

Fictional Reality

Issue 15

March 2004

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FROM THE EDITOR

Hello everyone,

Well, it's March in Texas and that means a couple of things. First off, this completes the fourth year of publication for Fictional Reality. We would like to thank everyone that's supported us through the years; writers, reviewers, manufacturers, advertisers and most especially gamers. In the past four years we've seen Fictional Reality get larger and (we certainly hope) better. Comments from all of you are always welcome and appreciated. March also means that we're moving into the wet season here and storms will become more commonplace. How does this affect you as a gamer? Not one little bit, but for us it means rain, rain, and more rain with lots of thunder and lightning thrown in.

Hope that everyone had a wonderful Christmas and that you're busily painting up the plethora of miniatures that were waiting for you under the tree or that you've been busy pouring through the new rulebooks you got. For me, new rulebooks mainly consisted of d20 Modern stuff and I'm about to start a small (three player) d20 Modern campaign and I'm very excited about it. I've enjoyed the d20 Modern books and am finally going to get to put them to use. I'm going to take a look at some China Town miniatures to use in this campaign to supplement the ones that I suggested in a previous d20 Modern Miniatures article.

On the miniatures side of things I got in a very good amount of gaming in at GenCon SoCal, which you can read about in my convention report later in this issue of Fictional Reality. Upon getting home I've had less time to push little metal men across the table but I did get to play in a Warmachine battle report (also later in this issue) and you'll also get to read a Dark Age battle report sent in by Dark Age demo guy, Harry Kruger, from Las Vegas. I've had a chance to read through the Hybrid rules and look forward to playing it as soon as I can squeeze it in.

You may have recently read about two new miniature games that Mongoose Publishing will be putting out; Judge Dredd and Starship Troopers. I'm looking forward to both of these very much. I loved the old Games Workshop Judge Dredd miniatures and still have a few along with some new 2000AD figures from Foundry, but Mongoose should be producing a full range of figures from this well-known setting.

For Starship Troopers I'm not really sure in which direction they're more like to go. Centered more towards the movie, the book, or somewhere in the middle. For hard-core fans I'd say that the book rated higher than the movie, but more people in the mainstream know about Starship Troopers more from the movie than anything else. Maybe right in the middle is the place to be. While I had a thumbs in the middle for the first movie I am looking forward to the release, DVD only as far as I've heard, of the second Starship Troopers movie offering.

Yup, we're still waiting for the release of Ultimate Warzone, but as of this writing (late FEB) it's in the hands of a new printer and we have our fingers crossed that we'll have it in-hand for a review and battle report in the June issue of Fictional Reality. Until then, I might try to get in a game of Dark Age if I can find time.

Right before I sat down to write this short editorial I heard news (that you've probably also heard by now) that I-Kore may have shut down. I hope this is not the case as they've put out some very cool figures and vehicles in the past few years. I especially like using the Junker Dune-buggies as Bauhaus GT Offroads in Warzone.

Well, until next time I hope that you're dice roll well and when they don't be sure to keep from throwing them across the room as that really irritates people and loses your dice.

Mark Theurer



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d20 system RPG OBJECTS

The Adiken miniatures has produced a new 28mm standard fantasy set. The models are sculpted with an integrated oval base. For those wishing to work with a plastic square base, each blister includes one with an oval indentation for the integrated base. The miniatures are packed one to a blister and, for the most part, are cast as a single piece. These miniatures are for Adiken's Nin-Gonost game, but can be use with almost any fantasy RPG or regimental game.

Sir Galwen (AF 017, \$2.99)

Sir Galwen is a single-piece 28mm knight in full plate armor with a cape. The miniature has his sword raised in his right hand and his shield in his left. The helmet includes a face shield which covers everything but the eyes. The helmet is adorned with a tassel at the crown which hangs down the back of the helmet.

The model is well formed and has no flash and little in the way of mold lines. The shield features heraldry in relief of a stylized bird above a split with the left half composed of 3 ribs and the plain right. This is the only ornamentation on the figure.

The plate mail is simply sculpted, with simple unadorned plates covering everywhere except the inner thighs. There is a large rosette belt buckle just below layered plates on the figure's abdomen. The cloak of the figure is also simply sculpted, with few undulations. All this combines to make an very elegant looking miniature. A horizon-style Non-metallic metal painting style would make this a very striking figure.

Sir Galwen's Squire (AF 018, \$2.99)

Sir Galwen's Squire is a single-piece 28mm female archer dressed in leather with plate armor on her shoulders and thighs. She is holding a bow in her left hand while reaching into her quiver with her right. She is looking up and to the right as if she sees a target up in a tower. Once again, there is little ornamentation on the model. The only fiddly bits to paint are the laces on the bodice and the rivets on the armor plates.

The model has very little flash and only a minor mold line along the lower end of the bow. However, the upper end of the bow is bent out of shape. This is due to the way the model was packed into the blister - the upper part of the bow was wedged between the foam backing and the edge of the blister. The bow is thick enough that it will handle being reshaped. However, be sure to examine this blister carefully to make sure the upper portion has not been broken off in shipping. Like the Queen's Champion, Sir Galwen's squire would make an excellent female ranger or other lightly armored fighter.

Orc Spearman (Af 019, \$2.99)

The Orc Spearman is a single-piece 28mm miniature. The figure is posed with his spear raised as if trying to spear a horseman riding by. The spear has 3 points on the end but is otherwise unadorned. The model is cleanly forged with no flash or mold lines.

The figure is sculpted wearing very angular armor. All plates end in points and a triangle-motif is evident on every piece, from the bracers to the greaves. The breast plate follows this style, with angular pectoral plates. The face, however, is what makes this orc line unique from all others. Rather than the gorilla-like faces of other orc lines, this model has a face that is more bat-like. It has sharply pointed ears which reach up and back from its face. The eyes are large and round while the nose is flat with the nostrils open forward. The small round mouth is full of pointed teeth, which serves to complete the bat appearance. In a direct comparison to orc models of other lines, this model would appear spindly and weak, like a Mordor orc next to a Uruk-hai.

Female Warrior with Halberd (AF 020, \$2.99)

Female Warrior with Halberd is a single piece 28mm female fighter dressed in a skirt and leather bodice. The Model is also wearing a head scarf secured by a head band. The scarf hides the model's hair. The bodice is low cut and short resembling something Britney Spears would wear. The most striking portion of this model is the halberd. The blade is half the height of the model itself. The model is posed which the Halberd in her left hand, leaning forward at a near 60-degree angle. The other arm is resting on the model's hip. This is a very static pose, but given the size of the weapon, any other pose would be off-balanced.

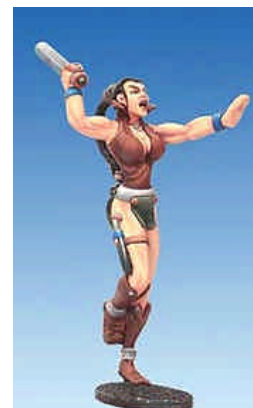
The model has very little ornamentation on the armor or the halberd. In fact, the only ornamentation is the metal circles on the models' belt. The musculature on the arms is impressive - as is the Pamela Anderson bust line. There is no flash but there is a significant mold line along the outside top of the right arm. Like the mold line on the Queen's Champion, this can easily be cleaned off. A few of these models would make an excellent honor guard for an Amazon queen or for a unique Empire militia in Warhammer.

Queen's Champion with Sword (AF 021, \$2.99)

The Queen's Champion is a single piece 28mm female warrior figure dressed in a leather jerkin and tabard. Her right arm is raised as if to strike with her sword while her left arm is outstretched, holding her hand palm-forward. The figure is leaning forward on her left foot with her right foot raised as if to step forward. All in all, a very dynamic pose.

The model's hair is pulled back in a single long braid that loops out and down her back. This loop adds to the impression that the Champion is running into battle. Her face is sculpted in her War Face, as Gunny Erney would say. There is only a little flash at the end of the sword but there are significant mold lines under the left arm and down the back of the left leg. These are significant in their length - not their size. They can be quickly cleaned off without damaging the model.

The overall sculpting of the model is very simple. The jerkin, boots, and tabard are all unadorned. This model shows lots of skin and the musculature is well defined. The model also has a chest reminiscent of Pam Anderson. This model would make an excellent female thief or a lightly armored fighter. The facial features are elfin and this could be either accented or downplayed depending upon the character.



Half-Troll (AF 022, \$8.99)

The Half-Troll is a 54mm two part model. The body is a single piece and the upper half of its trident is a separate piece. This model does not come with a plastic base. The body of the half-troll is simply sculpted with flash only on the bottom of the integrated base and a slight mold line down the right arm. For the first time in this line, the simplicity of sculpting causes a problem. Specifically, the model's tabard blends into its right thigh.

In addition to its tabard, the model is wearing a spiked helmet and a leather harness with armor on its left arm. The model is sculpted advancing on its left foot, holding the trident straight out behind it. The half-troll is holding a length of chain in its left hand. The facial features of this model resemble the orc, but there are not well formed. The in-curving tusks on the cheeks of the helmet obscure the face.

The upper part of the trident fits into a small hole in the model's right fist. This hole is bigger than the shaft of the trident, so there is a very loose fit. Since the hole only extends half way into the fist, I would suggest drilling out the rest of the way with a smaller diameter bit for a better fit. This model will fit in well as a "heavy" for a fighting group of orcs.



Orc Warrior with Sword (AF 025, \$2.99)

The Orc Warrior is a single-piece 28mm figure. He is holding his sword aloft in his right and holding his shield down in front of him with his left. The model has the angular armor and bat face of the Orc with Spear. However, where the Orc with Spear had his hair in a pony-tail, this model has it loose around his shoulders. The long hair doesn't change the bat-like appearance of the model's face.

The sword has a broken-curve to it, giving a very evil impression. The shield has a simple 3-pointed device on the front. The overall effect is a little sinister without being too much. There is more ornamentation on this figure than on the others in the line. The angular armor along with a leather skirt make this a relatively busy figure. The pose of this model is very linear and would rank up well for a regimental game.

Queen Lomelind' (AF 026, \$2.99)

Queen Lomelind' is a single piece 28mm female dressed in a many-layered gown. The gown includes a high collar and laced up bodice as well as floor-length sleeves. The model is sculpted with her arms outstretched, palms down. This pose is rather static, but one does not expect a queen to move that much. Her sleeves are billowing, giving the impression that she has either just come to a stop or just moved her arms. The queen's hair is sculpted in a short style, with a tiara type crown. She is also wearing a choker with a jewel pendant. The front of the gown features a tabard that ends in three sets of three small jewels that hang down in a line. The rear of her gown features a brooch in the center of the small of her back and two ribbons are attached there. These hang almost to the feet of the miniature and end in two more jewels.



The face of the model is sculpted simply - all the details are present but not exaggerated. The model's integrated base is mostly covered by the gown. The entire model has some ornamentation, but it is not excessive. The sculptor has spent time getting the folds and flow of the gown to look natural. There is no flash or noticeable mold line. This is partially due to the way the gown was sculpted to account for the molding process. This model definitely should be painted with extra care to give it a regal bearing. This is definitely a queen figure and should be painted with royal colors - blues and purples. Alternatively, this would make a very good vampire or courtly enchantress with subtle color and shading.

Orc Warrior with Axe (AF 028, \$2.99)

The Orc Warrior with Axe is a 28mm single-piece figure. Like the other orcs in the Adiken line, this one features a bat-like face and angular armor. He is standing with his knees bent and holding his axe across his body. The axe has a slight S-curve to the handle. It is apparent that this is the way it is molded and not a distortion from packing and shipping. I guess this was intended to fit in with the angular armor of the Orc. To me it appears like the model has been bent and I keep wanting to straighten it out. The head of the axe is plain with only a small detail where the blade meets the shaft. Like the Orc Warrior with Sword, the angular armor and leather skirt give this model a relatively busy appearance. Unlike the Orc Warrior, this model's stance does not lend itself to ranking up.

Lady Nolwen, (AF 029, \$2.99)

Lady Nolwen is a single-piece 28mm figure of a female warrior with a banner. The banner is composed of two broad streamers attached to a spear. The spear is held in the model's left hand in such a way as to have the streamers billow behind the model's head. The model's right hand is drawing her sword across her body.



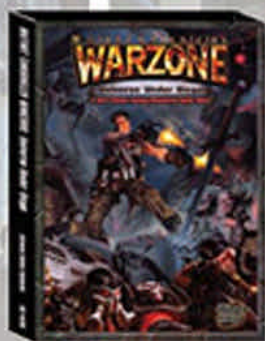
The model is wearing an armored, low-cut bodice as well as shoulder armor with high neck protection. She has an armored skirt and thigh-high grieves. The model's hair, tabard and cloak are both billowing slightly to the right, in the same direction as the banners. The most striking thing about the model are the two banners. These are very well sculpted and give great impression of popping in the wind. The rest of the model, however, is not well done.

The arms and legs of this model are too thin, reminding me of a bulimic more than a fighter. The detail on the face is very slight and, without very careful painting, could easily be obscured. The pose is most unnatural - the model appears to have been sculpted by two artists. The first who did the body did not know that the second would do the banners and cloak whipping in the wind. Of the entire Adiken range reviewed in this issue, this is the weakest figure. The Adiken line has a common theme of clean design with little ornamentation. The figures are well sculpted and this unadorned style is certainly a departure from most other lines. As such, this line of figures will appeal to the novice painter, who can be intimidated by lot of detail, and to the expert painter, who can use the clear canvas for more elaborate painting techniques.



Reviews by J Michael Tisdell

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Just in time for me picking up “All Flesh Must Be Eaten” (AFMBE) is another batch of ten zombies from Zombiesmith. This group is made up of all male zombies and all but two are suitable for use in either modern or fantasy games. The two that don’t cross over very well are the first two below.

The first is still carrying his briefcase from work and still has his cell phone up to his ear like he’s trying to make a call. He’s very decomposed and large bits of rotten flesh can be seen through the rips in his suit. His eyes are still present in their sockets and are bulging outward. The second is also wearing a businessman’s suit but this time with a hat to match. He’s been blown clean through the abdomen and is holding his coat open for everyone to see the hole. Again, lots of rotten flesh to be seen and painted.

Ok, on to those that can be used in whatever game you want to run that needs lots of dead guys. Of the remaining eight these next two are the only ones that are not missing something in the way of appendages or the like. Not missing from a bad cast though, just missing because they are zombies and had a piece hacked off either pre or post transformation into the undead.

First is a guy wrapped in a straightjacket. Someone must have forgotten about him in the asylum and then the zombies broke in and you can guess what happened next. He also has a bullet hole in his head so the theory that all you need to do to kill a zombie is shoot them in the head kind of gets blown away here. Actually, in AFMBE zombies can have vital spots other than the brain, he must be one of them. He has a very nicely pained expression on his face but he also had the most flash of any of these models and needed the most cleaning time. This next guy is sporting a shovel to bash you in the head with and is probably the most completely rotted of the group of ten. He’s wearing shorts, a T-shirt and shoes but all of his skin is either rotten or has been stripped away. Cleanup was very minimal here.

These next six are in various stages of decay but all are missing non-vital (for zombies anyway) body parts. The first two are just missing their left arm from the elbow down but one of them also has had his head twisted around to the back, Exorcist style, and also has his guts starting to pour out. He’s carrying a wrench in his right hand and was probably a mechanic. The other has a crowbar raised above his head ready to strike. His head is still pretty intact and does not show much in the way of decay.

The next two are missing lower portions of their anatomy, the first just his left leg and the other has his waist but both legs have been chopped off and are just stubs and he also has bunches of guts hanging out. He’s the least decomposed of the two meaning that some terrible accident befell him either right before or right after his transformation. He’ll probably have an easier time getting around than “hoppy” because zombies are generally not known for their balance and dexterity.

And our last two of the walking dead finds one with no arms and one with no head, ah another without ‘brain’ as his vital spot. The no-armed guy is rather portly and has several gaping wounds right in the middle of his belly. Looks like someone took an axe to him in a bad way. Most of his flesh that is missing looks like it came from wounds rather than decomposition and his head/face is still pretty intact. His only clothing is a pair of shorts. Mister No Head is well on his way to being very dead and stinky as he’s pretty much all rotten and his abdominal cavity has opened up to reveal his internal organs. He’s wearing a pair of jeans and shoes and both hands are searching in vain for his missing melon.

In general, I liked this batch of walking dead. I like their one-piece models more than the multi-piece ones that require assembly just because these don’t require me to put them together. Sure, you lose a bit of pose-ability but these are all unique anyway and less time assembling gives me more time to paint and play. There was at least a little cleaning needed on all of them but none of these were mis-cast.

Of the two that are really suited only for modern games they could both be modified to fit into either just a fantasy world or either. The one with the hat could have his head removed and either just left off or you could pop on a GW plastic zombie head if you have one lying around. The other could be modified with a bit of green stuff to turn the phone into a noose that he’s holding around his own neck and the hand holding the briefcase could be pretty easily removed from the model. These ten figures will set you back \$20.00 USD and to me that is a super price for ten unique metal flesh-eaters.



Safari Into Danger PHP8 \$12.00

Pulp Figures has produced yet another fine personality pack for their pulp-era line. "Safari Into Danger" consists of five 25mm figures on an integrated base.

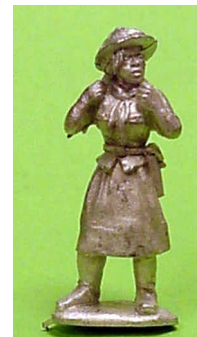
All of the models exhibit the Pulp Figures clean and detailed sculpture style. All the models in the package exhibited a small amount of flash, but only the Hero had an excessive amount - and that was on the under side of the base.

The first model in the kit is The Entomologist. Equipped with his large butterfly net, handlebar mustache, and coke-bottle thick glasses, this figure is the perfect stereotype of the absent-minded professor on expedition. He is even sculpted as if he's just spotted a rare *Danaus Plexippus* on a nearby waitabit bush.

The second model in the pack is obviously the Hero. Not only does he look like Brandon Frasier from "The Mummy", but his shirt is undone to show his chiseled chest. The model is sculpted in an advancing position, his right hand holding aloft a machete and his left keeping his slung rifle from sliding off his shoulder. Obviously, he's hacking his way through the dense jungle growth.

The third model is the Hunter. A slightly rotund figure, he stands with his legs apart and the butt of his bolt action rifle resting on his left thigh. He is wearing a slouch hat and this combined with his facial features and body shape reminds me of President Teddy Roosevelt.

The last two models remind me of Deborah Kerr and Richard Carlson from "King Solomon's Mines". The Female Adventurer is sculpted as if she had just hoisted her backpack and is turning in response to a question. The Male Adventurer is sculpted in the act of loading his rifle. Both figures round out yet another excellent set from Pulp Figures.



Product Review

Michael Colbert Fantasy Scenery

This is an interesting review - I was contacted by Michael Colbert back in November about advertising his new scenery models on the Confrontation Forum that I administer. After a short series of e-mail messages, Michael sent me a sample of his work. Michael lives in Australia and is starting modeling scenery for collectors and fantasy miniature wargamers.

The piece he sent is a resin megalith (or menhir). Okay, at first glance, it appears to be a lump of resin, but closer examination reveals that Michael has put a lot of work into the model. The surface is textured like the large stones at Stonehenge. There are even cracks modeled into the surface of the piece.

