine and keep your players quite happy and also take a load of work off of yourself as the DM. I also like that they've continued to insert some Pulp-related stuff, a genre that I think doesn't get enough attention in general. I would have been ok without the Gnoll language primer. Maybe it's just me but our group doesn't sit around the table grunting out stuff that nobody else can understand just to make the point clear that the party can't speak Gnoll. If it's your cup of tea, great. The reviews were good and useful, but some were a bit dated, going back to d20 Modern and the Encyclopedia of Demons and Devils II.

As I've found to be the norm with Campaign Magazine, it's well worth picking up if you're a d20 player, especially in the fantasy realms.

D20 Product Reviews



AT FIRST GLANCE

The Encyclopedia of Prestige Classes is published by Fast Forward Entertainment. Unlike some of their earlier D20 books, *Rings of Power* and *Swords of Power*, the *Encyclopedia of Prestige Classes* follows FFE's recent publications by being a softbound book. Its cover artwork is full color. Inside the cover are 128 pages of material complete with black and white drawings representing some of the included prestige classes. At a suggested retail cost of \$24.99 this book is reasonably priced falling well within the acceptable price range for a sourcebook.

OKAY WHAT'S REALLY IN IT?

As the name suggests this book is filled with prestige classes. Ninety-five pages of prestige classes to be exact. The book starts off with a chapter of new skills needed for these prestige classes. Following the skills is a section on new feats. Many of the feats revolve around some of the new skills, such as flying, artillery, and swinging. A brief three-page portion outlines siege weapons in combat. Following this is the meat of the book, ninety-five pages full of nothing but prestige classes.

WHAT IMPRESSED ME

I like the variety and depth put into each prestige classes. There truly is a little something for everyone. The above-mentioned escort would fit in great with a mature role-playing game. The escort is a man or woman who sell his or her time and/or body. More than a prostitute or spy, the escort has many information and charisma based feats. Artillerists build siege weapons and can be plunked into a large spanning campaign. His nemesis the Saboteur is also included. Both of these prestige classes can be used to base an adventure or two around. Help breach a town wall be constructing the siege engines, or sabotage the enemy gates under the cover of darkness. As a gamer who strives to increase my role-playing abilities and to lessen the natural hack and slash tendencies of the D20 games, these prestige classes give me encouragement as to archetypes that I could play. I really liked the rules for using the flying skill as well. I think these rules were lacking in the core rulebooks, and am glad to see them created here.

NOTHING IS PERFECT

Several of the prestige classes are very campaign specific. While I will stress that this is NOT a flaw in the book, but it is a drawback to mass-market sales. Some of the prestige classes, like the Sky Sailor, are intended for use in one of FFE's campaign settings, in the Sky Sailor's case this is *Cloud Warriors* supplement. For the D20 players who love the dungeon crawl and hack and slash, there are less combat powerful prestige classes in the book although those classes designed for combat such as the Shadow Knight are rough to come up against. The usual third party editing typos appear throughout the book, but not enough to be distracting. It is a vast improvement from some of FFE's earlier books. The book has b/w drawings for each class. This alone would not be a problem, but the styles change dramatically, from a pencil shaded Time Touched to the cartoony Earthwalker, FFE would have done better picking to a theme and sticking to it with illustrations. There is a little concern about some balance issues with a few of the Prestige classes. Many of those classes that have companions or can replace them in a day and not the obligatory full year to recruit or summon one.

AND THE OVERALL IMPRESSION IS

Before reviewing this book I spent some time on the FFE website lurking on their forums. What I like the most about their books is probably where they catch flack for. FFE openly admits that they are making products for the role-players and gamers that are not just the status norm. They want storylines to be rich with character development and grand plotline, with the occasionally battle tossed in. I think this is a great book for GM's to add variety to their settings as well as to player developing characters who want them a bit different from the fighter, rogue, and ranger of the *Players Handbook*.

BASICS

Blood and Fist is a d20 Modern supplement from RPG Objects that deals with bringing martial arts to the forefront, or at least to the same level as gunplay, in the game. It's 62 pages are available in e-format (download) or in a print version (reviewed here). The print version has a color cover and black & white interior art with a retail price of \$14.95 USD.

INSIDE

Blood and Fist starts off with an introduction that quickly establishes that we're dealing with martial arts in the movie sense.

The authors back that up with a statement later on basically saying the same thing. This book will be used to bring Jet Li, Jackie Chan and other kung-fu types into your d20 Modern game. The book is designed around bringing realistic martial arts up a notch (or a couple) to get players thinking about taking a character of that type instead of always wanting to carry the biggest gun. There is some adult language scattered around in the flavor text, just FYI.

Three new Prestige Classes (Bad-Ass Barroom Brawler, Contemplative Master, and Martial Arts Master) get things going and as much of a fan of PrC's as I am they are not the star of the book. Skills are mostly new uses for old ones but a Pressure Points will be a must-have for any martial artist. Feats really come in two flavors here. First, the ones you're used to for using Asian weapons, but also some that are there to boost your martial arts attacks. Then, we have feats that represent basic training in lots of different martial art styles and then special moves that would be taught to an advanced student. The *styles* give you additional class skills and usually some kind of perk based on the style. As an example, taking the Monkey style lets you (among other things) Feint as a move action and you provoke no AoO's when tripping someone. Also you get Bluff and Tumble as class skills.

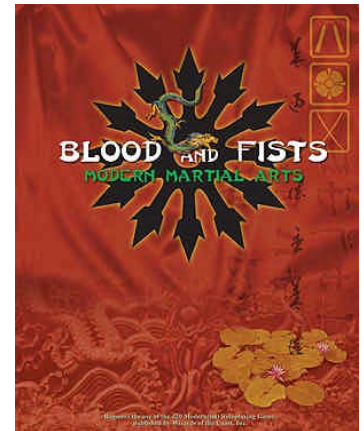
The maneuvers have *style* prerequisites but also give cool bonuses. Take *Box Ears* for instance. It has several different *styles* as prerequisites so lots of different martial artists can take it. While it only causes 1-2 (+STR bonus) points of damage your opponent it considered flat-footed the first time you use it against him (likely the only time) but if you hit they must make a FOR check or be deafened for 1-4 rounds. If they pass the test they are dazed. Either way you're setting them up for the next attack. The specific maneuvers are really designed to be used in combinations for full effectiveness. There are also *signature maneuvers* which are what I would describe as the special moves of each fighter in *Mortal Combat*. They are far more specialized than regular maneuvers (not handed out to everyone) and are the stuff of the movies. There are also Ki feats that are martial artsy magical (sorta) bonuses.

The Martial Arts Master PrC is a bit different than the others as you can choose which style to 'master' and devote your whole life to. It's sort of like getting a couple of dozen variants of the PrC. What's the big deal? Well, becoming a master unlocks new abilities that rock. Let's say you get to the point that you learn *Dirty Tricks 3*. Once per day an attack against a flat-footed opponent is automatically a critical, whoa! Yeah, sign me up for that one.

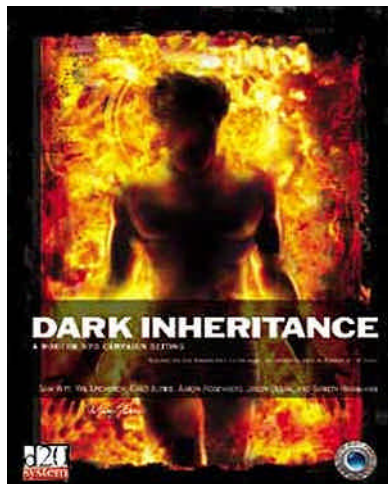
Several pages of weapons are next and fleshes out some weapons that you didn't get in the core book. Suggestions for running martial arts campaigns are presented along with information about the Hanmei, a martial arts competition. Tables of all of the material presented and a character sheet finish off the book.

VALUE

Awesome book! There was nothing here I didn't like. A great addition to any d20 Modern game and one that really deserves to be sitting next to the core book on your shelf.



D20 Product Reviews



BASICS

While the number of supplements released for d20 Modern is nowhere near that of Dungeons & Dragons it is on the rise and Dark Inheritance from Mythic Dreams Studios is the latest one that I've been able to take a look at. Dark Inheritance is a 222-page hardback book with a color cover and black and white interior art. The paper is of good stock and the binding appears solid and should hold up well under regular use. I don't know that I'd call the setting *Mature* but it definitely has the potential to ruffle a few feathers. More on that later.

INSIDE

The book is divided into an Introduction and seven chapters (The Ways of the World, Allegiances, New Character Options, Birthrights, Magic, Equipment, and Terrors). Before the proper introduction there is a timeline of events that lead you into the setting and, to be honest, I had to read it twice to get it straight in my head. The fact that the timeline entries have a tendency to jump back and forth (in terms of dates) might have had something to do with that. Ok, here are the basics of the setting. In early 2003 the city of Jerusalem was merged with a very ancient and, for the most part, very evil city that also exists in another world called Otherworld. This merging was dubbed "The Rip" and the world as we know it has ceased to exist. There is also more going on with secret societies, mercenaries, genetic experimentation and the like, but the fact that Jerusalem, a city of importance to Christians, Jews, and Muslims has just been torn asunder and merged with a place of unquestionable evil and mystery. Ok, see how some people could take this the wrong way? Well, for me, I choose to look at it as a game and a pretty darn cool idea for a modern day adventure/horror game so I'm not going to sweat it too much. Of course, if it's not your cup of tea then turning away now is probably a good idea.

As a GM, something that you could do if you don't expect any of your players to freak out about the whole Jerusalem thing is to be running your regular d20 Modern campaign like just like normal and then involve get them into Israel on a standard mission and then drop The Rip on them halfway through jumping them straight into a huge freaking mess. If you show up at your next game with the Dark Inheritance book everyone will know that something is up, but if you drop them into it as if it's a regular extension of the campaign that's already going on they almost certainly won't be expecting it and won't just have to act surprised, they'll be surprised.

In "The Ways of the World" you get further information on what's going on in the world, who some of the power players are, and a peek at Titans. Titans are a powerful (but with some drawbacks) option for PC's to take that elevates them into being more than human. It's a 20-page background expansion that's a good read but is not the only source of setting information in the book. More is revealed throughout the entire volume.

"Allegiances" in Dark Inheritance are not the same as those in d20 Modern. Makes me think that a name change would have been in order. In Dark Inheritance, Allegiances are groups or secret societies that the party can belong to that shape the campaign to a certain extent. They are more like campaign settings within a campaign setting than anything else. For instance, your party could all be members of the Brotherhood of the Iron Rose that is a Catholic-based entity that is charge with eradicating evil. Ok,

sounds reasonable enough but of course there are many layers to this onion, all of the others also, and internal struggle, back-stabbing, and even murder can, and likely will, come up even with everything else going bug-nuts all over the rest of the world. There are seven of these Allegiances presented and all are fully fleshed out and a great job was done on all of them. You could use one of them, none of them, or just port over your existing campaign group structure. Using more than one Allegiance in a single campaign could be problematic as there are pretty significant rifts between some of them.

"New Character Options" is where you'll find new occupations, including child (anyone 12 years old or less) and Streetperson, which I thought were both cool and very appropriate for the setting. You could have a whole party of pre-teens running around. Oh, now there's a frightening scenario. There are also lots of new feats with many being available only to Titans. Ok, Titans, what are they? Titans are descendants of ancient gods and monsters that are given supernatural abilities which make them remarkable but all is not rosy as weaknesses can just make the brown stuff hit the fan. There are seven new Advanced Classes (Stim Freak, Super Soldier, Eldritch Monk, Explorer, Initiate, Mystic, and Crusading Advocate) each with ten levels and two Prestige Classes (Spec Ops and the Two-Fisted God of Guns) with just five levels each. Every one of these fit into the world just fine.

The next chapter, "Birthrights" is really only of use to PC's playing Titans or if the GM will be using them against the party. It's about 40-pages long but not because it's tedious, it's complete. Birthrights are paid for in Action Points and there is a test (sometimes easy, sometimes not) to see if you suffer any ill effects. They are sort of like super-feats that only Titans can use and some of them are not too far off from super-ish powers.

The "Magic" chapter is the shortest in the book and that's because it's basically the same as in a standard d20 Modern game. There are some new spells and information on relics, but the most significant changes are that spell components have gone out the window and there is no longer a distinction between arcane and divine magic. In my opinion the second change is the most significant and far-reaching. Existing spellcasters should be enthused at the hugely expanded list of spells that they would have to choose from now.

"Equipment" is also a bit short but you get some new guns, ammunition, and magic items (like the Skeleton Key and the Wallet of Currency).

"Terrors" starts off what I'm sure will be an expanded list of the demonic (and non-demonic) monstrosities that are now running around the world. A large part of this chapter is devoted to cults, their rituals, and daemonhosts. There are eleven new monsters presented and unfortunately the stat block for the last one, the Tauran Elk, is incomplete. There are a lot of 'standard' Dungeons and Dragons monsters that are perfectly usable in Dark Inheritance, like demons, devils, and undead, but I don't think you're going to see any drow, giants, or orcs running around causing a ruckus.

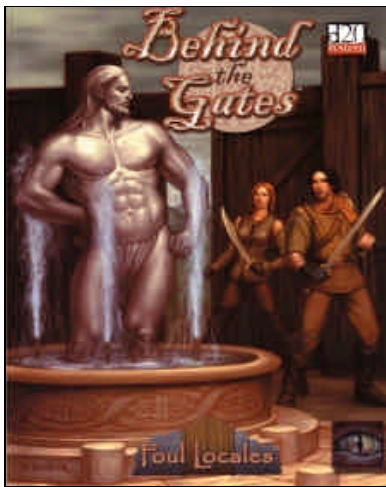
VALUE

I think Dark Awakenings is an excellent game setting for d20 Modern. It could be introduced very subtly or just jumped right into. Even with all of the horrific things going on in the world of Dark Awakenings I wouldn't say it's as bleak as Call of Cthulhu, which some people find less enjoyable because of that. I think that this is a plus for Dark Awakenings and it may find a good audience because of it. Overall, I like it very, very much but there are three things that I would have like to see that were missing; an expanded table of contents, an index, and an introductory adventure.

Dark Inheritance is a dark world with gateways to a hellish world populated by monsters and daemons which have spilled out into our existence. There's room in the game for political intrigue, adventures in the jungle, and lots of blood-letting. I found it different enough to be interesting and its \$34.99 cover price was not a turn off at all and seemed on-target.

The Mystic Dreams Studios website currently has reprinted the Advanced Class, The Eldritch Monk for you to check out and also has some fiction so you can get a nice feel for what you might be getting yourself into. I'm hoping that an introductory adventure finds its way onto the website soon.

D20 Product Reviews



BASICS

Foul Locales: Behind the Gates is a 136-page trade paperback source book for d20 fantasy games. This volume has a full color cover and black and white pages. This book presents pre-generated locations for small towns. It has a retail price of \$21.99 USD.

CONTENTS

Foul Locales: Behind the Gates is the third in the *Foul Locales* series by Mystic Eye Games. The other two volumes, *Foul Locales: Urban Blight* and *Foul Locales: Beyond the Walls* have been reviewed

in earlier issues of Fictional Reality. *Behind the Gates* consists of sixteen locations that a party of adventurers is likely to find in a town. For each location, there is a brief overview and its intended use by the author. This is a guide for using the location in a fantasy d20 setting. Each location is also rated for encounter level, climate (cold, temperate, or warm), and terrain (aquatic, desert, forest, hill, marsh, mountain, plain, or underground). After the brief description, the details of the location are presented which includes illustrations, maps and keyed descriptions. Then follows information on any NPC or creature that is in the location. Next is a section that presents adventure and plot hooks, including any rumors or information that can be gathered locally about the location. There are multiple plot hooks that give the GM different ways to bring the location into his game. Some of the locations include prestige classes, magic items, spells, or feats. This information is included in a Notes section, along with any Open Gaming Content. For each location there is a section which addresses where the location would fit in a standard fantasy campaign. There are also suggestions for adapting it for other locations or cultures. In addition, some of the locales include sidebars detailing important information related to the location. Some of the locations in this volume include: a haunted apple orchard, an inhabited wishing well, and a sage and his companion androsphinx.

REVIEW

First off, it should be noted that the majority of the locations are dark and meant for mature players. GM's with younger players should read study this volume closely to see if it fits within their group. As in the other volumes in this series, Mystic Eye has done a phenomenal job of creating locations that can easily be dropped into almost any campaign setting. However, this volume provides fewer locations than the others, but there is much more detail for each encounter. The majority of the locations have encounter levels in the range of 7 to 10, and there are two in the 18+ range. Therefore, these locations are not for inexperienced parties. However, the locations can be introduced at earlier levels, but their plot hooks not revealed until the party is of a level to handle them. The locations are ingenious. I especially liked the assassin/sculptor who uses magic (flesh to stone) to snare his victim and then carve away the body until the life-like bust is all that remains. Ideally, a GM could use the locations in this book for a short filler game session between major adventures or campaigns. He can then not have to craft an adventure a week and spend time putting together the larger adventures. With these three volumes, Mystic Eye has provided locations for large cities, small villages, and wilderness areas. All that is left is dungeons and the lairs of monsters.

VALUE

This book is a great value for GM's with a regular group. With the other two volumes in the series, the GM can use them for quick filler game sessions, or he can integrate them into his larger campaign. If you already have the first two volumes, then definitely get this one. If not, try this one out to see how it works and you'll definitely want the other two in the series. I wonder what Mystic Eye has for volume four? Could it be *Foul Locales: Inside the Lair*?

BETWEEN THE EMPIRE AND THE OUTLANDS

"They say you can tell how close to the Outlands you are by the way a planet looks from space. If that is true, then the Outlands must be just around the corner from Drelga, because from space you can barely see signs of technology." Designed for 4th level characters. Uses an innovative theme box system to adjust adventure elements quickly. Face intrigue and investigation, chases and combat. Uncover an interplanetary plot. Introducing the Chase Randomizer for urban and rural vehicle chases. New Corporations and chain stores that can be used anywhere in the Dragon Empire. New robots, equipment, spells and a new race. US \$13.99



BETWEEN THE COVERS

We are presented with a well designed, almost comic book style cover, in the trusty limp back and eggshell finish format. The comic book feel is maintained throughout, with a wealth of interior illustration and backgrounds, all in greyscale. A large bulk of the contents, are given over to introducing the DM to the planet Drelga and its main city and port Drelendan, its inhabitants and places of note. Indeed the adventure proper does not commence, for the players at least, until page 23 of a 60 or so page adventure. There are some interesting pre-generated Player Characters to choose from, as an option. The players' reasons for being in this place are left to the DM, a few believable examples are thoughtfully provided. The party are allowed some time to familiarize themselves with the place, it's varied peoples and their customs, before being drawn into a plotline of subterfuge, and shady dealings. Eventually the party is drawn into a fast-paced shoot-em up, car chasing plotline, which would grace the final twenty minutes of any action movie and there is an end sequence to match, a la James Bond. Along the way, we are introduced to new equipment, spells and a new race, well more like a new derivative but "If I told you any more, I'd have to kill you."

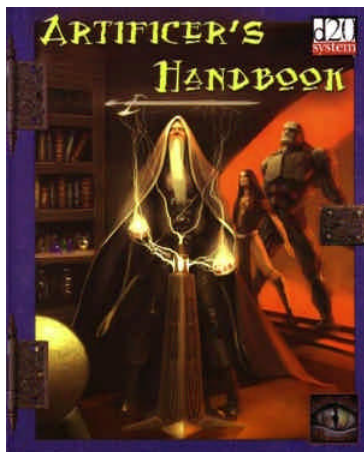
BETWEEN THE LINES

The lack of colour interior illustration may be a ploy to keep down costs and therefore price, an aim which is to be applauded, I'm sure you'll agree but the quality is consistent and personally, I prefer black and white illustration. The city is well fleshed out in parts, both the notaries and the notorious given equal berth, enough so to make this worthy as a regular stopping off point for the adventurers. Even though a large part of the book is given over to Drelendan background there is scant encounter detail to busy the party during the initial sojourn, which inexperienced DM's should note. As for the innovative theme box system, well it can be summed up as, depending upon the strength and style of the players and characters: increase the number of opponents, decrease the number of opponents, let the opponents start from cover, use a more dangerous trap, role-play a little more. Wow! I never would have thought to do that. The chase randomizer is of a similar vent, it is simple and works well but is only useful for those DM's whom are totally devoid of imagination. The new spells and equipment are there also, although I cannot accept a knuckle-duster as new. Are the new corporations and chain stores there as promised? Who knows? Who cares?

BETWEEN YOU AND ME

Forget the gimmicks and the supposed innovations. This is a simple, small and eventually fast-paced adventure, placed in a land that could prove interesting as a regular haunt. The storyline can be built up to be as all encompassing as you want it to be but it could just as easily be quickly forgotten.

D20 Product Reviews



BASICS

Artificer's Handbook is a 120-page trade paperback source book for d20 fantasy games. This volume has a full color cover and black and white pages. It presents an alternative system for magic item creation.

CONTENTS

Artificer's Handbook consists of nine chapters and three appendices. Chapter

one deal with magic in a fantasy campaign, including the power of magic, limitations on item creation and limitations on power level. Chapter two presents the spell slot item creation rules as an alternate to the item creation rules in the d20 Core Rulebook III. Chapter three introduces new feats for item creation. Chapters four describes new prestige classes that specialize in magic item creation.

Chapter five lists new spells that can be enchanted into items. Chapter six introduces rules for magic item instability. Chapter seven provides variant rules for using magic items. Chapter eight discusses components – those materials needed to create magic items or cast spells. Chapter nine is composed of tables for randomly generating a history for a magic item. The appendices give spell slot creation costs, sample wondrous items, and a market cost comparison of items.

REVIEW

Once again the folks at Mystic Eye publications have delved deeply into a little known area of the d20 rules. And, as before, they have returned a gem of great value. The basic magic item creation rules in the d20 core rules tends to focus on “ability supplement items” such as +3 sword or +5 leather armor. Such items tend to draw the game into more of a number crunching exercise – and your humble reviewer has been know to succumb to the allure of this system.

The beauty of the *Artificer's Handbook* is that it pulls the game back from this accounting exercise and more into the quest realm. First and foremost, it deals with the prevalence of magic items and how this would affect the world at large. When laborers are paid 10 sps a day, how often could anyone afford a sword that costs 2,500 gps? Also, what is the nature of the world – high magic where commoners have access to cantrips or low magic where even *Dancing Lights* amazes the learned? All this plays into item creation, as magic items are magic made whole. The actual creation rules – called spell slot creation – provide a type of plug-and-play mechanism for building up your items. This doesn't lessen the wonder of the item, but it helps make a more balanced item. You don't have *Bob's Kazoo* listing the same powers as *Heward's Mystical Organ*. The rules cover all the various aspects of an item – how often it can be used, how it is activated, and the number of effects – and set a price in money, experience, and time.

To this basic system, the book adds Feats, Prestige classes, and new spells. These are necessary to make the system work. If your party doesn't include an Artificer or Infuser character, there will certainly be an NPC of one of these classes that you deal with often! As important to the creation process as the crafter is

the components used. This book covers creation components in great detail. It provides rules for finding the components in town (an expensive option) or for going out and getting them yourself (a dangerous option). Foraging for herbs isn't bad, but what about getting that vile of adult Black Dragon blood?

Then there is the availability of mundane craftsmen – only the most expensive artificers are their own blacksmiths, fletchers, coopers, armorers, wainwrights, etc. You've got hire the best and that requires first finding them.

These chapters introduce the basic system, which is a vast improvement on the older one. But the instability rules introduced in chapter six make this system much more interesting. Based on Thithelay's Laws of Magic Item Creation, these rules account for the quality of material used and artificer skill that made the item. A magical dagger from a novice made with found components is more apt to “misfire” than one made by a master craftsman using the best quality elements.

Chapter seven introduces even more interesting concepts, such as piece meal armor, new armor types, and for you *Diablo* players out there, socketed magic items.

The example wondrous items listed in the appendix shows what this system can do – though you can certainly do better with a little practice!

VALUE

There is quite a bit in this book for those who would rather wield *Lothgar's Sword of Retribution, forged in the heat of Flamehart Glacier to slay Argonarg, Lord of the Salamanders – he who slew Hrothgar, Lothgar's father* than a +3 Frost blade. If you want the more exotic magical items and you don't care about just improving your stats (or a least you like more heroic trappings when improving your stats) then this volume is for you. Targeted toward both the player and the referee, *Artificer's Handbook* can definitely add the magic back into your d20 rolling festivities. Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to go build *Lothgar's Sword of Retribution*.

DARWIN'S WORLD

POST APOCALYPTIC ADVENTURES

"I do not know what weapons will be used in World War III, but I assure you that World War IV will be fought with stones."

-Albert Einstein

DARWINRPG.COM

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RPG OBJECTS

D20 Product Reviews



BASICS

With the update to Dungeons and Dragons being complete Green Ronin has also updated their award winning character folio. It's a 16-page softcover book that will hold every aspect of your character's adventuring career. It has a retail price of just \$4.50 USD.

INSIDE

The inside front and back covers is where the information begins. Included are level advancement charts, attack roll modifiers, armor class modifiers, weapon charts and more. All would be very helpful to

any player and will reduce book flipping during play. All of the documentation pages are easy to read and the type is large enough without things looking squished. The first several sheets will be of use to any class (Stats, Skills, Feats, Description, Equipment, Magic Items, and an Advancement Tracker). I found it strange that only a sketch of a male figure was given in the section where you count up magic items. However, the description page has a blank space for you to draw in a more fitting illustration of your character. Mine would be a stick-man. All of my characters would be stick-men if I has to draw them, and poorly drawn stick-men at that.

The rest of the pages give plenty of space for detailed record keeping of Psionics, Spells, Followers, and a nice large section to list your character's contacts, and a place to log their most memorable adventures. There's also the ubiquitous "Miscellaneous Notes" page and also a nice short block for "Stats of Legend" like most damage you've inflicted with a single hit, most monsters killed in a single round, etc... Good stuff for the bard of the party to use as song/poem material.

VALUE

Ok, so do you drop \$4.50 on a single character sheet? There are a couple of things to consider before we truly answer that question. If you've already become very accustomed to using computerized sheets then maybe not. I have but this one is still keeping my interest so that's a step in its direction. Ok, on to cost. \$4.50 is really pretty cheap for what you get. Yes, it's only for one character, but it's an adventuring lifetime of information that you can keep here and it's all in one place so losing or forgetting to print out a particular sheet should be gone. Also, if you're like me you won't think twice about dropping a couple (sometimes significantly more than a couple) of dollars on a miniature that will see no use other than as a specific player character. To me, the cost is not really an issue here and it's priced affordably enough for just about anyone. Ok, now on to something that may not immediately be considered by a lot of people and that's the lethality of your game. Even if you're using a computerized character sheet there is a significant investment in your time in preparing and maintaining the record of your character's adventures. If you're in a game where characters are dropping like flies then you'll probably not want to invest the time or money in a character sheet like this. If you're playing in an established campaign where character mortality is relatively rare and is very significant when it happens then something like the Character Folio 3.5 will be great. I could also see one being useful for d20 Modern but Call of Cthulhu might have a bit too much of built-in lethality to get a lot of use out of one. Of course, they can be re-used in case of unexpected character death if you use pencil, but if you're like me you remember the joy (not) of recycling the old yellow and blue/green sheets that TSR published for Dungeons & Dragons. Basically, these are priced very nicely and are incredibly useful if your character lives for any significant amount of time.

BASICS

The Unholy Warrior's Handbook is a 80-page softcover book from Green Ronin that retails for \$16.95 USD. Inside you'll find rules for running evil player characters, most of which are quite combat-heavy.

INSIDE

This is somewhat of an evil counterpart to the Book of the Righteous that Green Ronin previously published. Where the former was dedicated to the promotion of the good and holy this is seeks to give players and DM's the opposite. The book starts off with a new base character class, the Unholy Warrior. Calling the Unholy Warrior an anti-hero really is not saying enough. They are base, evil, and truly despicable beings with the completely opposite motivations of a Paladin or Holy Warrior. There are also four Prestige Classes (Angel Hunter, Champion of the Dark Seven, Knight of Bedlam, and Order's Tyrant) who definitely won't be on your local town's Christmas card list but also might not get along very well with each other. The Knight of Bedlam has a very chaos-warrior feel to it, along with mutations to make him super-green, and the Order's Tyrant is completely evil but has a lawful and orderly feel to him. These two guys are both bad, evil, and nasty but they'd probably tear each other apart as well as the local sheep farmer.

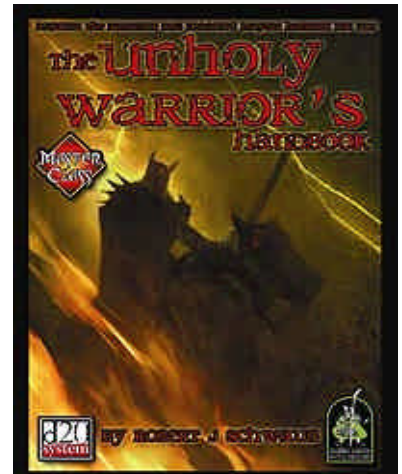
The second chapter (The Power of Evil) details evil badness that comes from the special powers available to these rotten no-good-nicks. Some of them, as you should expect, are downright evil like Sadistic Strike (where you gain bonuses if you hit your opponent for maximum damage), Loathsome Strike (may inflict 1d8 Charisma damage) and Rabid Frenzy, which allows you to fight on past when you should normally be pushing up daisies.

The Feats are also very suitable for the characters not only in this book, but for lots of them that would be built without it. Watch out for anyone you kill that has (not that you'd know it) Brimstone Death, just watch out. Many, like Executioner, Reckless Attack, and Night Fighter, are combat related and turn what is probably already a nasty killing machine into an unholy terror. My personal favorite is Necrotic Shield. Beware of anyone that travels with a pack of zombies or skeletons. Well, beware of them for a whole new (no I won't tell you and spoil it) reason now.

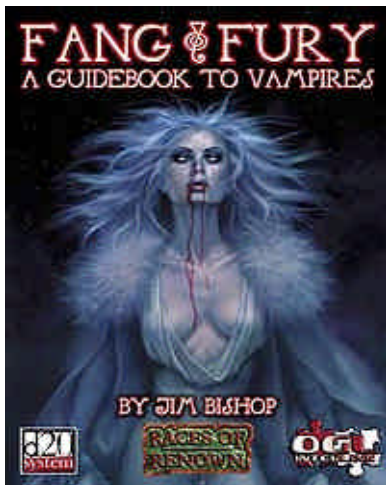
Seven pages of new (yes evil) spells and magic items are also included to make your bad guy even mo' bad and Dark Masters details unholy deities like Asmodeus, Canarak (wrath, violence and destruction; very suitable for an evil barbarian clan) and Thellos (exploitative; hey just right for some film makers and politicians). New mounts and templates (devilish and demonic) are included and I was really pleased to see the book end in a chapter titled "Fallen and Redeemed" because even while the good can turn evil, the unholy can repent and start anew.

VALUE

Green Ronin's high production values have not slipped and the book was easy to read and very clear. Artwork was quite good and up to par. You're either going to love and need this book or walk away from it if you're a player. As a DM you'll find a good amount of information to add new villains to your game and it reminded me, at least a little bit, of the old Realms of Chaos books for Warhammer and Warhammer Fantasy Role-Play. Even with that said the book is not for everyone and the audience for The Unholy Warrior's Handbook is somewhat limited. If you're not playing in an evil campaign you're likely to let it be. As a GM I found several cool things to do, including building a warband of Knights of Bedlam and their followers (along with some demons tossed in for flavor) to harass my party with. It's definitely worth the cover price if it's what you're looking for.



D20 Product Reviews



BASICS

Fang and Fury: A Guidebook to Vampires is an 81-page trade paperback source book for d20 fantasy games. This volume has a full color cover and black and white pages. This book expands upon the vampire and vampire template from the Third Edition d20 books. It is published by Green Ronin and has a cover price of \$16.95 USD.

REVIEW

The vampire, as we all know, is a common legend in most cultures. This is why they have always been present in Dungeons and Dragons. However, with the singular exception of the *Ravenloft* campaign setting, Vampires have usually been presented as a high-level undead encounter. To quote the authors of *Fang and Fury*: “Vampires in the core rules are tough. ... They have solid ability scores, a slew of bonus feats, and a laundry list of special attacks and special qualities. They also have those legendary weaknesses: to garlic, to sunlight, to running water.” As the text continues: when a party encounters a vampire, it usually goes one of two ways – either the vampire surprises the party and carves them up with out breaking a sweat or the party is prepared and pulls the vampire out into the sun – like James Woods did in John Carpenter’s *Vampire\$*. Such a rich historic archetype deserves better – and the folks at Green Ronin do the bloodsuckers it justice. First off, they tackle the concept of a Vampire player character. The existing Vampire in the core rules is so powerful, that it is given an effective character level (ECL) of +8. Yep, you’re typical 1st level Vampire PC is expected to run around with 8th level wizards and fighters. Not a fun place to start, eh? Plus, this 8th level PC is running away from kobolds with garlic necklaces! Green Ronin addresses this by creating a new race – the Vampire Scion (okay, it’s actually a template, but it is effectively a new race). The Scion is a newly changed Vampire; a member of the undead who hasn’t fully adapted to their new state. As such, the scion still has attachments to normal life and society. It’s only after centuries of unlife that they become the classic vampire who disdains mortals as little more than cattle. *Fang and Fury* covers all aspects of the Scion, including such topics as feeding, blood drain, healing, slumber, and Vampiric weaknesses. Note, since Vampires are all evil, this may not fit into some campaigns, especially with younger players. There is an entire chapter devoted to playing a Vampire Scion character, which includes archetypes such as the avenger, the cursed, and the predator. For the referee, there is also a set of campaign options – how to include the scion in the world. There are many threads that rung the gambit from a search for a cure to decadent cruelty. Upon this skeleton, *Fang and Fury* fleshes it out with Vampiric feats such as Create Darkness or Animal Feeder. The volume also includes Vampiric prestige classes that build upon the archetypes for the Vampire Scion. The most notable of these include the Black Abbot, evil clerics who court the vampire gift, the Foundling, an elfin Vampire scion, and the Masked Player, a decadent actor. In addition, there is even a Vampiric pantheon! The chapter of creatures includes more vampire variants such as the Blood Puppet, a vampire’s servant, the Daywalker, and a Vampiric Dragon template. The volume is rounded out with magic and equipment specific to Vampires.