In 28mm, this figure would be a great menhir (large stone) and in 54mm, it would serve as a good kerbstone (small stone that lines the path to a henge). There's really not more that I can say about this piece. As a representative piece of his work, I look forward to the full product line that Michael will be releasing.

For those who are interesting in henges and megalithic sites, I would recommend <http://www.lessing4.de/megaliths/start.htm>. I've used this site in the past when researching "The Order of the Stone", a d20 Call of Cthulhu adventure published in the June 2003 issue of Fictional Reality.

Michael Colbert can be contacted via e-mail at: mlcolbert@netc.net.au





Miniature Reviews



From Dark Age we have two blisters of new troops from the Forsaken army to take a look at. First up are the Firestorms (top-right). These are female troopers that carry big-ass flamethrowers but don't wear much at all in the clothing department. The one on the left is a single-piece model who is carrying her gun in a resting position. The picture is actually a reverse image of the model's actual stance. Just imagine them turned around the other way and you'll be on the right track. Her boots cover the largest amount of flesh on the model but she's also wearing what amounts to not much more than a G-string, a bikini top and one glove on the hand that is carrying the gun. The second bid bad momma comes in two pieces (right arm and the rest of the model) and is dressed in a similar fashion except that it really looks like she chose to not wear the bikini top into battle today. Man, if that gun doesn't contain it's flammable liquid properly she's in for one hell of a burn. Detail on these models was excellent and smooth with neither of them being excessively muscled but still look nicely toned. Their costumes are a bit over the top but that is expected from the Dark Age line of figures and it fits in well. Their guns are big, really bit and they each have a backpack that presumably carries all sorts of nasty flammables. Facial detail was very good with the girls looking similar but they are not simply copies of each other. The excessive flesh may turn off some gamers but I'd guess that Dark Age players probably have a slightly higher average age than some other games so this probably won't be too much of an issue but better that you're aware of it. Unlike some other futuristic female miniatures these don't suffer from *Pamela Anderson Syndrome*. The one-piece models has neither flash nor mold lines that needed cleaning but the other figure did have a slightly visible mold line that needed to be smoothed down. A blister of two figures will set you back \$9.99 USD which is getting up there for rank and file figures but they are of high quality and can do double duty in a game of T20, Necromunda (superb Escher gang members!) or maybe even d20 Modern (and definitely d20 Future when it comes out).



FIRESTORMS
DAG1020



DEDLOCK
DAG1019



In the center-right is Dedlock, another female in the Forsaken army. She is wearing a full bodysuit including a head covering with large bug-eyes. The head covering is right out of an S&M catalog (not that I'd know anything about such matters) but the high collar almost seems out of place to me. Her two arms and guns come as separate pieces but they came off the sprue easily and fit into place perfectly and I did not need to pin them. She is standing back on one foot firing away and there is a tab of metal that connects her left foot to the base that you'll need to clip off. Her arms can also be adjusted slightly if you like. The guns did need some cleaning up as they each had bits of flash on them along with mold lines and there was a very faint mold line on the body of the figure. Like the Firestorms above she is endowed to a normal level and the whole model is reasonably proportioned, except for the guns which are oversized a bit. She is also armed with a dagger but I don't think that it gets too much use. Dedlock has a retail price of \$5.99 which is not bad for an individual model that you'll likely not have more than one of in an army, but I do like the Firestorms a bit better and no, it's not because of the partial nudity!

PEER OF THE REALM

Miniature Reviews

PEER OF THE REALM



I received two **Peer of the Realm** figures in the mail for review and eagerly opened the clamshell blister that they came in. Up until then I had only seen the figures on their website and had spoken to Neil Miranda from the company. My initial thoughts, again just from looking at the figs on the web, were that they looked very unique, ok kind of strange, with some thin (almost awkward) limbs and an almost cartoony or animae look to them. I also thought that at a list price of \$7.99 USD they were a bit pricey. What a huge difference having two figures from the Dark Human faction in my hand made. First off, these are not 28mm figures. I got review figs of Caldron D'Capiton and Kempon and each is about 2.5" in height from the bottom of the base to the top of their heads. Easily as tall as a standard 28mm ogre, but don't really look the part to fill that role.

Caldon D'Capiton \$7.99

Caldon (right) is a human that is wearing hard leather armor and is armed with a single sword. He has two pouches on his belt, but not much else. The mold line here was very faint and his sword arm (separate piece) fit onto the body easily but could be pinned for extra stability. All of the features on this model are clean and well defined and he's well proportioned.

Kempon \$7.99

Kempon (left) is also a human and he comes in four pieces (hat, two hands and rest of the model).

You might want to pin the wrists, but I decided against it. If you have a nice snug foam carrying case you probably don't need to pin them. Kempon's upper body is very well done and his face is really expressive with a nice snarl and bits of stringy hair hanging down onto his cheeks. His legs are what made me think cartoony and I still do to a certain extent, but they are not that bad when looking at the model in-hand. They are just dramatically thinner than his upper body. Muscle detail was done well on this model, but he does look a little more exaggetated than Caldron.



Peer of the Realm has a game scheduled to come out soon to use these figures and they have four other armies (Vampires, Mutants, Orcs and Hyenas) already in the works. Given the size of the models I'd expect it to be a skirmish level game with lots of possibilities. I can't wait to see it. Each of these miniatures comes with a 40mm square base and a small packed of flock and static grass. The \$7.99 price tag is now really more than reasonable considering the size of the models and the fact that they are providing the flocking for you. This may seem like a small thing but I saw it as going the extra mile to help their customers and how can you frown on that? Both figures needed just a little cleaning, Kempon more than Caldron, but neither was excessive. The only downside that I see with the figures right now is that unless you plan to use them in the **Peer of the Realm** game the only other uses I see for them is as diorama pieces or if you were playing a fantasy version on Inquisitor. I'm hoping that the **PotR** game ends up being as detailed of a fantasy game as Inquisitor is in the sci-fi arena. Also, be sure to check out the monthly painting contests on their website.

2744 Cichastus, Fly Demon \$10.99 Bob Olley

This demonic monstrosity comes in six pieces (two wings, three sets of legs and the rest of the body) that all needed some kind of cleaning. The wings come on a single sprue so take care not to damage them when removing them. I think the picture best describes this figure. Think of a giant fly then possess it with a demon. Ok, 'nuff said. The wings fit into their slots very well and you could pin them but it's not necessary. The legs also easily fit into their slots but each had a small gap that was left with the center pair being the worst offenders. Some putty will be needed if you want to hide this as paint alone won't suffice. This is a decent figure but one that is pretty specific in its uses and does not have a ton of crossover possibilities. If you're a DM in a campaign where your PC routinely square off against lots of different kinds of demons and netherworld creatures then you'll probably get a lot of mileage out of Cichastus. For the rest of us maybe not so much.

2746 Caella, Death Cultist \$3.29 Werner Klocke

Caella is an evil female cultist that would also make a good evil druid if it were not for the axe that she is carrying in her right hand. Maybe grab a level of fighter first. Anyway, she is dressed in very little armor. Just a few shoulder plates and the rest is made up of leathers along with two small skulls that make her bustier. Another skull makes up her helmet and you can see an eye patch over her right eye. Nice added detail there. She is wearing a loincloth that covers her from the waist down in front but there is nothing more than a piece of dental floss between her cheeks on the backside. The pose is well animated and she looks like she's right in the thick of a fight. There were some bits of flash here and there was a hint of the mold line in a few places.

2747 Jean Paul Werewolf \$4.99 Tim Prow

The lycanthropy-afflicted Jean Paul comes as three pieces (right and left arm and rest of body). The arms are molded on a single sprue and each had a bit of flash. Also, you'll need to be careful not to mar the arms when removing them from the sprue. Just take a bit of care and time and they'll be ok. The rest of the body needed almost zero cleanup save for a minor mold line that was barely visible. The body is about half-covered in thick hair

and the rest is well developed muscle. A tail sticks out from, well, where it should be, and is probably the weakest joint on the model even above the arms which could be pinned into place. It just has such a small connective area to the rest of the model that if something is going to break this is probably it. The muscles and hair are equally well done and let me tell you, this guy is ripped! The head and facial features are awesome with its lips pulled back in a snarl showing its teeth and tongue. What I'd like to see next from Mr. Prow is a female werewolf to go along with this one. Excellent figure and he absolutely gets added to one of my D&D Miniatures warbands.



Cichastus, Fly Demon



Sir David

2748 Sir David \$3.29 Sandy Garrity

Sir David is an adventuring knight that is carrying a sword, shield and a large backpack on his journey. Mine came with the sword slightly bent in the package but this was easily bent back into position. He's wearing full plate armor and his shield bears a castle emblem to characterize him a bit more. There was a fair amount of cleaning needed between the mold line and flash on this figure. He would make a good paladin for a PC but just struck me as being a bit plain.



Caella, Death Cultist

2749 Jade, Dancing Girl \$3.29 Werner Klocke

Jade, Dancing Girl is a well sculpted dancer. She is sculpted with a sheer top and a long skirt with a slit up to her waist. The model has been caught in the middle of her dance, her arms entwined above her head. There is not much detail to this figure since it is scantily clothed. However, this means that there is an opportunity for your painting skills to shine - especially with the sheer clothing. This figure is definitely useful as a bystander in a caravan or bar fight - or as a disguise for a female rogue.



Jade, Dancing Girl



Jean Paul Werewolf

WARLORD

BATTLES IN WAR-TORN TALTO

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REAPER

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2750 Ardanael, Elf \$3.29 Sandy Garrity

Ardanael is a male elf that is equipped for adventuring much like Sir David. Where I thought that Sir David looked kind of plain I have no such complaint with Ardanael. He's in a much more combat oriented pose, on guard waiting to attack or be attacked and just has a more animated look to the figure. He is wearing chain mail armor and leather boots and gloves and is armed with a sword in his right hand and there is a longbow slung across his back. You'll also find a quiver, bedroll and a couple of pouches back there too. A nice tree symbol has been etched onto his shield along with a few other decorations to make it stand out. The face and ears are very cleanly done without being exaggerated at all. There were a few bits of flash that needed to be clipped but this model has almost no mold line at all. Cleanup was a snap.

**Stone Golem****2751 Stone Golem \$5.99 J. Van Schaik**

This construct comes in at almost 2¼" tall and about 1½" wide. There is no doubt at all that he was carved out of stone and while he has large muscles and a, well, chiseled, physique there would be no mistaking him for a living creature. The surface of the golem is scratched and chipped to add to the look and he should be easy to paint to look good. This is a single piece model that does not bear any weapons other than his two big-ass fists. He's been given a large headpiece that might look good painted up as steel rather than stone just for some contrast. There was a mold line going all the way around the figure and a couple bits of flash needed to be clipped off. Nothing that ended up marring the figure though. This is a simple, but effectively, sculpted figure that will see use, for me anyway, in the service of an evil mage villain in D&D until Stone Golems are introduced into the D&D Miniatures game.

2752 Yanara, High Sorceress \$3.29 Ben Siens

This model is sculpted standing on some tumbled stones from a fallen temple. She stands proud with her staff in her right hand and her chest thrust forward. Yes, she is bare breasted, but the rest of her is covered in jewelry and wrapped in a tight fitting skirt. Unlike Jade, there are quite a number of details on this model that, with careful painting, will make this a striking figure. The way it is sculpted, this is really not a player character figure, but would make an impressive NPC, either friend or foe.

**Ardanael, Elf Adventurer****Yanara, High Sorceress****Werebear****2753 Werebear \$7.99 Jason Weibe**

At just over 2" tall and about 2½" wide this werebear is a really large specimen. It also looks extremely close to the picture in the Monster Manual. Not enough to get Reaper sued but close enough that any D&D player will instantly recognize this figure for what it is. It comes as two pieces, head and rest of body and is armed with a large double-bladed axe. The fur is really well done and is sculpted cleanly and does not look matted or just slapped on. The definition of his muscles under the fur is equally well done and you can even make out his abdominal muscles under the fur. Along the upper ridge of the shoulders there was a bit of trimming that needed to be done but other than that the figure was pretty clean other than a thin mold line that ran along the axe. The head had a bit of flash but cleaned up quickly and fit into place easily. There was a small gap along the neck-line on each side of the head that can either be taken care of with a bit of putty or might even be pretty hard to see once primed and painted. The head is great and would be 100% at home on a regular (not were) bear. For me, he'll see use mainly in the Dungeons & Dragons miniatures game as soon as I slap him on a large round base. He would also be perfect for a Warlord army like the one I ran in a previous battle report as part of a *Dungeon Monsters* army. Of course, assaulting your PC's in D&D (or any other fantasy rpg where were-creatures exist) is also on the menu. This is a hefty piece of metal and well worth about eight bucks.

2755 Marunma, Naga \$4.99 G. Valley

I was glad to see a Reaper Naga come along, mainly because I can increase the number I can use in the D&D Miniatures game. I know you've seen that pattern develop with my look at many recent Reaper figures but there's no denying that players of that game, in friendly non-tournament games anyway, have such easy access to perfect figures that they would otherwise be fishing around in sealed booster packs for. Of course, it will likely cost you more per figure and you'll have to paint these rather than pulling them out of the booster pre-painted. Ok, back to the Naga. This figure comes in two pieces (head and rest of body) and it is coiled around a treasure chest where you can see lots of coins, a necklace and a quiver of arrows waiting to be picked up. The body of the Naga has a nice diamond pattern on it that will stand out well when painted with a thin coat of your chosen color and then washed with ink before a final highlight. The tail ends in a spike. The head is covered in a mass of unkempt hair and a forked tongue slides out from between the large teeth. There was no real cleaning needed on the head piece but I had to trim it where it slides into the notch on the lower body to make it fit without leaving a gap. Five bucks, works for me.

**Marunma, Naga**

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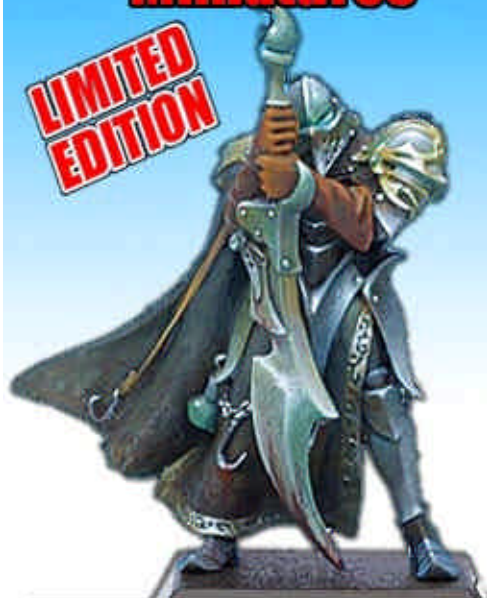
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Stern the Paladin

2758 Stern the Paladin \$3.99 Werner Klocke

This model departs from the normal Dark Heaven line in that it is a multi-piece model. Stern's shield is cast as part of the base but is designed to be removed and attached to a stud on the paladin's left shoulder. Stern, unlike his name sake in "Heavy Metal", is sculpted in a fighting stance. He is holding his sword out in front of him as if he's threatening someone or something. The model is sculpted wearing plate mail and a cape. The shield is sculpted without an embossed emblem but does have a clear field with battle scars - perfect for free hand heraldry.

2762 Tuilin, Female Elf \$3.29 Sandra Garrity

Tuilin is a mage as can be seen by the two scrolls hanging from her belt. She is rearing a full-length robe with detailed edging and is carrying a staff in her left hand. There is quite a bit of detail on this model - especially on the long hair and face. This is definitely a good figure for an elf high priestess or player character mage.

61001 Harmonious Jade \$3.99 Jim Johnson

This is the first figure from the Exalted range that we've gotten a look at. They are all sculpted onto an integrated metal base much like the Dark Heaven line of figures. Jade is a female ranger-type that is carrying a bow in both hands and has a short sword in a scabbard to her side. There's a lot of detail to pick out on this model on her bracers, shirt and even the bow, which has a very magical look to it. The face is not quite as sharp as with some models from the Dark Heaven or Warlord line but it is ok. Her hair is braided into cornrows and has beads woven into it. I thought this was a nice touch and it's an added bit of detail that will make her stand out once painted. I like the pose that Jade is in, ready to draw her arrow back and move into a firing stance. There was a bit more flash on Jade than on the other Dark Heaven figures that I got to see this time around but it was not excessive and she cleaned up pretty easily. The mold line was all but invisible except a small space on her cape that had to be filed.

61003 Arianna \$3.99 Jim Johnson

The figure follows a similar model to the Dark Heaven line, it is also a single-piece, 25mm model with integrated base. However, there is a stylistic difference from the Dark Heaven model: Arianna is sculpted with a book in her right hand and a pointed dagger in her left. She is wearing dress reminiscent of the St. Pauli girl. This is a very well done model - I especially like the single braided pony tail that would hang to the ankles of the model. Even with her overcoat and pony tail billowing, this is a fairly static model. For those not playing Exalted, this would make a very good female wizard figure.



Harmonious Jade



Tuilin, Female Elf



Arianna

61002 Panther \$3.99 Jim Johnson

Panther is well-muscled human male sculpted in the “heroic” 28mm scale. Like the majority of the figures from Reaper Panther does not come on a slotted base, but is standing on what is sculpted like a stone slab. Panther is posed in a traditional beefcake pose that I have decided after standing in the mirror is entirely unnatural. As part of the “Exalted” line, Panther is fantasy styled figure intended for use in White Wolf games. He is armed with two ornate wrist blades that are attached to rather thick looking leather gloves. The rams’ heads at the base of the blades are well detailed with the daggers sprouting from between the two horns. Wearing baggy pants and no shirt, it is easy to see that Panther has a tattoo of a sunburst on his chest. Sporting a rather short crew cut hairstyle, sandals, and wearing three pouches Panther is a generic fantasy figure, but with the right paint job he could easily blend into almost any role-playing game as a beefcake character, especially in a post apocalyptic setting. With very little flash, my only complaint is the visible mold line that runs down both legs, both arms, his chest, and most unfortunately his face. While the most pronounced part of the line is on his arm and is easy to remove the line across his face spoils any high quality paint job unless extreme care is given to cleaning it.



Panther

61004 Horned Snow Hunter \$3.99 Jim Johnson

the Horned Snow Hunter is my favorite of the three Exalted figures that I received to review. The Horned Snow hunter is a demonic wolf-like figure with, you guessed it, horns. The figure comes in two pieces, the body of the Hunter and the horns that attach in a deep depression on his forehead. While the actual stance of the monster is static, the long fur appears windswept back from the face. The face is very well defined with the Hunter baring his fangs and teeth in a grimace that lends his static stance a feeling of waiting to pounce and attack. The ear canals are surprisingly deep, rivaling the depression for the horns, and help to frame the grimacing face. Once again another Reaper figure is on a sculpted base, this time one of gravel and rocks. The Horned Snow Hunter has no mold lines that I can find. This is great due to the difficulty in cleaning mold lines off of fur. Some putty work will need to be done when attaching the horns to the head, but this is more a function of the intricate fur than a poor fit of the horns. One of the reasons that the



Horned Snow Hunter

Horned Snow Hunter is my favorite is its utility. From a mutated guard dog of a sci-fi adventure to a magically summoned hell spawn of a fantasy genre, the Horned Snow Hunter can be used as a universal four legged, furry, horned monster. *Note the packaging attributed the sculpting to Jim Johnson, but the Reaper Website credited Sandra Garrity. No offense is intended if Sandra was the artist responsible for the Horned Snow Hunter.

61005 Avaku \$3.99 Jim Johnson

Jim Johnson delivers another White Wolf inspired figure for the Exalted range. This heavily armored male is armed with a single punch dagger. Avaku is helmetless, with wind tussled hair, which shows off his goatee and eye patch over his right eye. The shoulder pads of his armor sport spikes that resemble two spearheads sprouting from his shoulders. The tangle on his breastplate is an image of two strands of laurel leaves meeting in a pentagram. Avaku’s breastplate sports a high armored collar in between his spiky shoulder pads. Additional filigree resembling flames adorn the bottom edges of his breastplate on the sides and back. From the waist down the figure is wearing pants with knee high boots. Avaku is standing on the same looking sculptured stone slab as Panther. Avaku is posed in a rather static position with his punch dagger in his right hand and his left hand raised shoulder height in a clenched fist. The quality of the sculpt on Avaku is very good with three pieces of flash needing to be cut off and most importantly no mold lines.



Avaku Fire Dragon Blooded

14068 Duke Gerard \$5.99 Werner Klocke

The Duke is a multiple piece miniatures that comes with a separate shield, back banner and axe. The back banner and shield each came off of the metal sprue easily but care needs to be taken with the axe as the shaft is kind of thin and it could easily bend and weaken. You’ll also want to remember about the shaft on the axe being thin after you’ve assembled and painted the figure. Each piece did need some cleaning in regards to flash and the mold lines. After cleaning you might want to prime and paint the shield and back banner separately as they will obstruct other areas of the figure that are visible but will be hard to get to if he’s completely assembled. That’s what I’ll be doing. Gerard is dressed in very heavy plate armor and has a stern look on his face. If he had a helmet on that left his mouth and chin exposed you’d swear he was Judge Dredd. He looks pretty opposed to taking carp from anyone. Lots of decorative emblems have been sculpted onto his armor and these will be easy to pick out when painting. A flowing cape blows behind him and there is also a longsword, belts and a pouch on his back. The shield is about two-thirds as tall as Gerard himself and is not decorated at all, but there are a few rivets poking out on the front. Gerard’s armor is the star of this show but his back banner runs a close second. It has a large pair of wings that come out from behind a large circle and cross emblem that has the text *Via Virtus* inscribed on it. Very cool indeed. This would make an outstanding figure for a paladin or any of the various holy warrior prestige classes. Now, if they made a version of Gerard that was mounted on a Griffon, see next review, I’d be on Cloud 9 for sure. The only downside to him is that he comes with a plastic base instead of the metal ones that I’ve become so fond of.



Duke Gerard

14077 Griffon \$15.99 Sandra Garrity

This is an impressive piece. In addition to the large base, the griffon model has four pieces - the body, the left foreleg, and the wings. The body was cast as a single piece which simplifies assembly quite a bit over a two-piece cast. The left foreleg fits snugly into a square pegged space. The wings fit into slots cut into the back of the body. These slots are larger than the tabs on the wings and I had to shim the wing tabs with some masking tape. The model is in a rampant pose - raised up on its hind legs with its forelegs extended. The wings are sculpted straight out as if in the middle of taking off. Most importantly, there is room on the neck of this creature to mount a rider model. All in all, the griffon is a very impressive piece as either a monster for an RPG, or a mount for a character or table-top general.



Griffon



14083 Female Demon Sergeant \$5.99 Chaz Elliot

This is an interesting sculpt. The figure itself comes in two pieces - the demon's body and its wings. The tips of the wings meet at the bottom and this is where the tab is molded for fitting into the slotted base. The wings attach to the body between the model's shoulder blades. The result is that the figure appears to be flying. This could be enhanced by removing the tab from the bottom of the wings and attaching the figure to a flying stand.

There is a hole in the demon's right wing which I originally took to be a void from the mold, but it is sculpted to be there. The wings have a very nice look to them, sort of a cross between bones and a leathery bat-like look. As you can see, she is bare-chested (I guess you can't expect nether-wordly demon women to be worried about showing off a little of their naughty bits.) so keep this one out of the kiddies hands if you don't want them exposed. The face looks very good and her evil nature is really made plain by her horns.



Female Demon Sergeant

14081 Mummy Consort \$3.99 Bob Ridolfi

Aha, a metal base! This female mummy comes as a single piece miniature and will make a super mummy or even a lich. She is dressed in the typical mummy wrappings but also has several pieces of ornate jewelry including a very nice headdress. If it weren't for the skeletal features of her hands you might not take her for one of the undead as the rest of her exposed flesh doesn't look too worse for the wear. Her left hand holds a mask that she probably wears until the time is right to reveal her true self but by then you're pretty screwed. There are lots of little bits of easily picked out detail on this figure that will make her look great once she's painted. I like this figure very much but I'm afraid that I'll be sending her metal base over to Duke Gerard for his use as he'll get painted before her.



Mummy Consort

14082 Margara, Dwarf Mage \$3.99 Werner Klocke

Yes, folks, this is a female dwarf! No, she doesn't have a beard, but she does have a warhammer and tankard. Brandishing the hammer in her right hand, she holds a spike in her left. She is wearing a leather forge apron decorated with runes. Margara is another excellent player character figure and would make an excellent leader for a regiment of dwarf warriors.



Margara, Dwarf Mage

14084 Soul Cannon \$5.99 Williams/Stewart

Arr, me hearties! The skeleton pirates of Warlord get an artillery boost this time around with the Soul Cannon. This blister contains three pieces, the cannon, it's carriage, and a skeleton ready to fire it. Each piece had flash that needed attention and the cannon itself had a pretty visible mold line that needed to be filed. For a name like 'Soul Cannon' it looks kind of ordinary but maybe I oversold myself on what to expect. The skeleton pirate is dressed very appropriately and will fit right in with the rest of the army. This figure is supplied with a 40mm plastic base and is a good addition to the army but is a bit singular in its use unless you want to use a band of skeleton pirates in your D&D game.



Soul Cannon / Crew





GH Vindicator



MK IV Revenant

14087 Warlord Familiars II \$5.49 Werner Klocke

This batch of little monsters gets you five new friends to go on adventures with your mages. The most natural animal looking is a small eight legged lizard creature with its tongue sticking out. It could be used as a baby basilisk if you wanted. A knobby wooden creature is here and it reminds me of a Twig Blight in D&D. I had some trouble figuring out what this next guy was but it looks like some kind of turtle creature that is carrying a sword, probably a dagger for his master, and a bunch of scrolls tied to his back. Either that or he has the thickest dreadlocks that I've ever seen. The last two are the easiest to place your finger on. They are both holding books for their master. One is a small fairy like creature with little wings and a tail and the other is her evil counterpart, a small imp or maybe even a tiny demon if you like complete with curved horns, bit floppy ears and a pot-belly. At about a buck each these will make cool additions to your mages, either on their own bases or added to their master's to spruce them up a bit.

7082 Mk IV Revenant \$13.99 Ron DuBray

The Mark IV Revenant is the first super-heavy battlefield superiority mech from Mark IV industries. The Revenant is armed with two V/32 Gauss Cannons (range 36, +7 versus hard targets and +2 versus soft targets) and two Hf4 Direct Fire Missile Packs (range 36, +4 versus hard targets and +1 versus soft targets). With seven damage tracks, this is definitely a mech killer, but at 510 points, it is a pricey one.

The model itself has six pieces in addition to the hexagonal base. The model is a standard CAV structure with its torso, legs, and gun arms separate pieces. However, unlike most CAV, the missile packs are not molded into the gun arms, but are their own pieces. This will make changing the missile packs much easier. The only flaw I encountered in this month's set of models was with the missile packs on the Revenant. They were sloped as if the two sides of the mold did not align properly. This is not noticeable on the table top, but does give the model an off-kilter look when held close.

7081 Vindicator (2) \$9.99 Neil Nowatzki

The second CAV blister pack has 2 GH Vindicator armored personnel carriers. The Vindicator was built in answer to KDM's Fenri - an APC that could do more than just ferry troops to the battlefield. The Vindicator is equipped with two Riddle AI-12 Gatteling Gauss Cannons (range 36, +1 versus hard targets, +6 versus soft targets). These are integrated into the structure and cannot be altered except to remove them. The addition of the GGC's mean that the Vindicator has room for only one stand of infantry. At 120 points each, these CAV versions of the reliable Huey will be quite popular with the mercenary guilds. The models themselves include two pieces, the body and the wings, in addition to the hexagonal base and flying stand. The detail is excellent and the assembly quite easy. The wings are a single piece that fits on top of the fuselage and is secured by a small tab. Both of these models are an excellent addition to the CAV line.

10020 Marthrangul, Great Dragon \$75.00 Jim Johnson

Marthrangul is the newest multi-piece dragon boxed set from Reaper miniatures. It comes in just nine pieces (body, upper head, two wings, one foot, three legs and tail) and while the pieces fit together very well I would recommend using pins for stability and strength, especially the wings and tail. You will also need a small amount of putty to fill in some small gaps here and there but for a model as large as this bad boy is the gaps are surprisingly few and are relatively small. Even with the small amount of modeling work that you'll need/want to do this could easily be the first Reaper dragon that you pick up because all of the pieces went together so easily. I would recommend mounting the whole dragon on a blank CD (AOL CD's work great for this too) and you'll want to use just a bit of putty or clay to build up under one or two of the feet that didn't sit perfectly flat for me. You could bend the legs a bit if you wanted to get a perfectly flat footing but I think this would make a gap where the leg meets the body so you're probably using some putty either way.

Let's start at the head of the model and move our way back. The bottom half of the jaw is attached to the rest of the length of the body, minus the tail. When the top of the head is put on the dragon takes on a very flat reptilian look, which suits it perfectly. It reminds me a lot of the dragon in Dragonslayer. From snout to tail Marthrangul measures in at just over 9.75" in length and each wing is about 6"x4" at the widest points. The picture to the right illustrates just how big this model is when compared to two other Reaper figures.

The detail on the spines and scales is outstanding on this model and it's easy to see that a lot of time was taken to make them look right. Each and every piece needed some cleaning but it's something I expected with a model of this size and the need for some putty and pins is also something that you should expect when assembling this big of a model that's entirely metal. It will absolutely see the game table in my Warlord army and while it's pricey if you have the need for a very large dragon it's justifiable, especially over a plastic variant.





#8010 Wood Elf Archer in Chainmail \$2.50

The second batch of figures from Thunderbolt Mountain is three wood elf archers. Like the spearmen these three elves are sculpted in true 30mm scale. The same facial structures and proportions that are apparent in the spearmen also appear in the archers. The three archers are sculpted in three different stages of firing an arrow. One is drawing an arrow from his quiver on his back, the second is drawing the arrow against his cheek (the arrow is not sculpted on, but a thin brass rod would suffice), and the other has just released and begun lowering his bow. All three have slightly different armor, and have different bows ranging from ornate to plain. A bit of wire to string the bows would help to finish off a magnificent sculpt. Similarly garbed in breeches as their spear counterparts, the bowmen are also mounted on the same smooth thin oval base. Unlike the spearmen though, the archers suffered from a little bit of flashing between one of the bows and the base, and various pointy objects (leaves and tips of bows) has pieces of flash sticking off. The archers show a very faint mold line as well. While not as blown away by the archers as I was with the spearmen, I believe that is not the fault of Mr. Mierer's sculpting ability, but more of a function of wood elves with bows being pretty plentiful in the marketplace.

#8040 Wood Elf Musician...(\$8.50 buys a standard and musician)

The Wood Elf musician is a part of the command group sculpted by Mr. Mierer. Once again we see the same lithe proportions as the others, but with a less armored look. The first difference I noticed between the musician and the spearmen was the lack of a helmet. The long wavy hair that was visible peeking out of the helmets of the other elves now flows to a little below his shoulders. The musician also wears an ankle length cloak that is adorned with a leaf-like trim, and whose hood is visibly pulled back underneath the hair flowing over his shoulders. Following the usual realism the cloak hangs flat as if there is no wind and does not dominate the figure. The musician is holding a horn to his lips ready to blow. His eyes are closed as if he is drawing a breath right before sounding the charge. The horn is an animal's horn that is sculpted with a very realistic texture and if propped on the ground would be as tall as the elf's waist. The musician is armored in slightly more ornate scale mail with the scales sculpted into leaves. A belt that hangs at his waist holds a small pouch. A sword in its scabbard is also on the belt, but it is tucked into his cloak and blends in naturally with the stance and style of the figure. Once again preaches are tucked into boots, and the whole figure is standing on a smooth oval base. As far as the actual sculpting quality of the figures in this batch the musician is probably the best sculpted with the detail on the face, cloak, and the horn being almost hyper realistic. Very little flash and no mold lines mar this figure. The leaf motif and the natural horn keep the wood elf roots of this figure.



#8000 Wood Elf Spearman in Leaf-scale \$3.00

The first of the three selections from Thunderbolt Mountain are three wood elves in leaf-scale. These three figures are sculpted in true 30mm scale.

These are not heroic figures, but highly detailed to scale renditions of what the sculptor and many of us think of when we envision wood elves. Their arms, legs and faces are thin and all three sport around shoulder length curly hair that reminds me of the curly hair of Hellenistic sculptures from art history class. All three have helmets with a leaf at the top, and each of the armor is sculpted different, but are all obviously wearing scale mail. The elves all sport a cloak underneath their armor that is decorate with leaves. The breeches are tucked into their knee-high boots. The elves are mounted on smooth oval, metal bases. These are fairly thin so that if you glue them to square bases and flock them they will not look out of place. All three of the elves are armed with thin spears that are separate pieces, with hands sculpted to be holding the spears. The other hand has a post to affix the oval shields with a post and socket joint. All the shields are different and are embossed with a leaf, tree, and ivy respectively. The three poses are sculpted with forward movement with two of them leaning and walking forward, and the third bracing his spear with the side of his shield. There was not a mold line to be seen on any of the three spearmen, and the only flash was the pieces of metal that the shield and spear came attached to. I really appreciate the fine detail work the pieces. It is rare to find pieces that are not over done with kung fu unrealistic poses or muscle bound oafs that would look out of place in a third graders drawing. Tom Mierer, you have made a new fan with these guys.



Basti Camp Followers 1, 2, and 3 (\$9.95 each).

These three blister packs each contain three 25mm feline humanoid figures for the Basti force in WarGods of Egyptus. All figures have tabs beneath their feet which fit into 15mm slotted square bases.

The figures in the Basti Camp Followers 1 pack include a serving wench with a tray of fish, a cook carrying a pot of fish soup, and a male Basti holding up a fish preparing to drop it into his mouth.

The Serving Wench is well sculpted with lots of nice details. The tray of fish has some striking details as does the back of her tabard. As with most females in this line, the model is wearing only a tabard and a halter top. As with most of the Basti line, it is the female figures that catch the eye. This is entirely due to the way their bodies are sculpted. The serving wench is no different - I am also impressed by the feline features of the models face - there is enough detail for the experienced painter to make a real show piece of this model.

The Cook is a pot-bellied feline man with a caldron in one hand and a large spoon in the other. He wears an apron over his skirt. There is less detail on this model than on the Serving Wench, but it is a product of the minimalist approach taken to sculpting this line. It's almost as if the Basti are more siamese cats than persians. The cook's hat, a fez with a relief of a bird hieroglyphic on it really draws the eye. When painting this model, you should probably play down the hat to pull attention more to the model's well sculpted and bearded face. The third model in this pack is a Basti male holding aloft a fish with his mouth open. He appears to be ready to swallow the fish whole. This gives the model a very dynamic pose which is in stark contrast to the other poses in this blister.

The Basti Camp Followers 2 pack will probably be the most popular of the three packs. This pack contains a harem guard and two harem members.

The first figure is the Guard. He stands with his legs spread and his curved sword in his left hand. The blade rests on the ground. The model has bulging muscles and a very broad face. I would think he would look best if painted darker than the normal Basti mail. I would be tempted to paint him with a gloss finish coat on his skin to mimic the effect of being oiled. This model is obviously a eunuch as he has a bell mounted just below his belt. Also, if he wasn't a eunuch, no one would have packaged him in the same box as the two harem girls. :)

The first of the two harem girls could be a slave. She has the typical Basti halter top and tabard outfit. Her body fits the high standard of the Basti line but its her pose that makes her stand out. She is sculpted with her left arm behind her back and holding her right elbow.

Her right hand is holding the back of her tabard. The pose gives the impression that she is nervously waiting for something. This model does have a small tab on its base which made it difficult to glue into the slotted base. The most striking model in the pack is the second harem girl. Called the Courtesan, this model is the show piece of the pack. If possible, the model is more curvaceous than the normal Basti Female and the chosen pose accents this. The Courtesan is standing and looking over her left shoulder while she is removing her skirt. This is a PG-13 sculpt as the model is wearing a thong. The Courtesan is the most detailed model of the package, with striking features and jewelry in her hair. Of all the models reviewed here, this one should be given the most attention when painting. It will certainly be a centerpiece figure.

The final pack includes general camp followers - an acrobat, task master, and a dancing girl. The dancing girl is, once again, a typical Basti female. She is sculpted as if in the last stages of the Dance of the Seven veils - she's already lost all her veils. Her left knee is slightly in front of her right and her hands are gathering her hair into a pony tail. The result is a model that almost appears alive.

The Task Master figure is the most detailed one of the three packages. Not only are his facial features well defined, but his whip and his clothing are full of fine details. He is wearing a pleated skirt over his tabard and is holding it at the waist with his left hand. He is sculpted to stand with his weight on his left foot and his right set slightly forward. Obviously he's watching the dancing girl.

The final figure of the Basti is the most interesting. The Acrobat is sculpted so that he is balancing on one hand on top of a large ball. Though not as big as the Harem Guard, this figure has a well defined musculature and a well draped tabard. While the Courtesan will be an army center piece, it is the Acrobat that will be the most fun to paint.

Crocodile Games has an excellent line of figures in the Basti and these packages are a good addition to the line. The trademark female figures are, once again, some of the best female sculpts in the industry. These figures are a must have for the painter and the Basti player. And if your fantasy RPG campaign has a feline race in it, these should be a part of your standard figure stable.



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Miniature Previews

Magnificent Egos is a new fantasy miniature company based out of Allen, TX (Hey, right in my backyard!) that is ready to produce limited runs of character based miniatures. These new miniatures will be based on concepts by artist Jason Engle, among others, and many will be based on the various creatures dreamed up by the guys at Bastion Press. If you've read any of my reviews of Bastion Press products you'll remember that I've been wishing and hoping that somebody would start making miniatures for them and apparently my cries were heard or at least I must not have been the only one crying for them.

To the right are a few "greens" of a handful of figures, three characters and one spell effect. The top two characters have a very human appearance but the first one could end up being an elf or half-elf. The one at the bottom-right is a gnome rogue that kind of grumpy.

From the pictures we've seen they all seem to have a lot of clear detail and don't look disproportional, but we haven't gotten any actual figures in our hands yet, but we hope to have several to review in the next issue of Fictional Reality. Until then, be sure to check out their website for pics of works in progress.

They also run contests on the site and have special package deals for various pre-orders.



“Lootenant, lootenant, wake up.”

Lieutenant Digsby wrestled himself awake from what had been a very pleasant dream about shore leave on Dinskyia Lambda with a very amorous Kestrarian bar girl. He awoke to the considerably less attractive face of Corporal Tsoppov, the platoon runner.

“Tsoppov this better be good or I’ll use you for our next hand-to-hand combat demonstration.”