VALUE

If you’ve got a taste for Vampires – for the writings of Ann Rice or a longing for the old *Ravenloft* campaign – then you will definitely be interested in *Fang and Fury*. Green Ronin has put quite a bit of work into this volume. This volume expands upon the basics laid out in the core rulebooks and brings a rich, dare I say full-blooded, treatment of vampires to the game. I am not normally a fan of vampires – truthfully, Lestat doesn’t interested me. As such, I approached this book in a skeptical mood. The quality of the work impressed me. I highly recommend it to every referee – if only as a reference work. Now, this doesn’t mean that I’m going to go rent *Interview with a Vampire*, but it does mean that I hope Green Ronin does a similar volume on the werewolf!

BASICS

Tales of Freeport is a 96-page softcover book by the incomparable Graeme Davis of Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay fame. Gathered here are four adventures, two locations and over a dozen adventure seeds for you to flesh out. There are also new rules, skills, and prestige classes. *Tales of Freeport* is published by Green Ronin and has a cover price of \$18.95 USD.

INSIDE

The introduction for *Tales of Freeport* is rather short, but if you’re familiar with the setting it doesn’t need to be very long. If you don’t have the *Freeport* book it will help a lot with the adventures in *Tales of Freeport*, but I bet an industrious DM could make do without it. The artwork inside is all in the good to very good range and some of it is as nice as the cover, but in black and white instead of color. All of the maps are clear and easy to read.

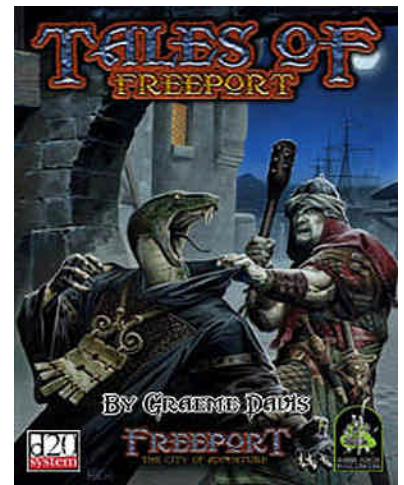
Below is a brief look at the four adventures inside without giving away too much to players that might be taking a peek.

- *The Soul of the Serpent People* Intended for a party level 5-7
This is the longest adventure in the book at close to 40 pages and could have been sold on its own for about ten bucks. It starts off as a missing-person hunt and hostage rescue scenario that presents some good rp’ing opportunities and several new magic items for PC’s to wrap their grubby fingers around.
- *The Last Resort* Usable with a party of any level
The events in this adventure take place on one night over the course of about 8 hours in a large hotel. This is definitely more of an rp’ing scenario in my mind and has plenty of opportunity to do so, but there is some combat to keep hackers happy enough. It’s about 10 pages long and would make a great in-between side game while your party is resting, conveniently at The Last Resort.
- *Cut-Throat’s Gold* Intended for a party level 4-7
Another 10-page affair here, but one where the party finds an old treasure map that leads them into a wilderness adventure. While kind of short there are plenty of combat opportunities here and the party could find itself in the middle, literally, of some nasty fighting.
- *Fair Salvage* Intended for parties level 7-9
Also around 10 pages long, you might guess from the title that it starts off as a salvage mission and you’d be right. Of course, things get messy from there and this turns into a mystery story.

Plots & Places is 10 more pages of very interesting seeds that can be expanded into either full-blown adventures or side-treks. I’m surprised that some of these weren’t kept back by Green Ronin to use in future books. There are two places presented, but they’ll help make *Freeport* even more “alive” than it already is. *Rules You Can Use* is 7 pages of skills (new and old), 1 new Feat (Card Counting), some firearm rules and three Prestige Classes; *Freeport Merchant*, *Ship’s Captain*, and *Gambler*. All are most useful in a *Freeport* campaign, but could find life in another.

VALUE

Tales of Freeport is definitely worth the cover price for GM’s that are looking for new stuff to sprinkle into an existing campaign. For GM’s of a *Freeport* campaign it’s a real bargain and will keep your party occupied for at least 4-5 gaming sessions with the adventures alone and the adventure hooks should be able to spark any DM’s imagination. Off topic for a minute. The WFRP adventures by Graeme Davis are well worth looking for and converting to D&D so be on the look-out!



D20 Product Reviews



BASICS

Testament: Roleplaying in the Biblical Age is a 240-page trade paperback campaign book for d20 fantasy games. This volume has a full color cover and black and white pages. It has a retail price of \$32.95 USD.

CONTENTS

Testament consists of twenty-five chapters that cover every aspect campaigning during Biblical times. The book presents a campaign with the Israelite, Canaanite, Egyptian, and Babylonian peoples.

The topics covered include:

- Character creation
- Character classes and prestige classes
- New feats, spells, magic items, and monsters.
- A mass combat system
- Economics, communities, and equipment.
- Geography, religion, cosmology, and culture for the different nations.

In addition, there are notes on running a biblical campaign as well as a large bibliography and recommended reading list.

REVIEW

Testament is set in the two millennia preceding the birth of Christ and the Roman Empire. A time when giants walked the land, and great cultures and civilizations struggled and fought. This is the Bronze Age in the Middle East. This period of history has been very influential on the rest of the world. Three of the great religions have their foundation in this period. As such, this can be a risky period to role-play. The authors recognize this and address it up front in their Introduction.

Rather than making this an RPG targeted toward people who want to learn about the foundations of their faith or making an RPG that dealt with only historically verifiable events, the authors chose a different route:

“...[W]e’re running a fantasy game, a game of magic and mythology, and if prophets aren’t empowered by the god if Israel, demons don’t drive men mad, and giants don’t walk the Earth, we’re not doing the material justice.”

This sets the stage for the rest of the book. *Testament* starts off by defining some new concepts in the d20 universe. These include:

- **Eras** – one of four major political spheres in which a campaign can be run. Other RPG settings usually deal with a single time and place.
- **Piety** – a replacement for alignment that is a measure of how attuned a character is to his society’s definition of a moral person.
- **Community** – in the eras covered by *Testament*, the health of the community is more important than an individual’s glory.

All of this combines to make *Testament* a unique setting for d20 RPG’s.

The majority of the book focuses on the Israelites, but there is information on the other civilizations. As such, the Era’s are based upon period in the Old Testament. The list starts Antediluvian (approximately 3,000 BCE) and ends in 135 BCE at the death of Simon Maccabee.

These eras offer a world of options for campaigning. How about running a Hebrew guard during the Exodus? Or being a Judge prior to the crowning of Saul? Or even being a thief during the Babylonian Captivity? How about being a soldier with Joshua or a defender in Jericho?

And yes, *Testament* includes some great NPC’s such as Moses, Aaron, Ruth, Joshua, Samson, Delilah, David, Goliath, Solomon, Jezebel, and, my personal favorite, Elijah.

In addition to the Israelites, there is also some information on the other civilizations in during these eras. You can be an Egyptian during the Exodus or a Babylonian during the captivity. There are also wonderful NPC’s here such as King Nebuchadnezzar, Pharaoh Imhotep, Akhenaton, and Ramesses II. As you can see, the setting of *Testament* is wonderfully rich. It should be as this takes over 100 pages. However, there is quite a bit more.

Due to its unique setting, *Testament* has unique aspects of character creation. In this setting, nationality has taken on the role of race in other d20 systems. Your character’s class and languages depends upon his nationality.

There are also Flaws. “One of the primary conflicts of the Testament setting is the struggle with the weakness every person has”. Flaws are a way for the player to incorporate this internal struggle into his character creation – and this serves as a great foundation upon which to role-play.

Testament does not have all the usual character classes. The basics are there - fighter, assassin, cleric, rogue, and paladin – but there are also unique classes such as judge, desert hermit, and royal astrologer. The classes include both normal and prestige classes, such as psalmist, Levite priest, and prophet.

Magic is also handled based upon nationality. For the Egyptians, there is no distinction between arcane and divine magic while the Israelites see arcane magic as a sin and only practice divine magic. *Testament* also provides new feats and spells that fit into the setting.

Piety is a concept unique to *Testament*. “Piety is the obedience to the laws of a god who could protect his people against life’s most brutal misfortunes...” This virtue replaces the d20 alignment mechanic. Piety is very important. A character with a positive piety score can gain benefits each gaming session, such as increased hit points; the ability to smite evil, or even improving his saving throws. A negative piety can also have game effects in the form of curses for the worst offenders. *Testament* includes rules for using and managing piety in characters.

Battles were a major feature of the period covered by *Testament*. For those without extensive ancient armies or rules, a section on mass combat is included. Tactics in the ancient world were very simple and the authors use this to create an abstracted mechanism for resolving battles. This means that the players can have an impact on the outcome of the battle with out pulling out **DBM** or **Warhammer Ancient Battles**.

VALUE

Right up front, I will say that because of its subject matter, *Testament: Roleplaying in the Biblical Age* is not for every gamer. If you find it demeaning or offensive to have this setting in a role-playing game, then stay far away. If not, then read on!

The authors have put an amazing amount of research and work into this volume. This was definitely a labor of love. The results are very impressive. I’ve not seen a book crammed with this much information since the **Traveller T20** book.

Like all great fantasy RPG settings, *Testament* has magic and heroes and grand civilizations. However, unlike all those others, virtually every player already knows part of the background. This setting is our cultural history and it beckons us all.

Do I like this book – yes! It’s exceptional. I highly recommend it to anyone who is not offended by its subject matter. The quality of the setting places this on par with *Forgotten Realms*, and it is certainly an intriguing concept. Now, I wonder if there will be a supplement in the future to include the Minoan and classic Greek cultures?

D20 Product Reviews



BASICS

Just in time for you to still have 'Pirates of the Caribbean' still on your mind is *Pirates!* from Living Imagination. *Pirates!* is a 112-page (color cover and black & white interior) that retails for \$19.95 and details the life of a pirate in some historical terms, as a playable player character and all of the extras that go along with bringing pirates into a fantasy adventure world.

INSIDE

There are seven chapters in the book (Pirate's Life, Pirate Profiles, Ships and Booty, Ship

Construction, Equipment and Magic, Kronor's Folly, Pirate Adventures, and two appendices) and the first gives a very nice historical accounting of pirate life and will give GM's a lot to work with in building a campaign. In this section there's also a decent glossary of pirate/nautical terms so you and your players can use the proper wording for things.

Pirate Profiles is really two sections in one. First, it's background and NPC stats/info for a whole slew of pirates (some historical like Captain Kidd, but most not) to flesh out your game and fourteen Prestige Classes, including Gentleman Pirate, Slaver, Smuggler, Island Protector and many more. This chapter takes up the vast majority of the book, but like I said it's really two chapters in one.

Ships and Booty and Ship Construction are both relatively short chapters but they didn't seem lacking. Ships and Booty does a good job of working out the cost of goods and how much it'll cost you to stay in business as a pirate. A very good chapter. Ship construction won't get you the same wealth of information that living Imagination brought you in *Broadsides!* but it will definitely get you in the water and sailing.

Equipment and Magic gives you plenty of mundane and magic items (as you would expect most are nautical-based), but no new spells. The 'Ship of Holding' is a must for any Slaver fleet. Kronor's Folly is an island location where you can start your pirating campaign and there are two mini-adventures (4-9 pages each) that can be used as-is or fleshed out into longer excursions. They are for levels 6+ so you'll either need to start your party off in that range, move an existing campaign into pirate waters, or adjust the encounters accordingly.

VALUE

This was a great book. From beginning to end I was eager to keep reading. Its release being close to 'Pirates of the Caribbean' is a good thing too. There's two ways that I see this book being used most effectively. First, and the most intended use is obviously so you can run a band of bloodthirsty cutthroats that will roam the seas in search of vessels to pillage and plunder. Unless you want to play a 'good' pirate, a bit like in the movie, this seems to me to lead in a more evil-party direction. Not guaranteed, but at least in that direction as the whole party now (not just the Rogue as in a more standard campaign) will be working to be, rather violently, separate people from their possessions. Not just monsters, but people. This is all a very viable way to run a campaign and if it's what you want then this is the book for you.

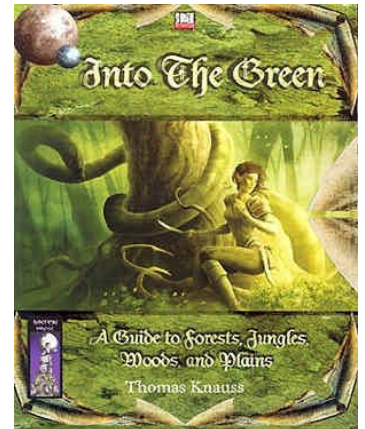
Second, it could be used to emulate the life of Han Solo in Star Wars. The rogue-ish smuggler with a heart of gold. Along the same lines would be running an adventure game on the high seas with the party being ex-pirates or other 'watery' classes. If this is what you want to do then this book is for you. I rather like the idea of a water-based campaign of adventurers that find trouble everywhere they sail to. Highly recommended and makes a great companion to *Twin Crowns* and *Broadsides!* by Living Imagination.

BASICS

Into the Green is a soft cover book published by Bastion Press. The front and back covers are full color while internal illustrations are black and white. This 96-page volume is a d20 System supplement that retails for \$22.95.

INSIDE

Into the Green consists of an Introduction, six chapters and three appendices. The one-page introduction is a brief outline of the book. The Chapters are titled Forests, Jungles, Woods, Plains, New Equipment and Spells.



Each of the first four chapters discusses the climate, plants, animals, environmental hazards and monsters of the specific environment. Chapter 1, entitled Forests, talks about the varied seasonal climates of a forest and delves into the local fauna, animals and specific monsters found in a forest region. Animals are different from monsters in that they do not inherently attack others when near by. In this tome, Animals are described and statistics (specifically Wilderness Lore Check numbers) are given for a character to recognize a specific animal. The monster listings are created to replicate the listings in the Monster Manual, so they will be familiar to a Dungeon Master. As well, the chapter provides campaign suggestions for each monster, a very useful addition to this book. Chapter 2, Jungles, starts out discussing the climate and makes a point of the high level of heat inherent in jungle settings. A heat index chart is provided and a discussion is included on heat index conditions and their potential effect on characters; great food for thought on adventuring in jungles. As with the previous chapter, great detail is spent discussing fauna, animals and monsters specific to a jungle environment. Each monster is listed as in the Monster manual and campaign hints are provided for each monster. Chapter 3 is Woods, which are described as temperate in climate (subject to sweeping changes in temperature and precipitation), with relatively short trees (as tall as 25') and without the characteristic density of forests or jungles. Extensive fauna, animals (both mammals and insects), environmental hazards, and monsters are listed in this chapter as well. Chapter 4 is entitled Plains. Like the previous chapters, it discusses fauna, animals, environmental hazards and monsters with similar campaign suggestions included with each monster. Chapter 5 is New Items. It includes mundane items, magical items, new materials, new substances and weapons. All deal somehow with forest habitats and substances derived therein. The items are very inventive and can enhance a campaign very well if used effectively. Chapter 6 is entitled Spells. It lists new spells by class then includes detailed write-ups of each spell similar to how spells are written in the Players Handbook. All together, there are 22 additional spells in this book. Appendix A is a list of new poisons derived from the forest or the denizens thereof. The list includes difficulty class (DC) of each poison, initial damage, secondary damage and the cost per dose of each poison. There are a total of 8 new poisons in this list. Appendix B is a series of charts for determining encounters in each of the environments listed in this book. There are twelve separate charts and they include lists of animal, plant and monster encounters. Appendix C, the last appendix of the book contains charts involving weather and its effects by season. There are four lists, one for each of the four seasons. The charts include high temperatures, low temperatures, wind speed, humidity, percentage chance of precipitation (rain or snow) and the percentage chances of thunderstorm, hurricane and/or blizzard.

VALUE

Into the Green is an excellent add-on for any d20 campaign. The descriptions are detailed and provide very good information for forest, jungle or woodland campaigning. The campaign suggestions require quite a bit of work to implement but creating any campaign takes work. The equipment and substances can be incorporated very easily into the game and the spells are unique and varied. This would be an excellent book for DM's creating forest or jungle campaigns and for players playing Ranger or Druid characters. The level of detail is amazing and the organization of the book is exceptional.

D20 Product Reviews



BASICS

Torn Asunder: Critical Hits is a supplement for d20 fantasy games and it does make use of information found in the 3.5 version of the *Dungeons and Dragons* rule books. It has a color cover and b/w interior artwork. It's 96-pages in length and has a retail price of \$22.95. *Torn Asunder* is published by Bastion Press.

INSIDE

If you were expecting *Torn Asunder* to be nothing more than a series of critical hit charts for all sorts of weapons you'd be wrong.

In fact, only about a third of the book is devoted to the actual hitting of your enemies in a 'critical' fashion and it does not attempt to turn D&D into Rolemaster, or Chart-Master as I've heard it called by some. Really, what's being done here is determining the effect of a critical hit. You're still doing your normal (increased) amount of critical damage and maybe also putting out an eye or severing a hand, etc... There is a quick calculation to determine if you get a critical effect and then a single extra roll to figure out a body location. The bulk of work will be on the GM to keep copies of the hit locations of various creature types on-hand. A set of note cards would be great for this. Critical fumbles are also a possibility so beware of natural 1's.

With the increased ass-kicking and body parts lying on the floor you'll need new ways to put your party back together. About 20 pages are dedicated to new natural, herbal, and magical healing and also some of the effects of living with just one eye or with massive scarring. They've taken care to make sure that this is not a tome just for the fighter-types. There are also a few pieces of new armor, some designed to protect those 'vital' parts that you'd *REALLY* not want severed, and also a few new prestige classes (Marksman, Spiritual Healer, and Apothecary) which I'm always happy to see. The Marksman, as you'd probably expect, makes

The section on spells is rather small, but I enjoyed it very much. What spell-caster wouldn't want an electrical bolt that has a vorpal affect!?! Also, there's a spell that basically negates a number of incoming hits based upon your level. Very nice indeed. New weapons are presented along with new magical qualities including *Breaking* and *Steel-phase*, which passes through (yes, you read that right) metal armor.

There are six new monsters including a Dung Golem (yuck!) that makes me afraid to walk past a compost pile (I live in the country, ya'll) and a Ramzadi, which is a new draconic race. Three new templates (Primal, Spined, and Threatening).

VALUE

If you're playing in a combat-heavy game then your players will very likely appreciate the damage and flair that their combats can take. Of course, they can be on the receiving end also so watch out.

What I liked is that even though some of the critical effects will likely end up in death, like a Head-Serious effect (dead in a number of rounds equal to your CON modifier) there were none that simply said "dead" and that be the end of the story. They also took the time to craft ways to stave off the impending doom that waits for you at the end of that Ogre's blade, but not enough to make the critical effects useless.

Overall, it's a nice addition that would be best used in a game where combat is a little more prevalent than straight detective work, but having your mate's ear ripped off could bring in some nice role-playing opportunities. I'll be trying it out when we take a break from Mutants and Masterminds and resume our assault on the Steading of the Hill Giant King.

BASICS

Oathbound: Wrack and Ruin is a 128-page trade paperback source book for d20 fantasy games. This volume has a full color cover and black and white pages. This book describes the ruined and under city parts of the City of Penance in the *Oathbound* campaign setting. It's published by Bastion Press and has a retail price of \$25.95.

CONTENTS

Oathbound: Wrack and Ruin consists of five chapters and two appendices. Chapter one introduces the concept of the wrack and maze sections of Penance. Chapter two describes the new player character races, prestige classes, gifts, and prestige races, a concept unique to the *Oathbound* setting. Chapter three covers the lost city area – the sections of the City of Penance which have been abandoned for one reason or another. Chapter four describes the Undercity – the collection of ruins and older building upon top of which the current City of Penance rests. Chapter five presents an adventure, *Black on Black*, for 5 to 8 players of 8th to 12th level. The appendices list new spells, magic items, and monsters for this setting. The final appendix provides a how-to guide for creating adventures in the Maze, as the subterranean area is called.

REVIEW

Bastion Press's *Oathbound* campaign setting has been one of the most refreshing ones to come out in the past few years. We have been fortunate here at *Fictional Reality* to watch it grow. This new volume continues this tradition with new and exciting ideas and settings.

The book starts by reminding the reader of the size of the City of Penance and its age. The sixty-seven mile diameter city has been inhabited for so long that parts of it have been abandoned and fallen into disrepair. More than just an abandoned block, the ruined areas cover acres.

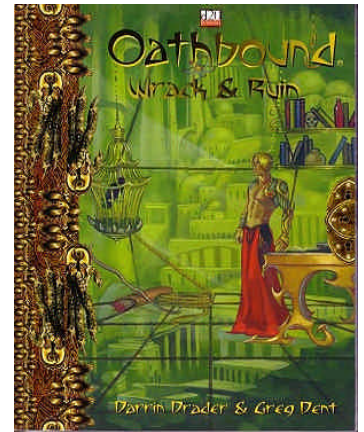
Called the Lost City, these areas are left alone by the citizens for years at a time. They become a haven for the unlawful and the outcast as well as for vermin and adventurers. The lure of the abandoned parts of the city is often too much for certain citizens and they enter in search of knowledge and wealth.

Since the City of Penance is built atop a quarter-mile high pedestal, there is no more room to expand. When new living or working space is required, it is built upon these ruins. Over history of Penance, this has happened countless times. The older ruins have been paved over many times by countless generations. Needless to say, this is not the most stable building area – rifts, sinkholes, and city-quakes are quite common.

All of these give access to the layers of buried ruins of the Maze. The allure of the Lost City is strong but the wealth and dangers of the Maze are greater. After describing this rich background, *Oathbound: Wrack and Ruin* describes the inhabitants of these mysterious areas.

First off, there are three new player character races: the Nkoll who are an aggressive serpentine species living under the eastern part of the Lost city, the Skar who resemble human lepers due to a side effect of a symbiotic parasite, and the Wygith who are a sub-race of Drow changed by the magic of this world.

In addition to these base races, there are five new prestige races. In the *Oathbound* setting, the power of the world itself can cause beings to evolve into prestige races. The mechanics of a prestige race are similar to a prestige class. The new prestige races are Focus of the Arachnid, Focus of the Cham-



D20 Product Reviews



★★★★

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RPG OBJECTS

★★★★

eleon, Focus of the Cockroach, Focus of the Exile, and Focus of the Mole. In each race, the character takes on physical abilities, mannerisms, and appearance of its namesake.

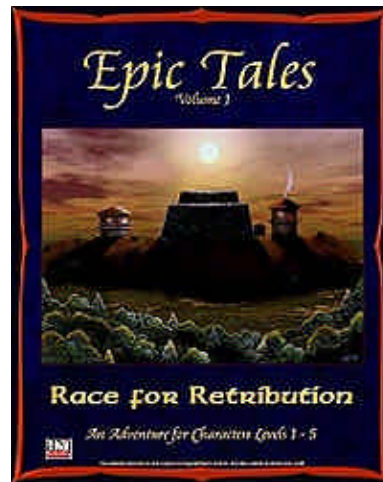
The next sections of the *Oathbound: Wrack and Ruin* provide a gazetteer of the various known areas of the Lost City and the Maze. Each area is described along with its inhabitants, racial makeup, as well as any special NPC's.

Finally, there is an adventure that sends a party of adventures into the Lost City and the Maze. In six episodes, the party travels through the wrack and ruin trying to stop an insurrection by an ancient and immortal being all the while dealing with the factions and dangers that inhabit the abandoned parts of Penance.

VALUE

Oathbound: Wrack and Ruin is an excellent supplement to the *Oathbound* campaign setting. It is a must have for those who are adventuring in this world.

For referees running games outside of *Oathbound*, this is an excellent reference work. The ideas of the Lost City and the Maze can be used in almost any large city setting – as a transitional place between the surface world and the Underdark.



BASICS

Epic Tales Volume 1, Race For Retribution is a series of adventures for Dungeons & Dragons, presented as four booklets. These are each around 30 pages giving around 116 pages all together. The cover is removable, doubles as a screen, and features three useful colour maps. The art and maps in the booklets are black and white. The retail price is \$21.95 usd and it is published by Bard's Productions.

BETWEEN THE COVERS

The first booklet provides all the necessary information about Stahl and Laendersburg, the two cities around which the series of adventures are based. For each city there is a page or so of population data followed by a good chunk about significant NPCs. Around two dozen are detailed, with role-playing notes to back up the stat blocks.

Each booklet contains a single adventure, building on this information. Each adventure can stand alone, or they can be run as a series. The strength of the collection is found when used together. The adventures themselves are unexceptional. However, the back-story and the detailed NPCs add a great deal to the experience when running the adventures as a series. There is plenty of scope to break up the parts with other scenarios, allowing PCs and DM alike to take a break and return later. Indeed the author suggests running at least one session between each of the four adventure parts.

There is good variety in the different modules. They vary from the traditional dungeon crawl to a city-based hunt for a murderer. The last section includes the interesting use of a stop-clock to present some game events in real-time.

Everything you could possibly wish for is detailed. All the monsters in the game have full stats. All the special abilities that come up in the game are there for reference too. About the only thing the GM might need to do is possibly look up some spells in the PHB. Even monsters that might be summoned have stat blocks provided. Wandering monster tables are included, with notes on how and when to use them. A very nice touch is the inclusion of battle tactics, and even battle timetables, for the various combats that can occur throughout.

The DM aids do not end there either. A selection of handouts and maps are available to download from the publisher's website in glorious colour. These are a handy addition to the smaller, black and white, versions found within. It is the small touches like this, that show how much thought has been put into a product of this nature. I was impressed by the extra details giving suggestions on how to adjust sections of the series. This is really helpful when the characters are of the wrong levels, or even if the PCs are finding that particular section too hard or too easy.

CONCLUSION

This is an excellent adventure combining some classic themes into a unique experience. The level of detail provided for the story's NPCs is good enough to keep the PCs busy in Stahl and Laendersburg far beyond the end of the adventure. The tips throughout make this a good choice for a novice DM, while a seasoned DM will have plenty to get their teeth into. My only real qualms are the black and white maps, which can be difficult to read and the way some information or text is repeated many times. The maps however do have larger colour counterparts available for download and the repeated text can be ignored. All in all this is a great product. Now, to find my players...



Adventure



Dangerous Dealings and Marvelous Maidens

A Short Adventure for *Savage Worlds*

Introduction

Dangerous Dealings and Marvelous Maidens is an adventure for 3 to 5 players set in 1934 California. The classic movie serials of the 30's and 40's inspire this adventure. This isn't your epic, earth shaking type of adventure – no it's just the simple story of a megalomaniac bent on world domination and the innocent maiden who is ensnared in his web.

Since this is based on the serials, the story is told in chapters or episodes. The first two episodes are included in this issue and the rest will be in the next.

If you are going to be a character in this adventure, please go read another article in this fine magazine. The stuff below is FGMEO – For Game Master Eyes Only! You have been warned!

Note that this is a complete adventure on its own, but it is also part of a longer story line. What good serial would end without a cliffhanger?

Summary

Professor Alistair Gordon of Pacific Tech, a technical college just outside of Los Angeles, is scheduled to present his new invention at a conference in San Francisco. It is a rocket pack. There are many who are interested in the Professor's work, both good and bad. Of the later, the most notable is Dr Boskone. The doctor is in league with evil forces and plans to use the professor's invention to rule the world!

Dramatis Personae

Professor Alistair Gordon

Professor Alistair Gordon has taught aeronautics at Pacific Tech for seventeen years. He, and his good friend Dr. Bilderbeck, has spent the past few years working with rockets and jet propulsion. He has recently perfected a rocket pack that allows a man to fly without an airplane.

Wilma Deering

Wilma Deering was the daughter of Orin Deering, owner of Deering Aero Manufacturing. Orin was killed in a car accident ten years ago and Professor Gordon adopted Wilma. It was the least he could do for his old friend. Wilma, like her father, had a natural gift for aeronautics and she is currently working on her doctorate on rocket propulsion while assisting the Professor.

Dr Boskone

No one knows who Dr Boskone is or where he comes from. About two years ago, there was an explosion at a fertilizer plant that killed seven workers. A letter appeared in the Chicago Tribune claiming responsibility and warning that other plants would be destroyed unless a ransom of \$250,000 was paid to a numbered Swiss bank account. Dr Boskone signed the letter. After another explosion, the ransom was paid and Dr. Boskone was not heard from again.

Dr. Boskone has made an alliance with the Emir of Venus. The Venusians want to conquer Earth and use it's people as a slave labor force. When Earth is conquered, Dr. Boskone will rule for the Emir. Of course, the Doctor has other plans, and is just using the help of his Venusian allies to take over.

Detective Elliot Queen

Elliot Queen is a detective with the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD). He has been on the force for twelve years, working mostly homicide in and around the wharves. Last year he was promoted to sergeant and was moved to the downtown area. He usually gets involved only in high-profile cases. He is a chain smoker with a fondness for coffee with too much sugar and cream.

Grond

Grond is a close associate of Dr. Boskone. He is also a Minotaur. He is not too bright, but does have a low cunning. This, plus his stubbornness and "stick-to-itiveness" means that the Doctor often sends Grond off to do the unpleasant things that must be done. Grond is originally from Venus. Dr. Boskone's Venusian allies sent him to help the Dr with their plans to conquer the Earth.

Grond the Minotaur

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit: d8, Strength: d12+2, Vigor d12.

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d12, Intimidation d12, Notice d10, Throwing: d6.

Pace: 8, Parry: 7, Toughness: 11.

Gear: Leather Armor (+1), Colt M1911 (12/24/48, 2d6+1, AP1).

Special Abilities: Bite (STR), Fleet Foot (d10 for running), Gore (+4 to attack if charge at least 6"), Size (+2, 7'+ tall), Low Light Vision.

Episode 1: Train Ride to Terror

Location: Los Angeles Central Train Station, Platform 13.

Time: Friday, July 6 1934, 9:00 a.m.

Summary: The party is drawn into the machinations of the Evil Dr. Boskone.

Boarding the Bay Liner Express

The adventure begins at Los Angeles Central Train Station where the party is boarding the Bay Liner Express for San Francisco. All members of the party have first class tickets for compartment 5 on the first class car.

The train is set to leave Los Angeles at 9:20, so the party has a little time to knock around. It might be interesting to have each player describe why he is going to San Francisco. Use this as an opportunity for the players to introduce their characters.

The steam train is pulling four cars – a first-class, car a second-class car, a dining car, and a baggage car. The first class car has six compartments that seat six people comfortably. The second-class car has bench seating for sixty people and the dining car has stools and chairs to seat twenty-five.

There is one conductor in the first-class and the second-class cars as well as a cook and two waitresses in the dining car. The brakeman and his assistant are in the baggage car.

Inside the compartment are six large chairs, 3 on each bulkhead, with a package shelf above each. The door to the compartment is on the left and there is a large plate glass window looking out over the platform on the right. A hinged table is attached just under the window. See the diagram below for the layout of the car.

Compartment
Compartment
Compartment
Compartment
Compartment
Compartment
Compartment

The compartments are numbered 1 to 7 from top to bottom. There are 2 to 5 other passengers in each other compartment. Treat these folks and bystanders.

Two complimentary copies of the *San Francisco Tribune* are lying on seats. The front page of the paper has the following stories:

President Roosevelt to visit San Francisco on Tuesday to meet with the Foreign Minister of Siam. Ernst Rohm, leader of the SA, committed suicide on 1 July in a prison in Munich.

Professor Alistair Gordon is to unveil his new rocket pack today at the annual Aeronautical Engineering conference at the University of San Francisco auditorium.

As the conductor makes the final boarding call and the train whistle sounds, one of the characters by the window sees a striking young woman in a dark blue dress and yellow hat run up across the platform and get on board the first-class car. The character that notices is the one who makes the best *Notice* roll (TN 4, no modifiers).

As the train lurches into motion, the door to the player's compartment opens and in steps the woman. She is carrying a large and obviously heavy salesman's brief case. This is Wilma Deering, ward of Professor Alistair Gordon. She is taking some important papers to the professor in San Francisco. The professor forgot them when he left for the conference. Wilma received the phone call with just enough time to pack the case and make it to the train. Wilma is very friendly and very pretty. She is smart but she is also aware that smart girls are not popular, so she doesn't try to impress anyone.