“Sir, you know I wouldn’t wake you for anything other than a command net signal. Major Gresda wants you on the circuit pronto.”

“Yeah, yeah, it’s always a rush when I’m trying to get some sleep.” Even as he groused, Digsby was moving towards the comm. box they’d set up in what used to be the entertainment room of the farmhouse they’d taken over as their base after the last mission. As he came in sight of the view screen he saw that Major Gresda was already on screen. That meant something was going to happen in a hurry, Majors usually don’t wait for Lieutenants, even ones with the Silver Shield for combat heroism.

“Digs, this is short and sweet. Intelsats have spotted a Kryomek column of vehicles and bugs on foot moving to assault Riverdale City. Obviously they’re looking to use colonists for food, hence the vehicles. Our Tactical specialists think they’ve worked out a good ambush point for your platoon, supported by tanks. The tanks are on their way to your position now. Suit up, mount up, and execute an ambush at the point indicated on your tac console. Let me know when you’ve squashed the bugs, and what the body count is.”

“But Major we just finished the Twister assault on Point Omega, we’re due “...that was as far as Digsby got before the Major cut him off.

“I know, I know, everybody’s tired and everyone likes to quote regulation mandated rest times. Too bad the Kryomek don’t follow our regs. You’re it, so shut up and get going. Good luck.” The comm. box went blank, followed by a series of flashing screens as the mission data was downloaded.

“Platoon Sergeant Hegger!” called Digsby in his parade ground command voice, “Activate the platoon, full armor, combat loads, we’re going hunting”

Thirty minutes later, Digsby’s command lay spread out in a classic L shaped ambush alongside a forest trail. The short side of the L was the blocking force, one of his heavy weapons squads supported by two of the *Sand Carrier* 4 APCs that had transported his force to this point. The APCs had twin chain guns, while three of the squad had shoulder mount LMGs, the other two squad members had BAT MNP heavy flamers for close action. The long side of the L held the remaining two APCs, two *Assegai* tanks with HAK 1010 cannons, all four infantry squads, and the reserve heavy weapons squad who all had HAK 420-Y5 over the shoulder recoilless rifles in addition to their regular weapons. His command group also had HAK 420s, so they could hunt Warmasters if things went badly. The CBU’s were also under his control, held at the far end of his line.

Their Interdiction suits were in full camouflage mode, heat, color and scent. There wasn’t much he could do about the exhaust odor from the vehicles, just hope that his setting up downwind of the road would give them the few extra minutes of concealment that the ambush needed. He intended to let the lead Kryomek run into the landmines they had planted in the road before opening fire.

Suddenly Digsby’s taccomm display was flooded with data. The Talos CBU’s had picked up the clacking and clicking that signified Kryomek on the move. SGT Qarrel was also sending in a feed from his surveillance stalk. Qarrel was prone at the far end of the ambush line, raising his surveillance stalk above the vegetation to view the road. Due to the twists in the road, and the considerable undergrowth, he could only see about 20 meters or so down the road. The heavy undergrowth and thick topcover was why the Kryomek thought they could move through here so quickly.

“Everyone wait until they trigger the mines at the head of the ambush, then go for the targets we planned. The tankers will handle their vehicles, heavy weapons the Warmasters, everyone else start with the warriors or drones if they have any. If we can get all the Warmasters, the rest will be easy to clean up. So keep your itchy fingers off the triggers.” Digsby broadcast over the platoon net, whispering even though the bugs couldn’t hear him through his helmet.

The Kryomek column came into view. Most of the bugs were on foot, but they still moved twice as fast as humans did. Despite their large size, and the fact that many of them moved on tails instead of legs, they moved about 15 Kilometers per Hour. This group had eight vehicles, moving along on loudly clicking treads. It was hard to believe that these vehicles were actually living, breathing Kryomek. Bred specially for combat with the humans after the Kryomek Warmasters had seen how effective human tanks were, the Kryomek vehicles were deadly. With no delay between thought and action, they could move and react quicker than any human operated vehicle. Still commanded by the will of the Warmasters, they always did exactly what those tactical geniuses wanted. Many human commanders hadn’t lived long enough to understand that Warmasters had perfect command control.

“Command, this is Qarel, I count eight vehicles, four with projectors of some kind, and at least one Warmaster. Looks like 50 plus Kryomek of various types, mostly Helions.”

“Damn, outnumbered once again!”, thought Digsby. Just once he’d like to go into battle where his side had more men than the other. Men? Hell, he’d love to fight something besides bugs that stood eight feet tall and could kill you with the acid in their blood even as you blew their guts out.

He sensed the men and women of his command starting to fidget as the Kryomek column came into sight along the road. While anyone would get nervous at the sight of that many Kryomek killing machines, they needed to stay still until the ambush was triggered. Digsby was just about to say something when the Kryomek column stopped. Everyone held their breath as the Warmaster in the middle of the column suddenly reared up, till it was standing 20 feet high, its oversized, armor plated head swaying from side to side. Suddenly it dropped down and slithered into the woods on the other side of the road.

“Let ‘em have it, we’ve been spotted” yelled Digsby over the tacnet. As the first ripple of shells left their guns the Kryomek were already reacting to the ambush. Two Kryomek APCs in the lead drove down the road, triggering vibromines that tipped them over, only to spill out six Helions each. All teeth and claws, the Helions ran right into the *Sand Carrier* APCs and the blocking squad. In seconds they were within flamer range, and gouts of flame set Helions and trees afire. It looked like they could hold.

The main line was having more trouble with the Kryomek streaming up from the road. Due to the foliage, they’d had to set up closer to the road than he’d have liked. This gave them less time to use their ranged weapons before the Kryomek got within close combat range. Digsby had hoped to get at least one good volley off before the Kryomek started moving, but the Warmaster had been too alert. Now his troopers were letting go with everything they. Danaher was using his auto-shotgun to good effect, he was usually left out of the long range engagements. The flamer in each squad was also killing Kryomek, but the flamers were too spread out to cover the entire front with fire.

The Kryomek charged in, unheeding of their losses. A Kryomek tank loosed a concentrated stream of acid from its projector that caught Private Unsda squarely. She writhed in smoke for a second before collapsing to the ground. Not even Interdiction Suits could hold up against that kind of hit. Her squadmate Sguri stood next to a tree and caught the Kryomek tank with a solid recoilless rifle hit. The vehicle slowed and its Bio-Acid Jet disappeared in the explosion. It turned in her direction, giving one of the *Assegai* tanks a perfect side shot. The HAK 1010 barked once and the Kryomek tank disintegrated.

As Digsby looked down the line, he saw that his marines were holding, but the Kryomek were causing more casualties that he wanted to take. The Warmaster had reacted perfectly to the ambush, running its Helions right at the ambushers, while using the Warriors to provide support. Well, he'd been ready for that. Too bad he couldn't get enough vibro mines to cover the entire front of his unit, that would have given the Kryomek something to think about.

"Hector, Achilles move across the road and hunt down the Warmaster. Kill any Kryomek that get in your way, but your primary target is the Warmaster in the brush." With that command from Digsby, two red-bronze shapes moved out of the brush to his right. Talos Mk V CBU's, they could survive where no human could. This pair had been with them since they cleaned out an Agarax factory earlier in the campaign. The grateful factory exec had given them two custom units right off the production line soon thereafter. Hector was a standard Talos, with a recoilless rifle/combustion rifle over/under combination in his right hand, and a heavy flamer in his left hand. Achilles was customized for close in use, with a TAV-2 Mad Dog auto-shotgun head, a Chain Gun right hand and a power claw for his left hand. They moved into the woods on the other side of the road, killing a few Kryomek on the way.

Seeing them on their way, Digsby ordered the Helcat CBU's to close the back door of the ambush. Responding to his voice commands, the three squat shapes moved out of the underbrush and started up the road, killing Kryomek as they went. The Fury led the way, spewing hundreds of rounds from its four chainguns. The Cerberus followed, using its gauss cannon against the Warriors, while its SMGs swatted away any Helions that got too close. Things seemed to be going well when the tank to his left exploded and the woods around it started to burn.

The bugs had gotten their multiple spore launcher vehicles set up. They had found the range and now were blasting the ridge with their pods. Each exploded on contact, throwing millions of tiny spores that burst into flame as soon as they landed on anything. Digsby heard the cries of the tank crew as they emerged from their burning vehicle, alight themselves. They had to stop those spore launchers before they lost all their support vehicles.

"Sergeant Mbini, take your girls down to the right and take out those spore launchers with your rifles."

"Yes sir, we're airborne" called Mbini while her all female weapons squad moved through the woods. Seconds later, round after round of recoilless rifle fire landed on or near the spore launchers. The Warmaster could move them out of harm's way, but that meant losing their support fire. One started to move, while the other kept firing. That told Digsby that the Warmaster was getting overloaded, there were too many cells of Kryomek for it to control. For the first time since the ambush was blown, Digsby felt confident.

"Marines, looks like we're facing just a single Warmaster, so they can't react too well. Keep the pressure on, Achilles and Hector are out tracking that bastard down. Once they kill it, the rest of them will be easy picking." Digsby heard a few ragged cheers over the news, but most of his marines were too busy fighting and dodging Helions in the trees to cheer. While the more intelligent Kryomek would usually go shell down once there was no Warmaster in control, the Helions would keep going after whatever was in front of them until they were killed.

Digsby acknowledged a signal from the remaining tank that the last of the bug tanks was knocked out, and that the APCs were cleaning out the remaining bug APCs. He saw Mbini's girls take out the last Spore Launcher and started to relax. It looked like they were going to hold. The Helcats were advancing up the road, they'd taken out a lot of the Warriors along the way.

Suddenly, the Warmaster emerged from the woods across the road. Before Digsby could even call a warning, its corroder lance caught the Helcats. A perfect shot, the Fury and the Loki went down in a pile of smoking, acid-melted junk. The Cerberus opened up with its gauss cannon, knocking some scales off the Warmaster, but little else. Then the Cerberus was swamped by Warriors with single molecule blades. The Helcats weren't designed for close combat, in seconds the Kryomek had chopped it into pieces. Digsby saw the Cerberus' green light turn red on his tac display, and knew they weren't out of the woods yet. Before he could consider the appropriateness of the cliché, he rapped out new orders.

"Mbini, stay back but use your rifles in that Warmaster. We've got to kill that bastard before he gets to the rest of the platoon." Too late, the Warmaster had already turned his corroder lance against an APC coming down the hill. A

square hit, the vehicle seemed to split in two as the concentrated acid cut through it, incinerating the two crewmen inside. If they didn't stop this Warmaster soon, it could wipe out his entire command.

"Hegger, Tsoppov, with me, we've got to get that Warmaster" called Digsby as he lowered his recoilless rifle over his left shoulder, and started firing his combat rifle at the Warmaster, even as he moved toward his target. Without even looking, loud concussions from either side told him that Hegger and Tsoppov were moving with him. The three moved to a point twenty meters from the Warmaster, peppering his carapace with hits. The combat rifle slugs wouldn't do much but chip off his armor, but that might help a recoilless rifle shell make it into a vital spot. Between his command team and SGT Mbini's squad, eight recoilless rifles were firing at the twisting, dodging target.

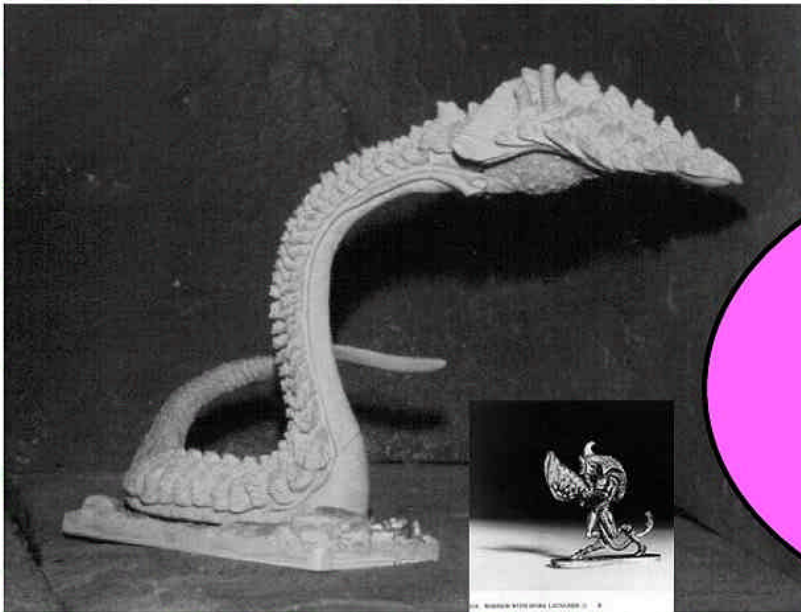
Realizing it was the center of attention, the Warmaster released a cloud of miasma. By concentrating the scents that it used to control the other Kryomek, the Warmaster could create a smoke screen that obscured the humans' vision. Unfortunately for it, Interdict Marines had multi-spectral scanners. After a second's delay to switch sensor types, the fire continued. Spraying the miasma had reduced the Warmaster's ability to control its troops, and that pause in the pace of combat allowed the hard-pressed marines to regain the initiative. The APCs and weapons squad from the front of the ambush were finally moving forward, burning bugs with their flamers as they went.

From the woods behind the Warmaster, the three shot clip of a recoilless rifle was emptied in rapid fire. The Warmaster's head exploded in a fountain of gore, raining acid on everything nearby. The vegetation and road surface smoked and disappeared and the long snake-like trunk sank to the ground. Sturdy Hector had come through again, killing the Warmaster from behind.

The remaining Warriors dropped into a shell down position. Experience had shown that as long as you didn't get within its reach, it wouldn't fight. Marines with flamers carefully lined up their shots, and burned the Warriors where they sat. The Helions went into a frenzy, attacking anything nearby, even each other. The marines killed these as quickly as they could, while the medic went among the dead and injured, seeing who she could save. They had saved Medical Specialist Yydis while protecting a settlement from the first Kryomek raids. She had saved many of their lives since then with her combination of medical skill and something else that no one talked about. Some said she was part alien, or that she used alien tech. Despite the bans on anything having to do with aliens, no one questioned her ability to save the lives of badly injured marines. This platoon was closer to full complement than any other unit on planet due to the lives she'd saved.

It was over. Digsby checked his tac display and realized that the entire action had taken less than ten minutes. Ten minutes and over sixty Kryomek destroyed, including a Warmaster. The Platoon's casualties looked light, thanks to Yydis. Only 3 dead and six wounded, it would have been a lot worse if not for the armor. The vehicle crews were worse off. Six dead and four wounded, they had learned that riding behind iridium-bronze armor doesn't make you completely safe. While they loaded up the dead and wounded on the vehicles, Digsby was already thinking about where he could steal some Helcat CBU's to replace the ones he'd just lost.

The Invasion Continues



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I had the opportunity to meet Alain Henner from Adiken at GenCon SoCal and in addition to some of their figures, reviewed by J Michael Tisdal earlier in this issue, I was able to make use of their new paint set and you'll find my review of it here.

Let's talk about price first. The set will set you back around \$135.00 USD (I've seen it for this price several places on-line) and comes with 60 paints in 17ml eye-dropper bottles. If we're talking just paint alone you're getting them for \$2.25 USD each which I found to be a very reasonable price. You're also getting four sable brushes. If you're like me you go through a lot of brushes (ok, I probably don't take care of mine as well as I should) so any additional brushes are good brushes to me. There are two random human-sized figures also included for you to get started on, but don't expect big 'uns like the Half-Troll to show up in the case. The case itself is also an attraction to this set. It's made of hard plastic and holds everything you get. Inside the case is a set of cardboard dividers that keep each bottle of paint held pretty snugly.

Ok, now that price is out of the way let's talk about quality for a minute. I've been known to favor cheap paints in the past, like the kind you would find at your local craft store or major retailer. Definitely not paint designed for use with miniatures. I've also been under the impression that there was not much difference in paints. I was wrong, way wrong. I've had very limited use of Vallejo paints but I found the Adiken line to be similar enough that I could not tell the difference.

These were all very smooth and covered well. In comparison to craft paints these are much smoother and I've not found any of the Adiken line that contained any grit at all. This was/is something that you're not unlikely to get in a bottle of craft paint. When you're painting something from 'Trading Places' it might not matter too much but on a miniature it will stand out terribly. I'd also rank the Adiken colors above most of the GW paints in my collection. I've had very bad luck with GW paints getting very thick very quickly and while the Adiken paints did dry on the model fairly quickly I have not seen any thickening of the paint itself. I've thrown away several pots of GW paint for this reason and really only use their washes right now. As I've said, I only have limited experience using Vallejo colors but the ones I have used seemed to be right on par with these.

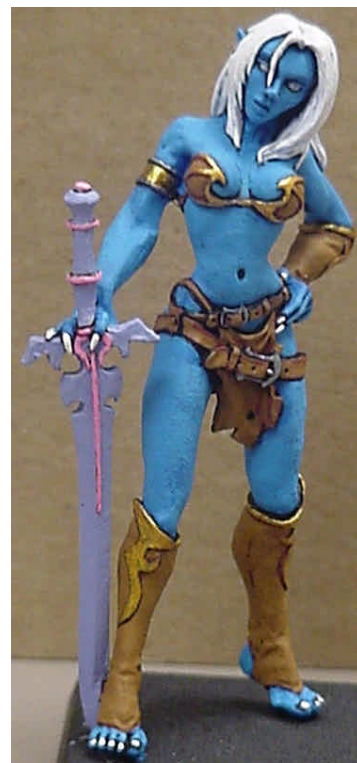
Using really good quality paints has taught me something. It won't make you a better painter just on its own but it will make your paintings better just because you're using a higher quality medium. I noticed that pretty much right off the bat. This is not something that I can attribute just to the Adiken paint as I'm sure it would have also been apparent to me if I was using another paint of similar quality, but my stuff does look better. At heart, I still consider myself a hack and I'll only get really better through more practice and learning new techniques, but the quality of the materials



does matter a lot. All of the models on this page were done using the Adiken line.

For brighter colors I found that the white covered better than the yellow. On the ogre's hair I had gotten splotches of brown on it and had to cover it with white and then go over it with yellow. I could have done it with just the yellow (or not been as sloppy) but it would have taken more coats.

One thing that I really liked about the set (and this would apply to any set of this size) is the variety of colors that are present. I've noticed that over the years I've moved over to using lots of dark reds, browns and black on quite a few models. I would have probably done the same with the Gladiator (above) but having a wide selection of colors on hand lead me to going with a more aquatic-looking set of colors to try to better match him up with carrying a trident. Not sure how well I pulled it off but I was glad to see him in something other than brown/red/black.



Mixing was easy to do with the eye-dropper bottles, just keep track of whatever recipe you concoct so you can duplicate it easily later. You also get an empty eye-dropper bottle if you're looking to mix up a decent quantity of paint for later use. If you're planning on painting a large quantity of figure all on the same paint scheme you'll want to either pick up extras of specific colors or just specific colors. As an example, I'm painting up an army for Reaper's CAV game. My army includes several aircraft, tanks, infantry and combat Assault Vehicles and all are going to be done in a drab green color. I'll run out of what's in one 17ml bottle before getting half of the army painted.

Ok, value is up next. I've found (on-line again) individual bottle of Adiken for sale for \$2.25 USD, the same price as each bottle when bought in the set. So why would you buy the set opposed to just individual bottles? Well, the regular price of the set is \$175.00 USD, but that comes with the brushes, figures and case. Definitely try to find the \$135.00 price if you can. I found the brushes to be of high quality and have been sure to take good care of them. The two figures are nice and all but they're not really a selling point of the set. They are more there to give you something to paint right then and also introduce you to the Adiken line of figures. I was very happy with the plastic case. I was concerned that the plastic clasps might become weak through use and break but this has not been the case at all and I've gone through several openings and closings of the case. The cardboard inserts are the most worrisome thing here as I fear they will rip and tear before anything else fails.

Ok, so do you drop over a hundred dollars on a set of paints? How much would you think about dropping a similar amount on a handful or two of miniatures? I've easily spent two to three times the amount of this set over the years and now looking back wish that I had a set like this years ago. I'm very happy to have this one now and will get great use out of it. So, is it worth picking up? If you're looking to start fresh with a high quality set of paints (like I was even though I didn't really know it at the time) then yes, absolutely it's worth it.



New Unit



Alexandria had been a good soldier. At one time she had been considered Sorscha's equal when both were pre-teen cadets back in the capital. But that was a long time ago. That was before Sorscha showed promise with the magicks, while Alexandria was only good with the fire brands of war, the treated long guns of the nation. Not that rising to the ranks of the vaunted Widowmakers would have been a bad thing. Such a path was one of honour, and Alexandria and her family would have been proud. But then along came Mikhail, a tall, blonde cadet with the deepest blue eyes Alexandria had ever seen. By now a young woman, tall with gunpowder black hair set against a pale skin of winter white, Alexandria was under his spell from the first time their eyes met on the shooting range. The heat between them seemed to melt even the coldest day in Khador.

But, Sorscha too had spied Mikhail, and with her growing reputation, one that would lead her to the sparse ranks of the Warcasters in the years ahead. A few well placed whispers in the ears of a few superiors dreaming of promotions on Sorscha's coat tails, and Alexandria was soon not as favoured. Within months Alexandria found herself stationed to some remote border post high on a mountain ridge keeping a half-hearted eye on the land of Rhul and the Dwarves which never seemed too concerned with the politics of men -- except for the occasional band of rogues sneaking through the mountain passes to blunder small villages. It was a posting that no matter how keen a shot she was, had doomed Alexandria to no where, while far away Sorscha's career was now in charge of giant warjacks, and her free time was free to swim in Mikhail's ocean blue eyes.

Alexandria seethed with each patrol through the mountains. She might have been the ruling officer, but it was over a handful of men, too old, too ill-mannered or to unskilled to be deemed worth taking into a real battle. With each crunch of snow under her boots she seethed with hatred for the witch who had cast her to such a fate. It was on just such a trek through the unchanging pass fate would yet again cast Alexandria a new path to follow. Passing along a low ridge, the mountain touring above, Alexandria spied a stag wondering the valley below. So had one of the men, a fall with no thought but for his stomach, sick of dried rations. He lifted his gun and fired. The stag only bounded away, while above them the mountain was angered by the interruption of the silence.

Snow began to rumble down the mountain face. Alexandria's reflexes kicked it diving for the slight cover a rock overhang just to her left. If the stone above her head did not break off, perhaps she would survive. She heard the screams of her comrades, as their reflexes failed them, and the avalanche of snow carried them to their deaths in the valley the stag had just ran from. Then above her Alexandria heard a cracking sound, looking up just in time to see the protective stone above her give up a piece of itself to the weight of the snow. Then it was blackness as the piece of stone grazed her head on its descent down the mountain.

When Alexandria regained consciousness, her mind felt as though it were wrapped in sable fur. Her head ached. Reaching up to touch her brow she found it swelled and agonizingly sore to the touch. Blood spattered the snow where her head had laid. The bite of a Khadorian winter had snuck through even her heavy clothing, and her joints protested with each movement. Yet move she did, for to stay even in the seeming comfort of decline would be death. She struggled to her feet. Disoriented, she could still see the path behind her was blocked by the snow of the fall.

Her destiny now lay ahead. Slowly she trudged on down the mountain toward the land of the Dwarves. Within a couple of hours Alexandria's legs wanted to abandon the trek. They protested every step, wavering like wheat before a breeze. She focused her mind swearing to survive, in order to find Sorscha and have her heart of a sword for putting her here staggering along with death's shadow her only companion. Alexandria remembered reaching the edge of the trees, seeing the tall tamarack still green in spite of the snow, but then her mind had faltered, her legs slowly twisting her body to the snow. She struggled to regain her feet, but then there was only blackness. Alexandria's eyes finally fought their way open. There was light, and she immediately felt there was warmth. Where was she? Perhaps this was the here after, she thought.

But, then she saw them, eyes watching her from bearded faces. She tried to sit up. Her head spun in protest and she fell back, realizing her head came to rest on a cloth sack filled with some fragrant grass. She shook her head trying to clear it. "Ah Sneg Belyj stirs," she heard one of the bearded ones say. The words were familiar, but made no sense, she must have misheard through the ache of her mind. Slowly she sat up, scanning her surroundings. It was a log building, a fire lace on the far wall burned warm. The furnishings were utilitarian, but sufficient. Around her she noted were a group of Dwarves. They must have found her out there on the mountain and brought her here.

But what were they doing out here, she wondered? Unless, yes, they must be the rogues who harried the border on occasion. Her hand went to her hip seeking her musket, but she found that her gear was not with her. One of the Dwarves told her not to worry, but to rest, to rebuild her strength. In her heart Alexandria knew she had no other choice. In the days ahead she mended. The bump on her head subsided. Her mind cleared. Her strength returned. The Dwarves, although somewhat dour, cared for her more than anyone since her mother, and even she had been eager to see her off to cadet corps for training.

In time, Alexandria began to wonder where the Khadorians were. Surely a missing patrol would be draw out a search party. While it was likely they had found the dead and assumed her body buried, in her mind it was yet another plot by Sorscha, pulling strings to make sure she was never found. Alexandria stood on the porch of the small hut and vowed never to return to Khador unless it was leading an armed force to exact her revenge. But it would not be as Alexandria. She had died on that mountain just as Sorscha had wanted from the outside. Maybe the Dwarf had been right, she was Sneg Belyj -- Snow White the lady from the snows. But, she would need those willing to follow her. She watched as the Dwarves, all seven, sat on crude stumps of woods and cleaned surprisingly well made short arms. Snow White smiled. Perhaps she had her force right in front of her.

Sneg Belyj
Mercenary Character and Unit

Sneg Belyj		CMD 8			
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM
6	5	4	7	14	11

Hunting Rifle
RNG ROF AOE POW

14 1 — 10

Sword
Special POW P+S

— 3 8

Dwarves		CMD 6			
SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM
4	6	6	7	13	14

Short Arm
RNG ROF AOE POW

8 1 — 12

Warhammer
Special POW P+S

— 5 11

Sneg Belyj
(Leader, Hunting Rifle and Sword)

5 Dwarves
(Short Arm and Warhammer)

Point Cost	70
Up to 2 additional Dwarves	10 ea.
Field Allowance	C
Victory Points	2

Mercenary - Sneg Belyj will not work for Khador



SHE'S ONE IN A BILLION.

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1. Who is Wolfe Games?

Wolfe Games is a small game-design firm, located in Indianapolis, IN. I am the President, CEO, lead artist, writer, game designer, legal department, accountant, and business adviser. In other words, no matter where the buck comes from, it stops on my desk. All answers using "our" and "we" are 'royal' in nature, although I consider my playtesters part of my family, even though they're not employees :-)

2. What was your first war/minature game?

I *think* it was Car Wars, but some part of my brain keeps going "no, it was Battletech". I suppose chess doesn't count?

3. What is the product line of Wolfe Games?

Our current product line is our flagship title, Silent Dark, which will be used to introduce players to G.U.T.S. (the Generic Universal Tactical System).

4. What is a short description of "Silent Dark"?

Silent Dark is a tabletop wargame, designed primarily for skirmish-level actions at the 25mm figure scale. The setting of the game is best described as "semi-hard" science-fiction, which is to say that we think it's believable, but it postulates great technological changes during the next 500 years which have had corresponding effects on the methods and practice of warfare.

5. Could you describe G.U.T.S.?

G.U.T.S. stands for "Generic Universal Tactical System". It is a set of skirmish rules that is designed to be as close to "universal" as is practical. It is easy to scale, uses D100 rolls throughout the system, and is integrated with the Design System. You could use the version of G.U.T.S. Core Rules included with the game to simulate a very wide number of conflicts... anything from the Age of Gunpowder onwards, history-wise- it's merely a matter of deciding what stat-levels are legal.

What *can't* you simulate with G.U.T.S.? Well, at the current time, I would judge the rules unsuitable for pre-gunpowder conflicts or fantasy settings. It's not a good design for the pre-gunpowder age, because it doesn't have rules that encourage players to mass their troops into tight formations- rather the opposite. And there aren't any "magic" elements in the current game, which would mean that fantastic games would need additional rules, properly balanced, in order to play well.

6. What were your influences for Silent Dark?

The Design System owes Car Wars, Battletech, Master of Orion II and Total Annihilation debts for ideas and concepts. The Core Rules borrow from Car Wars, Rogue Trader, Fallout, Counter Strike and Total Annihilation.

7. What did you not want to do?

I didn't want to fall into the trap of designing a system that was balanced from the get-go, but impossible to add to. I didn't want to make "Advanced Squad Leader", or re-make 40K, or ape VOR. In short, I wanted a system that I enjoyed playing, that was free of the constrictions imposed by previous skirmish rules, but without all of the tragic flaws that have sunk other attempts to make a universal system. I think Silent Dark does a good job.

8. Could Silent Dark be used in a large scale tactical encounter for a hard SF game as is or would it require minor modifications such as stat conversions?

Well, like any system that differs sharply from the originals, some changes would have to be made, such as stat conversions. But would it be hard? Not at all- it would require minor stat conversions, and maybe an extra house rule or two. G.U.T.S. is very flexible.

9. If there was interested in this, how would you make it available?

If people wish to write up a free "total conversion" for, say, the Star Trek franchise, then they can do so, provided that they've taken the steps needed to keep from being sued by the lawful copyright holders. We think it's great if they put up the house rules and stats for Creatures, Vehicles and Weapons for other systems, so that people can "convert" their armies fairly easily. If we won't get into legal trouble, we'll even host such conversions and distribute them for free.

There *are* limits, though. We do not want players to freely distribute the Design System, or modify it for their private use, without our permission, and we

will take steps to stop players from handing out any part of the Core Rules- if other people want to play a "mod" of our game, then they need to buy our product. It's only fair, after all. But we certainly encourage players to develop Silent Dark into "mods" that will showcase the possibilities of the system.

10. What is unique about Silent Dark?

There are three things that make Silent Dark stand out:

1. The detailed interaction between Creatures and Buildings
2. The Design System,
3. The Action Point system.

None of these things are "unique". They aren't radical innovations. It's just the way that they were brought together.

11. What is your favorite part of the game?

By far, it's the Design System. It allows players to build just about anything you could possibly imagine from lots of sci-fi genre settings, but in a points-balanced way, so that players aren't forced to write up a mod to play, say "Star Wreck: The Last Temptation". It's very flexible, user-friendly and easy to use, because the computer does all of the math, and prevents people from making mistakes. I love it.

I've been polishing it in tandem with rules changes for most of the period of development, and while it could be prettier, it's very powerful and useful. And it totally breaks the mold used by other games, such as Classic Battletech, where you have a very flexible design system coupled to fixed-stat sub-systems, which caused some big problems with power-gaming. You don't need to play Guy X from Army List Y from Company Z to win. Simply revise your army's stats, and develop your own style, to defeat the paper, rocks and scissors of your opponents. It's freedom.

12. There are quite a bit of players who use point-based design systems to build rule-efficient but "silly" game entities. This problem had plagued all points-based systems since creation. How would you address these "Munchkin" players?

Well, one of my playtesters was an "uber-twink", and I included him in the project to help deal with this specific problem. If you don't playtest with somebody who will instinctually seek stat-av solutions, then you will miss great gaping holes in your design, which will only be found later, when such players begin making people miserable. I played most sessions with him, and he was basically instructed to "poke holes" anywhere I'd left easy outs. Needless to say, since I used the Sample Army Lists every game, I usually got my ears boxed, badly. Then I'd take a lot of notes and go back for another round of design work, trying to sort out which of his innovations counted as "hidden fun" and which were "wildly unbalancing". Some of the "hidden" category made it into the Sample Army Lists, and some of it has been deliberately left hidden. We *want* players to seek better designs, not just use ours.

After I'd worked really hard on Points balance, boolean operators in the Design System to prevent certain blatantly "silly" creations, and other efforts, I watched my players to see what armies they ended up building. When even the "uber-twink" started bringing things that were pretty reasonable (by my standards at least), I knew I was doing OK.

So basically every practical effort has been made to limit such problems, and if we see issues arise post-release, we will release a new version of the Design System that fixes any problems we encounter. That's one of the biggest benefits of using a computerized system like this; we don't have to print a new book to fix the area that's most likely to have rough spots. But as I said recently to someone asking about the Design System, it is rather complicated "under the hood", in order to make it easy to use, yet balanced. When asked why I don't just turn the Design System into a series of charts... I tell people that for Vehicles alone, it'd be 20+ pages of charts. They tend to say things like, "but it's so simple?!?"... and then I say, "no, it just looks that way" :-)

13. Who are your playtesters? (in general, no need to name names)

I name all my playtesters in the book, but I think I'll just use pseudonyms here, because of the online format :-)

"Joe" was one of the lead playtesters. He's one of those fellows who puts the "t" in "Twink". I think you described such players as "Munchkins", but let's be

honest and just call him a stats monster. An evil opponent- the kind of guy who actually enjoys pushing a game's numeric side to the absolute limit. "Joe" offered some of the best advice about points costs, balance and design issues. And I knew I was getting pretty close to a well-balanced game when he started showing up with armies that featured a broad mix of arms :-)

"Bubba" was my other lead. He had never, ever played *any* game of this kind before. And better yet, he had a great attitude, and didn't take off after being roundly thrashed a few times, which made his growing experience a very useful yardstick. He offered some of the best advice about the "fun factor" changes made to the game, by telling me when I'd made the game better (or sometimes worse). Without him, I might've made the game needlessly complicated, as it's always easier to be a lazy game designer and make players wade through intricate rules rather than come up with a clever compromise.

Both of these fellows were a very big part of the game design process, but I enlisted just about anybody who said "yes" to free homemade pizza :-). Some of them played more than once, and some of them didn't. The main idea was to get the game in front of as wide a spectrum of possible players as possible: men, women, different age ranges and levels of experience with games of all kinds. The Big Guys do this sort of thing more scientifically, I'm sure, but I tried my best to learn from each player's unique perspective. I watched every game being played, and held mini-interviews afterwards, to see whether a rules change or points change had had a positive difference in the way the game played.

And I continually watched the results, to see if they fit my model for how the game *should* play. When gameplay results began to look roughly like what I'd wanted from the get-go, then I knew I was close, and quit making radical rules changes- I concentrated mainly on the Design System instead. You can over-polish a game and make it unplayable, and it's almost as tempting as being lazy and leaving it messy.

14. What are the early responses from your customers?

People who have played the Sample Game have been very positive thus far. People have said things like "very detailed skirmish game" and "very clearly-written rules", and have praised our examples. On balance, I can honestly say that about 95% of the posts and email I've read about the title have been very positive and hopeful. The responsibility of making these folks happy with the game is a very heavy weight, but a happy one :-)

Now, my game has been flamed- I'm not going to act like everybody thinks Silent Dark is perfect. The fiery stuff thus far has come from people who were hoping for a more RPG-like experience, from what I've gleaned in their posts. I've had complaints about the backstory, the art direction (how people can complain about production values when they haven't seen a production text is beyond me, but it's happened), and other things like that. There isn't a way to answer such people most of the time, as my answers are never satisfactory. In general, the positive comments have far outweighed the negatives, and the negatives will be dealt with as best as possible over time, so long as they don't limit our artistic vision.

I also want to take this opportunity to repeat, in as public a fashion as possible, our positions on some important matters.

1. We do not make, nor will we ever make, miniatures, models, or other value-added content. We believe doing so creates an inherent conflict of interest between game designers and salesmanship, and besmirches our reputation as a firm committed to players. We will license other firms to make miniatures and models, but we will never force players to buy those products via rules changes or special rules. That is a solemn promise.
2. We will make money, but players who buy early will get upgrades that will improve the games they buy, at no cost. We will not suddenly announce that we hate our current rules, and force people to learn an entirely new game design. Such actions are dishonest, and we feel that if a game comes out with our name on it, then players should know that they will not be forced to "upgrade".
3. If we put out new products, we will always try to ensure that they stand on their own. None of that "you need product X to play product Y" stuff.
4. Our artistic integrity comes first. We will not build a game based on marketing data- we will build the games we want to play, even if that means that we don't become wealthy.

15. Why did you decide to make "Silent Dark"?

Like the any work of art, there is a complicated story behind it. Here's the very short version. Trust me, nobody wants to read the long one :-). In December of 2002, I finally brought all of my old miniatures, models and other paraphernalia out of my parent's attic to my home. I hadn't looked at them for 10 years or so, but in a fit of nostalgia, I asked my wife for some paints and brushes for Christmas, which she was kind enough to purchase. As I sat with these lumps of

plastic and metal in very early January, re-teaching myself how to paint, I began to say to myself, "Hey, this is really fun. Why did I quit?" The answer: "It started costing too much, when our budgets began to include things like Cars and Girls. The rules of the game we played kept being changed. Games took too long. We had to endure arguments by players who'd just bought the WhatsThat, Mark 5, which had special/illogical/unfair rules, because they thought that the game company's word was final and that we should accept their judgment." In short, it quit being fun. Such is the tale of many an ex-gamer. I decided to do something about it. I began writing a game design in early January, and presented it to my friends to playtest in early February. It stank, but I rewrote it and tried again. After several months of terrible game design, it began to look decent. By June, it started to look better than anything I'd ever bought from somebody else. In July, I tried to get it published, but the deal fell through by September. I kept going, and by early November, I had made all of the art myself, and was getting into page layout. I found a print-on-demand firm whose deal was more than fair, opened up shop on the Web, and have been gaining speed ever since :-)

16. When did you decide to shelve the hobby?

When I was about 16-17. I kept painting until I was 18, and then totally dropped it. I kept working on graphics and other things for computer games, but I didn't have anything to do with miniatures for most of the decade since.

17. What net-presence do you have?

We are almost entirely web-driven, and will probably remain so. We have an extensive website, at www.wolfegames.com, that showcases our current content, which includes a downloadable PDF "Sample Game", which is a simplified version of Silent Dark, as well as conversion ideas, example material for people who want to understand the Design System better, and other materials. The Internet, in short, makes this company viable, and gives us a way to reach customers that would've been impossible, even 10 years ago.

18. Do you offer post-purchase support (tournaments, player databases, etc)?

We will be developing a number of resources as our audience and resources grow. At this time, we offer a moderated Yahoo Group and lots of free additional downloadable content to players, but eventually we will be adding a formal tournament system, and an online database for Creatures, Vehicles, Weapons and Army Lists that people develop for Silent Dark. We are committed to letting players create and distribute new content for the game, instead of defining such things from 'on high', and this commitment will turn into something more and more tangible as our resources allow.