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she is a bit nervous about traveling alone to San Francisco, and is quite eager to talk. Wilma knows the following information, in addition to any small talk she may make. She won't divulge this information herself, but she will respond if questioned:

- Professor Gordon's rocket pack is a major breakthrough in both power and range. With a little training almost anyone can fly the rocket pack – and it is very fast (250 mph).
- The phone call this morning was not from the professor, but from one of the conference organizers. The organizer, who didn't give his name, said that the professor needed his notes and plans for the rocket pack for his presentation. And asked that Wilma bring them to the conference center in San Francisco.
- Before leaving for the conference, she overheard the professor talking on the phone to someone. He sounded angry and kept telling the other person that he could not help him, not for any amount of money, and if he continued to call, the professor would call the police. When Wilma asked about the call, the professor said that it was simply one of his students wanting a better grade – however Wilma didn't believe him.

Sometime during the trip, the conductor will come in to punch everyone's tickets. If the party has not gotten the information about the Professor and Wilma Deering, the conductor will notice her name on the ticket and ask about her father. The conductor is an airplane fanatic and builds models of them on the weekends.

The Attack on the Train

Location: Aboard the Bay Liner Express about an hour out of San Francisco.

Time: Friday, July 6 1934, 11:00 p.m.

Summary: Dr. Boskone makes his first move.

The trip from Los Angeles to San Francisco takes about three hours. After two hours, the train slows and stops. Soon afterward, the conductor comes by to say that a large hay wagon is blocking the track. The engineer and fireman are working with the farmer to clear the track. The train should start up shortly. Of course, the hay wagon is a diversion. Dr. Boskone has arranged it to stop the train and allow his associates to kidnap Wilma Deering and the plans to the rocket pack.

Shortly after the conductor leaves the compartment, there is a thump and the car shakes. Seven of Dr. Boskone's henchmen get on the car – three from the front and four from the rear. Their mission is to capture Wilma – and they won't be stopped by anyone in their way. Once she's grabbed, they will take her to a waiting car and speed away.

Boskone's Henchmen

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4, Spirit: d4, Strength: d4, Vigor d4.

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Shooting d6.

Pace: 6, **Parry:** 5, **Toughness:** 4.

Gear: Colt M1911 (12/24/48, 2d6+1, AP1).

Special Abilities: None.

The henchmen will first try and bully their way around, only resorting to shooting if they have to – or the party shoots first. The henchmen are not above taking hostages to secure what they want. If they can't get Wilma, they will, at least, take her case. Fight this encounter out using miniatures as described in the **Savage Worlds** rulebook. The action will take place on the rail car and, maybe, in the immediate surroundings.

After this fight, there are three possible outcomes:

- (1) The henchmen kidnap Wilma, with or without the plans.
- (2) The henchmen don't get Wilma but they do get the plans.
- (3) The henchmen fail to get Wilma and the plans.

In any event, the party doesn't have much choice but to ride the train on into San Francisco.

Episode 2: The Demon at Devil's Draw

Location: San Francisco Train Station, Platform 4,

Time: Friday, July 6 1934, 12:45 p.m.

Summary: The party confronts the minions of Dr Boskone in a ghost town where a shoot-out ensues.

Meeting Professor Gordon

When the train arrives in San Francisco, Detective Elliot Queen and six uniformed officers meet the party. Detective Queen says he wants to talk to the party and escorts them and Wilma (if present) to an office in back behind the ticketing windows.

The office has a single desk, four large filing cabinets, and enough chairs for everyone. There is a water cooler in one corner of the office, and a small window high on one wall – too small to climb out of. There is one door. Detective Queen says he needs to talk to the conductor and other passengers and will return. He leaves three officers – Jack, Reggie, and "Doc" – to guard the only door to the room. If the party needs anything, they can ask the officers.

Detective Queen is gone about fifteen minutes when the door opens, and an old man enters. This is Professor Gordon. What happens next depends on if Wilma was captured or not.

In either event, the professor will inform the party of the following items during the discussion:

- The professor has been in contact with the US Army for the beginning on this project. They have funded part of the research.
- The army is very interested in the rocket pack. There are other countries that also would be interested in it.
- In the last few weeks of testing, the professor has gotten calls from someone calling himself Doctor Boskone. This doctor says that there is a rich and powerful group of men who will pay good money for the rocket pack.

The professor has politely refused the offers but the calls have become more numerous and insistent.

Wilma was not captured.

If Wilma is with the party she will jump up and hug her guardian. He will quiet her and she will say that the party saved her from the attackers. During this discussion Wilma will say that she brought the plans that Professor Gordon requested. The professor will say he made no such arrangements.

Professor Gordon will thank the entire party and pledge to present their case to the police. He will also inquire about the men that attacked the train. He will be most interested if any one had mentioned "Doctor Boskone" or were interested in the plans to his rocket pack. Earlier today, the professor received a call from Doctor Boskone saying his ward escaped today but wouldn't be so lucky in the future if the professor didn't cooperate.

Wilma was captured.

If Wilma is not present, then Doctor Gordon will introduce himself and inquire about his ward. He will be most interested in hearing what happened on the train, in detail. He will ask questions about the attackers, if they mentioned "Doctor Boskone" or were interested in the rocket plans. Earlier today, the professor received a call from Doctor Boskone saying that he captured Wilma.

Dealing with the Police

After the important parts of the Professor story have been told to the party, Detective Queen will come into the room. Elliot does not know much about what is going on, but he knows that the people in First-class Compartment 5 on the Bay Liner Express were the ones who fought the bandits. He will tell the group that he has statements from the conductor and the other passengers of the first class car. Now he wants to talk to the people in this room.

Randomly select one of the party members that Detective Queen will ask to follow him to another office. As the Detective and the party member are leaving the room, Professor Queen interrupts and asks to speak with the Detective in the hall. Detective Queen agrees, and tells the party to wait as he and the professor step out of the room.

After about twenty minutes, the professor and the detective come back in the room. The professor has managed to convince the Detective that the party were just bystanders and all they did was help, or try to help depending on the outcome of episode 1, a lady in distress. Detective Queen knows that there's something else going on, but he doesn't know what. The detective also doesn't have enough evidence to hold any of the party members. However kidnapping or attempted kidnapping is a capital crime so the party is not to leave town. They are also to leave an address where they will be staying in San Francisco.

The Detective then lets the party go, and walks out of the room. The professor asks the party to hold on a minute while he goes to the office door. Once he's sure the police are gone, the professor says that Doctor Boskone wants to meet with him at midnight tonight at Devils' Draw, an abandoned mining town. The professor, after hearing how the party protected his ward, will ask that they accompany him to the meeting tonight, as Doctor Boskone said that the police were not to be involved. The professor does not want anyone else to get hurt – especially at his expense. He will want to cooperate with the demands of Doctor Boskone and emphatically does not want the police involved.

The Meeting

Location: Devil's Draw ghost town,

Time: Friday, July 6 1934, 11:00 p.m.

Summary: The party confronts the minions of Dr Boskone in a ghost town where a shoot-out ensues.

The party has plenty of time to prepare for the meeting – including scouting out the location or even laying a trap. Devil's Draw is about thirty-five miles northeast of Oakland in a mountainous wooded area. There are only five buildings still standing, and these have been overgrown by weeds and brush. They line on either side of a steep main street. At the end of this street are the old mine workings.

Andersen's Livery Stable. The first building on the right is the old livery stable. A fire gutted the insides some time ago and now the façade is all that remains. The second floor is gone.

Devil's Draw Saloon. The saloon is the largest of the six buildings, and the only one on the left side. The furnishings are still inside, though most are rotten. On the second floor there are four rooms that look out over the porch and the street.

Swenson's General Store. The second building on the right is a general store, and is in the same state of repair as the Saloon. There are two windows on the second floor that overlook the street.

Wells Fargo Office. This door to this building is locked, but all the windows have been broken out. Inside, an old safe sits with its door open. Close inspection will reveal that someone had tried to open the door by force. The rest of the office has been ransacked.

Jail. This single-story building has bars on all its windows. Inside, it is bare; all of its furnishings have been removed. The cells, however, are still intact.

Mine Workings. The Devil's Mine workings are in the same state as the rest of the town. When the mine played out, the mining company sealed it with two large iron doors set into the side of the hill. Unlike the rest of the town, some one is taking care of these doors. They have been cleaned up and their hinges oiled. A fresh lock has been placed on the doors.

Deployment of Doctor Boskone's Minions

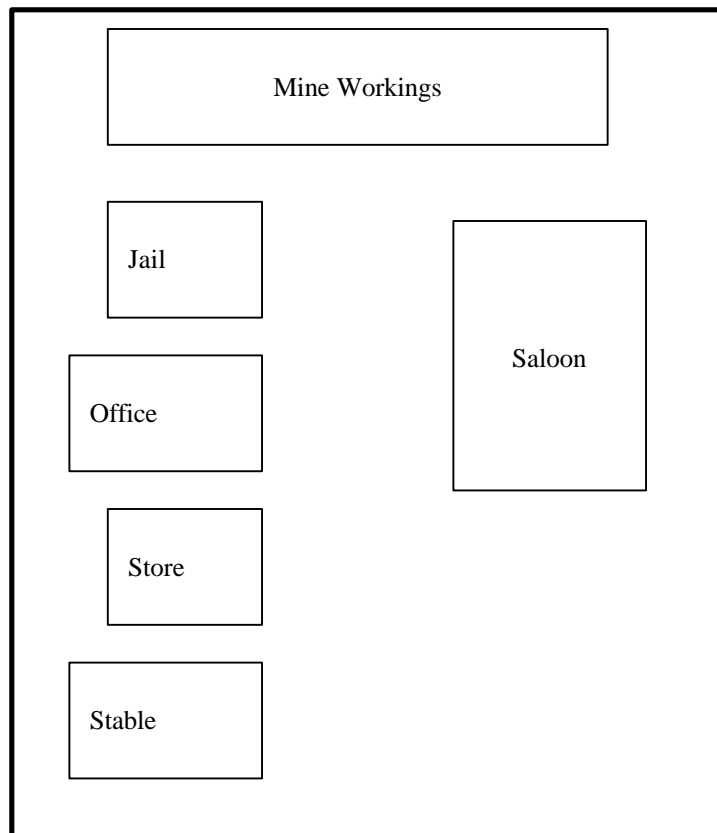
Dr. Boskone has sent Grond and seven henchmen to town to wait for the Professor. Just after dark, about 9:30 p.m., the minions and Grond will come out of the mine workings and deploy in the village. Adjust this accordingly if the party have already moved into the ghost town.

If Wilma was captured, Grond has locked her in one of the cells in the Jail. He is in the jail himself. He has positioned the rest of his men around the town. They are hidden in the buildings with a good view of the street.

Grond has been instructed to capture the Professor and bring him to Dr. Boskone. He will not engage the party directly but will try and sneak up on them and grab the Professor from behind. Grond will then make for the mine and will try to lose any pursuit in the underground tunnels. The dense vegetation around the edge of the town will allow him to surprise the party. The henchmen are meant to keep busy the obligatory police that accompany the Professor.

This part should be fought out on as a tabletop battle. I would definitely recommend using a large battlemat so that the whole town can be drawn on it. The Professor won't take part in the battle, he is a frail old man after all, and will probably hang as far back as he can.

The henchmen are all armed with rifles and are hidden. Remember that this fight is occurring in the dark of night!



Boskone's Henchmen

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4, Spirit: d4, Strength: d4, Vigor d4.

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Shooting d6.

Pace: 6, **Parry:** 5, **Toughness:** 4.

Gear: Colt M1911 (12/24/48, 2d6+1, AP1).

Special Abilities: None.

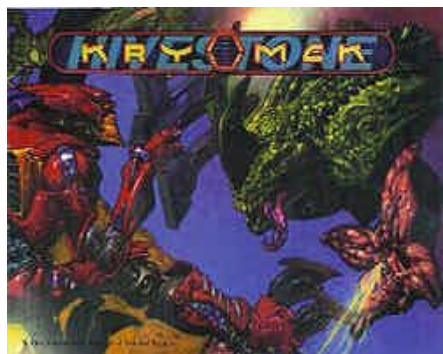
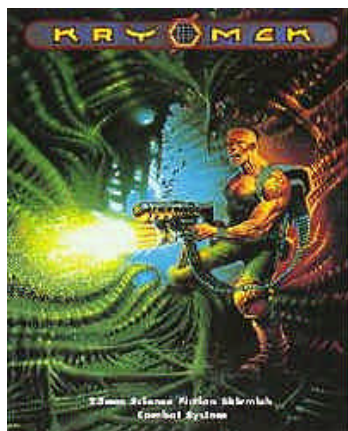
Aftermath

There are two general outcomes from this adventure:

- (1) Grond successfully spirits away the Professor. Things are bad, Dr. Boskone has what he needs to equip his forces with rocket packs!
- (2) Grond doesn't get the Professor. Dr. Boskone's plans have been set back, but he still has the blueprints for the rocket packs!

So what happens next? Be here next issue, loyal readers!

Game Review



BASICS

Kryomek, and its expansion Hivestone, is a 25mm science-fiction tabletop miniatures game that was originally released over a decade ago by Fantasy Forge. It is now under the direction of Kryomek USA who is marketing the rules and miniatures (also see Kryomek miniature reviews in this issue of Fictional Reality). The basic Kryomek book is a 136-page softcover rulebook printed on pretty heavy paper with color cover and black & white interior art. It's printed on A4 size paper, which means it's noticeably taller than most of the other books in your game collection. You also get a quick-play sheet, squad record sheets, counters and clear acetate templates for burst effect and directly placed template weapons. Yup, they were doing it long before Games Workshop did with the third edition of Warhammer 40K. These are more like overhead transparencies than the thick plastic ones in Warhammer though. We'll take a separate look at Hivestone a little later in this article.

INSIDE

The Kryomek rules are based on the Stargrunt sci-fi rules so players of that game will likely see some similarities between them. Also, these rules have four names credited with having written them, two of which you're likely to recognize; John Grant and John Robertson of I-Kore fame.

The game background takes up about half of the book and is a richly detailed story of humankind's encounters and battles with the alien Kryomek and also provides a good understanding for the units in the game and how they operate and fight. Most of the artwork is pen & ink and looks very good. Some of it is just 'ok', but most of it is really very nice and the Kryomek definitely have similarities to the 'bugs' in the "Aliens" series of movies. All of the text was very clear and everything was easy on the eyes.

The rules section was very easy to read and digest. It's packed with many diagrams and pictures to fully explain rules. The rules section has a glossary of its own and finding specific rules in this book is probably one of the easiest that I've seen. Excellent layout here'

THE GAME

Kryomek, at its base, is about combat between humans with guns versus bugs. All random actions, like shooting, close combat, morale, etc, are resolved using one chart and comparing your relevant statistic to a d20 roll. Yes, you'll be using the chart to resolve most actions in the game, but no, it's not like this is a miniature game version of Rolemaster where you have a chart for every single weapon in the game. The chart is reprinted on the quick-play cards and after using it in a couple of games you'll be pretty familiar with it. Actions are assigned what is called a 'Base Number' that represents how likely (or not) you are to successfully complete the action. The lower the number the harder it will be for you to pull it off. As an example, let's say that you have an experienced warrior shooting at a target. His Ranged Combat Ability (his Base Number in this case) is a 10. He rolls a d20 and we compare the result of his roll on the Resolution Table. We find that if he rolls a 10 or less then he

would miss. If he rolls better than a 10 he would hit and how many hits he causes would depend on the weapon he's using. Modifiers, as you would expect, can always come into play and the lower your Base Number goes the higher your chances of failure. Take a green trooper as another example. He or she has a Ranged Combat Ability of 6 and they will miss on a d20 roll of 14 or less, before worrying about modifiers.

The game turn is broken up into several phases

- Motivation
- Panic & Pursuit
- Initiative
- Activation
- Close Combat
- Regroup & Recover
- Tidy

and each turn proceeds through all of them. In the Motivation phase players assign face-down counters to their units which indicates whether the unit is intent on moving or firing during the current turn. Basically, it represents what type of orders the squad leader is barking out to his troops. Rest assured that things will come up during the battle that will make you wish you gave the opposite motivation counter to your troops. You won't have as many options or as good of chances of success, but you can fire when under Move orders and can move (with restrictions) when under Fire orders. Kryomek motivation works a bit differently than humans as they have more of a hive mentality that helps govern their actions on the battlefield. Either way, command and control is very important in Kryomek.

Panicking troops, and their pursuers, take their moves before any other troops for the current turn are activated. Each player then rolls a d20 and the highest rolling player chooses to activate a single unit first or not. Activation then passes back and forth between players until all troops have been activated. Movement, ranged combat, panic rolls, etc...are resolved in this phase of the turn. All close combat attacks take place during the same phase and move, like a wave, from one end of the table to the other. Yes, in general, the Kryomek are going to eat the humans in close combat. In the Regroup & Recover phase units that were panicked in the previous turn can try to recover and troops from units that got blown to hell can regroup. The Tidy phase is a bit of cleaning up and preparation for the next turn of the game.

We had a quick example of ranged combat above and, like I said, if you roll especially well and are using a weapon capable of tossing lots of lead downfield you could cause multiple hits. On the other hand a single shot pistol will only cause either one hit or be a miss. Template weapons, even directly placed ones like flame-throwers, can deviate and cause all sorts of havoc. Kromek are clearly superior in close combat, not only in terms of their Close Combat Ability (9-15 for the Kryomek, while humans are in the 6-11 range) but also in how many attacks they get and how effective they are. Things can go downhill rapidly for the humans when (if?) the Kryomek advance gets to them. Also, the closer you are to your enemy when making a charge move the more likely you are to put the boots (or teeth) to them without them being able to fire on you as you come in.

Once hits have been determined we use the chart again to see if damage is taken. The armor rating (Kryomek have an edge here too) is the Base Number and it is increased (or in a few cases could be decreased) by the type of weapon being used. For example, if you shoot and hit a Kryomek Warrior (AC 4) with a Chain Gun (+4 Impact) his Base Number is now an 8. On a d20 roll of a 12 or less he won't take a wound. One advantage the humans have in combat is the use of vehicles and robotic troops. Vehicles and gun emplacements have 'Hard' armor as opposed to the 'Soft' armor of ground troops. As you would expect, 'Hard' armor is much more difficult to get through.

Morale, as the book puts it, is not a weakness that the Kryomek suffer from. Having said that, human troops could decide that seeing their mates getting gutted before them by an alien is something that they'd rather not experience and decide to get the hell out of there. As with combat, this entails a roll on the Resolution table...roll high!

Kryomek is more of a squad-based game, instead of being individual-based, but you do have a good degree of control over the members of a unit. A lot of what goes on does revolve around the squad leader, but it's not so abstract that it takes away from each squad member being important. Ok, so what's missing? A point system, that's what. You can build and play scenario games with no problem, but playing competitive games would be very difficult unless both sides were using the exact same troops. When the game originally came out you could get a page of point values from Fantasy Forge. The game is definitely playable and I like the system a lot, but what it really needed was the Hivestone expansion.

HIVESTONE

Hivestone is an 88-page softcover book and the first expansion for Kryomek. Inside you'll find lots of new background information and nine army lists along with complete point values for all models. Ok, now we're talking!

There are also lots of new troops and vehicles including quadruped vehicles, drop pods, and jet cycles. The Kryomek also get some updates in the form of some biological artillery.

There are also some updates to existing rules and new rules, most notably for the use of vehicles, but the main point of this book for me is the point values of troops. In addition to the cost of your troops, where your game takes place matters in a huge sense now. As you could surmise from the review of Kryomek the humans have a distinct advantage in the realm of missile combat (the Kryomek do have range-capable troops though) and 'Hard' targets like gun silos, vehicles, and bunkers while the Kryomek excel in hand-to-hand combat, morale (or lack thereof) and troop armor (to a certain degree). But, even with the rather large advantage that the Kryomek have in close combat, if only one of them survives the run across a barren landscape it will still get mobbed by the humans and be brought down. Here's where 'where' you play is taken into account and I think that it's a great idea.

The terrain conditions for the game are decided on ahead of time and range from Dense (a hive city, a packed town, basically unsuitable for vehicles and likely no way for emplacements to be erected there and where most ranged fire is taking place at close range) to Barren (a huge parking lot or similar con-

ditions that are ideal for vehicles and missile fire can get started at extreme range and pepper away at the enemy for a long time as they close in). How does this work? Well, first decide on a total army point value. Let's say 1000 points. The human player always get one times this number, so 1000 points. The Kryomek player gets a multiple of this number, which starts at 1 for a Dense terrain board and can go as high as 3 (3000 points in this example) for a Barren board. Very interesting and I think it's a neat way to work out the differences between ranged and close abilities. Of course, human versus human games would be fought on a 1:1 ratio.

The point values are organized on a chart for each troop type where you choose their experience level then make one selection (generally their armor) and then cross that with what weapon they are carrying to get a final point cost for one trooper. This allows a great deal of customization of weapons of your troops. The Hivestone supplement is exactly what Kryomek needs to be a great game.

VALUE

The Kryomek book will set you back \$19.95 USD and Hivestone is another \$15.95 USD. I'd really look at getting these two as a single purchase to get everything in your hands that you'll need/want in one fell swoop. At about \$35 it's really no more expensive, and maybe cheaper, than comparable rule sets and it's definitely worth checking out even if you end up using your existing models to play with. Be sure to check out the review of several Kryomek models in this issue and take a good look at my personal favorites, the TALOS units. These are the models that single-handedly drew me into the game about ten years ago. It's nice to see Kryomek USA working to revitalize the game and I wish them a lot of luck. It's a game with a good background, models, and system that could do well if it catches on and is supported.

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Game Review



Basics

Victoriana is a 304-page trade paperback role-playing fantasy game set in an alternate Victorian period. This volume has a full color cover and black and white pages. It has a retail price of \$29.99 USD and is published by Heresy Gaming.

Contents

The *Victoriana* book has eleven chapters. Three of the chapters are devoted to describing the environment in which the game takes place and six describe the game system. The other two chapters provide an introduction and advice on running a *Victoriana* game.

Background

Seventy-five pages of the *Victoriana* book are devoted to describing the game's setting. It can best be described as Dickens meets Spencer. Society had a sharp class division – the wealthy aristocracy lives in luxury while the middle class of professionals and merchants strive to feed and clothe their families. Beside all this, there is rank poverty, inequality, depravity, and injustice for the lower classes of manual laborers and criminals. It's like *Oliver!* without the big production numbers.

The setting is unflinching in its portrayal of sexism and racism in its setting. It is presented as the background for the characters to fight against. In addition to classisms, the background also covers the other major "isms" of the Victorian period: nationalism of Eastern European countries, communism to redress perceived economic wrongs, and chartism to effect democratic political reforms in England. No aspect of Victorian society is left out. Entertainment, in general, and vices in particular, are also presented – including prostitution, opium, and general deviancies – as is law enforcement, education, and religion.

It is in the area of religion where the fantasy aspects of the game start to appear in the background. Up until this point, this game could have been a historical RPG based in the 19th century. Religion includes the dominant Aluminat Church as well as evangelical puritans, earth goddess, and the dark gods. After describing the society, the rules delve into the steam-powered technology.

Victoriana is definitely a steam-punk setting that includes steam-powered flying machines battling dragons as well as railroad, steamships, telegraph lines, and even Babbage's Difference Engine. The game is set in England of 1867, so most of the background deals with that nation. However, the nations of Europe and the rest of the world do get an introductory treatment. The fantasy element is strong here as well – with the Zulu nation being composed of Orcs led by their chief Shaka. For those that are interested, the setting of *Victoriana* is after the Boer War but before the Zulu war, so gaming of Roark's Drift is an option!

Game System

The character generation system is composed of seven steps. The first, and most important, is the selection of Social class. Social class defines the number of Characteristic points that a character has to work with to build his character. It also defines which skills are available as well as the starting monetary funds. Race plays an important factor, as the upper social classes are restricted to select races.

For example, in England, only humans and eldren (elves) can be upper class. A character's race provides both bonuses and penalties to Characteristics. Humans are the norm, with no modifiers, while the other races gain bonuses and penalties based on their stature. For example, a Beastman gains +1 body and -1 presence.

The list of races includes:

- Beastmen – humanoid with animal features like lionmen, ratmen, etc.
- Eldren – classic elven
- Dwarves – short and strong
- Halflings – gypsies that enjoy food and drink
- Gnomes – frail small humanoids
- Ogres – brutes

Victoriana characters have both primary and derived characteristics. The range of a characteristic's value is from 0, which is handicapped, to 9+, which is legendary, with average human values in the range of 1 to 2. Characters start with all characteristics at 0 and must spend points to raise them. Each characteristic point spent raises a primary characteristic by one. Each characteristic has a minimum value of 1 and a maximum value of 8 for generation purposes. Racial bonuses and penalties are added to this.

Victoriana is a skill-based system, rather than a level-based one. The range of initial skills choices is based on your social class and sex. As a character gains experience points, it can buy higher levels of skills. Starting skills are provided in groups based on childhood experience and on past career. So, for example, if you were a farm hand growing up, your skill kit includes animal care, athletics, farming specialty, herding specialty, horse riding, and carriage driving. You spend your 30 skill points on these listed skills.

There are 61 skill kits, but *Victoriana* also provides information for creating your own skill kits. After skills, your character spends option points. These points can be used to round out your character by buying skills not available in your skill kit, innate talents, privileges, property, contacts, money, or even raising derived characteristics.

More option points can be "bought" by adding complications to your character. This follows a similar mechanism to disadvantages in the Hero system. For each complication your character has, such as glass jaw, you get extra option points. The number of complications is limited and they provide diminishing returns as they mount up.

Finally, there is wealth. This is, not surprisingly, a function of your social class – the higher your are the more disposable income you have. This money is spent on daily necessities as well as for equipment. The monetary system used is, of course, the classic English Pound/shilling/pence, and other currencies are translated into this. To make things easier, there are 6 pre-generated characters that round out this section of the rules.

General Mechanics

Game mechanics are based on 3d6. In general, you roll your dice and apply the appropriate characteristic or skill level as a modifier and compare the result to a standard difficulty. If you exceed the difficulty, you succeed. The range of difficulties goes from 10 (easy) up to 42 (a million to one).

Rolls can also be opposed, in which case your total must exceed your opponent's roll to succeed. Combat actions are opposed rolls.

The standard action round is 3 seconds and there are 20 rounds in a minute. Taking extra time to perform an action can add bonuses to your skill roll.

Combat Mechanics

Combat initiative is a 2d6 roll to which a character adds his initiative. Actions are taken in initiative order, counting down from the highest to 0. When your initiative score comes up, you may make one action. Each initiative point is equivalent a second and each action takes a base 3 seconds. So if your initiative score is 15 and you take a walk action, you may act again on initiative 12. You may also hold an action to interrupt a character that acts at a lower initiative score.

Attacking is an opposed roll – you must beat your target's defense action roll with your attack roll to score a hit. Determine Damage by rolling the number of dice listed for your weapon and adding in your strength (for melee weapons). From this total, subtract your target's fortitude and armor, if any. The result is applied to the target's health score.

Damage comes in two varieties: stun and lethal. Stun damage is subtracted from a character's stun damage track. When reduced to 0, the character passes out. Lethal damage is subtracted from the Lethal damage track. When this reaches 0, the character is unconscious. A character is killed when his lethal damage is twice his body characteristic below zero.

Magic Mechanics

Magic in *Victoriana* is very rare and is shunned by society. This is an age of machines, after all. Casting a spell is a action test with a difficulty set by the spell being cast. A character draws upon his Resolve pool to cast a spell or summon an entity. As spells are cast, this pool shrinks. Rest or meditation replenishes the Resolve pool. Characters spend time and money learns spells. Spells also cost experience points as well as require an action test against Resolve to see if they are learned at all.

Magic itself is divided into colleges, some of which are more acceptable than others. Where petty magic is tolerated, demonology and necromancy are shunned and punished. The later also brings with it the possibility of corruption of your character.

Game Mastering

After the magic rules, *Victoriana* includes a list of NPC archetypes, called the Supporting Cast. These are to be used by the GM to provide necessary and on-the-spot characters with which the players interact. Rather than providing a complete character sheet, each of these NPC's are rated with a base mental and physical competence which is used in place of the characteristic + skill mechanism for player characters. Obviously these characters are not meant to be the major adversaries to the players. Rather, consider them to be the rest of humanity, like Inspector Lestrade instead of James Moriarty. The supporting cast section also includes all the creatures and monsters for the game.

Finally, the section on running the game gives the GM tips on how to use the *Victoriana* setting. Different styles of game play are described, including farce, horror, imperial expansion, and grim reality among others. Information for random encounters as well as "getting started" ideas are also presented. The section is rounded out with some general vignettes such as a brawl in a bar, a *pea souper*, and the ever-popular rooftop chase. To get things started, *Victoriana* includes "Penny Dreadful: A White Wedding", an example adventure.

Review

Two things must be said about *Victoriana*. First, it is a detailed game world that relies quite a bit on period literature rather than subsequent works and Hollywood. As such, the game has a definite dark and gritty feel to it. Secondly, the game does not shy away from sexual themes – though it does not dwell upon them.

In all, this is a very good work. The authors have a real interest in the Victorian period and do well transcribing it to a fantasy RPG. The game mechanics, based on Heresy's Fuzion System, provide a wealth of detail and simplicity of play. Simple die rolls and quick circumstance addition are all that is required to do anything. I especially like the magic system and the tension between emerging technology and older magic.

Victoriana has more of the feel of a Dickens novel than of a Kipling poem. And since I prefer the later to the former, I will be playing an imperial expansion style game which concentrates on the Indian Mutiny, the expedition into Afghanistan, and the Zulu wars. I'll leave the dark and dirty streets of White Chappell to someone else.

Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to go roll up my character – Harry Flashman!

ZOMBIESMITH



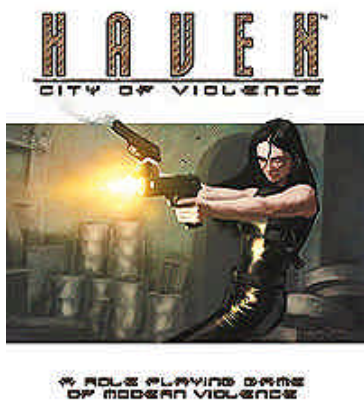
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Game Review



BASICS

Haven, City of Violence is a modern (not d20 Modern though) game of urban violence (go figure) and adventure. It's a 206-page production with a very nice color cover and interior black and white artwork, except for a short graphic novel (without any text) to start off the book. The binding seems very solid and should hold up well even under lots of use and the pages are all printed on heavy stock paper. It is produced by LPJDesigns and has a retail price of \$30.00 USD.

INSIDE

Haven starts off with an introduction by the author that I was very glad to see for two reasons. First, this is a dark, gritty, and definitely 'R' rated game. I would have even liked to see some kind of indication of such on the cover (front or back) but with a game like Haven, City of Violence you should probably have a good idea of what you're getting into. Anyway, having this intro was very welcome and the guys at LPJ seem very big on personal responsibility, which scores high marks from me personally, and not namby-pamby excuses of, "the game made my kid go nuts and kill all of the 11th grade teachers." Louis Porter strikes me as the kind of guy that is straightforward with you and if you don't like where he's coming from that's ok with him and, oh hell, "screw you". Ok, those are my words, not his, but I don't think that he gives up a huge amount of time to people that take things like imaginary violence too seriously. So, with that said, Haven, City of Violence is a game for people that have enough sense in their heads to not go out a pick up a gun and try to be Max Payne. Secondly, I just happen to like reading the thoughts of people that write games. I don't always agree with their points of view, but it's still quite interesting to me. There are six chapters in the book (History of Haven, Character Creation, Abilities, Combat & Conflict, The Golden Rules, and Emerald Hill). You won't find a GM in Haven. The person running the game is the **Game Operation Director**, yup G.O.D., and I have a feeling that Louis did that just to make someone twist in their shorts. In the introduction you'll also find a huge list of movies, books, music, and comics to use as reference material, very nice, and comprehensive, touch. The background of the city, including some timeline information, is a pretty quick read and the quip on the back cover that describes Haven as, "a cross between New York City, East Central Los Angeles and Beirut" is pretty darn accurate. Think of the movie "The Crow" and you'll be right on target. Character creation is easily grasped and there are also several archetypes provided if you just want to jump right into the ass-kicking with your group. Characters have Primary Abilities which are purchased with Character Points (also used to buy skills, benefits, and special abilities) so you can build what you want rather than hoping for good die rolls. Secondary Attributes are derived from the primaries. As an example, your Accuracy (used to make other people dead) is your Agility and Perception halved. The skill list is fairly extensive and goes from Accounting to Weaponsmith. Zoology is probably not needed in Haven very much ;) Your skill proficiency is determined by its modifier (+1 to +4). You get a number of skills for free determined by your Intelligence, but you're likely to want more or to increase those that you have with Character Points. Benefits are like perks or feats (from d20) and have variable costs depending on how good they are. Perfect Timing will cost you 1 points and Rapid Fire will nail you for 6! You can also take Drawbacks to increase your Character Points (up to 12 extra) and if you want you can play a Coward that is also Foolhardy, Functionally Illiterate, who is Ugly as Sin, has a Dependency (crackhead) and Traumatic Flashbacks about when his mommy locked him in the closet. Ok, he's just begging for death but you get the idea. Special Abilities are even better than Benefits, stuff like Sixth Sense (not the seeing dead people kind, but in this game you're likely to see a lot of dead people). As with any role-playing game you'll be playing a roll but there are also things that the dice must resolve; driving a car, shooting people, jumping out a window, shooting people, opening a safe, shooting people, you know everyday stuff like that. Using a d20 to make the check you take your ability

or skill rank and add/subtract situational modifiers. If you roll equal to or less than the target number you succeed. Damage done is either Concussive or Lethal and you'll generally not be able to take a never-ending number of gunshot wounds before expiring...messily. There is a very nice example of combat that lasts seven rounds and really goes through the paces of a fight. The Golden Rules is the section on running games and setting the tone for a Haven adventure. Adventure might not exactly be the right word as simple survival on a walk to 7-11 might be tough or staying away from your crack-whore landlady and her transgender biker boyfriend might be all that you can handle today, much less running up against some wiseguys. The last chapter is a short adventure, which will get the blood flowing, literally, and the lead flying quickly. Any book that ends with an adventure to get you started gets extra marks from me.