19. What did you learn about bringing this game to production that really surprised you?

I think the biggest single surprise was when I realized that I'd passed through the veil that exists between home-grown rule sets and something you'd buy. I own a ton of games, including things that I think most people would consider classics, such as Paranoia 2nd Ed., Counter-Strike, Total Annihilation, Car Wars, Battletech (pre-Clan, pre-Citytech rules), Fallout, and Warhammer 40,000 Rogue Trader (that's 1st Ed., for newer players), so my standards for "acceptable" are really high. I don't think that my game is a classic game yet. But I think it's a very good game at its core, and will become steadily better as my company's resources grow large enough to meet the needs of my imagination. I am not delusional- this is 25% of the game I want, in my dreams. Fortunately for customers, that 25% contains the most important bits- the game design and the tools that the player gets to use.

My ultimate goal is not to become rich- if I become rich, but turn former players into embittered non-players like I became, then I have failed. My goal is to become well-known for quality, responsiveness and innovation, so that my player base grows steadily because people feel a loyalty to my games, and know that I will treat them fairly and with the respect that their hard-earned money commands.

20. What's next for Wolfe Games?

As of this writing (12/22/2003) this issue is subject to a poll I'm conducting via my Yahoo Group, but by the time readers see this in the March issue, I will be well into product development of a new product, which may or may not reflect the poll's final results.

I don't say a lot about new products until they're nearly finished, because that's a very private time for me as a designer, and I don't want people to focus their hopes upon vaporware- I want them to see something tangible that's nearly done, or completed. It's fairer than promising something that will never be delivered, and I have to keep my freedom as a designer, or I will end up in the trap that most firms enter- trying to deliver a product that reflects phantom expectations, not an artistic vision. This is riskier from a business side, of course, but the company's in a very good position to take risks.

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Battle Report



Life is good! Mark has asked me to participate in another *Warmachine* battle report. I got to take part in F.R.'s other *Warmachine* battle report, many moons ago, using the Quick Start rules. Now, I'm going to get to play against Herr Theurer using the regular rule set. I have wanted to get some more playing time in on *Warmachine*, but real life sure does get in the way. That's enough complaining. Mark and I decided to go for as large a game as possible. With the model assortment that I currently have I can field 740 points, including two Warcasters. So, that is what we are going to do.

My plan of attack will consist of the K.I.S.S. (Keep It Simple, Stupid) approach. The Deliverers and the Redeemer will pound the Cygnaran forces from a distance while the rest of my fanatics move in to do what they do best: punch the opposition in the brain. The only real subtlety will be in trying to keep the Choir of Menoth near enough to both groups of Warjacks for the Chants to affect them. Last as well as least, I'm keeping my fingers crossed that my inexperience at the game does not put me in too much of a hole. **Let's get it on!**



Brian's Deployment

I know that Mark has been accumulating units of Long Gunners and Gun Mage-like models to complement his 'jacks. I decided to start at the top and work my way down. As The High Reclaimer is still in the mail my choices for warcasters defaulted to High Exemplar Kreoss and Grand Scrutator Severius. That name, Scrutator, seems like something indecent that you would do on a farm. But, I digress. I believe that I will have the advantage when it comes to the voodoo portion of the program because between Kreoss and Severius I will have fifteen Focus points. Mark will have Haley and Stryker on the board. The two of them total only thirteen Focus points. I also believe that Kreoss' and Severius' Feats are better than the Cygnaran Warcasters'. Severius' Feat, *Divine Might*, can be a game breaker since it keeps all enemy warcasters in his control area from gaining Focus points and casting/channeling spells for one turn. Kreoss' ability to knock down all enemy models in his control area will come in very handy since models that are prone only have a Defense of 5. Even a Skyhammer can hit Defense 5. Speaking of Skyhammers I will bring all that I can. I bring a base unit of six Deliverers (I can't wait for the rest of them to arrive in the mail). Since the Redeemer Warjack also carries Skyhammers he gets to come along for the ride.

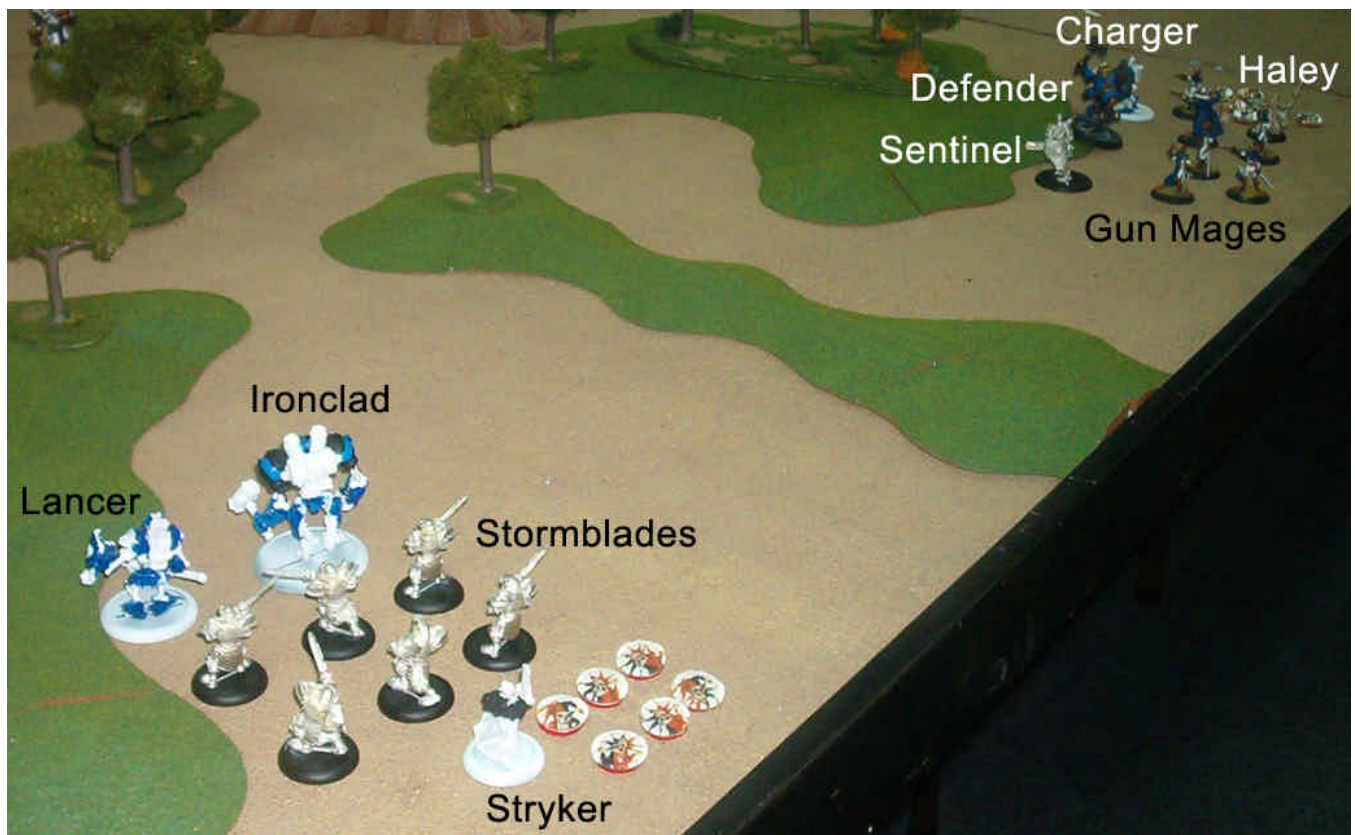
Because Deliverers and the Redeemer both have the Inaccurate (-4 to ranged attacks) ability I will need to find a place with clear lanes of fire for them and just leave them in place so I can get the aiming bonus for not moving. I will send the Redeemer with Severius because he has more Focus than Kreoss and that extra Focus can mean launching several more Skyhammers over the course of the game. To keep the Redeemer and Severius company will be a Vanquisher and a Revenger (for channeling purposes). Kreoss' battle group will consist of a Crusader and a Repenter. To help out all of the Warjacks I will field a full Choir of Menoth. Since I have not used the Choir before, I'm very interested in seeing how well the Choir works at augmenting my 'jacks. The rest of my points will go to a full, ten man squad of Temple Flameguard and, last, but certainly not least, my freshly painted Paladin of the Order of the Wall (a truly lovely model).

Ok, so here I am fresh (well fairly fresh) off of a win and a loss at GenCon SoCal and am more confident in my abilities at Warmachine after gaining a bit, actually a lot, of experience from getting to play with people outside my regular group. It's amazing what a change in opponents will do for your knowledge of the game. It seems that no matter what the game, I always learn something more from playing with 'new' opponents. Hopefully that will turn into a severe ass-kicking for Brian!

Getting up to 740 (or so points) to match Brian should not be a problem, especially since I loaded up on goodies at GenCon. In addition to most of the available Cygnar troops I also have Boomhowler and his crew along with Herne & Jonne that I can use to bolster my forces. I've used Boomhowler once before and they got roasted but that was primarily due to my ineptness in their deployment and use. I think I'll hold off on them for a while. It's true that I have a new unit of Long Gunners but they are currently off being painted so they are off the list also.

I've decided to build two battlegroups, each centered around their own Warcaster. First up will be Stryker and a hand-to-hand force that will include a full unit of Stormblades, an Ironclad and a Lancer. Use of Stryker's feat, *Invincibility*, at the right time will make this group all but impenetrable. Right time, yeah, that's the key to this and one that I have yet to master at Warmachine. Overall, there's nothing too subtle about this group. They are very much a hammer that needs to be put to use in very aggressive fashion.

For group number two I'll grab Haley as their Warcaster and build it around ranged fire capability. With her feat, *Blitz*, they should be able to throw down a withering hail of fire and hopefully kick Brian in the brain. I've had pretty good luck with the Gun Mages so we'll start with a full boat of them. Yes, you will notice correctly that my Gun Mages are currently made up of Confrontation

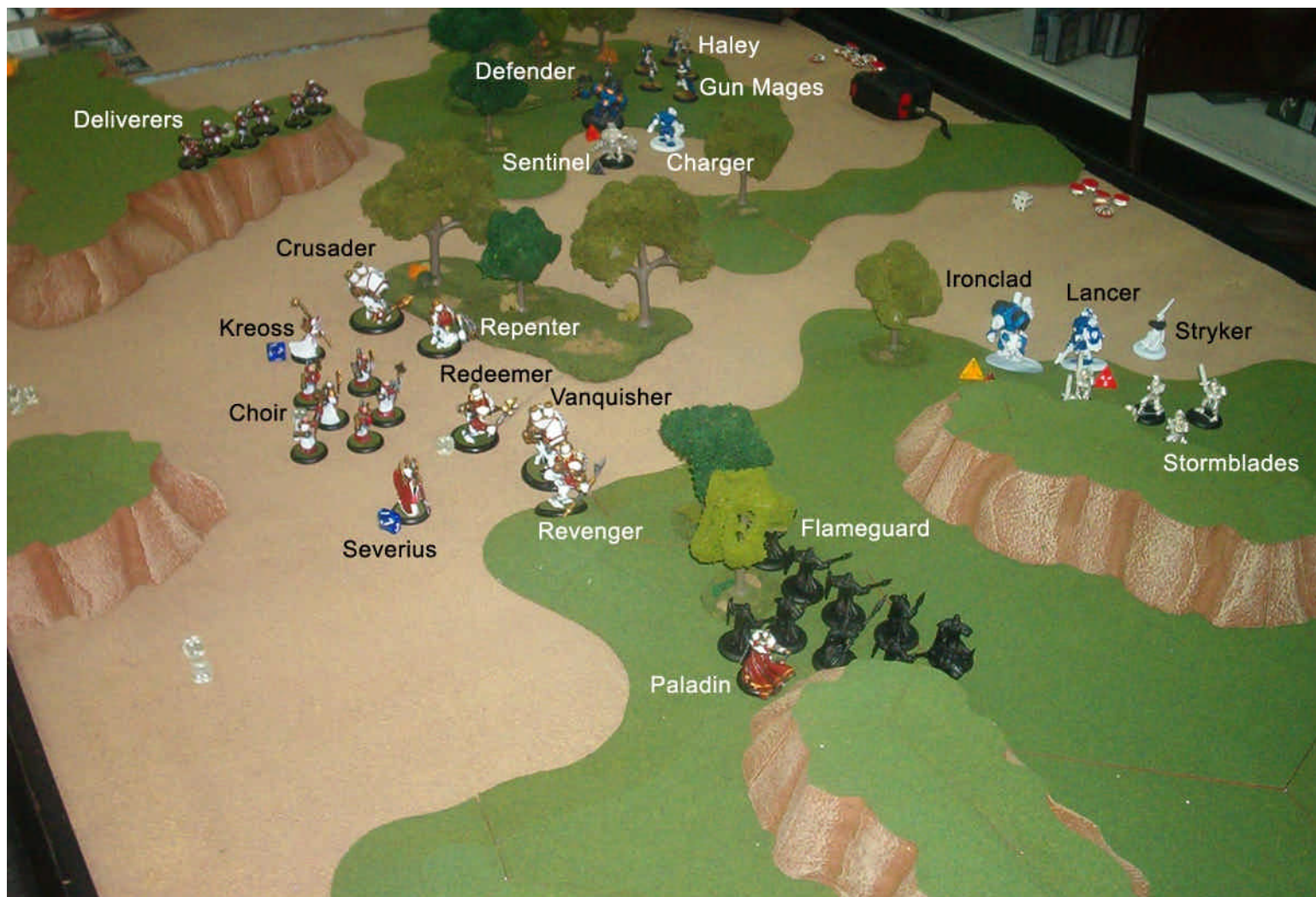


Mark's Deployment

figures. Well, I don't have the *real* Gun Mages yet and these do look very nice so gun tottin' mages they are. On the 'jack side of things I'll be going with a Defender, a Charger and a Sentinel. I've made the mistake of taking too few Warjacks and too many troops before and suffered mightily for it.

I'm hoping that this will strike a nice effective balance. I've also been able to make particularly good use out of Haley's *Chain Lightning* spell so hopefully it will also assist in putting some Menoth heads to bed. Below is the complete deployment of forces prior to the start of the game.





Turn 1

I (Mark) ended up starting turn one and as you might expect it was a lot of moving for both sides but not too much else. The final positions for turn 1 can be seen in the picture above.

Cygnar

Haley started off by allocating 1 Focus to each of the Charger, Sentinel and Defender. Stryker did not allocate any Focus to either of the 'jacks in his battle group but he did start off the turn by casting *Blur* on the Ironclad and Lancer and then *Arcane Shield* on the Ironclad to boost his ARM to 21. Everyone in Stryker's battle group then advanced towards the enemy. Haley toughened up the Defender and Sentinel with *Arcane Shield* and then she advanced. All three of her 'jacks used their Focus to run up the field while to use the trees to keep from being seen too much. The Gun Mages also ran forward ending up right behind the Warjacks.

Menoth

Between his two Warcasters Brian allocated 1 Focus to The Repenter, Crusader, Vanquisher and Revenger and two to the Redeemer. Kreoss then tossed *Protection of Menoth* onto the Deliverers and the Choir while Severius cast *Holy Vigil* on the Redeemer. A good bit of running then ensued with the Deliverers running up to the edge of the hill to get into position to light their fireworks on the Repenter and Crusader both chugged along at an accelerated rate. The Flameguard and Paladin also took to running in my direction. Dang, a Movement of 6 out of both of them sees them crossing a lot of ground rather quickly. The Revenger and Vanquisher also run forward but the Redeemer favors a normal move and fires off a round in the direction of Stryker's battle group but is out of range, thankfully. The Choir of Menoth also performed a standard move and then took out their hymnals to sing that oldie but goodie, *Safe Passage*. Everyone follow the bouncing ball and sing along.

Turn 2

Maps of turn 2 can be seen at the top and bottom of the following page.

Alright, let's see if our ranged group can drop some of those pesky Deliverers before they rain death down upon us. But before that, let's not forget about Focus allocation. Haley gave three to the Sentinel and one each to the Defender and Charger. Again, Stryker did not allocate any, preferring to save them for spells instead.

The Defender, Sentinel and Charger all moved up a bit and then unloaded on the Deliverers. Each also added +1d6 to their chances to hit and believe it or not every single one of them missed! I kid you not. Not one damn hit out of all sorts of fire directed towards the top of that hill. What a disappointment. The Gun Mages ran towards the center of the board in an effort to get into position to support Stryker's group. Haley maintained the protective spells that were cast in turn 1 and that depleted her Focus pool. She then moved up towards her Warjacks.

Stryker, knowing that Haley's group had just been totally ineffective had to begin setting up some kind of decent offensive. That started with the Stormblades heading up the hill so they could then later head down into the Menoth troops and then saw the Ironclad and Lancer advance just a bit towards the enemy, but not very much because I was trying to get into position to charge rather than be charged. Stryker paid the upkeep on the three spells cast in turn 1 and added *Arcane Shield* to the Lancer before advancing himself.

Menoth

The only Menoth Warjacks to receive Focus points this turn were the Vanquisher, which got 1, and the Redeemer who got 2. The Redeemer started off this turn's activity for Menoth by firing at the Lancer that I had just carefully moved up right into range! The rocket missed the 'jack but ended up hitting one Stormblade after deviating. His rather decent ARM rating saved

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A *Shield Wall* was formed by some of the Flameguard and the Paladin moved up into position. The Choir of Menoth kept on moving but also sang the second verse of *Safe Passage*.

The Crusader and Repenter both moved forward and the Repenter fired at, but missed, the Sentinel. Kreoss moved up and cast *Cleansing Flame* at the Sentinel. He hit and also clipped the Charger who was not damaged but did cause 4 points of damage to the Sentinel in location 3.

Ok, time to bring the pain in the form of the Deliverers. The first took a shot at the Defender and hit but was not able to penetrate. The remaining five Deliverers took aim at the Charger and let him have it. Of the four that hit, one bounced and the three others caused damage as can be seen on the Datacard below.

A full view of the battlefield aft the end of Turn 2 can be seen at the top of the next page.

him. The Redeemer's second shot (made available through a Focus point) also deviated but managed to hit a Stormblade and still clip the Lancer. His last Focus point was used to add +1d6 damage to the Stormblade and it made him very dead. The reduced damage of the deviated shot bounced off of the Lancer though.

The Vanquisher moved up and fired, also at the Stormblades and even with adding +1d6 to his chances to hit ended up missing. Of course, the shot deviated and covered three other Stormblades and ended up killing the Leader!

The Revenger just moved up, as did Severius but he also cast *Ashes to Ashes*, channeled through the Revenger and it hit and killed all four of the remaining Stormblades. It also hit the Lancer but caused no damage.



Charger Cygnar Light Warjack

SPD	STR	MAT	RAT	DEF	ARM	
6	8	5	5	13	16	
<div><div></div><div>DUAL CANNON</div></div>						
<div><div></div><div>RNG ROF AOE POW</div></div>						
<div><div>LFT</div><div>12</div><div>2</div><div>—</div><div>12</div></div>						
<div><div></div><div>BATTLE HAMMER</div></div>						
<div><div></div><div>Special POW P+S</div></div>						
<div><div>RT</div><div>—</div><div>4</div><div>12</div></div>						

SYSTEM STATUS

Left Arm(L)

Right Arm(R)

Cortex(C)

Movement(M)

DAMAGE

1 2 3 4 5 6

Sentinel Cygnar Light Warjack

Chain Gun
+Strafe

SYSTEM STATUS

Left Arm(L) ☐

Right Arm(R) ☐

Cortex(C) ☐

Movement(M) ☐

DAMAGE

1	2	3	4	5	6
				</	



Turn 3

Losing all of the Stormblades, pretty much all at once, sucked badly. Yes, very much my own fault for sticking them out there but I have to credit Brian for taking care of them in short order. Things need to turn around, and quickly!

The Charger and Sentinel were each allocated a single Focus point and that was it.

Haley activated first and after last turn's pathetic shooting display decided that using her *Blitz* feat would rectify the matter by loosing twice as many shots into the area. She started off by casting Chain Lightning at the Deliverers and promptly missed. Things did not improve from there. She also missed when shooting at them with her pistol.

The Charger, Sentinel and Defender all moved into position to fire at Kreoss and each did their best to put him down and gain control over much of this side of the battlefield. You would think that even with Kreoss getting a concealment bonus that with twice the normal number of shots I would have been able to hit him at least once. I would have thought that too but I did not hit, not even once. I think that I can now see very clearly how this day is going to go ☹

Over on the other side of the board Stryker had the Lancer move up and then he cast *Earthquake* through the 'jack and lots of Menoth troops went all weak in the knees and hit the group. The picture to the right shows this. Make careful note of this particular moment in time. It is my highlight for the game and I won't be denied. The Ironclad then moved up but without a Focus point he could not charge in.

The Gun Mages were able, four of them anyway, to unleash *Arcane Storm* on the Choir of Menoth and actually managed to kill three of them but their religious fervor helped to keep them from running away.

Menoth

Brian allocated Focus points as needed but seeing Haley's ass hanging out there in the wind got him right to work. Things started off with Kreoss using his feat, *Menoth's Wrath*, to knock down Haley and all three of her Warjacks. Oh, the hits just keep on comin' don't they?



Nice aerial shot of my flank collapsing

Oh yes, they do! Above you can see the very nice collapse of my flank. The Deliverers then pointed their boomsticks at Haley and let fly. The first hit her but the second blew up in its owner's hands and killed him and one of his neighbors. The next two hit Miss Haley and killed her. The last hit the Charger and caused 3 points of damage to location 5.

The Repenter then moved up and flamed the Sentinel and the Defender. The Defender (now inert like the other two in Haley's group) took no damage but the Sentinel took 8 more points of damage, this time to location 6.

Not to be denied, the Crusader charged the inert Sentinel and pounded him like there was no tomorrow. Two attacks later, aided by Focus, the Sentinel took enough damage to fill all of his damage boxes. All sorts of wrecked, it was.

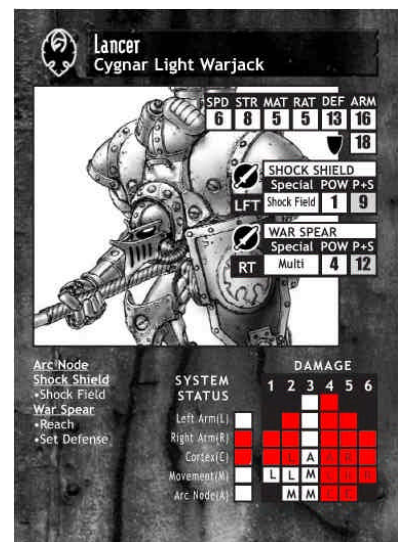
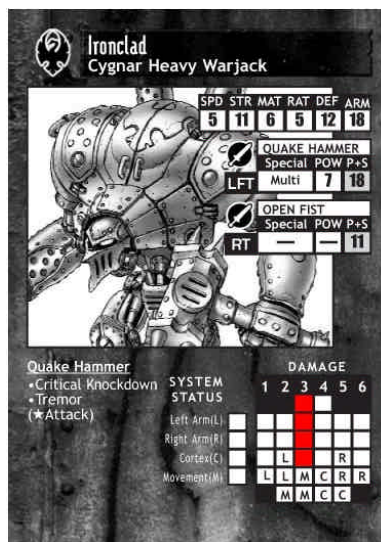
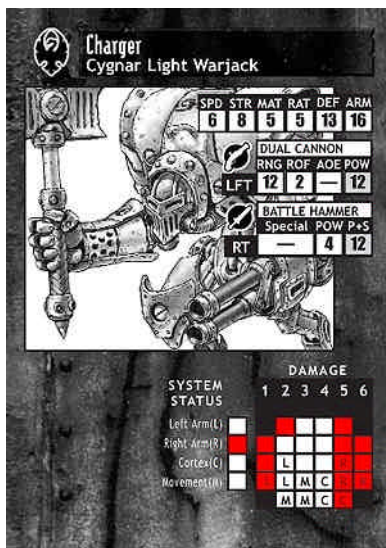
Turning to another page in their hymnals the Choir of Menoth started singing *Infuse* and then Severius cast *Immolation* on the Lancer but it caused no damage. To keep from ending his activation on a sour note Severius then used his feat, *Divine Might*, to make sure that Stryker would surely suck eggs next turn.

The Redeemer was next and he let rockets fly at the Gun Mages that just shot up the Choir. Using all of his Focus points for the turn it made four of the Gun Mages turn into a nice red mist and then hit the Lancer for 3 points to location 2. Just spreadin' the love around.

Big Daddy Vanquisher then walked up to the Lancer and Ironclad and did his spinning torso trick (Circular Strike) and hit both 'jacks and then added +1d6 to each damage roll. This resulted in 4 points to location 3 on the Ironclad and 16 whopping points of damage to the Lancer in location 4.

All of Brian's guys that fell over in the *Earthquake* now stood up and some of the Flameguard moved up the hill.

Datacards for my busted-ass 'jacks, except the Sentinel who was now scrap metal can be seen on the next page along with a full battlefield view of the ass whippin' that Brian was dealing out to me.



Turn 4

Ok, how can I salvage this game? Salvage the game?!? How in blazes can I salvage any shred of dignity after the beating that I've endured so far? Well, maybe by Stryker and his remaining 'jacks taking down as many Menoth scum as possible before he exits this world.

Since I get absolutely zero Focus for this turn and I'm down to less than half of my army my choices are not only severely limited but also quite easy to sit down and take care of.

First, Stryker will use his *Invincible* feat and yes I'm well aware that it's at least one turn too late, maybe even two. He heads up the hill and confronts the Flameguard and promptly misses. Hey, at least I'm being consistent here. It's not like I'm running hot and cold. Just cold, cold, cold!

The Ironclad swings back at the Vanquisher and actually hits causing a massive 2 points of damage to location 1. His smaller companion, the Lancer,

tries to pull off the same thing but misses, imagine my surprise. Of the two remaining Gun Mages the fallen one gets up and moves forward and the one that did not get knocked down fires off a shot at the Choir and actually kills one.

Menoth

Let the remaining ass kicking now commence!

Brian allocates all sorts of Focus points across many Warjacks and doesn't worry much in the way of keeping existing spell up. The Deliverers run down the hill in pursuit of the Gun Mages and the 'jacks and Kreoss over on that side of the board also move and run towards the center of the battlefield.

The Redeemer, loaded up with 2 Focus points, unloads twice on the Gun Mages and misses twice! Oh wonder of wonders. The Revenger charges the very wobbly Lancer and proceeds to wreck the light Warjack. It takes a poke at the Ironclad but does not manage to damage the heavy Warjack.

The Vanquisher then takes over for the Revenger and pounds on the Ironclad a bit more and hits twice but only causes a total of 3 points of damage.

In his one heroic, and useful, act for the game the Paladin get to and smacks up Stryker for 3 points of damage. Thankfully, Stryker is a bit sturdier than the fragile Miss Haley and he might just make it out of the game. Well, maybe not considering he's standing next to three Flameguard and the leader and another unit member get up to the remaining Cygnar commander. Through several attacks there are a bunch of misses and with his increased ARM those attacks that manage to hit him bounce off. So, with the end of turn 4 and the Cygnar forces being decimated we called the game a resounding victory for Menoth. Oh, and if you're wondering about a picture for the end of turn four just close your eyes and imagine lots of dead Cygnar troops and busted up 'jacks with smiling Menoth men and machines milling around. Ok, got that picture in your head? That's what it looked like.

Brian's Post-Game Musings

Well, that is what I call, "One free brutal beating." Even had I lost I would still label the game as "fun." I can't recall the last time I was on the delivering end of this kind of lopsided game. I began to feel bad for Mark for the way his dice were treating him. But, he has seen my dice do the same thing to me on plenty of occasions. I have to give Mark a lot of credit for not losing his composure while he was getting "roshambeauxed". I believe that his description of his side of the game went something along the lines of, "Now, I know how Ned Beatty felt in *Deliverance*."

Things went pretty much as I had hoped on my side. My simple plan did not fail me. All of my units pretty much did what they were supposed to do. All of my Warjacks dealt out damage. The Redeemer amused both, Mark and me. The Skyhammer, on the Redeemer, with its ROF of three and the Inaccurate ability is like firing off a Roman candle. Lots of missiles fly, but you have no idea where they're going to land. Luckily for me the rockets, when they did miss, usually did not miss by a lot. Most of the misses still managed to generate damage on Mark's forces. I was right about my warcasters' feats. They made a big difference in my half of turn three and Mark's part of turn four. Victoria being prone, due to Kreoss' Feat, made a lovely target for the Deliverers and they took care of her. Also, Severius' Feat meant that Mark would be unable to regenerate Focus points for Stryker in turn four. That made a HUGE difference. I was right about *Divine Might* being very powerful. Even Mark's use of Haley's feat in turn three (before she got herself perished) and Stryker's use of his feat in turn four could not turn the tide back in the favor of Cygnar.

The slowness of the Protectorate 'jacks is still a concern for me, but I believe that it may be made up for by their sturdiness. This showed in that none of my Warjacks were destroyed in the course of the fight. At games end I had lost a total of six models and two of those were from the misfire of a Skyhammer. This experience had just gone to further reinforce my enjoyment of the Warmachine rules and it has given me new impetus to get the rest of my models painted. Also, in the future I want to add another Paladin, Redeemer and Vanquisher to my collection. I might even add another Choir. They're cheap to field AND they are effective. I now know how much Mark loves being on the receiving end of Skyhammers. Ha! Will Mark ask me to do another battle report with him in the future? Who knows? Since I've beaten him in both the battle reports that he and I have played, that may be \$64 question.

Mark's Post-Game Musings

To quote Joe Pesci in *My Cousin Vinny*, "I could use a good ass kicking" and boy did I get one! Man, I went down as easy as the Broncos and Cowboys did in the Wildcard games this year. Wow! That's the first word that comes to mind after a game like that. Not, "Well, I was screwed out of that one" or "What a crock" but just a wide-eyed "Wow!" That was as brutal a beating as I've ever been involved in. My dice did suck for pretty much the whole game but after they abandoned me it was no longer too much of a surprise when they stayed gone. Frustrating? Of course, but after a while it was more of a surprise when I actually hit or damaged something. Having Haley's battle group com-

pletely blow chunks for two turns in a row was just stupefying and unprecedented. Brian had two suggestions for improvements and they boiled down to, "roll better" (yeah, thanks a lot for that one Captain Obvious) and "Of course you lost, you brought a girl to the fight." Haley has historically done pretty well for me but her slightly lower damage (when compared to Stryker) is likely what helped do her in. Of course, me hanging her out there on an all or nothing type maneuver didn't help matters but if I had pulled it off as I had hoped (and I figure I had a reasonable chance for success) I would be signing her praises and Brian would be recalling her battlefield heroics. I would have really liked to have the Long Gunners and even a unit of Trenchers in this fight. The Gun Mages did fine once they got to shoot at someone but they folded quickly under fire from the Redeemer. I'll have to play some more games to decide the right balance to strike between units and Warjacks. I just haven't found the sweet spot yet. Yet another excuse to play more games of Warmachine! Oh, Brian, a *Scrutator*, "One who scrutinizes; a close examiner or inquirer." It has nothing to do with an oversexed farmer and a root vegetable. And yes, Brian and I will be playing again, hopefully soon!

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The advertisement features two highly detailed miniature models. The top model is a large, green, heavily armored warrior (likely a Redeemer) holding a large, glowing red sword. The bottom model is a smaller, more intricate figure, possibly a warcaster or a different type of warrior, also with detailed armor and weapons. The background is dark with some light effects, suggesting a battlefield or a dramatic scene.



Battle Report



Dark Age Games is a new gaming company that has produced a miniatures game based on the art and themes of Brom's Dark Age world. It's a dark and ruined world where different factions and different races battle to survive. Free Rules and Free Gaming Aids, including full Faction Forcelists, are available for download at <http://www.dark-age.com>

For many months the first meeting between Saint John and the Brood has been building. Rumors have been followed. Scouts have been sent, and now, the initial test of arms is about to begin. Both sides have anticipated and planned for this battle, both have been waiting for the chance to prove their superiority over their new enemies. There would be no mercy, no quarter given on the desert battlefield in which these two Factions find themselves battling for survival and supremacy.

The forces of Saint John include the legendary Saint himself, equipped with his trademark power Maul and Shield. He brought with him his personal Weaponsmith to provide some seriously long-ranged fire power, really to be a sniper of sorts. As a bodyguard he had a squad of three Strikes to add some close-combat punch. Also included was a squad of two of his elite Haniels with their high-powered Ripper Guns. And finally, to provide a little more ranged combat punch, a squad of three Coils with their long-range Death Disks was assigned to the battle group.

Meeting them on the battlefield, the Brood was commanded by Murtros. He had decided to bring a variety of troops with him to test the mettle of his newfound opponent. Two Ratchets were there to bring in poisoned weapons, and two Sawblades were there to provide some staying power in melee. Grist was attached to the force to provide some area coverage with their Bio-repulsors, while Pud Throwers would provide a different kind of ranged support by hurling small beasties into the fray. In short, the force was equipped to test the abilities of any enemy it might fight against.

Using alternating deployment, the Forsaken set the Weaponsmith right in the middle of their deployment zone, on a hill for a wide field of fire. Grist was deployed on the Brood right flank, also on a hill. The Strikes were placed on the Forsaken right flank. Ratchets were set up about midway between the center and the Brood left flank. The Coils were set up midway between the center and the Forsaken left flank. Murtros established his position dead center of the Brood deployment area. St. John was placed to the right of the Strikes acting as his bodyguard. Sawblades were placed between the Grist and Murtros. The Haniels were placed behind cover but opposite the Grist, on the Forsaken left flank. The Pud Throwers were on the Brood left flank, across from the Strikes and Saint John. The Puds of course were not deployed; they would not enter the battle area until after hurled by the Throwers.

It was decided that there would be no turn limit to this game. The initial contact by Saint John and the Brood would be a battle to death, no questions asked. Before the forces were chosen, it was also established that the Brood force would use the modified unit sizes discussed at the Dark Age Forum, wherein Ratchets and Pud Throwers could be fielded in a minimum unit size of two instead of four. And finally, it was decided that the weather for this particular game could only be described as "a beautiful, clear day" and that subsequently range modifiers would not apply to any ranged combat that might take place.

The first turn of the game started with Lingering Effects. This early on, the only thing that needed to be resolved in this phase was where St. John would allocate power, and he chose to route it to the Power Shield. The Brood then won the Initiative roll for the turn, and Darkhost nominated St. John to activate first. The mighty Saint duly advanced, but used his last two AP to also activate the Strikes, who also advanced forward. The Ratchets, across from the two activated units, and then moved forward. The Haniels also



moved forward, trying to keep the walls between them and the Grist with those deadly Bio-repulsors. The Sawblades then advanced, followed by the Coils who did likewise. The Grist relocated themselves a little on their hill, setting up better fire opportunities for the following turn. The Weaponsmith took a shot at the Sawblades, but lacked the range to hit, so instead advanced with his remaining AP. Murtros followed up the Ratchet's advance, and finally the Pud Throwers hurled some Puds at Saint John, but lacking range they instead scattered and were lurking near the Forsaken units, ready to pounce in the following Lingering Effects phase. While this turn was fairly uneventful, it did allow both forces to re-locate their various units to set up some serious fighting for Turn Two.

The Lingering Effects phase of Turn Two was very exciting indeed. After Saint John powered up his Shield again, the Puds attacked the Strikes, and between the voracious little critters, they managed to kill one of the Forsaken elite warriors. How embarrassing! But the Forsaken won the Initiative roll this



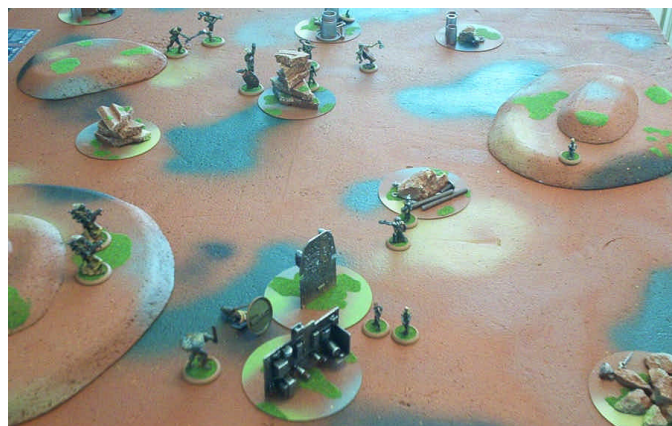
time around, so maybe a difference could be made. The Coils activated, shooting at the Sawblades and causing one wound. The Sawblades then advanced towards the Haniels. The Weaponsmith, after a small repositioning, now had range and line of sight to the Sawblades. He had the AP, he took the shot, and he missed! The Grist then took their opportunity to shoot, this time at the Coils. The first shot missed, but the resulting scatter managed to hit both the original target and another Coil, resulting in the death of one of them. The other Bio-repulsor shot missed and scattered wide.



The Haniels then activated, the first having clear line of sight to a Sawblade and killing him outright with two successful shots. The second Haniel moved into position to shoot the other Sawblade, but when the shot was taken, a high roll resulted in a Malfunction result. He shot himself in the foot! But his armor held out and no harm was done. The Pud Throwers then hurled a lone Pud at Saint John, but it not only missed but scattered 18 cm, it would be a few turns before that Pud saw any action. The Strikes then activated, the first killing both Puds in contact before advancing towards Murtros, and the second also advancing towards the Brood leader.

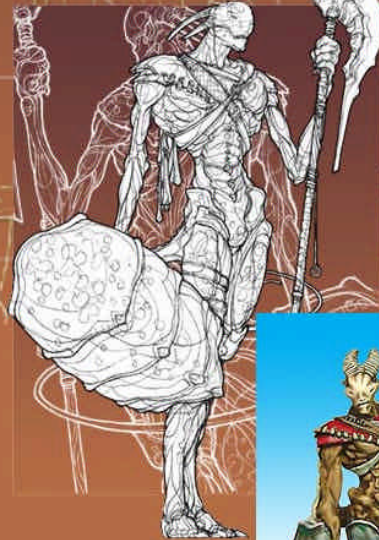


Murtros then charged the Strikes, easily dispatching the first and ready to charge the second. Saint John then advanced towards Murtros, took a shot at him with his Death Disk, but missed. Finally, the first Ratchet charged one of the Strikes, but made no hits, and the second advanced in the footsteps of the first. By the end of the second Turn, both sides have suffered casualties but they are both still looking strong. The big hitters, Murtros and Saint John, are still in good shape, and aside from the Strikes and the Sawblades, the units on both sides are still fresh.