VALUE

Haven is a very dark, edgy game where death not only waits but will also jump out from around just about every corner at your characters. Expect player characters to die in this game. If you plan to be a big hero that walks out of every situation with your head held high you'll be disappointed sooner rather than later. Yes, you can kick ass, but yours can also get kicked. If you're into dark adventure movies, and even not so dark ones, you'll probably like Haven a lot. Even though the rules are certainly complete the game struck me as being more about the story than the rolling of dice, which is fine. The game is set in a terribly brutal and violent place, hence the name, but I firmly believe that you could run a successful game with a group, or at least a few, real heroes and not just anti-hero "I don't give a damn types". Remember the cop in "The Crow"? He might not have been the main character of the movie, but he mattered and he was a good, genuinely good, guy. I liked it so it's definitely worth your time to check it out.

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Product Review



BASICS

Bulletproof Screen is a Games-Master screen intended for use with the Haven, City of Violence rpg. Along with the screen is an adventure which runs 32 pages in length, including maps. The screen has a glossy color cover, while all of the artwork in the adventure booklet is black and white. It is produced by LPJDesigns and has a retail price of \$20.00 USD.

INSIDE

We really have two things to look at here so we'll tackle each separately. First is the screen. The

cover side features a rather busty ninja-babe carrying a sword and pistol and a lot of cleavage that just might distract some of the more visually stimulated (and immature) members of your group. It's their own fault if they were busy looking at boobs and missed the sniper on the roof that just splattered their brains in the sidewalk, I guess. The screen itself is a tri-fold affair that contains mostly weapon damage and combat result tables. There are a few other charts on it but given the rather violent and combat intensive possibilities of the game it's not out of balance. The cardstock that the screen is printed on is not as thick as some others but it did stand up just fine and will do the job of hiding your notes and faked die rolls without complaint.

The Adventure, "Hamburger Hell" takes up 17 of the 32 pages of the booklet and there are 13 pages of modern-day maps to round things out. It starts out with a plea for help from the single mother of a very sick little girl and ends up taking the players (notice I did not say heroes as it is possible that they could take up the role of some very bad guys here) into hospitals, fast food joints and even some places where their dead bodies can vanish without a trace. There is a timeline of events provided that will help the GM keep things paced. I appreciated this addition as modern games can be a bit trickier to keep flowing unlike some (I said some, not all) fantasy dungeon-crawl that pretty much paces itself.

The major events of the adventure are laid out well and I thought that the hook at the beginning was a nice change of pace. Of course, things get more complicated as the players pick up information here and there and if everything was as it seemed your party would get bored and done very quickly. Rest assured, that they are not and there is a good "Oh crap!" moment for the party to get into. As well as I liked it I do think that it could have been fleshed out a bit more and a few pages of the maps could have been replaced with a bit more adventure text and information. It's absolutely playable, and enjoyable, as it is but I would have just liked a bit more. As you can expect from an adventure in Haven, the City of Violence, your characters might be separated from the rest of their lives in fairly rapid fashion. Consider yourself warned.

VALUE

Ok, so do you drop twenty bucks on a GM screen, a short adventure, and about a dozen maps? The screen is useful and does what it's intended to do. I'd have rather it had been on heavier stock but it's not thin enough to be less than useful so it's ok. The maps are all clear and will be easy enough to sketch over to a map grid for use with miniatures or could be used as-is to depict the area of what is likely to turn into a firefight. Some, but not all, of the maps can be used with the adventure but I would have liked to see a few more of the play areas mapped out. My enthusiasm for the adventure started out very high and ended with me still having very positive thoughts about it, but it did seem to end rather abruptly with a moderate amount of work left to sort out by the GM. If you were thinking of porting it over to d20 Modern it would work fine. I'd give the whole package a "yes" vote but just not a jumping up and down "yes".

BASICS

Map Set Compilation #1 consists of 24 previously published paper maps for use with the *Classic Battletech* line of products. The maps are reprints from the original Map Sets: 2, 3, and 4. The maps are full color, 18" by 22", 15x17 one-inch hexes (technically, 16x17 but the half hexes on each edge don't count in this writer's opinion). The maps represent a variety of terrain types including forest, urban, dessert, and mountain. The product retails for \$29.99 USD.

INSIDE

As a Battletech player the complaint I often hear from non-players is surrounding the use of paper maps. Most "sophisticated" gamers use their own three-dimensional terrain. As a player of Hexed-3D-Battletech, I often had the same opinion of paper maps, until I tried playing in a tournament. There is really no other way to play a Battletech tournament with several players; 3D terrain just takes up too much space. I can think of many other instances where I just wouldn't want to lug around boxes of Styrofoam terrain, containers of trees, other terrain, and a big cloth mat. And while 3D terrain may look more impressive, the only thing you really miss with playability is the modularity of 3D terrain.

A nice feature recently added to the map sets is that each type of differing terrain is clearly marked. In the earliest maps you had to guess what was a heavy or light woods, or if a topographic line passed through the hex, which elevation it was at. Well, not anymore, even terrain types that are painfully obvious (such as pavement) are clearly marked and you won't have to spend any time contemplating terrain types. This does take something away from the aesthetic appeal of the maps, but give me ease of play over pretty to look at any day.

For the most part these maps are still being produced years after their original release for a reason. The maps themselves are well laid out and provide an interesting battlefield environment. There are a few that might not be suitable by themselves for normal play, but might work well in a scenario driven game. I have played standard games on the Large Lakes and Heavy Forest maps and they can be a pain, but I can see their purpose in special scenarios.

One complaint I have about these maps is the same complaint I have had about all previous incarnations of Battletech maps. The hexes are too small. If you use a standard Battletech Hex base it covers the entire hex, to see the underlying terrain you have to pick up the unit. If the hexes were a half-inch larger, or the type of the print a bit smaller you could tell what the underlying terrain was. I know it sounds picky, but I hate having to recalculate my opponent's to-hit roll to make sure they included the terrain my unit is in, or conversely moving to a location when I think I have great numbers on an enemy unit only to find during firing phase that the unit was parked in a heavy woods. It is a small complaint though, and I am not sure many players share my point of view.

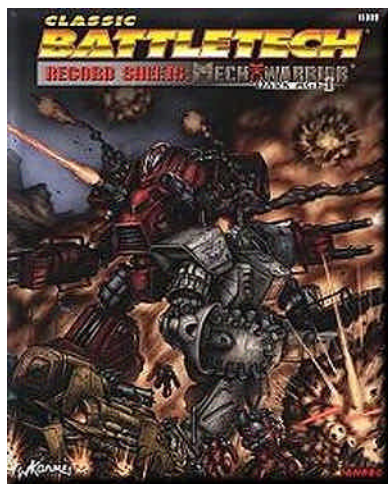
VALUE

With a retail price of 29.99, you are paying roughly 1.25 per map. This price seems relatively low. My only concern is that the paper quality seems to have downgraded from the early Map Sets, and I am not as confident that it will stand up to the wear and tear of regular use. Although, this writer was proved wrong when he said that the paper maps would not stand up to the abuse that the cardboard maps did.

Not every player can drop a c-note for a hexed and flock mat with flocked foam hexed terrain pieces. A beginning *Classic Battletech* player with limited space, funds or both, should look into this product. This supplement's 24 maps (generally used in pairs) should provide plenty of variety for game play, and for the particularly industrious the back of the maps are hexed on plain white for you to create your own battlefields.

Classic Battletech Map Set Compilation #1

Product Review



BASICS

Classic BattleTech Record Sheets: Mech Warrior Dark Age I (whew, what a long name!) is an 80-page softcover book published by WizKids/FanPro with a color cover and black and white interior. It contains record sheets for fifty-seven mechs and vehicles and more for infantry from Mech Warrior Dark Age for use with Classic BattleTech. It has a retail price of \$19.99 USD.

INSIDE

As its name implies these are record sheets that correspond to miniatures released for Mech Warrior Dark Age (aka Clicky Mech) so they can be used in your Classic BattleTech games. Some BattleTech elitists may look at mixing Clicky and non-Clicky mechs on the same table as heresy, but I see it as a great idea that not only allows me (and hopefully you too) to use my considerable number of Clicky Mechs in regular games with ease, but can also lead to bringing people to Classic BattleTech that had previously only played the Dark Age version. Additionally, my opinion is that if there are BattleTech players out there that don't want their precious metal Mechs to mingle with your Clicky Mechs on the battlefield I'll find someone else to play with. We're all trying to play the same game here, right?

The record sheets are printed on slightly thinner paper than some other books so you'll definitely want to get photocopies made where the back of one page does not fade through the front of another. The bottom of each record sheet bears the little 'permission' blurb to make sure that the Kinko's (or other copy shop) clerks won't give you a hard time for running off volumes of record sheets, for personal use of course. They are all clear and easy to read. I'll probably make a copy for every Clicky Mech that I own and drop them into a plastic sheet protector that can be marked on with a dry-erase marker or a grease pencil. The book is also 5-hole punched to facilitate easy storage in a binder that you probably already have stuffed with record sheets.

There are also a small number of Mechs that benefit from use of *optional* Level 3 equipment, which you'll probably find restricted to scenarios or campaigns and will likely not be allowed in tournaments.

The book ends with a nice appendix that lists each Mech along with its Battle Value, Tonnage, C-Bills Cost, and Technology Base. Tonnage ranges from 4 (infantry) to a couple 100's (Atlas, Jupiter, and Behemoth) and Battle Value starts at a measly 62 (JI100 Transportable Field Repair unit) to a whopping 3,128 (Tundra Wolf 2)! This was an excellent way to end a great supplement.

VALUE

If you missed that I liked this supplement for Classic BattleTech then I did something wrong in this review. Not only do I think that it will make BattleTech a more enjoyable game simply by adding the Clicky Mechs into the mix of regular ones, but I see it as being a great piece in the bridge of bringing new players into the game. Come on, let's be realistic, there are only so many 40-something's that live in their parent's basement that a game can support. New blood is always needed and bringing them in this way is as good as any other. In fact, it's better as they will be able to jump in with miniatures immediately. Ok, the part about the 40-something's was a tad stereotypical and I apologize. Unless of course it's accurate and if that's the case I feel sorry on a whole other level ;)

Bottom line, great book for a classic and great game that is well worth the cover price. Don't be a Clicky-Hater!

BASICS

TR:3060 is a 192-page soft cover book published by Fanpro. The cover is full color and the interior is black and white. This supplement provides details about some of the various 3060 era units used to play *Classic Battletech*. It retails for \$24.99.



INSIDE

For those players familiar with Classic BattleTech's Technical Readout line of books; *TR:3060* doesn't vary much from the standard set in the original *TR:3025* (originally published in the mid-eighties). It begins with a short fictional letter by some member of Comstar to another, and then the rest of the book is divided into sections based on unit type. Each of these sections detailing Inner Sphere Vehicles, Clan Vehicles, Inner Sphere Battlemechs, Clan Battlemechs, or Protomechs. With the exception of the section on Protomechs; each unit (Battlemech or conventional vehicle) has two pages devoted to it. The first page is a write up (i.e. Fluff) about the unit, that includes information such as who manufactures the unit, the capabilities of the unit, and where said unit is generally deployed, and, if applicable, variants of the unit. The second page includes an illustration of the unit (Black and White) as well as the game statistics for the unit. The Protomech pages place most of this same information onto one page. Most of the background information pages are black ink on a gray background this can make it a strain to read at times. The bulk of the illustration is provided by Mathew Plog, supported by Doug Chaffee, Brian Snoddy, and Franz Vohwinkel, as well as a couple from industry veteran Kevin Long (best known for his previous work with *Palladium Books*). *TR:3060* provides a look at some new units and a new unit type: the Protomech, and no volume to date provides such detailed information about this controversial new unit type (which players seem to praise and disdain in equal numbers). No *Classic Battletech* resource prior has such a comprehensive look at clan conventional vehicles. Prior to this volume one would be hard pressed to find any information about clan vehicles, with the exception that it was known that most of the clans made use of conventional vehicles sparingly if at all. The illustrations are generally well done (and a vast improvement over some of the mech illustrations in *TR:3055* and *TR:3058*), with one exception: many of the designs just are not well done. It is not certain whether the artist or a mech designer came up with the aesthetics of what a mech is to look like, but in any case, several mechs (and a few vehicles) look awkward and perhaps a little silly. Quite a few of these mechs just don't convey the power and awe of a several ton war machine. For example the Artic Fox (pg. 81) looks more like a high tech walking toilet than a walking tank, and The Ishtar heavy tank (pg. 63) looks more like a child's Big Wheel than a fire support tank. There are notable exceptions such as the Clint IIC (pg 151), the Tai-Sho (pg 123), and the Ha-Otoko (pg 171). On the topic of the illustrations, although I had issues with some of his artwork in *TR:3058*, I found I missed Duane Loose's artwork. His distinct line drawing style really made *TR:3025* a stand out book and was missed in this volume.

VALUE

Finally, in my view, this resource would mostly be of benefit to the BattleTech player that has a driving interest in the fiction behind the game, whether it out of simple curiosity, creating scenarios based on the fiction, or players interested in the role-playing aspects of the BattleTech universe (possibly, through the *Mechwarrior* line of products). Players who are only interested in actual game play would not receive much benefit from *TR:3060* as all rule additions are covered by the latest rules compendium (currently, *Revised Master Rules*) and all unit stats (in a more player friendly format) can be found in *BattleTech Record Sheets: 3060* both published by *FanPro/WizKids*.

DISCLAIMER

Technical Readout: 3060 (TR:3060) is a *Fantasy Productions* reprint of the 1998 book by the same name that was distributed by *FASA Corporation*, so I would not recommend picking up this item if you already have an older printing.

Game Review



Ever wonder what happens when you're not in your BattleTech taking over the galaxy one world at a time or turning a city into gravel and matchsticks? Classic BattleTech Companion gets you out of the cockpit and onto the ground and into the operations and daily life of your warrior or tech characters. Designed as a companion for the original Classic Battle Tech Role playing game

formerly Mech Warrior, the manual fleshes out the character creation process, the factions, the worlds, flora, fauna, and the day to day operations of a

mech warriors life. The companion was put together to offer resource to both the player and the game master. The entire first section and largest section of the book details Character Creation and adds a tremendous amount of detail to your characters. The Life path choices are point based and you gain more points to strengthen your character depending on time spent in training in different life stages as well as what type of field of training such as MechWarrior, regular military, or other. These fields are even then broken down further to Clan Warrior Castes, trueborn, freeborn or...washout. Sadly one thing I didn't like is that other professions such as spy or technician are all lumped under the "Other" heading. You can take the warrior out of the Mecha, but straying too far from the mechwarrior's related job fields in this universe will not get you far in life. Once you have your numbers then it's off to the affiliations.

All of the original Houses from MechWarrior are present as well as smaller alliances and pacts, and a good number of new affiliations to choose from. Each has its benefits and penalties as well as required skills, traits, fields, and any other useful information that is affiliation related. What happened in your early days? Were you responsible for the death of the planetary governor's son because of a bad day on a simple training exercise? Or will all of your awards and citations not fit on one wall? Several events covering paramilitary service, higher education, academies, Clan service offer unique circumstances to round out your character making him the avoided outcast jinx or the sought after war hero that he or she will eventually turn out to be. All events further round out your skills and traits whether you choose to roll randomly or pick and choose.

Events tables for all of the Houses, major House academies, Clans, mercenary units, and military factions are all included. All of this life path system can be very lengthy however, and there are just some people who like to get down to business fast. Also included is an alternate point only character system from the original classic BattleTech.

Points are generated by taking the general age of your character and choosing from pre-built occupational fields such as armored infantry or aerospace pilot. These basic skills are enough to get you started and on to trait selection. Several new traits have been added to turn you into that thick skinned berserker or the paranoid clumsy outcast with the dark secret. Pick more negative traits and you gain more points for positive traits. The more disabling the negative trait is the more points you gain for a positive. These traits, depending on how well you like to role play them are an excellent way to add some fun and diversity to your character. Negative traits range from simple confusion to outright catatonia, and positive from alertness to proud heritage.

Finally we get to the skills section of character creation. All of the skills picked up from those years in the academy are described here in detail and how they are dealt with in a game play sense. Martial arts skills are provided in depth even broken down into what styles are used in what parts of the galaxy, and what styles are taught at what House or Clan. Styles are further broken down into individual moves and actions. A lot of time was put into explaining this system over several pages, and you can get a good picture of how your undercover operative from the Draconis Combine is going to use his Tiger at Twilight defensive move to set up for the killing blow of a well placed Leopard Bares it Claws attack.

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Game Review

I find the companion an outstanding addition to the original rules. Role playing is the fun part for me, and I wasn't disappointed with the options available to really give my character some background and reasons for what he does. Its not just a few mechwarriors who had to climb out of their machines for a few minutes to settle a difference of opinion anymore, its full scale martial arts game play storylines now and I like it. And did I mention martial arts? I can see fully choreographed Bruce Lee style matrix shootouts in my future.

Of course this book is not all about character creation. The second half of the companion starts out with creatures. Every good role-playing game needs some type of man vs. environment content. Eventually those frontal attack gunfights are going to get boring. When your out in the swamp sliding neck deep through the muck to reach the hidden mech base, nothing adds a little excitement like the added fear that the lily pad your hiding under could turn out to be eyeing you up as its mid morning snack. A large amount of pre-built creatures are included, most with pictures in the companion to get you started quickly. All of the animals from the Clan totems are here such as the Strana Mechty Wolf and the towering Ghost Bear. A creature builder section is also included for the more creative game masters out there detailing the creation of humanoid, multi legged, snakelike, and fishlike body shapes as well as a section on Carnivorous plants.

If its players living off the land and fighting against the environment you're looking for then this will provide several critters to get you started. Now I can get in there and use my Dragon Tail Sweep to further enrage that hungry Smoke Jaguar. With my Jaguar scenario in mind that brings me to the next section of the companion, a few added rules and rule changes to personal combat. Rules for fighting in the jungle, out on the frozen tundra, burying my opponents face in the sandy beaches and even combat on molten lava are provided and explained as well as the modifiers and skill modifications for each. Weather conditions can also play a big factor in any combat. Heavy snow or fog might provide me some cover from my enemy, but it's also going to reduce my movement not to mention it's kind of cold. The Earthquake condition might be going a little overboard here, but then maybe that explains why the lava is included earlier. Travel on Ice, on mud, over rapids and even through a geyser is detailed and explained enough to give any adventurer a tough world to play in.

The remainder of the manual is the technical side of the universe. If you have ever wanted to see a drawing of some of the devices and weapons you are using as well as the inside components of a battlemech it's all in here. There is a large section on creation and use of Battle Armor. It's not just for Clan Elementals anymore, you can custom make and suit up in the armor of your choice and go at it. I personally am looking forward to future battle armor duels just like mech combat.

This will provide an interesting alternative to the old mech only battles. The armors seem to be constructed keeping in mind the scale of the mechs they fight alongside. No armor-suited individual is going to take out a heavy or assault mech unless it's a lucky shot. But higher end battle armor is more than a match in single combat against a light or scout mech. Tables and charts for creating the battle armors are included as well as modifiers for Clan, Inner Sphere and Periphery unique options. It's just like creating a scaled down Battlemech. Once again, if you're into the technical side of the game the artwork and descriptions of each piece of weapon or mechanical part are very well done. Overall I find the Companion a very useful addition to my game. Every time I read it I find something new I like.

I found very little that I didn't like about the manual. Lack of any serious direction for characters that wish to be anything other than serious military or mechwarriors is one thing I would like to see more of. I know that technology is lost and it's hard to find repairs, but someone is out there trying to learn and I would like to make a character to do that. Personal combat in earthquakes and molten lava is a little out there, but I guess it will turn up in some bodies' game somewhere, who knows where your players are going to take you. Enjoyed the book and highly recommend it for any battle tech role players out there.

BASICS

Demon Dice (The Zany Game of Eternal Damnation!) is published by Fast Forward Entertainment and comes with a random mix of twenty-six multi-colored dice and a tri-folded black and white rule sheet. It has a retail price of \$19.99 and the back of the box states that this is enough to accommodate 2-4 players.

THE GAME

The first thing you do in Demon Dice is assemble your fighting demon. Being netherworld creatures from Hell it's not inconceivable that they might end up with three tentacles, one leg, and no eyes. Demons are built using dice that represent body parts and items and you also have what are called "Non-ID" dice that are used for blocking, attacking, and stuff like that. In a 2-player game demons are usually made of 13 dice, but could be more if you have more than one set. The ultimate object of the game is to render your opponent's demon unplayable, which means that it is unable to roll any of its body part dice at the beginning of its turn. This can be accomplished by entangling body parts (with a whip or tentacle) or just tearing it off (with an axe, scythe or pincer).

After determining who goes first, by rolling all your demon's dice, it's a back and forth affair in which a game can end on the first turn. A best two-out-of-three format to games is probably the best approach here. Over the course of a game your, and hopefully your opponent's demon (dice) will degrade and become less effective in battle but miraculous (oh, that's probably the wrong word) come-from-behind wins are entirely possible.

VALUE

For twenty bucks your picking up a game that's probably going to be a stand-in for a regular game when enough people don't show up or as part of a night of playing board/dice games instead of whatever your regular miniatures or role-playing game might be. One set can easily take care of two players, but spreading six dice among four players might be going a bit thin on the powers and abilities that each demon will have. It's a tongue-in-cheek kind of game that reminded me a bit of Dragon Dice when I first saw it, but then not too much after playing a couple of games. I think that it would the game would find a larger audience if it had been named "Monster Dice" or something less likely to make someone from outside the regular gaming hobby to possibly wince upon first glance. Maybe I'm being too sensitive though. The instruction book is a bit on the brief side, but Fast Forward Entertainment has done something very cool in making a PowerPoint tutorial available on their website. I highly recommend checking out the on-line tutorial to get a good feel for the game and how it flows.

Since this is billed as a 'starter' set and there is a random assortment of dice so I expect 'boosters' to be available shortly, which will help you round out your demons and give you the ability to build 'pure-breeds', demons made up of only a single color of dice, more easily. This is a neat little pass-the-time kind of game, but I'm really not sure if 'collectible' dice games have the legs of collectible card games (some of them anyway) or those of collectible miniature games, but I have to hand it to Fast Forward Games for moving into the dice game, collectible and otherwise, arena. Worth a look, just not entirely sure if it will see a lot of play.



Product Review



BASICS

Shadowrun: Dragons of the Sixth World from Wiz Kids / FanPro is a background heavy, rules light, supplement for *Shadowrun, Third Edition*. The book presents an extended look at dragons and their impact on the Shadowrun world. For a retail cost of \$24.99 USD, you get a 208 page softcover book with a full color, glossy cover and black and white interior art.

INSIDE

Dragons of the Sixth World is written as a series of archive records transmitted to the reader by Captain Chaos, the sysop of the Shadowland data haven. These records are often interrupted by

various background personalities, adding their own personal views on the information at hand. The style is very similar to something you might read in an online newsgroup thread. The gamemaster is left to decide how much of the information presented in these interjections is truthful in his or her specific campaign. The book's content is organized into four main sections: Dragon Download, great dragon biographies (the 10 chapters titled by the great dragons names plus the chapter on the Draco Foundation), A Nest of Serpents (brief blurbs about sixteen other known dragons), and Game Information.

- Dragon Download

Dragons in Shadowrun play a role similar to gods and demi-gods in a Dungeons & Dragons campaign. They are few, powerful, mysterious, and generally behind many of the world's affairs if you dig deep enough. This initial section of the book provides an overview of dragon biology, life cycle, customs, servants, and magic.

- Great Dragon Biographies

The next eleven chapters of the book are dedicated to ten of the most well known great dragons and the Draco Foundation. The history, agenda, area of operations, enemies and allies of each of the dragons is covered in detail in their chapter.

- A Nest of Serpents

This section covers sixteen more dragons. There are brief anecdotes about some less visible and overtly active adult and great dragons. Several are new additions to the Shadowrun world.

- Game Information

This final section of the book provides the rules additions. Gamemasters get a wealth of information here regarding dragon powers, dragon combat, and how to use dragons in gameplay. Additionally, there are tips for each for how to work each of the detailed great dragons above and the Draco Foundation into your campaigns as employers or adversaries. Finally, there are rules for drakes, (magically created miniature dragons with the ability to assume human or metahuman form), including rules for drakes as player characters.

VALUE

I am a firm believer that you can't have too much dragon art. Wiz Kids / FanPro got it right with this book. Ninety percent of the included artwork is, as you would expect from the book's title, dragons. All of the illustrations are high quality and well selected for the area of the book they are in. Also, in case you wondered, the problems I had with the pages breaking loose from the binding of *The Sprawl Survival Guide* were not repeated here. Dragons of the Sixth World is a noticeably thicker book at 208 pages and I had no problems with loose pages after a thorough reading. Finally, who is this book really a good value for? Well, as much as I enjoyed it as just background reading, I can't really recommend it to most players. The information is very interesting, but does not have much applicability from a player's viewpoint. However, that is completely not the case from a gamemaster's view. The information in this book could be the source of almost limitless plot hooks and campaign ideas. The great dragons are the puppet masters of many of the most intricate and interesting plots in Shadowrun, and *Dragons of the Sixth World* makes them accessible devices for any gamemaster.

BASICS

The *Shadowrun: Sprawl Survival Guide* from Wiz Kids / FanPro is a background and rules resource book for *Shadowrun, Third Edition*. Primarily, the book provides extensive insight into the way things are, and how to get things done in the 2063, semi-apocalyptic Shadowrun environment. Also included are expanded rules for lifestyles, fake identities, and travel. The 144 page softcover volume features a full color glossy cover with black and white interior art. It retails for \$24.99 USD.



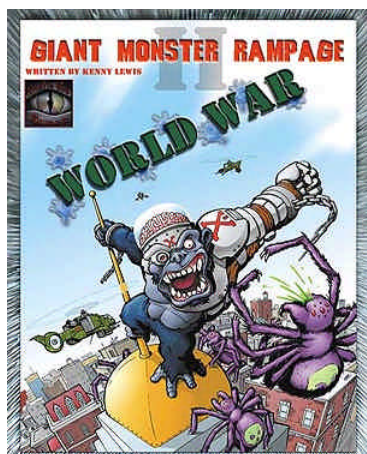
INSIDE

The *Sprawl Survival Guide* is divided into four main sections, covering life, travel, and running the shadows in 2063, plus a section of optional rules. Each of the first three sections are archive records transmitted to the reader by Captain Chaos, the sysop of the Shadowland data haven. These records are presented narrative style, with comments interjected by various shadow denizens, highlighting specifics and interpretations. The style is very similar to something you might read in an online newsgroup thread. The comments and the names of the commentators made for some fun "in" jokes throughout the book. This first section of the book is an article lifted from *Livewire Magazine*, detailing life in 2063. Housing, including household technology and home security are discussed in great detail. Entertainment, encompassing nightlife, music, shopping, trideo, simsense, and modern sports and the way the Awakening and science have affected them are covered as well. Finally, the government and politics of 2063 are exposed. Racism, law enforcement, financial interactions, fashion, religion, and education are among the topics of this part. I found it an enormously entertaining read, but I'm a junky for the Shadowrun genre. How do you get yourself, and your stuff moved around the world of 2063. This section covers travel from the perspective of a travel agent who moonlights as an "undisclosed commodities relocater". The agent lays out the basics of globetrotting and smuggling for an audience of new runners. Also included here is an overview of the socio-political-economic climate of cities around the continents of the world. I found the information to be interesting, but the city information was not nearly deep enough to host a character or campaign. A tale of a young undercover NewsNet stringer journeying from the light to the world of shadows forms the basis of the Life on the Run section. The information here shows the mistakes of a person new to the underworld and a gradual progression into a full-blown shadowrunner. This section would be incredibly useful for someone learning the ropes in Shadowrun. The Game Information section presents rules for home telecoms and dataterms, (as discussed in *Living in the Sixties*), new drones, pricing for living expenses, and expanded credstick rules. A useful guide for making, using, and erasing identities is also included. Finally, an optional extended ruleset for highly customizable character lifestyles concludes the book.

VALUE

Aside from the cover paintings, the art in the book is all black and white illustrations. The great majority of the work is high quality, and adds to the "feel" of the book. I do wish a few more illustrations were included, but the book's art is definitely not a weak point. There was one area of the book that disappointed me considerably. On the first read through the book, while being fairly careful how I held it, (not creasing the spine, etc), eight pages or so in the 30s popped loose from the binding. Perhaps if I had not read it in a hot car in the middle of a scorching Texas summer the pages would have stayed bound, but there is no way to tell now. In spite of the problems with the loose pages, I can still recommend *The Sprawl Survival Guide* to anyone who plays Shadowrun or runs Shadowrun games. In fact, I'd recommend it if you ever even had a slight curiosity about the Shadowrun world. The style and rich detail presented make the book a great resource for players and GMs alike. If Wiz Kids / FanPro ever decides to start up the Shadowrun novels again, this book should be required reading for the new authors.

Product Review



BASICS

Giant Monster Rampage II, World War, is the first expansion for GMR published by Mystic Eye Games. It's a 56-page softcover book with a color cover, that features a cross between King Kong and Mojo-Jojo fighting off giant spiders while army helicopters circle overhead, and black and white interior art. It features new rules for their 'Toy Battle System' and has a retail price of \$11.99 USD.

INSIDE

Ten chapters and a page of errata are packed into the 56-pages you'll find here. The first thing you'll notice is that the font size is a bit larger than normal, which makes things very easy on the eyes, but probably also accounts for a few pages of the book's size. Also, while a good portion of the interior artwork is original some of it is just cropped reprints of the covers of this book and Giant Monster Rampage. Not terrible, but just kind of redundant and unnecessary.

Otherwise, everything inside is meant to expand the rules found in the first book and it starts off with some new monster types including giant sea creatures, oozes, and undead to name a few. Lots of new kingdom-specific powers are included along with several 'generic' ones that any monster can use.

Chapter 4 details new close combat rules including the 'Building Walkthrough' (very much made me think of Crush, Crumble, and Chomp) and the 'Hammer Slam' that would make any professional wrestler proud as you grab your opponent and hoist it up into the air before slamming him down to the ground. Be sure to stomp your foot for the full effect of your opponent crashing down into the pavement.

What I saw as the biggest change to the game was introducing the military, in Chapter 5, to the game as a player-controlled force. Yup, you'll be dragging out your (or your kid's) plastic army men and tanks and probably not using your space marines or other figures that you've devoted countless hours painting. Infantry and vehicles can both be represented and there are several options available to customize your troops with.

New building rules are also present. Existing building can be made tougher to damage and destroy and you can now bring wanton destruction to chemical, electric, and nuclear plants and even pick up buildings to throw at each other. Talk about an area-effect attack! Treacherous terrain is also included, just be sure to dip your toe into that pool before you jump in and find out that it's filled with acid.

The last three chapters of the book give new optional rules for combat (ranged and close), hero characters (like in the movies where one brave human can save the day), and power creation. The errata section is very short (about half a page) so the guys at Mystic Eye Games probably did not find too much that needed to be corrected from the first book.

VALUE

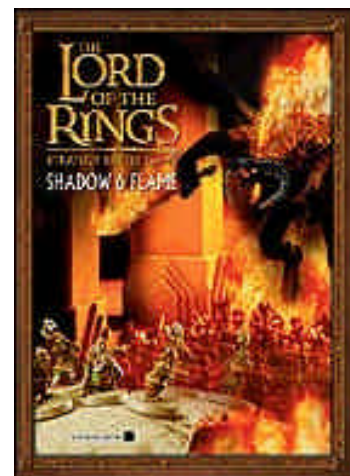
If you've already picked up Giant Monster Rampage and liked it then you'll surely want to grab this expansion. For less than the cost of a couple of blisters of miniatures you'll get a good expansion to a cute game. GMR II, World War retains the over-the-top monster movie flavor of the base book and expands on it well. If you have not looked at GMR yet it's worth checking out at the Mystic Eye Games website.

BASICS

Shadow & Flame is a softcover expansion for the Lord of the Rings strategy battle game from Games Workshop. It's a full color (interior and exterior) 48-page book that brings new scenarios and model profiles to the existing game. You'll need the base game to make use of this supplement.

INSIDE

The interior of the book is chock-full of great color pictures of painted miniatures, but very few movie stills as the scenarios presented herein deal more with the Lord of the Rings books than the movies. If you've only watched the first two movies and have not read the books you'll still be able to pick up the book and head right in and it's likely that you'll want to pick them up and start reading them.



The book and scenarios deal with the land of Moria and flesh it out with seven scenarios and plenty of new model stats and some excellent maps including one of the path that the Fellowship took through the Mines of Moria. The dwarves and goblins are the focal point of the book, but elves, men and undead like the Barrow-Wights are not left out. The painting section, however, focuses solely on the dwarves and there is a nice section on dwarven runes, armor and weapons.

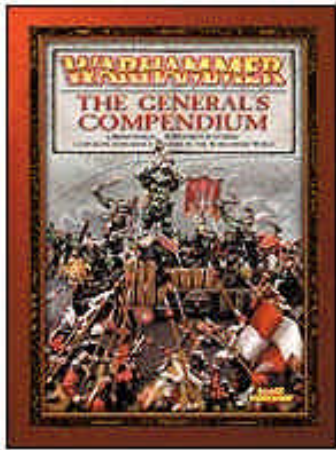
The scenarios are as follows:

- The East Gate – Balin's Dwarves fighting goblins when trying to enter Moria (about 45 total models used)
- Battle for the Dwarrowdelf – As Balin's forces descend into the Mines of Moria they again encounter goblins, but these have been reinforced (about 75 total models used).
- Mirrormere – The goblin ambush that claims Balin's life in the book (about 50 total models used).
- They are Coming – The fight at Balin's Tomb that was referenced in the first movie. No wonder it ended badly for the dwarves (about 55 total models used).
- Fog on the Barrow-Downs – Tom Bombadil and a smattering of hobbits take on the undead (about 10 total models used).
- Surrounded – A lot of good guys, lots of elves, fight off many, many orcs, goblins and trolls. Yeah, that's plural. (almost 100 models used in this one)
- Fangorn – Humans, and Treebeard fight against Uruk-hai and Warg Riders (about 55 models used).

VALUE

Current players of the Lord of the Rings strategy battle game will find this \$15.00 USD book to be a very easy purchase to say 'yes' to. It's easily as gorgeous as the previous two game books that have been released and expands the game well beyond the movies. Players that might have been disappointed as the exclusion of characters like Tom Bombadil should be pleased to find him in here. The scenarios run from having as few as 4-5 models per side to as many as 59, with the Balrog or Cave Troll represented in several of them. Now, if only I could get my terrain to look as good as what is pictured in the book!

Product Review



BASICS

Warhammer: The General's Compendium is a 176-page trade paperback supplement for Games Workshop's tabletop fantasy miniatures game **Warhammer**. This full-color volume contains unofficial rules and supplemental information to expand the basic **Warhammer** game. It has a retail price of \$25.00 USD.

CONTENTS

Warhammer: The General's Compendium consists of nine chapters and a foldout 20" x 30" color campaign map. The first four chapters cover campaigns for

Warhammer. Chapter five discusses competitive gaming, and chapter six covers hostile terrain. Chapter seven is about allies and multi-player games while chapter eight presents rules for fighting games with and on board ships. The final chapter covers sieges, raids, and sacking of cities. Through out the book, there are sidebars that cover associated topics, such as terrain making, tactical advice, and general ideas. There are also pages featuring games in progress as well as showing off exceptionally painted and converted models.

REVIEW

This book is written for the **Warhammer** player who has gotten tired of one-off games and tournaments. It is meant give rules, ideas and suggestions to expand the horizons of gamers who have grown bored with the "line 'em up and fight" style of game. As the authors say in the introduction:

Nothing stokes the hobby flames like something new – a new army to collect, a new opponent to fight, a new challenge to meet. The General's Compendium is fuel for your Warhammer fire with news ways to link your games, new scenarios to try, and new battlefields to play on.

The introduction promises a lot, and this volume delivers. There are 35 scenarios in this book that cover sieges, raids, multi-player games, and game on fantastic and unique terrain. There is even a simple ladder campaign that re-introduces Grom the Paunch, a goblin familiar to old **Warhammer** players. Multi-player games are always difficult for any game system designed for two-players. If you have three people ready to play, you normally either try a 3-way free-for-all, which degenerates into "let's you and him fight and I'll clean up the mess", or two people command one force against the other player.

Warhammer: The General's Compendium devotes an entire chapter to handling multi-player games. It is common in my gaming group to have a odd-number of players show up for a game, so I was very interested in this section. First off, the book covers the concepts of allies – who can ally with whom. Then it discusses different ways to include allies in a force, both good and bad. Finally, it covers mechanics such as command and control, table size, and point totals. The chapter is finished up with multi-player scenarios that can handle from two to eight armies! That last scenario handles 20,000 or more points on the table – one that is probably the length of a basketball court!

If you are a **Warhammer** player, then you are probably either logging onto the Games Workshop on-line store or are speaking to one of their mail-order Trolls. If you're not, you're probably asking, "what does this volume offer me?"

To answer that question in one word: "quite a lot" – okay, that was three words, but it is a fact that there is quite a bit of information here for those who don't play **Warhammer**. Much of the information presented here can be used for any other tabletop game.

For example, the **Warhammer** rulebook includes a multi-player map-based campaign called "The Border Princes". This campaign system is similar to many other map-based systems. *Warhammer: The General's Compendium* builds upon this base by adding a map and special terrain types with rules and construction ideas.

For those who are not interested in the complexities of this map-based campaign, the first two chapters of this book give a good introduction and rule set for ladder or tree-based campaigns.

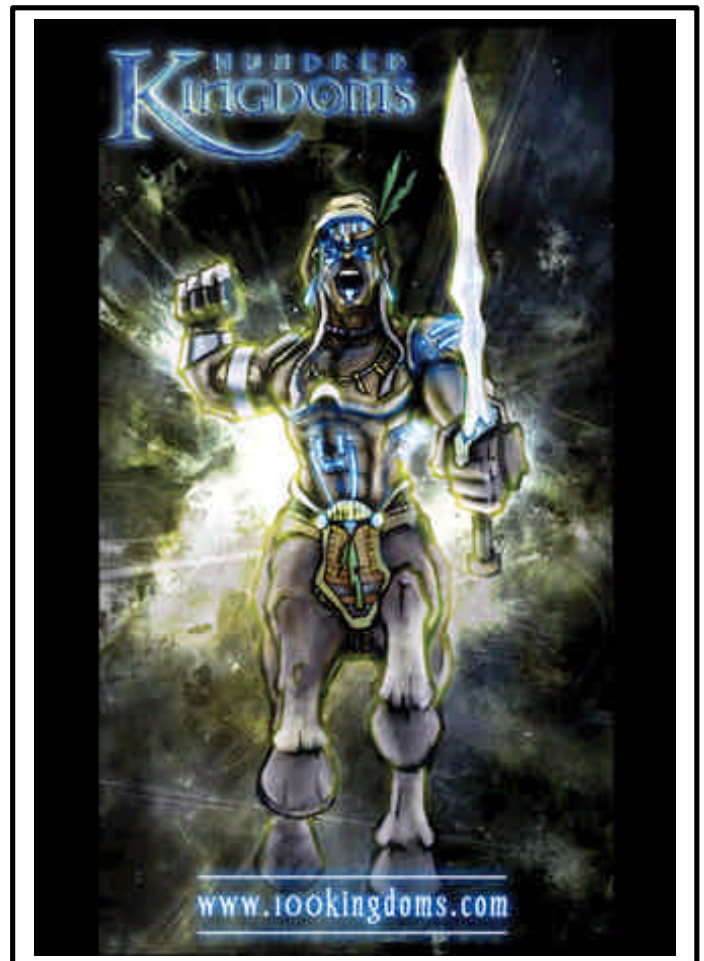
Much of the book has **Warhammer**-specific information that, with a little work, can be transferred over to other game systems. The scenarios are a prime example of this. Almost every miniatures game gets bland for the want of new scenarios. There's just only so many times you can see who kills the most models. Coming up with new scenarios is time consuming work – and requires some play testing. This volume gives any player a multitude of scenarios to adopt and use for their game system.

VALUE

Warhammer: The General's Compendium is another excellent volume from the folks at Games Workshop. This book is well worth its price for the quality of the information and the presentation.

To a **Warhammer** player this volume is a must buy. Even if you don't play campaigns, the scenarios and other articles are enough to revitalize your **Warhammer** group.

To those who don't play **Warhammer**, this volume is valuable reference work for ideas and scenarios. There is much to adapt and use even if you don't field any of the forces from the Old World. In short, buy this book! Now! No, don't go by Starbuck's first – go get it!



Game Review



Basics

Evernight is a 143-page hardback campaign book for Pinnacle Entertainment's **Savage Worlds** RPG. This volume has a full color cover and black and white pages. This book presents a fantasy campaign setting and adventures. It has a retail price of \$29.99 USD and is published by Pinnacle Entertainment Group.

Contents

Evernight is divided into 5 sections: The player's introduction describes the game setting and gives races, character archetypes, and general background of the nations of Tarth. The *Evernight* Part II section introduces the char-

acters to the campaign setting by describing recent history and the goal of the adventures in this campaign. The Game Master section provides the detailed background for the campaign in Tarth. The *Dying of the Light* is the actual campaign, composed of five acts. The final section covers monsters and provides props for the campaign adventures.

The Player's View of the World

Evernight starts out with player information - the stuff that everyone needs to know. Included in this section is history and information on the different races: men, dwarves, and elves, half-elves, half-folk and half-orcs. New hindrances and edges that are unique to Tarth are included as is fantasy gear and artifacts. Magic and spells that are unique to Tarth are then presented. The initial section ends with archetypes for Tarth. These can be used as the basis for characters in *Evernight*. Some of the archetypes are human fencer, dwarven fighter, half-orc musketeer, elven ranger, half-elven street rat, and human wizard.

Before the beginning of the campaign, players are only to read this section, and no farther. This gives them enough to create their starting characters. Once this is done, the campaigns ready to start. Hold on Dorothy, this isn't Kansas anymore!

The second section of player's information starts the campaign. The idyllic world that was is no more. Tarth has been taken over by the Dark Masters and their army of spiders. The new masters are harsh and people are consigned to death in the slave pits for the slightest of reasons. An esteemed wizard was put to death for uttering a single phrase! This is intolerable and someone should do something about it. Oh, did I mention that foul clouds have blocked the sun out?

So, there you have it. The world has been taken over by Evil and the players are to be part of the resistance - leaders in fact, who must pull together old men and boys to challenge the Dark Masters.

If new characters are generated after the invasion - maybe a resistance cell was uncovered and you got caught - there are new hindrances, edges, and archetypes to be used. After the invasion, there is even a new economy and prices have changed. Times are rough all over.

The Game Master Section

The GM's section includes much more detailed background on what has happened and why.

Naturally, this information is hidden from the players, as they are to discover it as the campaign progresses. This, however, is only part of the section. The majority of the GM section is the actual campaign, *The Dying of the Light*. Composed of five acts and over 24 scenes, the campaign is the main focus of *Evernight*. The campaign is designed to be played to its completion. There is room for extending it, but it would be more like a sequel than part of the same story.

Each section is written so that it requires the minimum amount of preparation on the part of the GM. Using the **Savage Worlds** rules, you can be sure that both classic role play and mass battles will be encountered as the campaign progresses.

Review

Evernight is a unique work for a unique game system. Most campaign books for RPG's present a detailed world with some adventure hooks, but leave it up to the GM to build his adventures and campaigns. These fantasy worlds are for extended game sessions over months if not years.

Evernight is an all in one campaign and world book. It is targeted to a different kind of group - one that changes game systems regularly or simply wants to try something else for a change. Having the world and the adventure in one volume makes it much easier to run this campaign.

Of course, there is a draw back. The world of Tarth is not as detailed as other game settings. But then, the players aren't going to spend a lot of time exploring. This is more like **The Hobbit** than it is **The Wheel of Time**. **Savage Worlds** is a fast, dynamic role-playing game and *Evernight* fits into this mold. If you like the SW system, then this is a must have volume.

Alternatively, if you want to take a break from your usual grand campaign, if only for a little while, this is an exceptional choice. Me? I plan on running this for my regular RPG group as a Christmas break.

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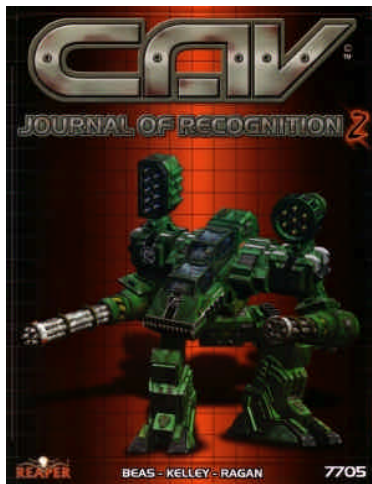
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Product Review



BASICS

CAV: *Journal of Recognition 2* is a 144-page trade paperback expansion for the *Combat Assault Vehicle* mecha miniatures game by Reaper Miniatures. This volume has a full color cover and black and white pages. This book presents more units for CAV as well as supplemental information and errata.

CONTENTS

CAV: *Journal of Recognition 2* (JOR2), like CAV: *Journal of Recognition 1* (JOR1), is mainly new units for the game – 120 of the 144 pages describe new units and present the unit cards. The rest of the book contains errata and support information.

REVIEW

The point of JOR2, like JOR1, is to present new models for CAV. And like its predecessor, this one does it well. There are eleven new Superiority mechs – including a new Dictator variant – and one Battlefield Suppression mech. However, where JOR1 focused on mechs, JOR2 focuses on the smaller fighting vehicles: armor, artillery, fighting vehicles, aircraft, and mechanized assault. Following in format presented in the CAV rulebook, each unit is given a two-page spread that includes production notes and battlefield history. This gives you the feel and “fluff” for the unit. The entry ends with a technical description of the unit, including all the interesting specifications, such as production start date, weight, height, and other systems by name. The actual gaming information is contained in data cards presented two to a page in the back of the book. where the descriptions are organized by battlefield role, the unit cards are alphabetical. This makes it very easy to find the data card for a given unit. The data cards list all the stats for the models as well as any special rules. The cards are labeled with photocopy permission, of course. After the new units, the important part of JOR2 is its errata. This section is not as large as in JOR1, which is to be expected, but it is important never the less. First off, there are updated data cards for certain units from JOR1. These are: the Fenri aircraft, the Hunter tank, the Katana Superiority mech, the Lance tank, the Vanquisher Suppression mech, and the Wyvern Superiority mech. Other errata includes point cost updates for mechs in the first printing of JOR 1, as well as some updated rules. The most interesting of these is a scenario rule that limits the number of Ace crewmembers. The new rule sets a limit based on the number of other crew upgrades. For every 2 Veterans you can have 1 Elite; for every 2 Elites, you can have 1 Ace. You can have as many Veterans as you want. There is no restriction on the type of upgrade, so you can have an Ace pilot for 2 Elite WSO's. There is also a FAQ that includes questions on the Whisper Missile. The rest of the book includes a short article on pirate organizations, battle map symbols, and complete system/weapons modification charts – updated to reflect the new point values from both JOR1 and JOR2. Yes, this is the converter's dream – as CAV has allowed weapon and system swapping from the very beginning.

VALUE

If you're a CAV player, then this book is a must-have, if for the errata alone. The addition of more units is a plus – yes, it's a big one! Up until the publication of JOR2, non-mech vehicles were more of an afterthought than a real force. Now, however, there is enough of a choice to allow you to field a mech-free fighting force. Given that the average mech costs over 200 points and the average non-mech is under that threshold, you can field a “horde” army that will definitely challenge a normal, mech-centered force. At 500 points, you could play a variant of the Ogre game – one Dictator versus a swarm of tanks and planes! I guess if there's one thing that's missing from JOR2, it's the Psyros. These aliens were mentioned in the original rulebook and there were some glimpses – 3 units actually – in JOR1. There is no new information on them in JOR2. I guess that will have to wait for a later publication – maybe the *Rules of Engagement* expansion.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

When I was given the chance to review Reaper's second paint set (Skin & Cloth) I was excited. Among our gaming group I have probably one of the most eclectic paint collections. This paint set contains nine ¾ ounce bottles, two paint brushes, two reaper figures, and a “how to” manual on painting skin and cloth. The color selection was

what you would expect for a beginning paint set; black, white, yellow, blue, green, red, flesh color, brown, and a copper metallic. The two brushes were the most ubiquitous sizes, the Round 000 and the round 0. The retail price of the paint set is a reasonable \$25.95, with the box boasting of a \$38.00 value if bought separately.

INSIDE THE BOX

I took me a minute to notice that the box contained two containers of the same color. A small flaw in packing (the extra green was placed in the opposite direction from the other colors). A quick email to Reaper allows me to brag about their customer service. Reaper responded to my email in 2 hours, a record time for a customer service department when contacted via email. Each paint bottle contains ¾ of an ounce of paint. This is the same size as the old Ral Partha line, and almost half again as much as Vallejo and GW paint. The lid is a screw on top allowing for a secure closure while shaking. Importantly there is no “lip” on the lid in which paint can seep in ruining you seal and causing the paint to dry out. The top of the lid is labeled with the paint color and since many of us store our paints in a box you can tell what color a bottle is without picking it up. The two figures included Laurana the Sorceress and Tsuko (monk) are both of the high quality I have come to expect from Reaper. The two brushes are definitely detail brushes, not meant for base coating. Also included is a painting guide pamphlet. Written by Anne Foerster, this booklet discusses layering, washing, highlighting, and mixing colors.

WHAT'S SO GREAT ABOUT THE PAINT

One of the coolest features about the pro paint line is the little metal skull in every bottle. Yes it is neat to have a metal skull lying around when you finish using the product, but the skull serves a very important purpose. It is a shaker ball. It helps to mix to paint evenly and combats the paint separation that we all see when the paint sits for a while. As for the paint itself, Pro Paints have an impressive coverage for their colors. Painted on white card only the red and flesh colors showed any streaks from brush strokes. Pro Paints are the perfect consistency to paint an average figure. If you are painting an entire squad or army these paints will serve you well. The coverage will keep you from having to paint multiple coats of most colors, although if you are painting a character or a more detailed project some thinning is suggested. The paint loses very little of its coverage when thinned with just a little water. The amount of paint that you get for your money for the quality is unsurpassed.

NOTHING IS PERFECT

Not counting the packing snafu, there is not a lot to be disappointed with in this paint set. When the paint is good it is great, wonderful opaqueness, great coverage, but when the paint has thickened you will need to add water and stir.

OVERALL

I consistently use Reaper Pro Paints in my regular painting. They do what they are designed to do very well, and that is to be a gamer paint. The bottle design and shaker skull are truly made with a gamer in mind. For your bang for your buck this is probably the best on the market for miniature paint.



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Fiction

The town had never been formally named, yet somehow the thousands of people that lived within its walls had concluded it should be called Peacedale. It was poetic, and not exactly what Jediron would have called it, but if it suited the people under his watch then that was more than enough.

Jediron looked out over the ramparts at the valley below his castle. Peacedale sprawled, wide avenues separating buildings of wood and stone, many of which were two or three stories high. The rooftops were covered with small gardens, and it gave Peacedale a look of green that he had not seen anywhere else. Beyond the walls there was the river and the farmlands, patchworks of wheat and apples, squash and cabbage. The monastery was visible on clear days such as this one, the vineyard around it evidence of the abbot's deep love of making incredible wine. The distant herd of longhorn cattle seemed larger this year, and Jediron recalled that two extra bulls were added, evidence of Peacedale's population growth and need for more food. Everywhere he looked there were signs of prosperity and happiness.

Jediron looked out over all this and frowned. It didn't fill him with the warmth he used to feel when he looked down from his castle, and he spun and walked back across the balcony. As he passed through the elegantly-crafted glass and wooden doors he wondered not for the first time why he didn't have better security going into his chambers. The architect hadn't thought of it, for at the top of a tower nearly seventy feet high there was little need for security. But in his heyday Delrik could have scaled the wall with ease, even in the rain. Then again, Delrik had been building ships for the King's navy for a decade and had gotten fat and weak and gray.

The mirror caught his reflection, and Jediron paused to look. From across the room he still looked handsome and strong, carrying his clothes on a frame that was more square than round. Something in the mirror distracted him, and he moved forward to wipe off the smudge when he realized the smudge was moving. As Jediron stood before the mirror he reached up and caressed the bits of white that were in his beard. They looked for all the world like an artist had touched him with a brush, yet as Jediron continued to rub his beard the paint did not move. He frowned again, conscious of it this time as his reflection showed him the deep creases in his forehead and the lines that branched out from his eyes and at the corners of his mouth.

Jediron stormed out of his chambers and down the wide stairs of the tower. When he reached the top floor of the manor house he pushed open the double set of doors with such force they crashed into the walls. Light was streaming in from the glass ceiling that provided excellent light for exercise. Jediron lifted off his jacket and tunic, and marched over to the tall cabinet of swords. A fat-bladed monstrosity practically fell out of the rack into Jediron's hands. He approached the wooden dummy clad only in his boots and trews then laid into the dummy with a ferocity that blinded him. He cut at it from the sides and from overhead, dropping the blade down as if he meant to split the fat log down the center. He worked the blade free and continued to cut and thrust until his body was covered in sweat and his breath came in ragged gasps. It seemed he hadn't been at it very long, much too soon to feel as he did. There was a pain across his shoulders he hadn't felt before, not even in the arena. He lifted the sword again and chopped with the last remaining bit of his strength, releasing the handle so that the sword vibrated in the wood.

"Sir?" came the voice from behind him, and it embarrassed Jediron that he was startled. He tried not to let the surprise show in his body or on his face as he slowly turned to face his majordomo.

"What is it, Berkley?" Jediron asked. It was difficult to keep the words even. Perhaps, Jediron thought, he had contracted an illness of the lungs, and that was why he wheezed so strongly.

"There is a matter of some import that requires your attention," Berkley said in the well-mannered tone that would not have changed had a dragon been clawing at the gates.

"Do I need to get my sword?" Jediron asked hopefully.

"That is doubtful, sir, unless, of course, you would rather have it with you."

The last time Berkley had suggested Jediron arm himself was almost eight years ago, not long after the town wall was completed. A band of marauders that had traveled through the valley at seasonal intervals was causing trouble and needed some of their numbers reduced before they thought better of relocation. Eight years was a very long time.

"What exactly is it?" said Jediron.

"There is a merchants' dispute over a shipment of wool," Berkley said.

"That does not sound very exciting."

"It is exciting to them, sir. Both men are rather passionate about their arguments."

A very, very long time, thought Jediron.

For the rest of the afternoon Jediron held court and judged petty dispute after petty dispute, though from the way the citizens bellowed it was apparent they didn't realize their own pettiness. One particularly memorable event came when two temples were arguing over the right to hold religious services on the same section of town property at the same time. Both representatives, who happened to be high-ranking temple officials, actually came to blows during the middle of their argument, and Jediron smiled as the guards pulled them apart. It was the most exciting thing to happen in his presence all year.

"Berkley?" Jediron said after too long a time sitting in judgement, when the audience chamber had finally emptied.

"Yes, sir?" said the man who had become more familiar to Jediron than his own face in the mirror.

"I don't want to do this any more."

"Sir?" Berkley said in that way that made Jediron feel he had just asked Berkley if he could massage his grandmother.

"I want something more in my life than this," Jediron said after a short pause.

"I regret that I cannot provide that for you," was Berkley's eloquently stated reply.

"I wish you could."

Jediron's majordomo merely shrugged, another of his familiarities.

"There is one more person who wishes to see you, sir."

"Send them away," said Jediron.

"I cannot, sir," Berkley said, and as Jediron looked at him he continued. "It is Mistress Heloine."

Jediron sat up straight in his chair, stood on his feet, then stepped forward to Berkley as if his body were filled with a sudden energy that would not dissipate.

"Why did you keep her waiting?" he asked.

"It was her request that she see you last."

"Where is she?" Jediron knew that Berkley would not have kept her waiting with all the other petitioners.

"She is in the library, sir. I took the liberty of setting up some light food and wine." But this last was said to Jediron's vanishing back.

Heloine was examining a row of scrolls against the far wall when Jediron entered. She was as beautiful as he remembered, having seen her twice since establishing Peacedale, and only briefly at that. As he took another moment to look at her Jediron could see that her hair no longer held the lustrous gleam it

once did and that it was thinner and a shade lighter than he remembered, that shade possibly coming from dyes and tints. She seemed to be a little heavier, and while she was far from being a maiden she was still shapely and desirable, even beneath the regal traveling clothes. As she turned she smiled softly, and for all else she was still beautiful. He crossed the room and embraced her. They kissed quickly, like former lovers who had been friends too long to go back.

"It is so good to see you," Jediron said.

"It has been too long," said Heloïne.

"I can't imagine the prince lets you get away from court on a regular basis."

"Governing does seem to be more time consuming than I thought it would be."

"I know that all too well," he replied, then gestured to the sofa. "Please, sit." Heloïne moved gracefully to the couch, and as Jediron sat beside her he could see the tray that Berkley had laid out for her. A slice of melon had been eaten and a little cheese, but what caught Jediron's eye was that the bottle of wine clearly had three glasses taken from it. He looked for her glass and saw it on a table against the wall. It was empty.

"There is some news," Heloïne said with no other preamble.

"I gather it is not good news," said Jediron, and he had meant it to be more upbeat than it was. He tried a small smile then thought better of it when he saw Heloïne's face.

"Alphred is dead," she said simply.

Jediron registered the words separately, as if they should somehow not be linked together in a sentence, especially one so short. In his mind he saw the journeyman apprentice who was studying his sorceries as he traveled the land with Jediron, Heloïne, Delrik and the brother-sister team of Miksa and Riksa. He could see the man who had never grown a beard, who could pluck a fallen comrade off the battlefield from the saddle at full gallop, who could best even Jediron with the staff or in a footrace or too frequently at dice and cards. Alphred had been the one who stood over them all, as they lay dying on the Bridge of Woes, and held back the demon army with the power that streamed from his eyes and his hands. Alphred had been the first of Jediron's comrades, the one who helped him find Songblade, the one who spent his winters crafting potions, the one who could speak the language of every man and creature that lived in the land. That Alphred was dead was incomprehensible.

"How did it happen?" Jediron asked. "Did Morqesh return from the Dark Plane? Did he try to recover the Ash Mountain Scrolls by himself?"

Heloïne looked peculiar, like she was ashamed to speak.

"He fell down the stairs," she said reluctantly, not even meeting Jediron's eyes as she said it. "He broke his neck."

Jediron stared at her. He waited for her to say more, but what else was there to say? Alphred fell down the stairs and died. That was it. A long while passed in silence.

Heloïne stood.

"Don't go," Jediron said softly. She turned and looked into his eyes.

"I have to," said Heloïne. "Williamette is expecting me to leave with him for Almon in the morning."

"How long will you be gone?"

"A year, perhaps more. We will be expanding the kingdom beyond the Great Sea. We will be establishing permanent residence there." She reached out and held his hand, and Jediron stood. "I am very sorry about Alphred. He was a good friend."

Jediron only nodded. Heloïne leaned forward and kissed him on the cheek, and if he could have sealed them in crystal at that moment he would have. Without saying anything else Heloïne walked from the room without looking back.

He found himself standing at the balcony without remembering how he had gotten there. Much time had elapsed, for the sun was setting behind the hills. Peacedale was still alive with light, the people not necessarily needing to go to bed with the sun. A burst of laughter came from the theater, and Jediron recalled wanting to see the new comedy that was playing. How small and worthless it all seemed.

Alphred was gone. Miksa and Riksa had died during their last great adventure, sacrificing themselves so that the Lord of Devils could be captured in the Heartstone. Delrik was a shipbuilder, concerned with nothing more than the price of oak and brass. And Heloïne was leaving. He would be lucky to see her again. The only one who had held onto the dream was Jediron, and it had been years now. Was he no more than a shipbuilder himself?

Jediron walked over to the table and lifted the wine bottle to his lips, lowering it only after it was empty. Then he marched over to one of the stacks and opened the hidden door, stepping inside and closing off all traces of light. He reached out for the lantern that was hanging from the peg and lit its wick with one of the simple tricks Alphred had taught him. Jediron walked down the spiraling stairs until he arrived at the massive, steel and stone door that only he could open safely, again because of Alphred.

Beyond the door was Jediron's trophy room. Standing over him was a great manticores, its wings spread so that they almost reached the walls, its frame formed into a feral pounce. It had taken the artisan a year to mount it, and as hard as Jediron had examined it he could find no trace of where his spear had penetrated it. On the walls were the heads of other beasts, below them the artifacts that had come with their encounters. There were rugs and statuettes, chests of jewelry and coins, weapons and magical constructs galore. It had taken him a lifetime to acquire them, and they merely gathered dust in the cellar of his castle.

Jediron walked to the wide cabinet and opened its doors. Glowing faintly was the hauberk of delicate chain that was stronger than any blade. Beside it were the gloves that gave him the speed of a cat, and the boots that allowed him to walk across dried leaves without making a sound. Without taking off any of his other clothes Jediron lifted the shirt of mail and climbed into it. He didn't remember the armor being so heavy, even distributed over him as it was. He took Songblade from the next cabinet and buckled it around his waist. When he turned to look at himself in the mirror he could barely move. It was so heavy. When he saw the old man staring back at him, struggling to stand in armor that was a third the weight of the first suit he had owned, he almost cried.

He undid the belt and let the sword fall to the ground, followed closely by the suit of mail. Jediron grabbed up the lantern and climbed the stairs back up to the library, not bothering to close the door of books behind him. In the room connected to his bedchamber he found a tray of fruits and breads, but he ignored these in favor of the bottle of strong whiskey.

It came to him in a dream, as answers sometimes do to even ordinary people. He leapt out of bed, hurling aside the goose-down covers with one sweep of his arm. Berkley had set out two sets of clothing, one formal and one less so, and it was into this second set of clothes that Jediron threw himself. A decade away from the thrill was too long. He needed adventure.

"May I get you something, sir?" said Berkley, and Jediron not for the first time wondered how his majordomo had acquired his stealth. Delrik would be envious.

"I will be going on a quest," Jediron said to him. "Send out a summons. I will need several people to accompany me. They should possess a variety of skills, and I should think one or two should be versed in the arts. Then pack up horses and gear. If they are here by mid-afternoon they will get one hundred gold coins in advance of their shares."

"As you wish." Berkley left the room with the same little bow he always performed though Jediron had rarely seen it.

It was an exciting morning. Jediron could hardly contain his enthusiasm. He gathered belongings from his cellar stash, choosing Songblade, obviously, to be his main weapon but also selecting something with silver in it in consideration of their prey. It was difficult to wean out from all of his artifacts the select few that would accompany him in a single pack, and he used all of the morning to do it. Berkley had needed to force food on him, actually standing over him as he wolfed down some roasted beef and brie. When Jediron lifted his pack the first time he found he couldn't carry it and whittled

down his selections by half. It was midday when he had finished, and if Berkley had not put together another pack with clothing and basic necessities he would have probably spent until sundown doing that.

"It's probably no secret," Jediron said to his majordomo when they were alone, "that you handle more of the daily governing of Peacedale than I do."

"It is a secret to its residents, sir," said Berkley.

"Be that as it may, I will be some time away from here. I will make an announcement that you will be acting as town administrator in my absence with my fullest authority."

"I would consider it an honor and a privilege, sir."

"Is the group assembled?"

"They are in the courtyard, sir?"

Berkley had summoned a porter to carry Jediron's two packs, and the burly man did so as if they were only stuffed with dandelions. He commanded the man to set the packs just inside the doors leading to the open grounds of the castle then dismissed him.

"You have paid them?" Jediron said.

"Yes, sir."

"What is your evaluation of their skills?"

"I know only of two of them, sir. The soldier with the blond hair is a Sergeant of the Guard. He is famed for his strength and his ability with the sword, and his character is held in the highest regard. There is also a woman who is known to be excellent with horses, and, in fact, she has been in employ in your stables for two years. Of the others I know nothing."

"Do your sources tell you that these are good people?"

"They are the best this town has to offer," Berkley said without pause.

Jediron nodded and stepped out into the courtyard.

They were all children. The girl Berkley spoke of was wiry thin, her woman's curves having yet to come to her body. The other girl in the group still wore her hair in an apprentice's braids. The five men, including the blond sergeant had bare faces. Jediron looked out upon the eagerness of their youth and tried to find the desire to meet danger with them, to saddle up and ride out into the unknown with them. He could have been father to them all.

"Thank you for coming so quickly," Jediron said when he found his voice. "I am assembling a group to strike out at a sinister foe that inhabits our neighboring land. This is one of the undead and will prove difficult to slay. But it has been told that its cache of riches is enough to provide everyone with a lifetime of wealth. I," and Jediron teetered on the precipice for only a moment, "will not be going with you. I am merely providing your company with the means to get there. In my possession are maps and some small trinkets that may help in your quest. Tonight there will be a banquet served for you in my main dining hall, and you may spend the night as my guests. In the morning you will set out on what may be the first of your many great adventures. The festivities will begin at sundown. Until then your time is yours." Jediron turned and strode back into the foyer.

"I will notify the kitchen at once, sir," said Berkley, but Jediron made no reply. He only walked past his majordomo and up to his chambers.

The banquet had gone well. There was music and some dancing, and Jediron sat among them all, learned their names and their histories, drank toasts with them, shared rumors and wisdom. He gave to them some maps and charms, allowed the older - pfaw! - of the two sorcerers to take a few books from his library that were only moldering, permitted the archers among them to borrow some silver-tipped shafts. They bade him goodnight and went to their rooms, leaving him alone to try to drink the rest of the wine until Berkley assisted him into his bed.

A brief rain prevented the party from leaving at first light, which was fortunate as Jediron was not yet recovered from his drinking. At midday they all thanked him again for the generous support then rode eight of his finest

horses down through the main street of Peacedale and out to the horizon. Jediron watched them the entire time.

He found himself down in his trophy room, fingering some of the relics that he had acquired over a lifetime of wearing a blade. He saw a chest of books, books so powerful even Alphred didn't want to be around them. There were weapons and jewelry, armor and shields, all covered in dust. There were vials of potions, and Jediron wondered if they still had their potency or were simply colored liquids. When his eyes fell on an axe he had liberated from a barbarian king he couldn't remember the name of it, and he was sure it had a powerful name, one that inspired poems. He began to think nobody remembered its name.

Jediron had never been struck by an epiphany before, and the feeling of it was, indeed, like a physical blow. As he emerged from the library wall he sought out Berkley, finding him supervising the polishing of the silver flatware.

"Summon engineers," Jediron said simply.

"For when, sir?" Berkley said, observing the lateness of the hour.

"Immediately."

"That may not be prudent, sir." Berkley was right, of course, as was so often the case.

"Then do it first thing tomorrow."

"Yes, sir. Shall I summon anyone else?"

"Just the engineers for now. And have drawing implements delivered to my chamber."

"What will you be drawing, sir?"

"Maps," Jediron said, and he turned and practically ran back down the stairs. He spent an hour taking an inventory of the trophy room then hurried back upstairs to his chambers. Berkley had placed a large table in the center of one of his rooms, a smaller table beside it holding chalks and inks. There were several tall candelabras positioned around the table, already lit, that provided more than adequate light for detailed working.

Jediron sat on the padded stool and picked up a chalk stick. He sketched the great cavern that would hold the dragon, not quite bothering to work out the details of capturing one. There would be only one entrance into the cavern, except for, naturally, the ones used by the handlers to provide food for the beast. He looked at his inventory and positioned some few of the trophies here and some others there, making certain not to put too many in this place. There would be other dungeons to build, and the rest of his acquisitions could go there.

Should he make an appearance in one of them himself? No, it would do no good to slay someone he had all but asked to be there. That would be crossing a very fine line. Instead, he would create the place and litter it with all manner of beasties and pitfalls and treasures, pack it full with enough excitement to last any person a score of ordinary lifetimes. Then he would lead those who had grown bored to another and another and another.

It would take time and money, but Jediron had plenty of each. It would be his greatest achievement. It would be an adventure.

THE END

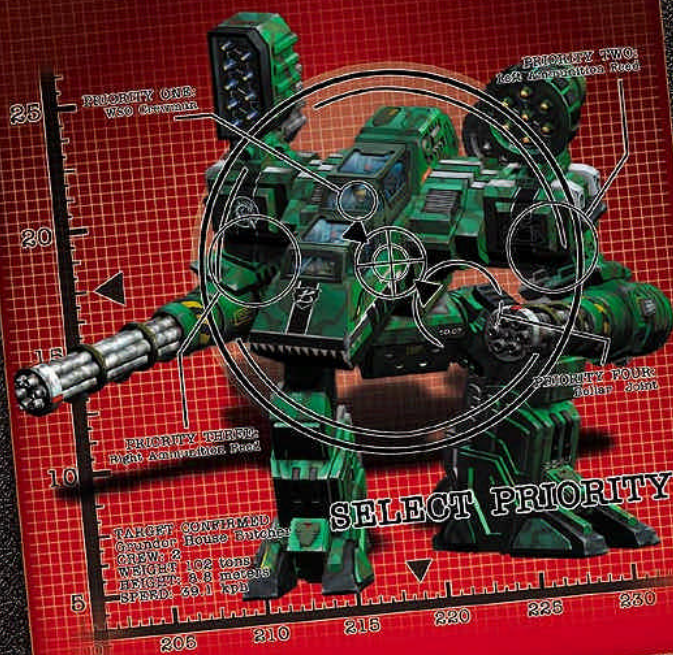
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CAV

65,000 ROUNDS OF
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CAV

JOURNAL OF RECOGNITION 2



It's the same old story. You wait nervously in the pre-dawn chill. Quietly at first, you hear the enemy advance: the distant thunder of their progress crescendoes into a bone-rattling roar. Then comes the decisive moment. As the opposing CAVs, aircraft, and armor crest the nearest ridge, you shout the command to fire.

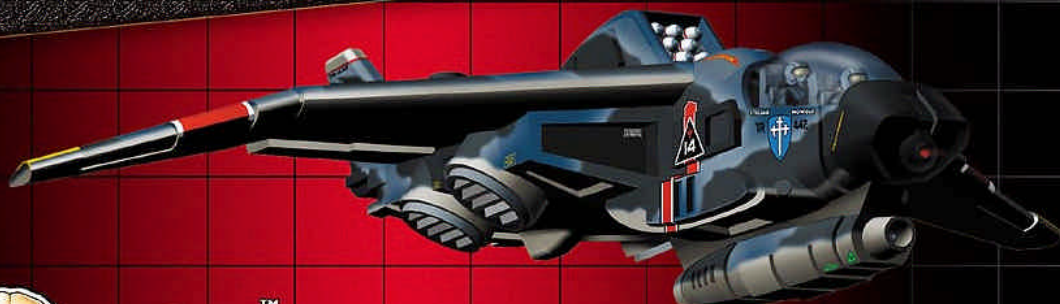
Suddenly, your ECM indicators shriek. Your best foot forward stumbles as the enemy swarms toward you. You thought you knew everything about fighting anything, but these... You've never seen anything like these before...

Through the thunderclap of incoming fire, your old Sarge's words echo in your head...

"First rule of war, soldier.
Evolve, or die."

Journal of
Recognition 2

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REAPER

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Michael and I were recently invited to come down to Reaper HQ and play a game of Warlord for a Fictional Reality battle report. Actually, I don't think Ed Pugh (head honcho at Reaper) actually got the entire invitation out of his mouth before we excitedly agreed. What follows is an account of the first game of Warlord that Michael and I have played along with some thoughts (and lots of pictures) of the game.

To keep things as an all-Reaper game my army selection was centered around what Reaper figs I had on-hand and painted. Being a D&D DM this meant lots of monsters and not so much in the way of a rank and file army. What to do? Hell, I emptied a dungeon and banded all of the monsters together to go raid a town! I had four squads (Bugbears, Carnivorous Apes, Gnolls, and Lizardmen) along with an Ettin, a Giant and a Ogre Mage attached to the squad of Gnolls. Not only did I like how it looked on paper and when deployed, it was also perfectly legal in Warlord.

Michael, having more player-character Reaper models than monsters, opted to grab stuff off of their shelves and went with an Undead army bolstered by a few of his own Skeleton Warriors. He ended up with units of Skeleton Cavalry, Skeleton Archers, Skeleton Warriors and a Necromancer. Much more reminiscent of a 'standard' fantasy army than mine and also perfectly legal.

Ok, so we get to Reaper and meet Matt (Warlord designer) who informs us that Ed will be here soon and we'll be playing a three-way game. Michael and I feel not so confident now. Then, painter extraordinaire, Ann Foerster walks in and tells us that she'll be playing on Ed's team. Remember that scene from "A Bronx Tale" where the bikers go into a bar and feel like bad-asses until the wiseguys come in, lock the door, and kick the ever lovin' crap out of them? That's pretty much how Michael and I felt...like the bikers, not the wiseguys. Today, Ed will be running an army designed by Matt which will consist of Orc Archers, Orc Warriors, and Beastmen with an Assassin, an Evil Mage (attached to the Orc Warriors) and an Ogre.

Below is a picture of the awesome city terrain that we got to play on. My deployment zone is over by the bridge on the left side, Michael will start down at the bottom around the graveyard and Ed/Ann will be over by the top



of the picture. We didn't add any extra obstructing terrain and built the game around each of these 'evil' armies coming to take control of the town, but having to take care of each other first.

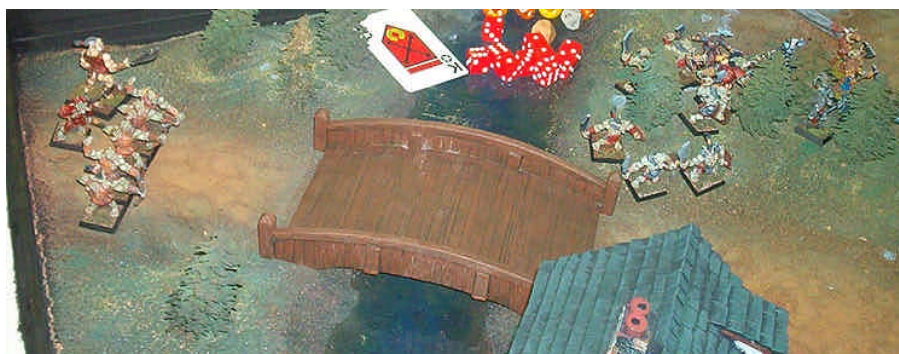
The next three pictures (right) show how the deployment shook out. I had a good portion of my army ready to move over the bridge and into town with a few guys having to move through the water. I think that Michael's was a bit flawed with his cavalry needing to get around his archers before they could be effective, but we'll have to wait and see. Ed/Ann had a pretty spread out deployment with their archers hanging back and the rest of their force, minus the Ogre heading into the cover afforded by the woods so they could advance on the

as unmolested as possible. With that done we re-shuffled the draw deck and began the game.

My only fear at this point was that the game could turn into a 2 on 1 affair as many 3-payler games have a tendency to do. I won't be giving anything away when I happily tell you that is not what happened here. Each of us ended up fighting the other two and it was not just one player teaming up with another to eliminate the third and then turning on his ally. Everyone went to kick everyone else in the teeth right from the beginning.

Michael and I were still not confident as we were fighting the owner of Reaper and a gal that is arguably one of the best miniature painters in the world and then having their army built by one of the designers of the game.

And so it begins...





Above (left and right) you can see the bonus *Ranger* movement for Orc and Undead armies. This extra move action takes place before turn 1 actually begins, but it is limited to each specific model that has the *Ranger* special ability. The leader of the Skeleton Archers (but not the Skeleton Archers themselves) and all of the Orc Archers (except their Leader) move closer to each other. Having nobody with the *Ranger* special ability my Dungeon Monsters took an extra few seconds to contemplate the meaning of the universe. Ok, scratch that, they picked their noses.

TURN 1

As with many miniature games turn 1 consisted mostly of moving towards positions on the tabletop where we expected battles to take place. The only combat that actually took place during turn 1 was the Skeleton Archers sending a volley of arrows down the dirt road towards the Orc Warriors. This resulted in a 2½" template hitting the orcs and one of them being killed. The draw for the turn went like this.

1. Ed/Ann Orc Archers
2. Mark Carnivorous Apes
3. Mark Ettin
4. Ed/Ann Orc Warriors / Evil Mage
5. Michael Skeleton Archers
6. Ed/Ann Ogre
7. Mark Lizardmen
8. Ed/Ann Beastmen
9. Michael Skeleton Warriors
10. Michael Skeleton Cavalry
11. Ed/Ann Assassin
12. Michael Necromancer
13. Mark Bugbears
14. Mark Gnolls / Ogre Mage
15. Mark Giant

The pictures below and to the right show the positions of each army at the end of turn 1. Michael draws first blood as we all close towards each other.



My advance is hampered slightly by the funnel that the bridge creates and the river, which is impeding my progress. Still, we march forward ready to pound whatever we meet into jelly.



The Undead stay pretty bunched up as they move down the street and between buildings. The Necromancer is taking care to keep himself out of sight as much as possible.



The Orcs do some spreading out with the warriors cutting across the street and the Beastmen heading up through the woods taking cover. The Ogre is maintaining his presence with the leader of the Orc Archers.

TURN 2

Some more moving and feeling out still going on during this turn. Again, combat consisted of missile fire, but this time the Orc Archers tried to get into the act only to find that they were out of range. The Skeleton Archers were using longbows while the Orc Archers were firing, you guessed it, regular bows. The Skeleton Archer's attack was devastating though as it killed three of the Orc Archers. Second blood to Michael also! The Orc Warriors advanced into the woods towards the Dungeon Monsters and the Beastmen maintained their bearings through the city towards the undead, eventually hoping to flank them. More of the Dungeon Monsters moved onto the bridge and further across the river and the Undead kept up their advance, but didn't seem in too much of a hurry to engage the enemy at close quarters yet. The draw went like this.

1. Ed/Ann Orc Warriors
2. Mark Bugbears
3. Mark Card buried using the *Tactician* Special Ability
4. Mark Ettin
5. Ed/Ann Orc Archers
6. Michael Skeleton Archers
7. Ed/Ann Ogre
8. Ed/Ann Beastmen
9. Michael Skeleton Warriors
10. Michael Skeleton Cavalry
11. Ed/Ann Assassin
12. Michael Necromancer
13. Mark Carnivorous Apes
14. Mark Lizardmen
15. Mark Gnolls / Ogre Mage
16. Mark Giant



TURN 3

The third turn started off amazingly well for Michael and horribly bad for Ed and Ann. Ed's Evil Mage had straggled too far behind the Orc Warriors and found himself in the open. Michael got the first draw of the turn and immediately proceeded to pin-cushion the wizard with his Skeleton Archers. That makes third blood to Michael too! Even though the bulk of fighting had not yet commenced the dance had begun. Other combat for the turn consisted of the Orc Warriors charging the Ettin but not hitting him. Their foolish dreams are realized when his defensive strike drops one of them and then a later (still on turn 3) *Ice Shard* cast from the Ogre Mage nails the other of the two orcs that made contact with the Ettin. The Orc Archers did manage to kill off two of the Skeleton Warriors who had moved into range and Michael's Necromancer snuck out from behind a building to drop a *Fireball* on my advancing forces. I was awfully worried about being bunched up but the resulting heatwave resulted in just two toasted Lizardmen. Mmmm, tastes like chicken! The remaining Lizardmen ran up towards the Necromancer but could not quite make contact.



The draw for turn three went as follows.

1. Michael Skeleton Archers
2. Mark
3. Mark Giant
4. Mark Bugbears
5. Mark Ettin
6. Ed/Ann Orc Warriors
7. Michael Skeleton Warriors
8. Ed/Ann Orc Archers
9. Mark Carnivorous Apes
10. Michael Necromancer
11. Ed/Ann Ogre
12. Michael Skeleton Cavalry
13. Ed/Ann Beastmen
14. Mark Lizardmen
15. Ed/Ann Assassin
16. Mark Gnolls / Ogre Mage



The sneaky Beastmen are getting closer to the Undead. In the picture to the left (bottom) you can see them creeping along side of the building and the Half-Orc Assassin is ready to strike from around the building where he is hiding. I think that we're about to have a massive bug-tussle down by the river as the Ogre and the Bugbears are closing in on the fight that just started there. The final position for turn three of many troops involved in the game can be seen at the top of the next page.





TURN 4

Ok, time to put boot to ass and really get this party going. Ok, before that can happen Michael's Necromancer needs to run away from the Lizardmen that are pestering him. Wuss! Ok, not really, he'd have been eaten if he stuck around so I can't blame him for taking off. Turn four did end up rockin' and a rollin' with plenty of blood being shed. The Skeleton Archers moved up some more and shot into the Beastmen right next to them and felled one. The Ettin, feeling all ballsy, charged the Orc Warlord (yup, da boss) and punched him once in the brain. The retaliatory strike from the Orc missed. Two of the Orc Warriors that had gone down bled out (blew their revive roll) and the rest charged the Ettin and brought the monster down. Their cries of joy were cut short as the Bugbears charged in and dropped another Orc Warrior and caused another wound on the Orc Warlord. The strikebacks from the Orcs were quite effective and dropped two of the Bugbears. Extra support from the Dungeon Monsters was needed in that area immediately.

The Orc Archers continued to pepper the Skeleton Swordsmen and another hit the ground. The leader of the Orc Archers moved up to get into position for

some close-up butt kicking. The Gnolls and Ogre Mage moved up with the Gnolls spreading out a bit and leaving room for a *Fireball* to be cast at the Skeleton Archers. Two blackened skeletons hit the ground and the Beastmen were appreciative of the support even though it was from an enemy that they soon expected to be fighting. The Ogre advanced towards the fight on the opposite shore while the Carnivorous Apes came around a building towards the same fight. The Skeleton Warriors charged the Assassin but were not able to hit their slippery foe. He also struck at them but missed and a retaliatory strike found its mark and caused a wound to the Half-Orc Assassin. The Lizardmen filled in across the street as best they could to form a line that the upcoming Skeleton Cavalry would have to get through before hitting the Gnolls, Ogre Mage and Giant. The expected charge came and the Lich was leading the undead riders. He took down one of the Lizardmen, but not before receiving a strikeback from the cold-blooded creature. The Beastmen saw their opportunity and charged the Skeleton Archers. Two more of the undead bowmen were brought down along with one of the Beastmen. The Giant moved up, ready to bonk someone on the head.

The draw for turn four went like this.

- | | | |
|-----|---------|--------------------|
| 1. | Michael | Necromancer |
| 2. | Michael | Skeleton Archers |
| 3. | Mark | Ettin |
| 4. | Ed/Ann | Orc Warriors |
| 5. | Mark | Bugbears |
| 6. | Ed/Ann | Orc Archers |
| 7. | Mark | Gnolls / Ogre Mage |
| 8. | Ed/Ann | Ogre |
| 9. | Mark | Carnivorous Apes |
| 10. | Michael | Skeleton Warriors |
| 11. | Ed/Ann | Assassin |
| 12. | Mark | Lizardmen |
| 13. | Michael | Skeleton Cavalry |
| 14. | Ed/Ann | Beastmen |
| 15. | Mark | Giant |

June 2003

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The cavalry charge of the Undead can be seen here along with the Beastmen putting down the Skeleton Archers. You can also spot the Necromancer (da wuss) over on the top-left corner.

TURN 5

At the beginning of turn five everyone still has a dog in this fight, but by the end of it fortunes will start to change. Things started off with the Carnivorous Apes charging into the Orc Warriors and taking down the Orc Warlord. Another Lizardman goes down to the Skeleton Cavalry, but the leader of the Lizardmen is still standing. The rest of the cavalry fill in the best they can across the street, setting up for a devastating ride towards the Gnolls.

The Bugbears (being sneaky gits of low moral fiber) slit the throats of three Orcs, including the Warlord, which are lying on the ground. The Half-Orc Assassin and Skeleton Warriors continue to dance around each other and the Ogre charges into two Bugbears dropping one and taking a retaliatory strike himself. The Gnolls charge into the Skeleton Cavalry and pile another hit on the Lich. Three of the Gnolls go down in a flurry of strikeouts but a *Bolt* spell from the Ogre Mage drops another undead rider in his tracks.

The Necromancer moves up around some buildings on the other side of the fight in the street and the Skeleton Archers that are in hand-to-hand with the Beastmen manage to drag one down. The Giant sends bone splinters flying everywhere when he smashes one of the Skeleton Cavalry and the Orc Archers also take shots at the riders and bring one down. The leader of the Orc Archers charges into the Skeleton Warriors and smashes it into the ground.



The Ogre must be highly pissed that the festivities started without him. The stars above represent models that are down, but not yet officially dead. They're just "mostly dead" right now and are waiting to either blow or make a revive roll or to have their throat's slit by a nearby sneaky bastage.

The last standing Lizardman, the leader, misses the Skeleton Cavalry that he's fighting and the Ettin dies from his wounds (I blew the revive roll). The Orc Warriors have two of their number bleed out and the remaining one charges a Bugbear only to miss and be dropped by a defensive strike. The unengaged Beastmen then charge the remaining Skeleton Archers and put a wound on the Sergeant and kill a regular archer.

Draw order for turn five.

1. Mark Carnivorous Apes
2. Michael Skeleton Cavalry
3. Mark Bugbears
4. Michael Skeleton Warriors
5. Ed/Ann Ogre
6. Mark Gnolls / Ogre Mage
7. Michael Necromancer
8. Michael Skeleton Archers
9. Mark Giant
10. Ed/Ann Orc Archers
11. Mark Lizardmen
12. Ed/Ann Assassin
13. Mark Ettin
14. Ed/Ann Orc Warriors
15. Ed/Ann Beastmen

I think that Michael took the worst drubbing of turn five. Ed and Ann didn't do too badly as a lot of their casualties came from the slitting of throats, but it made sure that they can't come back. My Gnolls did not fare well at all against the Skeleton Cavalry, but it came during defensive strike and there was not much I could do about it. If my Ettin had made his revive roll the Ogre probably would have loaded his pant, but as things stand the Bugbears and Carnivorous Apes will have to take care of him.



TURN 6

Turn six started with Michael's cavalry dropping the Lizardman leader and a Gnoll, but the Lich is also hit in the process and is stunned (goes down). The Orc Archers draw attention to themselves by shooting at the Carnivorous Apes, but they cause no hits. The archer leader charges another Skeleton Warriors but the clang of steel on steel is all that occurs.

The Carnivorous Apes, while irritated at being shot at have more pressing business with the Ogre, charge the beast and take it down while also slitting the throat of a felled orc. A Skeleton Warrior stands back up (ain't the *Tough* Special Ability great when it works) and the Assassin suffers another hit. The Bugbears do a coup de grace on the Ogre and the Bugbear sergeant actually makes his revive roll and stands up while another bleeds out. He gives the rest of the guys a big "thumbs up" at their good job of taking down the Ogre.

The Skeleton Archer sergeant is still fighting the Beastmen but misses when trying to strike but a defensive strike sends him back to hell. The Giant smashes another Skeleton Cavalry and then moves to stand between the last of the undead riders and the Ogre Mage. The Gnoll Warlord smashes the skull of the Lich in a coup de grace and the Ogre Mage steps out from behind the Giant to blast the last Skeleton Cavalry with a *Bolt* spell that shatter the rider and mount. Finishing the turn Michael's Necromancer moves to get a line of sight at the Gnoll Warlord and Ogre Mage and casts *Scare* at them. They both look in his direction and mouth, "I don't think so." as the spell has no effect on them.

We ended the game at the end of turn six with me having more than 50% of my army left and Ed and Ann's and Michael's armies both being decimated. The draw for turn six went like this.

1. Michael Skeleton Cavalry
2. Ed/Ann Orc Archers
3. Mark Carnivorous Apes
4. Michael Skeleton Warriors
5. Mark Bugbears
6. Michael Skeleton Archers
7. Mark Giant
8. Ed/Ann Beastmen
9. Mark Gnolls / Ogre Mage
10. Michael Necromancer

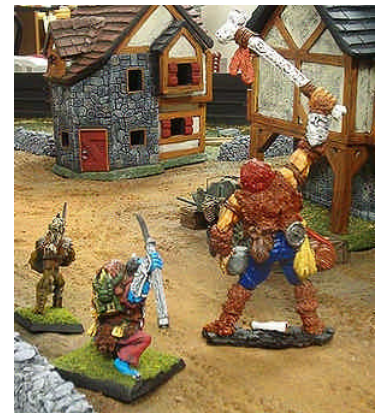
Had we gone another round or two I think that Ed and Ann and Michael would have ganged up on me but I'm fairly confident that I could have pulled it off considering how much of my army, including the Giant who was uninjured and the Carnivorous Apes (also still complete), was left alive.

MARK'S THOUGHTS

Well, we went into this game wanting to learn how to play and also evaluate Warlord as a fantasy skirmish game. We accomplished both and had a good time to boot. Ed, Ann, and Matt (and for that matter everyone that I've met at Reaper) are some of the nicest people you'll meet and treated us like guests in their house. It was a pleasure to play with them and I'd jump at any opportunity to do so again.

Ok, on the learning how to play bit. We read over the rules and built our army lists prior to the game but went over some special rules before we started and then got to work. The game was very easy to jump right in to and the only thing we really referenced the rulebook for was to check on the exact effects of some spells. Warlord uses the same kind of damage track system as CAV, but this is really not fantasy-CAV. In CAV everyone is walking around (for the most part) with lots of things with large damage tracks. In Warlord your Sergeants, other leaders and characters and monsters have damage tracks, but grunts have their one wound and that's pretty much it. Also, grunts (and adepts) have a significant place in the game and that's not just to soak up hits for the bigger guys. They can all do damage and I never got the feel of Warlord being a system that just delivers the bad-ass characters towards each other. Yes, the big guys are devastating, but they can also be brought down under a mass of regulars. Case in point was how my Ettin went down and how I took care of the Ogre.

I also liked the flow of the game. You never knew who was going to get the next activation but we were also not locked into activating certain units when your turn came up. We did have a couple of occasions of people getting multiple activations in a row and if played correctly this can lead to some awesome beat-downs.



What I probably liked most about the game, even more than winning, was how you can build pretty much whatever army you want to play. Had I really wanted to I could have taken a single dragon as my army. Not sure how well it would have fared, but I could have done it. My army for today was built primarily around necessity (using all-Reaper) miniatures but I was also able to build a decent reason for them to all be together. The down side to this is that now I have all sorts of ideas floating around my head on new Warlord armies to build, like a jungle/swamp-themed army that has Snakemen, Lizardmen, Giant Frogs, a Tortoise Dragon and Frogmen in it. I liked Warlord very, very much and will definitely find myself playing it more.



MICHAEL'S THOUGHTS

Well, that went about the way I thought. For once a 3-way game didn't degenerate into a "let's you and him fight" with the third force playing cleanup. I attribute that to the fact that there were experience players all around the table. Personally, I knew I had to hit Mark's forces with the Fireball spell when they were on the bridge because they wouldn't be that bunched up again in the game.

So, what did I learn from this game? Lots, actually - but that's to be expected when you play a game for the first time. I'll run through the more important ones below:

Spells are purchased per cast. The 50 points that I spent on the Fireball wasn't to have the spell for the entire game, but to have it once. I should have read the rules closer. If I had it to do over again, I wouldn't have sunk so many points into just one spell - but bought others - ones that could also be used to counter spell! The Scare spell is similar - I really didn't have a chance to use it against a troop of grunts - when I did cast it, it was a desperation move.

Cavalry are tough - but hard to maneuver. I bought this unit expecting a more open battlefield. In the streets of the village, I was stuck in multiple ranks and caught behind my archers for most of the game. When they finally broke out, they couldn't run down Mark's Lizardmen, and so they stood around and gave up their bounty points.

MICHAEL'S ARMY

Troop A – Longbow Sergeant [Skeleton] with five 5 Longbow Warriors [Skeletons]
Troop B – Warrior Sergeant [Skeleton] with six Warriors [Skeletons]
Troop C – Cavalry Captain [Lich] wearing magic armor and carrying a magic sword with six Cavalry [Skeletons]
Troop D - Wizard with Fireball and Scare spells

20 Models

The Longbowmen and Sergeant are my artillery. They can volley fire at massed troops and take 'em down or single fire at anyone who gets close. The warriors are to protect the longbowmen and the cavalry are to take out heavy infantry. The wizard will use the Fireball spell to supplement the longbowmen. The Scare spell is to break up an attacking formation by making them take shaken tests.

MARK'S ARMY

Troop A – Melee Captain [Gorilla Gladiator] with three Heavy Infantry [Carnivorous Apes]
Troop B – Linebreaker Sergeant [Lizardman] with four Linebreaker Infantry [Lizardmen]
Troop C – Warrior Sergeant [Bugbear] with four Warrior Infantry [Bugbears]
Troop D – Melee Warlord [Gnoll] with four Linebreaker Warriors [Gnolls] and a Wizard [Ogre Mage] with Fireball, Ice Shards and Bolt (x2) spells
Troop E – Large Monster [Ettin]
Troop F – Giant Monster [Giant]

22 Models

If I get to something, it's dead. If I get caught out in the open for too long I'll start to resemble a pin-cushion. I think that it would be an understatement to say that I'm light on missile troops. I'm more than light, they're just plain non-existent in my army. I could have taken some Skeleton Archers as they are sitting (and even painted) with the rest of my figures, but I decided against it for whatever reason.

Having six cards in the deck, actually seven when you count the *Tactician* Special Ability that my warlord has, should work to my benefit. I have a better chance of going first simply because I have more cards in the deck to begin with and now I have one more. Also, having more cards means I'm more likely to go on a 'run' with my activations and possibly get several in a row.

Longbowmen are vicious. My most effective tactic of the game was the deployment of my longbowmen in a line firing down the street. I was able to outrange the orc archers and take out the majority of them in a few turns using Volley Fire. Against the hapless wizard, shooting lots took him out very nicely. However, once the beastmen got into melee with the archers, they didn't do too well.

Grunts are tough. In most fantasy games, the regular troop types are just cannon (or wizard) fodder. In this game, they tend to stick around. There were many times that I thought my units would just cave in, but their 10+ DV kept them in the game. That being said, my swordsman sergeant sure did a number on the assassin.

Warlord is a fast playing game. The damage tracks means that most bookkeeping is handled for you. You don't have to drop counters to keep track of wound status. The two action turn means that you can move/move, move/fight or fight/move or, if you're special - fight/fight rather than using a move phase/shoot phase/melee phase mechanism.

The generic game is great, but it will get even better with the addition of the official Warlord troop types. I wonder what my Undead Horde would have done if they had had the Undead abilities? I guess I'll have to wait to find out!

ED/ANN'S ARMY

Troop A – Melee Warlord [Orc] with six Warriors [Orcs] and an Evil Mage [Human]
Troop B – Dervish Sergeant [Beastman] with five Linebreakers [Beastmen]
Troop C – Large Monster [Ogre]
Troop D – Assassin [Half-Orc]
Troop E – Warrior Sergeant [Orc] with five Archers [Orcs]

21 Models

Of course, Ed and Ann had a terribly unfair advantage. No, not that they've played before but that they are playing with miniatures painted by Ann which makes all of our figures feel puny and insignificant.

Michael and Ed and Ann both have lists that are more balanced between hand-to-hand combat and ranged combat than mine. I wouldn't say that my army is cheese-laden though. Heck, it's my first time playing so I don't even know what would be cheesy in Warlord. Ok, an army of all large/giant monsters might be.

In the end I was very pleased with how my army, the Dungeon Monsters, fared. The lack of missile troops really did not hinder me too much even though our tabletop had some vicious kill-zones. The two troops of archers that were present concentrated on each other and the centerline of the board for the most part, which was a relief.

I like the fact that anyone can be taken down. The chances of your grunt warrior working over a Warlord are not high but a dogpile of grunts on a high point value model could likely mean bad news for the big 'un.

Reaper's Warlord line of miniatures also fails to disappoint. They are super-high quality figures and I can't wait to see more of them but in the meantime I'll be getting some of their 1" square metal bases and dropping some figures on them. One thing that I'm really dreaming of seeing is a translation of the Dark Haven line of figures, primarily the monsters, to Warlord. An Eye Tyrant should be more than just a Wizard and a Ghoul King should also be something special too. It would be a shame not to exploit the vast range of Reaper miniatures for Warlord. The "open" nature of Warlord (not for tournament play however) should allow players to *really* field anything they want.

As with any first time playing a game Michael and I found some things that we could have done better and even a few things that we did wrong but I can't wait to play some more!

Mark Theurer, Fictional Reality



Game Preview



Mutant Chronicles Warzone: Universe Under Siege™, a look behind the curtain.

After nearly two years of painstaking effort, countless hours of development and creation, the Warzone Ultimate Edition is complete. Mutant Chronicles Warzone: Universe Under Siege™ is more than just a game to all of us, it is a passion; and we have taken this dedication to making sure the re-launch of the game is as powerful and exciting as possible.

With the now immanent release of UWZ, questions abound concerning how the new edition will compare to second edition, or even the first for that matter. Some of you who caught us at shows or online were given hints and teasers concerning the changes made to the system, but specific details have always been just out of reach, until now that is. Now that we are poised at the big re-launch, it is time more details can be shared.

Army Selection

In Universe Under Siege, the army you assemble will be the most important issue next to tactics you will have to face. Like any army, your forces will be broken down into various classifications. These groups are grunt squads, elite squads, support units, consultants and advisors, and officers. You will find that Grunt squads are the core of any army, as they are in reality. You may take unlimited grunt squads in your force composition. For each grunt squad, you may add in an elite squad of less than or equal size; and for every two grunt squads in your army, you may have one support unit. Lastly, you may have up to one officer for every grunt or elite squad you possess. Many armies, depending on their makeup and affiliation may take advisors and consultants to bolster the forces under their command.

Sometimes these forces may be mercenaries, malcontents or even forces from other Megacorporations or the Cartel. In this manner your army construction can be as varied and colorful as you can imagine.

One of the exciting additions to the army lists in the Ultimate Edition is the concept of subdivisions within a force. In compiling all the references of what existed from the RPG and the previous games, we knew that we had to try and inject as much of the flavor of the setting into the TTG. These subdivisions allow armies to play completely differently even against their own forces.

Examples of these subdivisions can be found in the various clans of Imperial, the noble houses of Bauhaus, or the lord heirs of Mishima. These armies will have selections common to the entire army, core troops to draw from, as well as squads unique to the specific subdivision within that army. If you wish to take a unit that belongs to another subdivision within your army, they would be considered either a support unit for purposes of your army composition or a slot in your Advisor/Consultants. Brotherhood units, Cartel units, and even Doomtroopers can also be taken under certain fluff related restrictions.

In games that have a minimum of six squads with three officers, you may elect to field a force commander. He is a high-ranking officer or leader who, among other things, can give orders to multiple squads and call fire missions from off-board support units like terrestrial artillery batteries, orbital weapon platforms, or attack aircraft circling high above the battlefield.

Officers and leaders in Ultimate Warzone will be very important, but not in the conventional sense. They won't be powerful uber-characters toting assault cannons and single handedly defeating entire squads. Instead their value will be shown in the leadership they offer an army, and the additional skills and abilities they make possible by being in the right place at the right time. They will be useful in the command and control of your troops, instead of simply being slightly better shooters with an extra wound or two. This design philosophy extends from the Force Commander who leads the whole army, to the squad Sgt. who is required to keep his men focused and sharp.

Deployment

Ultimate Warzone uses the same blind deployment system that Chronopia: War in the Eternal Realm does, except with a few additions. Certain units have the "Recon" special ability. They may act as skirmishers or scouts during deployment by attempting to identify the opposing player's blind deployment cards. If successful, the card is revealed and the identified enemy unit is immediately placed on the table.

This same "spotting" mechanism is used for stalkers and unseen assailants. No longer are these models completely immune from the enemy until they elect to attack. Now stealthy models have a level associated with their skill. Models within their leadership in inches may attempt to spot the stealthy model, with the level of their stealth ability acting as a penalty to dice roll of units trying to spot them. If the spot check is successful, the model is placed on the table for all to see.

For example, a Reaper of Souls might have a stalk ability of 10. It would be child's play for him to run circles around a squad of Ducal Militia. With their leadership of only nine, they would be virtually helpless to spot him. But sneaking up on a Mounted Hussar would be a different story. The Venusian Raptor he's riding has predator senses. It would have an excellent chance to spot the Reaper, if he were foolish enough to come within range.

If a stalker is spotted, all is not lost. If the stalker can break LOS with the enemy and no enemy model is within six inches, he can disappear into the shadows again with a successful leadership roll, and resume stalking.

In the above example, we have also illustrated another new feature to the game, namely levels. Many skills and abilities have levels associated with them now. These levels determine the degree of either mastery or penalty that a model possesses. By introducing levels to the game we have also insinuated a spread of mastery that adds new depth to basic concepts.

Ranged Combat

Like first edition and the RPG, weapons have been made unique again, with all their names and clever concepts restored to them. All weapons work best when used at the optimal range they were designed for and suffer penalties when used outside that optimal range. We have taken great care was taken to insure that every weapon has a range and circumstance where it is supreme. For example, while assault rifles are very solid at medium range, at short range they are clearly inferior to an SMG. At point blank range they are clearly inferior to a machine pistol and are arguably less useful than a pistol. And in close combat they are inferior to nearly every other close combat weapon, with the addition of a bayonet only marginally improving them. This does not end the creativity that has gone into the weapons design though. Load-outs are available for most weapon types. Load-outs are basically options you can add to your soldier's arsenal as restricted to the type of weapon in question. The open ended building version of first edition was prone to the building of unrealistic or uber troopers. By carefully regulating Load-outs, we were able to impart some of the customization of first edition with sound army construction techniques.

Assault rifles, for instance, can accept one of several types of bayonets, a laser optic sight or tracer rounds for night fighting being a few examples. Some of the machine pistols can mount the MP17 Night Sight, or an improved pistol grip and hand guard for fighting in close quarters. Additionally, there is a whole host of mortar load-outs including smoke canisters, illumination flares, chemical smoke dispensers, VX nerve gas and Phosgene gas warheads.

Not all weapons in Ultimate Warzone are designed to blast through armor, that's just too limiting. Many weapons are now considered environmental hazards. These weapons have an attack rating (ATR) that serves as the base number an exposed model would have to roll under in order to avoid the effects of the hazard. Armor and cover doesn't apply to these sorts of attacks, but environmental gear certainly does.

The level of environmental gear like gas masks and NBC suits are added to the ATR number for purposes of determining what you must roll under to save. So if your highly armored spearhead of very expensive troopers suddenly find themselves in a cloud of VX nerve gas (ATR 10), you might regret not paying for the optional NBC suit and gas mask load-outs. A level five mask and suit would have made them completely immune to the effects. Without that protection, half of all who end up under a template will take a wound, regardless of their armor or cover status.

Indirect Fire Weapons

Weapons like grenades and mortars no longer deviate by migrating a fixed distance from their target. They will always hit the target location, but their effectiveness is largely determined by the success of the roll to hit. A succes-

The Brotherhood is always there! Always.



IS LIFE HARD FOR YOU? Do the pressures of modern life weigh heavily upon your shoulders? Is the burden of scratching out some sort of existence sometimes too much to bear?

THE CARDINAL SAYETH, "Do not despair my children, I can show you the way out of the soul-consuming Darkness and into the salvation of the Light. Heed my call and my Brotherhood will give you succor." You may feel alone, entirely on your own with no one to help you, no one to hear your cries and share your pain. This is not true! The Cardinal hears all; he knows all. All you need do is accept his teachings into your life and you shall know peace.

REMEMBER to attend mass weekly at your local chapel or Cathedral. If this is not possible, listen to the regular radio broadcasts on nearly all stations. Give generously to help us all in our war against the returning Darkness. And if you need help, if you ever encounter evidence of the Darkness, come to us.

THE BROTHERHOOD IS ALWAYS THERE! ALWAYS.

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The Ultimate Edition Rulebook for Warzone is
coming soon from Excelsior Entertainment

successful roll indicates that the shot was placed effectively and those under the template suffer the full damage of the weapon. But for every point you miss the shot by on the to-hit roll, the damage is reduced by one point. So, if you fire a grenade needing a result of five but roll a 13 instead, the damage would be reduced by eight points. In some cases this will mean a nominal armor roll. In others none will be needed, the weapon detonating safely overhead. Some may ask why this was changed. This is a fair question. The changes were implemented for several reasons. We never felt that an indirectly fired weapon should "travel" like it used to. In many cases Indirect Fire weapons were used to literally litter the battlefield with little concern over their intended target. This never sat right with me and further did not seem a reasonable application of the use of indirect fire. By incorporating what I call "Depreciating Damage", the new application of Indirect Fire not only works better and more elegantly than the former, but it captures the unique feel of how Indirect Fire can be applied in a TTG.

Like Indirect Fire, Speculative Fire is handled differently now as well. In order for an indirect fire unit like a grenade launcher to fire speculatively (without LOS of the enemy), a forward observer model is required. By spending an action and rolling a successful leadership check, the forward observer can establish a communication link with an inactivated indirect fire unit. Then for each action the forward observer spends, the indirect fire unit can fire (with an RC penalty) on any target within their range and LOS of the observer. Once the forward observer is out of actions, both the indirect fire unit and the observer are marked activated for the round.

Close Combat

Close combat in second edition was often an exercise in futility. It won't be that way in Ultimate Warzone, not in the least. The awkward defensive counter strike of second edition is gone. Why remove this? While on the surface the defensive counter strike seems like a simple and reasonable idea, it is one that is mechanically flawed. Consider that to get into close combat is difficult anyway, wading through a storm of bullets just to get close enough to strike with your sword. Then when you get there, the normal flow of combat is interrupted by a mechanic that discourages fighting in cc.

Here's what I mean: When you shoot at a model that has not reserved an action on WAIT, it is either hit or it is missed. When you attack in cc, regardless of whether you hit or not and regardless of whether your opponent is on WAIT, that opponent may now strike you back. The life expectancy of cc models in this scenario isn't good and violates the core premise on how actions are used and resolved. In theory it seemed reasonable, in action it was not going to work.

Most close combat troopers have increased base movement to reflect their training in hand to hand combat. They are often not laden with bulky armor and extensive equipment to allow them to get into close combat more effectively. Many have the enhanced charge of level 1-4 Special Abilities. With this Special Ability, each level adds one inch to their movement when charging an enemy in close combat. Some close combat models also possess secondary attack allowing them to attack twice per action. These two features alone make close combat troopers much more viable and desirable.

The discussion about close combat issues spawned many ancillary topics that needed addressing as well, like how do you field close combat troopers to compliment your shooters. While there are many options here, some of the new changes include the introduction of support munitions that squad leaders can purchase as load-outs, which also gives your command structure another level of usefulness. Smoke grenades create a cloud of smoke that penalizes any RC fire that passes through the cloud. Flash-bang grenades cancel the wait status of those in the area of effect, and impose a CC penalty on them for the round the grenade went off. Suppression grenades can be used to soften up highly armored targets in preparation for a close assault.

Lastly, some of the close combat troopers make use of stealth. They have the ability to sneak forward unobserved and by the time they are in range of being detected, they are very close to their effective charge range. Those who don't employ stealth can make use of armored transport units that can quickly and safely transport close combat troops into effective range.

Moral

It was rare in second edition that panic was ever a problem. A panicked squad could still advance on the enemy, shoot, or even charge. And it was rare that the squad didn't simply rally upon activation and continue the attack as normal. Moral issues are a lot more serious now.

When a squad suffers panic, they must make a leadership test in order to

move closer to the unit that panicked them. They suffer a -3 to ranged combat, close combat, and leadership. And they may not charge, aim, wait, or use supernatural powers while panicked. But that isn't the worst of it. If the squad fails another check, they will break. That's a very serious thing.

Broken squads must use one full action to move away from the enemy unit that broke them. Any other actions they wish to take require a leadership test. Failure indicates the broken squad moves away from the enemy that broke them with that action as well. The broken unit also suffers a -6 to ranged combat, close combat, and leadership. And they may not charge, aim, wait, use supernatural powers, or move closer to the enemy that broke them.

Broken units who fail subsequent moral tests by a natural 20 must consult the unhinged chart where a whole host of unpleasant results awaits. But that generally isn't a concern, since most squads will be effectively destroyed long before the unhinged charge becomes an issue.

Officers will play a very important role in moral issues. The squad leader may make one attempt per squad activation to rally the troops. Success moves the squad one level up the scale, a broken squad will become panicked, and a panicked squad will be brought under control. But the squad leader must roll under his or her reduced leadership if the enemy is still in LOS. Without assistance, most grunt squad will struggle to rally, especially if they break. An officer with the rally others ability may attempt to rally the troops once per action spent, and the squad gains the benefit of rolling under his superior leadership so long as the squad leader is within his command radius. If the officer fails to rally the troops with a rally action, he or she will suffer a -3 penalty on the next attempt. A second failure would generate a -6 penalty, and so on. Troops that didn't respond to the first attempted rally are less likely to respond positively on subsequent attempts from the same officer.

Vehicles

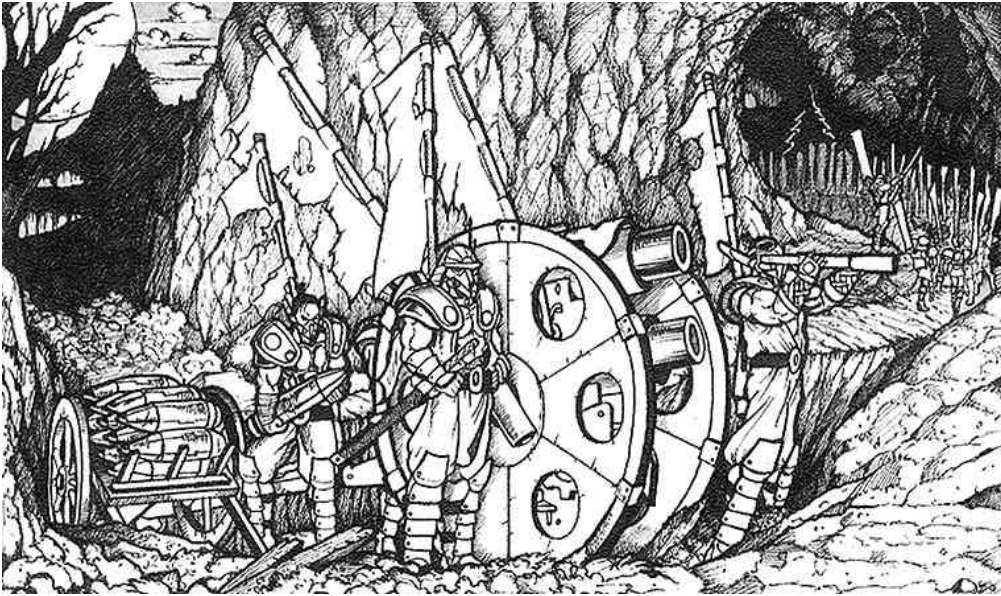
One of the most confusing parts of second edition Warzone was the rules concerning open vehicles. Ultimate Warzone clears all that up nicely. Now all vehicles have a certain number of "safe" wounds they can take before they become vulnerable to failures, and none of these failures involve the untimely death of the expensive vehicle due to nothing more than a bad die roll. Typical malfunctions include loss of movement, armor, penalties to RC, and loss of actions. Once the number of safe wounds is exceeded, a chart is consulted with every subsequent wound until the vehicle is destroyed. Multi-crewed vehicles take their crew actions sequentially. If the driver spends an action, the crewmembers must spend an action before the driver spends his next action. However, some gunners in multi-crewed vehicles have the ambush special ability. This ability allows them to reserve up to two wait actions, and come off wait without a leadership check. So it would be perfectly legal for the driver to drive and the gunner wait, then the driver drive and the gunner wait, and then the driver to drive and the gunner to fire three times using his two wait actions along with his last action. Models riding in transports are considered part of a single passenger crew unit. During that crew unit action, some or all of those riding in the transport may elect to disembark. Those that disembark must spend all of their actions before another model may disembark, or another crewmember takes a non-wait action.

Channeling

Another popular complaint about second edition was the lacking nature of the Brotherhood and Dark Legion powers, and for those who missed them, the KI powers of Mishima as well. This has been rectified in a major way. Mentalists can be found in virtually every army now, largely because of the Advisor/Consultant Slot and the scope and power of the spells have been dramatically increased.

Other Improvements

A description of the changes in Ultimate Warzone wouldn't be complete without expressing how much color and fluff has been reintroduced into the game. It simply reeks of the dark gritty intensity that made the Mutant Chronicles universe so unforgettable. That alone would make this revision worthwhile, but the additions don't stop there. Ultimate Warzone uses an extremely comprehensive and detailed point cost system to point cost the units, and dozens of new units were added in order to carefully balance the force lists. New rules were added for entrenchments, hostile environments, demolition charges, and off board support. New weapons were introduced. New powers were added. The game has been expanded in virtually every direction possible. Ultimate Warzone will be more colorful than first edition, and more balanced and playable than second. It is the best of both worlds, and much more. It is a version that will truly live up to its name and we hope you will enjoy it as much as we did creating it.



Arashi Ryuu Field Artillery

Of all their varied weapons employed by the Ashigaru, the Arashi Ryuu Field Artillery is perhaps the most powerful support unit the Kamakura has. Wheeled into battle by a team of Ashigaru, the Ryuu fires a 50 pound shell indirectly at the enemy with devastating impact. The Field Artillery consists of a crew of three Ashigaru operating a Light Gun, all overseen by a leader who is a veteran artillerist.

In Mercury's cramped honeycomb of tunnels and valleys Field Artillery units are light enough to move without vehicle or pack animal assistance and deliver enough of a punch to deal effectively with heavy armor at range. On the warzones of Venus and Mars, these weapons truly excel.



Typhoon Rocket Team

Typhoon Rocket Teams fulfill the same tactical role as the mortar teams of other corporations. However, in the cramped confines of the Mercurian underworld where battlefields often have low ceilings, indirect fire weapons require special solutions. The rockets launched from their Typhoon Multiple Rocket Launcher can weave to avoid large, solid objects along their trajectory, thus avoiding the embarrassment of firing on a distant enemy and bringing down the roof. In combat these squads usually sit in cover far behind the battle line, raining rockets down on approaching enemies. The Typhoon is operated in two-man crews.

The Unholy Champion

In life, the Unholy Champion was a whirlwind of slaughter, a death dealer to make the ranks of the Devout swell with pride. So committed were they to battle that even the confines of the grave would not stop their relentless thirst for blood. Unlike most Risen, the Unholy Champion is self created, its intense desire for war bringing its rotten form back to animation in search for a new master to serve. Garbed in the armor it wore in life and possessed of a diabolic banner and hell-kissed blade, the Unholy Champion is a walking nightmare. Deployed by the Necromancers and Warped Lords of the Devout, Unholy Champions can be found leading the war bands of the Devout to greater glories and spectacular carnage.



Only the Unholy Champion has the power, both innate and supernatural, to wield the supremely powerful standards of the Dark Master. These loathsome banners were created in the depths of the Dusk Realm and confer egregious powers to the army that possesses them. The Avatar of War, a device of insidious necromantic power, is the most commonly seen of the Avatar Standards witnessed on the fields of the Inner Realms.

The Stygian Flayer

To most humans, the Stygians look the same, murderous beasts of various sizes intent on the wholesale slaughter of their enemies. While we do not distinguish their ranks, there is both considerable diversity and malign intelligence within their hordes. The Flayer is one such example.

Resembling a Reaper with more ornate armor, the Flayer is a natural born leader, and as such is always found mixed into the Stygian hordes acting as points of rally and direction. While they are incredibly adept with their twin scythes, dealing far more damage than a normal Reaper, the true horror of the Flayer is its ability to strip the faces from its victims with amazing alacrity. Once removed, this grizzly trophy is displayed for the rest of the Horde to see, a sight which stirs the Stygian into a frenzy of exhilaration and activity. This is the true danger of the Flayer, for while it is a capable killer, its ability to drive its fellows into a frothing mass is unprecedented.

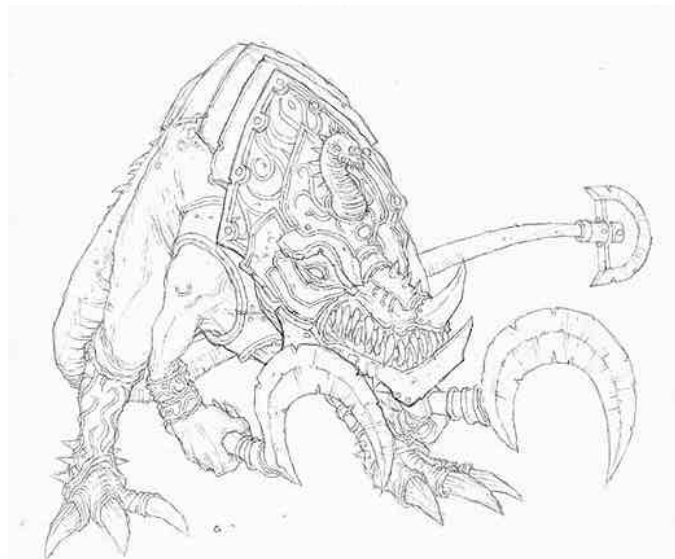
The Harvest Maiden & the Crone

While the ranks of the Skatha are as varied as any other group, the Harvest Maidens are the most commonly seen of the Skatha. They are found in far away lands in the service of their Mistress, fighting side by side with her allies or the potential allies Eefa wishes to have join her cause. They are given the title Harvest Maiden for their ability to bring new followers to the cause of their Mistress.

In appearance the Harvest Maiden (below) is stunning by human standards, the perfection of grace, beauty and allure. Their seductive powers are legendary and many a man or woman has found themselves forever enthralled by their kisses. In battle, the Harvest Maiden earns her name in a grizzly fashion. The staff that a Harvest Maiden carries transforms into a wicked scythe, whose blade is enchanted with an otherworldly fire. They move with a rhythmic grace and twirl their wicked blades in a dance macabre. In addition to this formidable arsenal of skills, the Harvest Maiden also comes with a variety of talismans and powers with which to rend her enemies.

The true horror of the Harvest Maiden is only revealed in their death. The Skatha, you see, have paid the supreme price for their powers and are as abhorrent as it is possible to be while still resembling humanity. Truly they are loathsome and revolting in appearance, able to give fright to animals and hardened warriors alike. Stooped and pestilent, the Skatha have undergone a transmutation of diabolic proportions.

The Harvest Maiden is nothing more than the glamour of the Skatha, the ideal of womanhood, the symbol of the perfection they have given up in their quest for power created by a Crone. When the Harvest Maiden is killed, she will be revealed for the horror she is. Dubbed the Skathan Crone (right), this is the true form of the core of the Skathan Coven, parodies of their cancerous leader Birog. When revealed, the Crone will be accompanied by her Fetch, a small servitor homunculi and her Cauldron, the source of her considerable power. It is from this cauldron that she is able to summon the Cauldron Birthed and other unspeakable powers.



Vulture Clan Blood Totem

The appearance of the Blood Totem of the Vulture Clan (previous page) mirrors the harsh demeanor of the Clan itself. Savage and sinewy, foul smelling and cadaverous, this Blood Totem is a frightening combination of Dwarf and Vulture. Standing over 9 cubits in height, it is the smallest of the Blood Totems though not the weakest. Possessed of a cruel cunning and savage claws, the Vulture Blood Totem prefers to fly into its prey, stunning them with the impact of its attack and grasping them into its talons, flying them aloft to finish off a warm meal. Vulture Blood Totems have been known to hurl warriors from great heights like living weapons and delight in the chaos their presence causes mounts and beasts.

Vulture Clan Impaler

The Impaler is a massive crossbow that the Vulture Clan designed to stop the charge of the Blackblood's Myrmadons. Crewed by two Dwarves, this machine can fire one gigantic bolt a tremendous distance with surprising accuracy. This accuracy is due in part to the intricate design of the weapon's rotating platform which makes it surprisingly easy for only one Dwarf to aim the weapon. The Impaler requires two Dwarves to move it and while powerful, it is slow to load. The Vulture Clan prefers to position these weapons in support positions that require as little movement as possible.



Game Background



Below is a portion of the Ultimate Warzone Introduction that we were fortunate enough to be provided by Thom Talamini over at Excelsior Entertainment. Please read, enjoy and try to control your drooling as you wait for the upcoming release of Ultimate Warzone.

~ From the Journal of Lain Mathmoi, Senior Archivist

WAR WITHOUT END

"The Dark Symmetry is like virulent bacteria that resists all but the most drastic treatment."

-Dieter Van Drusen, Ingressor, First Directorate

The Solar System, our home, has teetered on the brink of chaos since we first set foot off the world of our birth. From the antagonistic stellar aspirations of the 20th Century, to the sabotage-laden efforts of the 22nd century, we have embraced conflict, in spite of our lofty ideals. Since that first time we left Earth, the human race has witnessed many marvels and advanced to unprecedented heights, but all these were paid for with a tithe of blood. Now, from Mars' bleak and arid lands, to the steaming jungles of Venus, violent conflicts spark over precious substances that provide and prolong life. Within the huge caverns of the Mercurian underworlds, to the clustered frontiers of the Asteroid Belt, pitched battles are fought for both resources and land. Skirmishes for position and control rage in the cold emptiness of the Void, and the ravaged remains of Earth, renamed Dark Eden by those who since abandoned it, again see fierce fighting.

Throughout the inhabited worlds of our Solar System, the five great Megacorporations make covert, and, sometimes, open war on one another. Each strive for the domination of resources and profit, unconcerned of the destruction they cause and uncaring about the lives they destroy. The leaders of the Brotherhood, the spiritual protectors of humanity, seek to leash these warring Megacorporations, while simultaneously preparing the forces of mankind to repel the creeping Darkness, an enemy that most believe largely fictional.

There is no peace here anymore; instead, only a tenuous balance of power—a balance both threatened and maintained in the Warzones of the Solar System.

The Corporations

"Life is business, business is life."

-Overlord Mishima

Where once there were nations divided by geography, now there are only Megacorporations—gigantic, fiscal titans bestriding the worlds of humanity, bending all to their desires. In this corporate system, the Megacorporations manufacture everything, from foodstuffs to firearms, and their workforces are numbered in the tens of billions. To be an employee of a Megacorporation is to adopt a corporate way of life, to commit your self, your very body, mind and soul, to a single cause, to be first and foremost, a Citizen. Every moment of every day, Citizens of the Megacorporations are bombarded by their employer's propaganda, and, for them, the company line is consumed as easily as food or air. Citizens are indoctrinated that only their Megacorporation is supreme, that only their Megacorporation is right, that only their corporate way of life is good.

The employees of democratic Capitol know that they have the freedom to pursue their own dreams, secure in the knowledge that they personally own a small part of their Corporation. However, this ownership comes with heavy responsibilities. Capitol's huge armies, endlessly training, are committed to the welfare of its employees and the defense of the freedoms they enjoy. Concurrently, their massive media and entertainment interests watchfully maintain Capitol's sterling image.

By stark contrast, the subjects of Bauhaus's aristocracy know that they are surrounded by enemies who covet their wealth and superior craftsmanship. From the lowliest subsidiary to the great Elector Houses themselves, Bauhaus follows their ancient traditions and rituals, ensuring both the integrity of their past and guaranteeing their glorious future. The generals of Bauhaus's various military orders work hard to preserve their wealth and honor and maintain their corporation's dominance in manufacturing and production.

Those who serve the lords of the Mishima Megacorporation know that only they understand the true meaning of honor and that the universe tests that honor daily. To the Mishiman, the evils of the universe are part of a natural order, which culls the weak and tempers the strong. Their ancient traditions, combined with their ingenuity and skills, make Mishima a corporation that thrives on adversity. The retinues of the ruling Lord Heirs willingly give their lives to defend the traditions of their ancestors and elevate the name of their Megacorporation.

Diametrically opposed to the Mishiman corporate system, the fiercely independent people of Imperial are certain of only one thing: that life is hard and their survival will not come cheaply or easily. These are the laborers whose countless contributions allowed humanity to conquer the stars themselves and escape the toxic atmosphere of Dark Eden. This Megacorporation's "Clans" compensate for what they lack in size and solidarity with determination and aggressiveness, by proving their strength daily and expanding their empire by constant conquest and guile. Finally, the enigmatic members of Cybertronic know that they are a catalyst for change in a Solar System choked by stagnation and palpable oppression. They bring with them the technology that the other Megacorporations have banned yet still quietly desire, the same technology the Brotherhood wants to destroy.

Each Megacorporation has a part to play in the overall balance of power in the Solar System. Together, they have the potential to defeat the ultimate Darkness and bring humanity to a new age of peace and prosperity. Divided, however, they may just destroy us all.

The Independents

"There is a certain freedom to be found in being an independent, a liberation in knowing you are standing alone."

-Chairman Reginald Dunne, CEO of Amerite

The five Megacorporations make up the bulk of the business in the Solar System. Their combined assets are almost unfathomable, and often, they control many smaller freelance companies, called Independents, who depend on these larger Megacorporations for survival and trade. The Independents were formed during the First Corporate Wars, when clear-cut proof of ownership of lands or property was lost, and since that time they have become as numerous as the stars themselves. It is estimated that almost 85% of the Solar System's amassed production lies in the hands of these Independents, even if most are at least 51% controlled by one of the Megacorporations.

Unlike the massive lumbering bureaucracies of the Great Five, Independent companies gain a greater degree of freedom than the Megacorporations, allowing them to explore new and innovative business ventures that would otherwise prove problematic. However, this freedom comes at a price. Since most are too small to have their own standing army, some Independents become prey to the hostile takeovers by the larger Corporations, negotiated by payment or the barrel of a gun. Fortunately, in the scheme of things, for each Independent company absorbed into a Megacorporation, two others start up, taking its place. Such is the nature of humanity that it does not rest, though this can be both a blessing and a curse.

The Brotherhood

"Trust in the Cardinal, he will provide."

-Missionary Saying

Rising above the conflicts of the Megacorporations and Independents are the members of the Brotherhood, the spiritual guardians of humanity and their de facto leader. At the head of the Brotherhood stands the Cardinal, a being of enormous spiritual, moral and temporal power. He is served by countless billions of faithful followers who hang on his every word and breathe. Missionaries spread his teachings throughout the Solar System, while Inquisitors hunt down his heretical enemies. Mystics wield the strange supernatural powers of the Art in his name, as countless soldier/fanatics zealously enforce his will.

It is by these means that the Cardinal and his Brotherhood maintain a semblance of control over the bickering Megacorporations. For without this control, man would fall; either by his own hand or that of the encroaching Darkness. Billions of corporate Citizens heed his daily message of hope and redemption. They all need something to believe in, for the times are dark and the Great Evil has returned.

The Cartel

"Vigilance justifies the means."

-Cartel expression

The Cartel is the scale by which the balance of power is both measured and maintained. While the Brotherhood attempts to control the Megacorporations and stop their constant conflicts, the Cartel chooses to regulate the ways in which the corporate forces wage war.

Originally, the Cartel was a cooperative organization where delegations from each of the Corporations would meet to negotiate compromises and end wars, but it has since evolved, becoming an agency of shadows and conspiracies, of espionage and influence. Its clandestine Agents are everywhere and very little occurs within the walls of the corporate empires that are not known by the Cartel. Most fearsome of the Cartel's powers is its ability to legalize military action. The Cartel Law Lords, stoic individuals who have written the commandments of modern corporate warfare, must first approve all corporate military actions. Any Corporation that attempts to break the rules and regulations put forth by the Cartel risks swift sanctioning, both from within and without, as the Cartel's Agents expose and exploit the offending Corporation's secrets and weaknesses.

Currently, the Cartel is both feared and respected. It has, throughout its various evolutions, avoided becoming the puppet of the Megacorporations, and through careful concessions, has even limited the Brotherhood's direct influence. The Cartel managed this considerable feat by strictly adhering to the contracted laws that govern life and business in the Solar System, laws developed by the Megacorporations over the centuries, strictures which negotiate nearly every eventuality.

The Cartel does not play favorites though they are not beyond the pressures that can be applied by the Megacorporations. They know their power is one that can be taken away by a direct and concerted effort and as such make every effort to tread the fine line between diplomacy and antagonism. As a group, the Cartel will accept no impropriety within its ranks. Their Agents are infiltrating everywhere, both on the battlefield and in the boardroom, and, like the Brotherhood; they value information above all else. Using information is a delicate and dangerous game, and by exploiting this information the Cartel may create needs that legitimize its continued presence. This acquisition of information gives them their ability to play peacemaker and at times enforcer.

With the return of the Dark Legion, the Cartel has reinstated the Doomtroopers, an elite fighting force drawn from the best warriors the Megacorporations can provide. These fantastic warriors are assigned to the Cartel on a mission-to-mission basis when they feel they must directly intervene.

The Malcontents

"Funny that when they do something wrong they run to the Cartel for protection or cry to the Cardinal for forgiveness. And yet when those same hypocrites are themselves wronged, they come to us."

-Gunner Jarrod, Bounty Hunter—Orpheus Group

In the middle of these warring titans are those unfortunate individuals who do not belong to any Corporation, have not chosen the side of Light or Darkness, or are not in the thrall of the Cartel. These people must make their own way in a Solar System under constant siege, bereft of any assistance or protection from the powers that be. According to Cartel Laws, these individuals do not officially exist, having neither the rights nor the privileges afforded to the rest of corporate humanity. These unfortunates are branded Malcontents, for they do not wish to be a part of corporate society, as it is.

Criminals, mercenaries and the inhabitants of Dark Eden share the designation of Malcontent, as does any organization that refuses to bow to the will of the Cartel (which is ultimately an extension of the Megacorporations) or the Brotherhood. In a Solar System torn apart by war and divided up amongst giants, Malcontents learn to survive by any means necessary.

The Dark Legion

"I have stared into the abyss and it stared back."

-Jake Kramer, Ret.

Those who serve the Darkness are the eternal enemies of all humanity. The numberless hordes of the Dark Legion raise their gigantic Citadels on all of the inhabited worlds, spreading their corruption like an all-consuming disease. Undead warriors swarm against the armies of mankind, forcing even the fallen to serve them in their relentless conquest. Countless Heretics infest every corner of human society, spreading their message of corruption and rebellion, fostering wars between the Corporations, spreading distrust and hatred among all of humanity. They worship manifestations of this Darkness, called the Dark Apostles, beings of pure malice and the would-be conquerors of the Solar System.

They serve Ilian, the Mistress of the Void. Her sorcerous followers use the supernatural powers of the Dark Symmetry as a potent weapon and can summon forth-nightmarish creatures from the Void to do battle with their enemies.

They revere Algeroth, Apostle of War and Master of the Dark Technology. His never-ending hordes of mutants and war-machines wage a constant assault on the bastions of mankind, uncaring about the outcome of battle, only that war itself continues.

They heed the lies of Semai, Apostle of Spite and Master Prevaricator, who turns sibling against sibling, parent against child. His agents use deception to sow the seeds of distrust and confusion amongst humanity, reveling in the chaos that ensues.

They dance to the psychotic tune of Muawijhe, Lord of Insanity, whose methods, means and motivations are as mad as his minions. They fester in the abominable foulness of Demnogonis, Apostle of Corruption. His agents spread like a plague throughout the inhabited worlds, bringing contagion and illness with them.

The Apostles are not only the enemies of humanity, but also of each other. Their minions often battles for leadership and dominion, all in an attempt to be the favorite in the eyes of their master, the ultimate source of all evil, the Dark Soul. This infighting is the only thing that saves humanity from complete destruction, for fortunately, evil feeds off itself as readily as it does us.

The Warzones

“If there is no recourse, take it to a Warzone.”

-Law Lord Kressian

On all the inhabited worlds of the Solar System, there are Warzones, huge areas of conflict where the Megacorporations and the Dark Legion clash. On Mercury, fief-world of ancient and honorable Mishima, hundreds of small guerrilla wars are fought between the representatives of the Megacorporations as they seek control of the huge, underworld caverns and the incredible mineral wealth contained within.

In the jungles of Venus, human armies besiege the towering Dark Citadels that rise above the primordial jungle, while Corporations make war against each other for possession of the riches of the Graveton Archipelago. Amid the ruins of southern Mars, the soldiers of all the great powers fight for what remains of the most fertile region in the system, even though the canals are dry and the great red desert once more encroaches.

Amid the tiny worldlets of the asteroid belt, fierce battles are fought between Imperial, Cybertronic and the Dark Legion. These conflicts are all the more savage because of the restricted areas in which they are fought.

This is an age where the fate of humanity hangs precariously in the balance, where the threat of the Darkness may force humanity to unite once more. Mankind must stand together now, or face extinction.

This is an age of heroes. This is the age of Warzone, a Universe under Siege.

THE CHRONICLES

Chapter 1-Exodus

Earth, late twenty-third Century.

The human race is no longer divided into nations with laws, rights and restrictions. Instead, vast financial blocks, known as Megacorporations, control everything from trash collection to the declaration of war. These

powerful companies, formed by centuries of mergers and takeovers, have divided the planet up amongst themselves and those who were not employed by these giants were crushed beneath them.

Over time, the Megacorporations began to look elsewhere to expand their empires, since warfare was a dangerous endeavor in an age of super-powers and super-weapons. Their search took them to the stars, and the siblings of the weary and depleted Mother Earth. With countless research teams returning from the other planets in our Solar System bringing news of un-tapped, virgin resources, the Megacorporations formulated ambitious plans to stretch their powers heavenward. Scientists began designing tools to transform the inhospitable climes of the other planets into something their people could thrive in, and the Megacorporations began their campaigns to implement these machinations.

Using a combination of wondrous ingenuity and Herculean determination, the dynamic Corporation that controlled the United Federations of America established the first permanent base on Earth's moon, winning the distinction of being the first to claim a territory beyond Earth. This base, a modern marvel of technological achievement, grew exponentially and was named Luna by its founder, the Capitol Corporation. Capitol's insatiable drive paved the way for the other Megacorporations, who each played a part in the creation of a new era, and Luna became the both the gateway and stepping stone to the rest of the Solar System.

Bauhaus, the Corporation that controlled the European League used its technical and engineering expertise to create vast terraforming machines that could change the very nature of a world, re-creating a planet's biosphere by transforming their natural environments into something capable of sustaining human life. Once set into place on the worlds and moons of a system, these wondrous machines allowed mankind to both exploit these new resources and escape the growing unpleasantness of Earth.

As would be expected in a project of this size, an endless army of workers was necessary to perform the labor required to implement and maintain these terraforming machines; workers who would be willing to sacrifice their very lives, if needed. A budding Megacorporation whose billions resided in the impossibly tall towers of the Jade Empire—The Mishima Corporation, provided these workers.

In spite of the technical know-how and the manpower to achieve it such an enormous endeavour like the re-creation of a planet cannot succeed without the proper logistical fulfilment. The three major Megacorporations were strained thin, maintaining their control of Earth while re-making the other planets to fit their needs. So these other monumental tasks, like the transportation of equipment, supplies, and personnel and the distribution of provisions, were handled by a partnership of aggressive businesses that rose from the ashes of the Colonial Alliance, formally known as England and its conquered colonies. These businesses merged into a new fourth Megacorporation, which called itself Imperial.

Together, the Megacorporations pushed the boundaries of space travel and atmospheric processing until the colonization of the other planets was no longer a dream; it was a reality. Terraforming was now fully underway and the Megacorporations set to this task with relentless enthusiasm. Powerful gravitational regulators were imbedded deep beneath the planets' crusts while gigantic atmospheric processing plants were set up to convert thin toxic gases into breathable air. Organic enzymes, seeded from orbit, worked upon the noxious soil until it was capable of sustaining life. From this point, biological organisms, both big and small, were introduced to the System's planets in an effort test their handiwork and hasten the development of the ecosystem. Plants and insects that could produce oxygen were engineered and introduced into the budding ecosystem. Evolution, forced by the will of the Corporations, ensued. Soon, as the universe reckons time, the Megacorporation's plans were complete and the planets within the Solar System—Mercury, Venus, Luna, and Mars—became ready for the Corporation's people.

Ad Fidelis

Unfortunately for Mother Earth, neglected by thousands of years of human abuse and drained nearly dry of its own resources, this progress only served to hasten her eventual demise. Wars, climatic shifts, pollution, overpopulation, and disease brought the once verdant Earth to a state of near fatal toxicity. Mankind could no longer freely walk upon its surface. Ironically, the wondrous machines that created new Eden from dead worlds could not be used upon the Earth itself, for such a radical rebirth does not occur without great physical transformation, one that would leave nothing alive in its wake.

The planet that was home to humanity was all but a shell of its former self, stripped of any precious materials and left to rot by the Megacorporations. This was but the beginning of Earth's woes, for the Corporations decided they had no further use for the planet of their birth. Massive spaceships, crafted in secrecy from the very beginning of the Corporations' ventures, were filled with passengers who were ready to leave this broken planet behind forever. The people aboard these ships all shared one thing in common, which set them apart from the damned and the doomed peoples of Earth; they were the employees of the Megacorporations. They alone would enjoy the paradise that awaited them on the brave new worlds of the Solar System. The rest of the population, those deemed unworthy by the Megacorporations, looked on in horror as great Arks rose ponderously into the sky on columns of smoke and fire, disappearing into the choking brown clouds that filled the earthen sky. Despite of their past dedication and hard work, there would be no effort spent reversing the damage done to this planet for them, for simply put and without sentimentality, there would be no profit in it.

In corporate history, this event has become known as the Exodus, but to the forgotten peoples of Earth, this act was branded the Great Treachery. Left to their own resources, the remaining population was expected to carry on themselves, or more likely, simply die.

The Golden Age

In time, the freshly transplanted Megacorporations looked out on their new worlds and found that everything was good. The entire Solar System lay open to them and the possibilities were endless. Nothing could challenge their dominion over the stars, even nature, it seemed. There was the greatest, wealthiest, most advanced and potent civilization that had ever existed. They possessed technologies beyond the dreams of our now diminished folk. They could cure the sick and feed the hungry. They understood the mysteries of how to alter entire worlds and this knowledge was power. Humanity had moved on to its next period of evolution. This was known as the Golden Age, and during this era of corporate expansion, the Megacorporations defined both themselves and their future boundaries.

During this shining period of development, Capitol still maintained control of the central hub of the Solar System, Luna, and soon they had the majority of Mars under their control, as well. The President and the Board of Directors went about creating a vast empire of capitalism, using the drive and innovation that is the very heart of the Capitol Corporation. This systematic planning would see most of the Solar System's foodstuffs come from the red planet, harvested from Mars' vast fertile lands by the hardy Capitolian farmers.

Venus, with its teeming jungles, arctic regions and deep oceans, fell under the control of aristocratic Bauhaus. The harshness of the planet's surface, with its varied climates and the 121 day "Long Night", tested the resolve of Bauhaus' homebuilders. In the end, it was their technical expertise, coupled with their supreme self-confidence, which transformed the planet into the Solar System's main source of medicines, fuels, and luxury items, from exotic foods to precious minerals.

In stark contrast to the other two planets, Mercury is a study in contradictions and brutality with its massive cities secreted deep under the surface of this harsh planet. The wind-swept surface of Mercury, terraformed as best as possible, sported little surface life, while below, vast "under-cities" were carved from the walls of its ore-rich caverns. These under-cities housed the hardworking employees of the Mishima Corporation, protecting them from the searing heat of the Sun and allowing the Emperor unparalleled control of his subjects. Mishima's mines soon supplied the mineral needs of the entire Solar System.

Imperial fit in where it could, their people settling their facilities in those places that the three larger Corporations did not maintain a presence. The families of the Imperial Corporation, referred to as Clans, dug into the lands that were either abandoned by the other Corporations or were found outside normal trade routes. These same trade routes existed only because of Imperial's control of interplanetary shipping and the aggressive business practices of its Clans.

Red Rain, Blood Puddles—The Price of Greatness

While the Solar System buzzed with activity and development, there was only one quiet spot to be found between the Sun and the Asteroid Belt, old Earth. After the Exodus, the remaining peoples of the doomed planet raised clenched fists and threatened Luna with their rage and what little weapons remained.

The Corporations simply laughed. Bombings and sabotage became the impotent weapons of a people who had no chance of mustering enough power to actually threaten the Megacorporations. Their sparse and poorly maintained ships could barely make it to Luna.

Banding together, determined to be heard and committed to joining their departed brothers and sisters in the paradise of the Inner Planets, the entities and peoples of Earth turned to the most potent weapon they could. When abandoned Earth threatened to use dreaded nuclear weapons against Luna itself, the Megacorporations humor spoiled, and they spat down upon the Earth the full measure of their displeasure. Defense Satellites, left forgotten in orbit above the Earth, rained fire and death upon the brutalized planet for months on end as the Megacorporations dispassionately watched from above. After months of bombardment, Earth, at last, was silent; it's few survivors broken and hopeless, the sands swallowing its abandoned cities and erasing the last traces of humanity.

Finally, unimpeded by the constant protestations of Earth's former inhabitants, the Megacorporations could focus completely upon their new destiny.

With the threat of Earth silenced, the Golden Age of the Megacorporations reigned for more than five centuries and during this time, mankind flourished. There was no famine, no pestilence, no war and even death was pushed back by decades. To connect the planets and the Corporations, a gigantic electronic "net" was formed, with its heart located on Luna. This net allowed the computers of the various Corporations to communicate, fostering an unprecedented unity amongst mankind. In time, these same computers managed every aspect of corporate life, from the maintenance of its cities to the allocation of resources. Complex artificial intelligences predicted tension and unrest in the population and recommended measures to avert disasters. They plotted strategy, engaged in negotiations, and maintained the business and personal information that pertained to all of the Corporations and its employees.

It was a glorious age; a technological renaissance and the Megacorporations thrived unlike ever before. As a people they were proud and haughty, but their pride would soon count for naught, because they were to encounter a power that defied all human understanding and would forever alter the fate of man. Before this power, every aspect of their civilization seemed doomed.

Harbinger of Darkness

Ever driven by the spirit of expansion, the Imperial Corporation began to look past the normal boundaries of man's domain. First, they seeded the Asteroid Belt with their people, and then the pioneering division of their Clans, the Conquistadors, pushed out even further into the Solar System. Soon, Imperial outposts stretched past Saturn and Uranus. In the closing decades of 2400 AD, Imperial launched two major exploratory missions. One mission sent a massive assault spacecraft, known as a Dreadnaught, past the edge of the Solar System. This Dreadnaught, christened the Zephyr, was sent out at the same time as a Conquistador frigate, the Harbinger, landed on Pluto.

Imperial began the process of terraforming immediately upon landing on Pluto, having had practice with the techniques during the creation of its capital, Victoria, and its numerous Clan domains within the Asteroid Belt. However, construction teams found something underneath the surface of Pluto that defied their understanding, something that should not have been there, something totally alien. The Conquistadors sent back to Victoria for instructions on how to proceed with this unprecedented find. Certainly in their terraforming, the corporations had discovered traces of rudimentary life before, but this was the first time they had found something that actually resembled the architecture of an intelligent species. They received two replies to their inquiry: one from the A.I. computer network and one from the human leaders of Imperial.

The computer ordered the Conquistadors to abort the mission, relay the exact position of the artifact and evacuate the planet immediately. The humans at Victoria's Central Command countermanded this order, something entirely unheard of in this age of computer reliance. Instead, they instructed the Conquistadors to recover the artifact to learn of its exact nature. The team complied and the artifact, which took the form of a large metallic tablet, engraved in strange lines and shining like dark steel, was taken back to their ship and examined by the team's scientists. Little was uncovered about the tablet during these initial tests, except that its metallic composition did not match any known elements of the periodic table. In point of fact, its comp-

osition was so contrary that it should not have existed at all, defying as it did all the laws of physics. Molecularly, the tablet had a density that should have caused it to weigh tens of thousands of tons, yet it was nearly weightless. A second team of scientists desperately attempted to decipher the strange engravings upon its surface, believing they would hold the keys to unlocking the tablet's mysteries. Visions of corporate grandeur gripped the Imperial Central Command. Urged on by their anxious superiors, the scientists scanned the tablet into their computer, linking up to the System-wide central computer net and downloaded their findings.

This was the last communication ever received from the Harbinger, an image and translation of the alien tablet. The transmission became overshadowed by a grinding hum, imperceptible at first but growing in pitch and loudness until it erupted into an inhuman ululation, almost like that of laughter, reaching a cacophonous pitch that defined any attempts to muffle its thunderous presence. It burst the eardrums of all within close proximity to any transmitter and drove the unfortunates quite mad. The soil around the artifact site heaved as an earthquake of colossal proportions lurched forward in cascading waves across the surface of this forsaken planet. The surface of Pluto opened up and swallowed all traces of the excavation, and then all was silent.

A whisper, almost imperceptible wafted soundlessly across the void of space, even the blessed silence of the deaf was not proof against its insidious presence. The Dark Mother had awakened and from that day forward, the wonderous Solar System, with all its teeming trillions of human beings was changed forever.

This was the beginning of the end.

Thus, it was that the Dark Symmetry was introduced to Mankind, and "Mother Illian" became a curse on the lips of the faithful and unfaithful alike. Dire events began to occur as the complex technological systems that virtually ran mankind began to fail. Power plants, long automated and self-sufficient, exploded, annihilating whole cities in their destruction. Defense Computers ran amok, turning their automated weapons against the very human population they were designed to protect. The great electronic credit webs of the Megacorporations collapsed, bringing the economic system to its knees. New plagues emerged from computer-controlled biological labs, spawning new forms of death and pain upon a populace that had grown fat and happy in their prosperity.

Everywhere was rumors of sabotage. The Megacorporations blamed each other, leveling allegations and insinuations with growing vitriol. Evil "influences" saturated the core computer network, portraying rival Megacorporations to be at fault when they were, in fact, innocent. It soon became common knowledge that the astral filth emanating from beyond Pluto and spreading like a ravenous cancer through the Solar System was the fault of Imperial. The other corporations were quick to exact retribution. In the ensuing confusion, lies became indistinguishable from truth. Men had become so reliant on machines that they still believed this digital deity, even when the evidence their eyes witnessed told them otherwise. As the darkness fell about them, mankind collectively held their breath in anticipation of something even worse.

A Discovery from the Chaos

"The Harbinger and the Zephyr, our brightest and darkest discoveries have changed everything."

-Ryan Matthews, Lunar News Network

Lost now amid the immensity of the Harbinger debacle was an equally significant discovery. Following the final transmission from the Imperial frigate Harbinger, and before the computer network on Luna ran amok, the Imperial Dreadnaught Zephyr sent word of a amazing discovery. The transmission log recorded the last words of the Dreadnaught's Captain, Phillip Harrison:

"We have discovered an opening, a gate to another place...."

The rest of the transmission was lost as the Zephyr disappeared from Luna's sensors. At the same moment, the Steel Tablet's image was downloaded into the central computer and the Solar System sunk into chaos. Throughout the Solar System, space-faring vessels vanished. Some would reappear elsewhere in the System without a crew, the ship aging centuries within the span of a heartbeat. Other ships were lost, never to be seen or heard from again. A precious few would reappear far from their original position, traveling a distance that would normally take months in mere moments. These ships

became highly sought after by the Corporations, who realized the potential profit in this unexpected situation.

After arduous study during this chaotic time, an important discovery was made. Through the examination of these ship's logs and sensors, it was determined that the appearances of these "Rifts" followed a pattern that occurred when certain planets within the Solar System were at a particular point in their rotation. The ability to chart this phenomenon could allow the Corporations to greatly increase their rate of supply and mobility. The only question that could not be answered was why this was now possible. Popular sentiment was that the discovery of the Steel Tablet had somehow unlocked a method of transportation used by a lost, previously unknown civilization. Whatever the case, something wondrous had occurred.

This Spacial Rift technology was a saving grace amid the murderous bedlam that rocked the known worlds. This technology allowed the Megacorporations to chart the Rifts, to plot their schedules and most of their destinations. However, what should have been a wondrous boon to mankind had, like so many others of man's creations, turned dark. Space travel became a more dangerous affair than before, with a miscalculated course leading to the loss of entire ships and crew. Realizing their immediate military applications, the Corporations used these Rifts to allow their Dreadnaughts to quickly mobilize and set up orbit around planets, moons and stations of their desire, creating an unknown scenario that put fear into all.

As technical system after technical system controlled by the computers began an unstoppable cascading crash, deeds of ownership were lost, and invoices and contracts ceased to exist. Suddenly, all of the Solar System's Corporate boundaries and regulations evaporated, leading to a mass scramble to obtain as much of the planets' wealth as possible. All of the Corporations attempted to take what was not theirs, tired of having to rely on their rivals for what they lacked, having to pay for what they needed to survive. Now was the time to assert their domination.

Across the Solar System, conflagrations arose as corporate military forces appeared through the Rifts into their rival's territories. While the situation for humanity was at its bleakest, this open hostility quickly escalated into war and a new dark age fell upon mankind as it was plunged into utter chaos. The First Corporate Wars had begun.

The First Corporate Wars

Throughout the civilized world, wars were fought with insane ferocity between every Corporation. With all records of ownership gone, the Solar System was open to the taking and the rule of might replaced the rule of law. Imperial, who for more than a century had to settle for the crumbs of the big three Megacorporations, found themselves portrayed as the villains and in retaliation began a savage campaign of conquest, aggressively gaining property and digging in throughout the planets. Mishima quickly annexed all other corporate holdings on Mercury in a ruthless campaign, the very nature of their underground kingdom allowing the Corporation to repel all aggressors. On the Southern regions of Mars, the most fertile and prosperous real estate of the Solar System, war raged openly as Capitol, Mishima, and Imperial fought for control of that territory. On the Graveton Archipelago of Venus, a titanic struggle between Bauhaus, Mishima, and Capitol erupted across the Thousand Islands. The only thought that drove this madness was also the only thought that kept the Corporations from employing weapons of mass destruction: greed, and the desire to own the Solar System; the distant memories of Dark Eden reminding them of the lessons of nuclear warfare.

New alliances formed whenever either side could see a temporary advantage. Such alliances ended just as swiftly when another opportunity arose. It was an age of terrible treachery, breeding hatred and resentments that lasted for centuries, some of which have not healed to this day. It was an age of insane violence where Corporation smote Corporation over the slightest provocation. Fighting bred hatred, violence bred vengeance, and fear fuelled it all. Fear that the darkness would descend forever. Fear that technology was now mankind's enemy. Fear that in this new and barely understood universe, with its disturbing Rifts, there would not be enough resources for one Megacorporation, let alone them all.

The Founding of the Brotherhood

"I have seen the abyss that we were staring into and am certain the Brothers saved us from ourselves."

- Major Corbin Andrews, Fifth Airborne Squadron

Into this dark and corrupting Age strode a man of hope and vision. His name was Nathaniel Durand and he emerged from the jungles of Venus along with his two brothers, the burly Alexander and the insightful Peter. Their past was unknown, having been lost during the "Fall", but their future was evident within the first few months of their appearance.

The brothers' renown grew exponentially amongst the people of the Inner Spheres due largely to their positive message of hope and their uncanny ability to predict corporate maneuvers. There was something safe and comforting in their messages, and their repeated accuracy and insight only further endeared them to the besieged and confused inhabitants of the Solar System who were desperate for some guidance.

It was on Luna, the political center of the Solar System and the head of their religious movement, that the Durands gained the most striking power and influence. Nathaniel, full of conviction, wisdom and presence, spoke to the people from the street corners and the places of worship. He spoke of something called the Dark Symmetry, an energy unleashed upon mankind to corrupt them and their machines. According to his doctrine, the Dark Symmetry was the cause of the current chaos that gripped the Solar System and threatened to destroy mankind. It had come through the satellites that connected the planets together in communication, and it now resided in the complex computers that dominated the various Corporations' actions. He illustrated with powerful logic how the Thinking Machines had become its tools, how they had been infected with the essence of pure evil and had turned on their human former masters. His messages were always simple; namely, to stop the war and take the power from the hands of the machines.

At first, the Megacorporations chose to ignore the Durands, although their influence throughout the populace was growing. This policy of dismissal quickly changed when the brothers consistently stopped corporate military operations, operations that were supposed to be completely secret, by being at the location ahead of the corporate landings. To the officers of the corporate military, this was an impossible feat, as there was no way that the brothers could possibly have knowledge of their top secret machinations.

One of the most ambitious of the Durands' interventions occurred when corporate military officers ordered their soldiers to stand down and leave the area, following a closed meeting with the brothers. This was the first time a ranked force commander met with and acquiesced to the demands of a civilian commoner. Following what was later called the Merrick Accords, the brother's ranks of followers swelled to an unprecedented size, one even the Megacorporations could not easily ignore. Back room politics and opportunistic seizures suffered under the growing power of the brothers' movement. In a time of war and carnage, Nathaniel and his brothers gave people hope and the promise of stability, a thing far more precious than anything that could be conquered or mass-produced. The Megacorporations could ignore the brothers no longer, so they sent their "emissaries" to meet with them.

Assassins were sent after the brothers with the promise of vast wealth and power to the men that brought in the head of Nathaniel. Corporate bounty was posted in the millions of credits as the Megacorporations were determined to have the threat to their dominance removed.

As improbable as it was, many of these ruthless assassins did not take the lives of the brothers, but rather joined their cause. More telling than these bizarre defections were the disappearance of those assassins who did not join the Durands, murderers and bounty hunters who simply vanished. No official assassination attempt was witnessed or recorded during this time. Each of the Megacorporations and those that followed in their wake were amazed by the brothers' resilience and the willingness of the people, their people, to forgo the power of the monetary credit and focus on something more intangible. When subtlety failed, the three powers sent small military forces to crush the brothers, branding them threats to their corporate security. Much like their assassins, these forces fared no better as whole regiments defected to the cause of the brothers and their vision of a unified humanity. Whatever the Corporations planned, the brothers thwarted with a prophetic ease.

Eventually, Nathaniel, Alexander, and Peter had complete control over the civilian population of Luna, who felt the worst effects of growing chaos caused by the Dark Symmetry. Luna became a symbol for this movement, where the Megacorporations once began their conquest of the Solar System and where the brothers now began their conversion of its people. It was on Luna where the brothers' organized and solidified their convictions into a complex organization. It was on Luna that the cleansing of the Dark Symmetry would begin.

Now with an army of followers, the brothers entered the building that housed the central computer that linked the Corporate Thinking Machines together. Corporate security was helpless before the brothers, with reports stating that they used some kind of "magic" against them. Nathaniel and the others quickly destroyed the Thinking Engine, and for the first time in thousands of years, the Solar System went silent. The brothers had ripped the heart out of the Corporation's war efforts, and the people, beleaguered and weary, demanded peace. It was at this moment that the Durands had become more powerful than the Megacorporations.

Knowing that a divided humanity would inevitably fall, Nathaniel realized he must end the Corporate Wars, and, to that end, he sent emissaries to each of the Megacorporations and told them to make peace, or face the wrath of the brothers and their loyal followers. So it came to pass that the Megacorporations realized that they could not kill the Durands, nor could they stamp out the sacred message that Nathaniel preached. Like any good businessmen, they knew when to cut their losses and attempt to turn this problem to their advantage. Astonishingly, the Megacorporations decided to come to terms with the brothers Durand. Haltingly, unwillingly, yet not wanting the full weight of this new force thrown behind their enemies, each Megacorporation sent emissaries to the negotiating table. After twenty-five years of war, the Treaty of Heimbürg was signed.

The Megacorporations publicly acknowledged Nathaniel's spiritual authority and bent their propaganda machines to spreading his message, hoping that they could use his teachings to regain control their own people and restore their flagging loyalty. After the Durands' troops confiscated and stored the designs of the old technology, the Corporations dismantled their complex computer systems and their Thinking Engines, thus destroying the technological marvels of their golden empires. As the Durands had predicted, the silencing of the machines had indeed stopped the chaos that threatened to tear them asunder.

Nathaniel Durand and his brothers, still entrenched on Luna with countless followers of both a military and common nature, rejoiced in their accomplishments. The brothers quickly set up a new, universal religious organization, called the Brotherhood, and Nathaniel was proclaimed the first leader of the Brotherhood and given the exalted title of Cardinal.

The new Cathedral of Luna established the Brotherhood as a dominant power in the Solar System and gave them leverage to force peace between the Megacorporations.

The Return of Reason

In the early years of Cardinal Durand's long reign, billions entered the Brotherhood's fold, hungry to hear the Cardinal's spiritual teachings and eager to be given something more important than money, namely hope. Willingly, each rejoiced to give up his or her income and possessions, to help in the spreading of the Cardinal's word. The Cardinal ordered this money to be used in the formation of the Brotherhood's divisions, called the Directorates, and the construction of the Brotherhood's Cathedrals, mighty structures that would be bastions of the faith, beacons of hope and light towering over the cities of men. They would represent the highest ideals of man, not the baser desires that had driven him to near extinction. Here, amid the symbols and wisdom of the Durands, the peoples of all corporations could come and connect to something far greater than themselves. Nathaniel himself founded and led the First Directorate of the Brotherhood, a division comprised of individuals who had the same abilities to use "magic" as Nathaniel.

Alexander took the Brotherhood followers with a military background and formed them into a mighty fighting force known as the Second Directorate. The Second Directorate went about collecting both people and technology from all parts of the Solar System, by force, if necessary. It was Alexander's charge to ensure that the Megacorporations did not attempt to re-instate their former technology, vulnerable to the Dark Symmetry, which would continue mankind's downward spiral into Darkness.

To spread the word of the Brotherhood and to record the happenings of past, present, and the possible future, Peter founded the Third Directorate, aptly named, The Mission. Their symbols and bastions of faith were the Cathedrals of the Brotherhood, and the first and greatest Cathedral was built upon the ruins of the building where the Central Thinking Engine once reigned supreme on Luna.

With the First Corporate Wars ended, a brief age of hope began.

Calm before the Storm

The decade following the Treaty of Heimburg was one of feverish reconstruction. Cathedrals were built on each of the planets to appease the Brotherhood and give the people a focal point for their hope and aspirations. For the first time since the Exodus, there was unity amongst the Megacorporations as they sought to rebuild their empires. Under the guiding hand of the Brotherhood, the Corporations created a new and independent organization to preserve peace and foster negotiation amongst the powers of the Solar System. Called the Cartel, its focus was to replace the responsibilities and role of the old Thinking Engines; opening the lines of communications between the Megacorporations, ensuring that the System-wide destruction of the First Corporate War would never happen again. The Cartel drew its numbers from all the Megacorporations and extensively from the Brotherhood. By creating a detailed body of policy and practices above the auspices of any Megacorporation, the Cartel could act arbitrarily to ensure peace, and backed by the muscle of the swelling Brotherhood, they had a very real way to enforce it.

On every planet, construction was rampant, with countless billions employed to rebuild and re-tool the financial and production institutions, so that they could function without the necessity of computers. The Megacorporations, for the most part, still retained much of their original holdings. The only significant changes in territory occurred with Imperial, who vastly increased their holdings from before the wars. As ardent supporters of both the Brotherhood and the Cartel, the Imperial Megacorporations was able to retain their questionable acquisitions. A sense of entrepreneurship ran rampant within the system and an outbreak of small businesses, started by individuals and small companies, sprang up on every planet, asteroid, and moon. It was a time of possibility and positive outlooks, with profit being used to better the corporate lifestyle instead of the corporate military. Trade routes were re-established and the Megacorporations finally had a chance to deal with the issues that had occurred at the time of The Fall. One such issue had to deal with Imperial's lost colonies beyond the Asteroid Belt and the disappearance of the Harbinger.

The First Seal of Repulsion

On Luna, the leading scientific expert on the spatial Rifts, Victor Nero, made an astronomical supposition based upon the previous data collected by space-faring vessels and planetary observatories. Since the Rifts appearances and destinations were determined by the position of the planets in our Solar System and the interactions of their gravitic forces, Nero believed that an upcoming celestial event would open up an unprecedented spatial distortion—a Rift to the end of our Solar System, far beyond Pluto. Based on Nero's calculations, this event had not occurred in the span of recorded time and its very possibility had the Brotherhood up in arms, both figuratively and actively. The complete alignment of the planets, the Harmonic Convergence, within our Solar System with each of these planets' rotations coinciding with one another seemed a dark omen to the brothers.

With this unprecedented event looming in the near future, delegates from the Megacorporations and Brotherhood Observers met together in the first major Cartel gathering since the organizations formation. There was much debate about the significance of this event, with the Corporations, led by Imperial, argued the necessity to use this Rift to investigate the disappearance of the Harbinger and the fate of their outer-colonies. Without exploiting this event, it would take decades to re-establish contact with the outer-colonies.

In a speech inscribed on the stained glass of Luna's Outer Vestibule, Cardinal Durand spoke of a presence far from the Sun that was responsible for the near ruin of mankind, gesturing to the dead computer panels around the yet-to-be-renovated meeting room for effect. This assertion was not enough for many of the Megacorporations, thinking that the worst had already been suffered.

Peter Durand, the first and greatest of the Brotherhood Seers, spoke of his visions of a great evil awaiting man at the end of the Solar System. He informed the cynical men and women of the Megacorporations, individuals who had spent their entire lives within the pragmatic confines of corporate life, about horrors, monsters and demons in such a soft-spoken manner that it completely captivated the audience, so much so that many were startled when his brother, Alexander, cleared his throat.

While Nathaniel's argument was full of wisdom and common sense, and Peter's was of foreboding, Alexander's was simple and straightforward, a tact

even the Megacorporations could understand. He stated, in his usual brusque manner, that to go through that Rift was to invite a swift and final beating. The threat implied in Alexander's tone, and the large gun at his side, brought many of the corporate delegates over to the Durands' point of view—many, but not all.

One of Imperial's Clans decided to ignore the Brotherhood's ban in an attempt to complete its growth that it began during the Fall. Clan Kingsfield was a major Clan within Imperial at the time, and had financed much of the Corporation's outer-colonies. Despite the warnings of the Brotherhood and contrary to the wishes of the rest of the Imperial Corporation, Clan Kingsfield sent a Conquistador Dreadnaught, The Pale Horse, through the spatial rift just as every world in the Solar System fell under the darkness of an unprecedented eclipse. This single, selfish act tore both Imperial apart and nearly led to the extinction of mankind.

As the Conquistadors emerged from the rift, backed by a complete eclipse of the Sun, their eyes fell upon a planet of non-reflective black, crisscrossed with glowing red veins the color of blood and surrounded with an eldritch glow. Claiming this heady discovery for their Clan and Corporation, the Conquistadors named the planet after the man whose research made the discovery possible. Like moths to a flame, the Conquistadors moved across the barren surface of Nero and were drawn to the only feature that resided upon this forsaken world, a pattern of circular sigils, alien in design and carved into the ebon rock of the planet's crust. At the center of this pattern, jutting out of a circular podium, was an object that resembled something between a murderer's dagger and a disfigured cross. The Captain of the Pale Horse became completely entranced by this object, muttering into his radio about "power and glory", and of strange visions. He cackled and walked towards the podium, heedless of the commands of his staff, who urged caution. Though his companions tried to stop him, he pulled the object from its cradle, and, in that one simple act, the First Seal of Repulsion was broken. At that very same moment, a wave of terror passed through the Solar System, every planet in the Solar System trembled in unison. Every member of the populace who had shown a supernatural talent was beset by energies that they could not control. Some became Heretics, prophets of the Darkness, who spoke out against the Blessed Brotherhood, while others were a source of destruction for both themselves and others. The Brotherhood, which had been preparing for this moment, still lost many of its members, as they either burned out or imploded. The Cathedral of Luna was viciously shaken by Nathaniel himself, his sanctuary at the very pinnacle, glowing like a small star. Peter fell into Alexander's arms during Services, screaming in terror and convulsing in pain. The mystical Seers of the Brotherhood, whose talent allowed them insight into the Universe, went mad from the onslaught of visions, many tearing out their eyes in reaction to what they had seen. The rest of the Solar System knew a fear greater than anything that had yet come to pass. Above the din of panic and suffering, all of humanity heard the laughter of a woman and they instantly knew her name—Ilian, Mistress of the Void. She told the Seers that the Apostles of the Dark Soul were free, and that they were coming. For a full year, the populations of the civilized worlds were troubled by nightmares. Then, just as the memory of that event started to fade, the nightmares became reality and pain was given flesh.

Legions of Darkness

It was the Brotherhood Seers who first knew of the Darkness' arrival, though no one understood their ranting. Since the Seal had been broken, those Seers who had survived the onslaught of increased insight were confined to the safety of Brotherhood-run wards. Not until the same phrase was repeated by almost all of the Seers did humanity realize the impending doom. Peter Durand, who had been comatose since the Seal's breaking, shot straight up in his bed, screaming. His screams formed into a phrase, the same as all the other Seers.

"DARKNESS FALLS!"

Outside of Venus, an unscheduled spatial Rift tore open, disgorging a massive Black Ship, its spiked shape blotting out the stars. All light seemed to be absorbed into the ships rock-like surface. The Black Ship entered Venus' atmosphere on its dark side, the planet's Long Night, and plunged itself into the surface. The impact destroyed neither the ship, nor the planet as it should have, instead, the ship's aft stood erect in the darkened sky, shifting into a twisted abbey; a spire of malice and evil that was awaiting its prey—humanity.

Read more in the Ultimate Warzone rulebook, on sale soon!