It was in Turn Three that the fortunes would change and the direction of the battle decided. The Lingering Effects phase was fairly uneventful; the dead Sawblade failed his regeneration roll and was removed from the game, the lone Pud advanced in the direction of Saint John, and the Saint himself powered up his Power Maul in anticipation of laying the smack down on the Brood. The Brood won the Initiative this time around, and Darkhost promptly activated the Ratchets. The first spent his AP killing the last Strike, while the second charged Saint John. When he hit, John saved against the blow, but





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received a Poison counter that would have to be resolved in the next Lingering Effects phase. The Haniels then activated, and spent their entire store of AP killing the second Sawblade. Hopefully this one would stay down, too. The Gristles then took their shots at the Haniels, the first missed and scattered wide, the second Malfunctioned but managed to escape injury with some very lucky armor rolls. Saint John then activated, and using his mighty powered-up Power Maul he took a valiant swing at the ratchet attacking him and... Malfunctioned! Saint John managed to injure himself with his hammer on his first attack of the game. He made a second attack and... Malfunctioned! A fortuitous armor save prevented injury this time around. His third attack resulted in... another Malfunction! And another successful armor roll. Finally, with 1 AP left, Saint John took another swing at the Ratchet and... hit! The Ratchet was killed with one mighty blow of his Power Maul. If I could have gotten that result on the first swing, it would have been a whole different game. With Saint John out in the open now, the Pud Throwers both launched their small beasties at him, but they both scattered wide and would have to wait until later to attack. The Coils took aim at the Gristles, and with a couple of successful shots managed to kill both of them. But would they stay dead? Their job on this flank done, the Coils advanced towards the melee on the other side of the battlefield. Murtros for his part decided to get the drop on Saint John, charged him, caused him another injury, Malfunctioned with the second swing of his Kitache Staff, but made the armor roll and took no injury. Finally the Weaponsmith took some shots at the remaining Ratchet, but only hit once and it was to no effect. It was looking bad for the Forsaken, Saint John was down to one HP, the Strikes were gone, and the Coils were reduced. The Brood had several models down, but there was always the chance they would regenerate.



Initiative went to the Brood, with the newly regenerated Sawblade charging the closest Haniel. Darkhost rolled six attack dice during the course of the activation, and only managed to cause one wound. Saint John then activated, but caused no damage against Murtros Maybe powering the Maul would have been a better idea? The surviving Ratchet then charged Saint John and managed to roll a "1" to hit, which was a critical success and allowed no armor roll to be made. John, with only one HP at the start of the turn, was dead! The Ratchet used his remaining AP to move towards the Weaponsmith. The Weaponsmith then fired his God's Wrath Assault rifle on the "full auto" mode, squeezing off six shots in total, killing the Ratchet, wounding Murtros, and suffering a Malfunction and injuring himself. So everyone involved in the shooting took some form of damage. Murtros then activated, moved towards the Coils, and used the Reach (10) feature of his Kitache staff to attack them in melee from 10cm away. The Coil made a successful armor roll and suffered no injury. The Coils then activated, and failed their test against Murtros' Cause Fear ability. All of their target numbers would be reduced by 2 until they had a chance to test again. But by aiming their shots, they did manage to cause 1 wound against Murtros before retreating from the monstrous Brood leader. The Pud Throwers moved towards the central area where Murtros was now engaging the Coils. The Haniels then activated, the first attacking the Sawblade in contact. The hit connected, but the Sawblade made the armor roll. The downside of melee against Sawblades is that they spray Acid Blood when they are hit, and in this case the Acid Blood killed the Haniel, who only had 1 HP left. The second Haniel took two shots with his Ripper Gun and killed the Sawblade. Again. So at the end of Turn Four, great carnage had been committed by both sides. The Brood still had a full complement of Pud Throwers, but Murtros was down to 1 HP. The Forsaken were almost gone with only the Weaponsmith, two Coils, and a lone Haniel to hold the line.

Turn Five opened with several Lingering Effects to resolve. The dead Sawblade regenerated, back on his feet again with 1 HP. Murtros regenerated 1 HP. The dead Ratchet regenerated and was back on his feet. Finally, the Puds in play advanced towards the central area. The Initiative roll was won by the Brood, and Darkhost wasted no time charging Murtros right into the Coils. After a whirlwind melee, both Coils were dead and Murtros stood alone. The Weaponsmith then activated, took his shots first at the ratchet, killing the Brood warrior yet again, took a shot at a Pud, killed it, and then Malfunctioned again, which resulted in his death. In

effect, the Weaponsmith Malfunctioned himself to death! The Sawblade then charged the Haniel, promptly dispatched him, and secured an uncontested Brood victory. At the end of turn five, the brood had killed 482 points of Forsaken, while the Forsaken had only permanently killed 185 points of Brood.



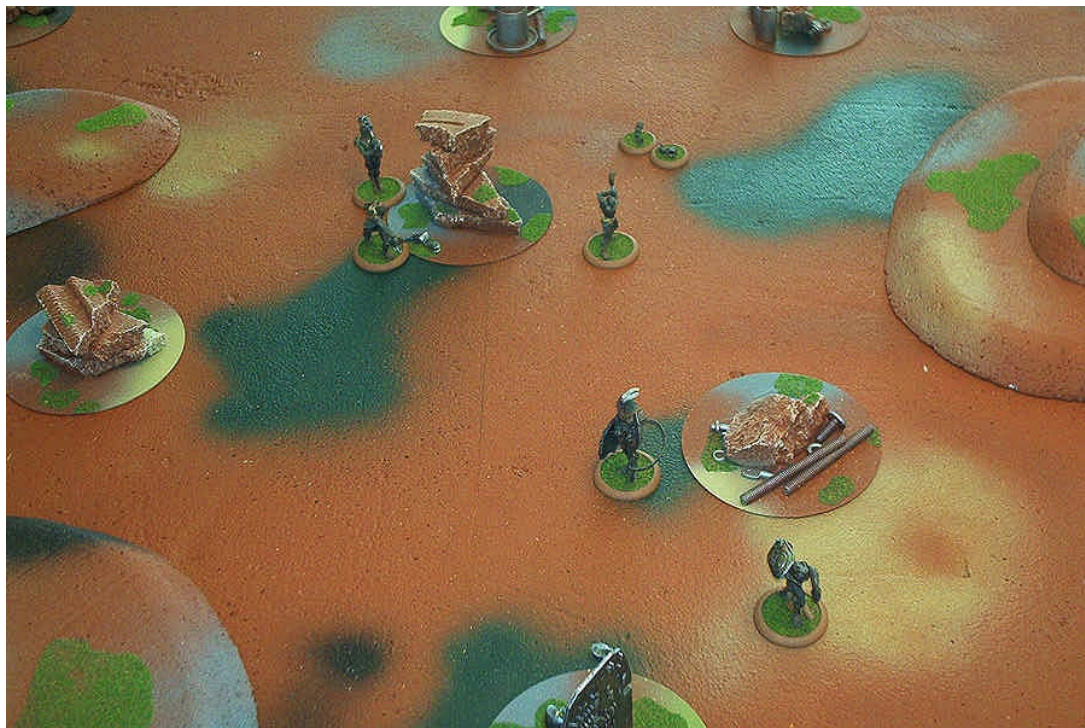
I think this game really managed to showcase some of the key elements of the Dark Age game. The Forsaken were really defeated more by their unreliable technology than by the Brood. At the moment when Saint John Malfunctioned with his Power Maul three times in a row, that was a classic example of what Dark Age is all about. Of course, I have never seen a multiple HP model like



Turn Four started with the resolution of any Lingering Effects. Saint John powered up his Shield in case Murtros attacked him first, and saved against the Poison counter, which was then removed. Regeneration went badly for the Brood; both Gristles and the dead Ratchet were removed from the game, but the Sawblade was back on his feet with 1 HP. Three Puds, however, made it into contact with Saint John. He handily shrugged off the little biters' attacks.

the Weaponsmith die exclusively as a result of his own Malfunctions, but that is what I get for using that full-auto mode, right? The Strikes were a bit of a disappointment this time around, I am used to seeing them perform much better. But some days you have it, and some you don't. The Coils did as well as they always do, they managed to take down the unit of Gristis and give Murtros some worry, the important thing with them is to always take that extra AP for aiming. They're nasty if they hit. The Haniels were a bit of a surprise. This was the first time I had used them, and I was rather impressed with how they managed to hold the line so well against the Sawblades.

The Brood are a completely different kind of army. They tend to be more reliable than the Forsaken, but need to use better combined-arms tactics. Their biggest strength is that damnable Regeneration. You can keep killing them, but they just keep coming back. The Pud Throwers really managed to disrupt the Forsaken line; little hungry monsters biting at people's feet will have that effect. The Ratchets were effective, but not greatly so. They did what they did well enough, but they really did not shine except in terms of Regeneration. The Gristis were having a bad day. Normally they can be relied on to at least knock down what they hit, so the Sawblades can move in and hit them while they are down. The Knock Prone from the Bio-repulsors did nothing in this game, sadly. The Sawblades were disappointing this game. They normally account for a much greater portion of the enemy army. But the consistent Regeneration and that final Acid Blood against the Haniels made them all worthwhile. If the Haniels had managed to get their firepower



pointed someplace else, the game may have turned out a bit differently. Finally, Murtros was the Brood Big Daddy this time around, taking down Saint John and the Coils and more than paying for himself in terms of enemies destroyed. He's big, he's bad, and he can roll up the Forsaken like no other. This was a fun game to play. Like most games of Dark Age, there were no survivors on one side. When the combat started, it was quick and bloody. It was a classic case of Big Monsters versus Heroic Humans. And at the end of the game, we were both able to shake hands and say "Yeah! THAT was fun!" In short, it was everything a skirmish-level sci-fi wargame should be.



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Game Preview



A Sneak Peek at Ultimate Warzone

My special thanks to the good folks at Excelsior Entertainment for providing us in Atlanta with a sneak peek at the new (3rd edition) Ultimate Warzone. Here's a quick review including some of the high points of the game.

The Mutant Chronicles: Warzone is a Science Fiction genre tabletop miniatures battle game set in a dark future where the earth has been mostly abandoned as a hazardous waste dump, Mercury, Venus, the Moon, Mars and some asteroid belts have been populated, and those people live under the protection and control of a few giant corporations. Not only is open warfare between the corporations common, trans-dimensional gates have opened, leaving humanity vulnerable to attack from the alien monstrosities of the Dark Legion. Advanced technology has proven especially vulnerable to the magical Dark Symmetry, and mankind has had to fall back on lower technologies for survival.

There are five Mega Corporations, each with its own culture: Imperial (British), Bahaus (Continental European), Capitol (USA), Mishima (Japan), Cybertronic (Artificial Intelligence). The Dark Legion has five factions, each able to wield the magical Dark Symmetry: Muwajie (madness), Semai (deceit), Algeroth (war), Ilian (pain) and Demnogonis (plague). Humanity also has two other major powers: The Cartel (combined corporation forces) and The Brotherhood (humanity's major religion which also wields the Art, which are spells). Several factions of people left to suffer on earth are represented: Sons of Rasputin (Russia), Inheritors of Job (Europe), Crescentians (Middle East) and Lutherans (Scotland).

Warzone uses a d20, but it's not D20: In order to create a good balance between simple play mechanics and a broad range of ability levels, Warzone is played with a d20. This allows a trooper's statistics to vary in 5% increments, much tighter than the 17% increments found in games using d6. Since all rolls are based on these statistics, one d20 is all the dice needed to play.

Low Rolls? Warzone uses a very simple die rolling mechanic. Troops have statistics for Close Combat, Ranged Combat, Leadership, Mystic Power, Physical Strength, Armor and Size. If you want a trooper to shoot at the enemy, simply roll the die; if the roll is equal to or less than the trooper's Ranged Combat stat, you hit. That's right, low rolls are successful (a 1 is always a success) and high rolls are unsuccessful (a 20 is always a failure).

In one statement: Ultimate Warzone will be worth the wait. The game is a good blend of 2nd Ed's balance with 1st Ed's emphasis on high fiction.

Game Balance: Each army has its bad boys, and it's Achilles' heel. Individuals are beefed up, but by no means unit-killers. Their stats simply reflect some facet of physical power, supernatural speed or outright competence. Unit costs per figure seem to be weighed in properly, no 'super bargain' troop could be found.

Speed of Play: The game's pace is still very dynamic; each new activation gives a feeling of a constantly evolving battlefield. A return to the Chronopia style armor save system makes determining these rolls much easier. Close combat has also been abbreviated for quicker fights.

A few gripes: Not everything is perfect, at least to my opinion. Close combat counter attacks have been eliminated; defenders no longer get an attack. While this speeds play and gives a real boost to CC troops, some realism has been lost. Then again, this is Sci-Fi!

Some re-alignment of the big uglies within Dark Legion will cause happiness for some, anger for others. Most notably, the Ezoghoul and Mercurian Maculator have found new homes, and a couple of individuals are now fielded in squads. Since I'm a sadistic type, I'm not telling where they went!

Some nice additions: It's not just enough to be scary, some critters are VERY scary. A new special ability called Dire takes this into account. If a figure or unit has this Dire ability, any unit making a panic check near them will have modifiers to the roll. For instance, something a little scary like a Reaper of Souls might have a Dire: 1 ability (-1 to LD), while a Bio-Giant might have a Dire: 4 (-4 to LD). NOTE: the numbers used in this example are NOT taken from actual stats.

Each Dark Legion Acolyte now has its own flavor of Undead Legionnaire, with a unique special ability. Undead also have a few up and down sides, such as not being able to aim trading off with their bodies being less susceptible to bullets.

New rules may or may not come into play. One I expect to see often is the option to fire smoke grenades to conceal troops. One I expect to see very little is the rule set for bio-chemically hazardous environments (except for Dark Eden scenarios and Demnogonis players).

Diversity of forces: In a casual conversation, we came up with over 25 different ways to put an army together. There's always a way to match up your favorite sculpts, fluff and style of play.

One last word: Ultimate Warzone is extraordinarily scalable. Players can have an enjoyable game while controlling as little as a squad and individual up to very large forces including heavy support. In regards to rules, the game can be made to run from a very simple beer-and-pretzels style through to a highly technical battle emphasizing advanced tactics and specialized units. Definitely worth the wait.



Game Reviews



"Silent Dark" is a new miniatures game by Wolfe Games. The game consists of a spiral bound rulebook and a CD ROM. The book has a full-color cover and black and white internal illustrations. It is published by Wolfe Games and has a retail price of \$40.00 USD.

CONTENTS

The "Silent Dark" rule book consists of a generic tactical miniatures game system, G.U.T.S., and a Science Fiction setting called "Silent Dark". The CD ROM includes supplemental material.

THE G.U.T.S. CORE RULES

The Generic Universal Tactical System (G.U.T.S.) is a non-genre specific rule set for playing skirmish-level miniature games. The system is written for 25 to 30 mm figures. G.U.T.S. uses the familiar polyhedral dice, from d4 through d100 but without the d12. However, the d100 or percentile dice are used most often. G.U.T.S. defines two types of units - creatures and vehicles. Each type has its own set of characteristics which describe how the unit performs. In addition, equipment also has characteristics.

Most of these characteristics are Percentage Stats in the range of 0 to 100. Combat and similar operations are resolved by taking the actor's relevant Percentage Stat and subtracting the defenders relevant characteristic and including any situational modifiers. The resulting number or less must be rolled on d100 for the action to be completed successfully. There are also flat stats, such as life points or movement, are simply numbers that say how much a model has of that characteristic. There are also Range Stats which are listed as a die type plus or minus an integer factor.

G.U.T.S. uses an action based system. Each model is rated with a number of action points. The model spends the action points to perform actions. For example, for each action point spent for movement, a model may move one inch. Some flat stats, such as movement or shots, limit how many actions can be spent performing certain actions. For example, a model with a movement of 3 could spend a maximum of 3 action points in movement - and thus move 3 inches. A weapon with a shot rating of 2 could only be fired twice in one turn - only 2 actions can be spent to fire that weapon.

Most actions take one action point to perform, but some take more. For example, driving a vehicle takes 5 action points. Creatures with less than 5 action points cannot drive a vehicle. Creatures with more than 5 action points can use their remainder to perform other actions.

Actions are performed during a player's phase. A player performs all the actions for all his models during his phase, then his opponent or opponents get their phases. The order in which the players perform their phases is randomly determined at the beginning of each turn.

There are two actions that can be performed out of phase - dodge and counter attack. Neither of these out of sequence actions cost action points. The dodge is a defensive action that a model may take to avoid being hit in either missile or close combat. Counter-Attack is an action that allows the model being attacked to strike back at his attacker. A model may only make one counter attack during a turn no matter how many times he is attacked.

Creatures and vehicles have many similar rules, but there are unique rules for each type to account for their differences. For example, there are rules for vehicles ramming other vehicles or creatures.

Weapons are divided into melee and missile types. The missile type is further subdivided by damage type into point effect (like a bow and arrow), template effect (like a shotgun) and area affect (like machine guns).

G.U.T.S. also includes rules for buildings, vehicle mounted weapons, and tournament rules. The tournament rules set army list limits, provide for random terrain placement, as well as list 6 tournament scenarios. These scenarios define the force sizes as well as victory conditions.

THE SILENT DARK SETTING

The second half of the rule book is the Silent Dark setting for G.U.T.S. This is the first published genre for G.U.T.S. and serves as an example of using the G.U.T.S. rules. Silent Dark is set in the 26th century where the nations of Earth, Mars, and the Asteroid Belt are involved in a series of brush wars. This part of the rule book includes both army lists and background for the Silent Dark setting.

Silent Dark includes 5 army lists: the British, Canadian, and American alliance (a balanced infantry and vehicle force), the Altered (a close-combat force), the Martian Protectorate (a sniping force), the Conversion Fleet (a tough and resilient force), and the Stranded (a horde).

THE CD-ROM

In addition to the printed rule book, "Silent Dark" includes a CD ROM with extra features such as foldable soldiers, building diagrams, optional rules, a sample game, and a short story set in the Silent Dark universe.

Most importantly, the CD includes an Excel spread sheet that implements the force design system used to create units for Silent Dark. The documentation on the design system is included in three AVI videos.

Note that the CD is mainly for Windows computers, but most of the information was accessible on my Macintosh. The videos, however, didn't play well with QuickTime 6.

VALUE

G.U.T.S. is a good system for skirmish level games. It addresses the general instances of combat and maneuver that occur in such a setting. The system is definitely not for regimental or larger games as the sheer number of statistics and die rolls would quickly bog the game down.

The game is designed for 25mm systems, but with a little tweaking - mainly in the movement distance per action point and the range and effect of weapons - the game could be adapted to anything from 10mm to 54mm. I personally think that this would be an excellent alternate rule system for the Inquisitor figures.

Greg Wolfe set himself a difficult task - that of designing a miniatures game system that can be used for any genre and figure set. There have been other generic systems in the past, such as Flashpoint!, but G.U.T.S. is different in that the designer has included his design system in the rules. This gives the player the ability to completely craft his own system. On that basis alone, the game is worth the price. The Silent Dark setting is just icing on the cake.



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Mutant Chronicles Warzone: Universe under Siege

A Sneak Preview by Marshall Caspian

In celebration of the tenth anniversary of the launch of the Mutant Chronicles game setting, Excelsior Entertainment is pleased to release their most ambitious project to date. This Ultimate Edition of Warzone (or UWZ as we refer to it) represents the efforts of dozens of talented people, years of play testing and development and a determined focus on the background of the game. With ten years worth of material to sift through, digest and collate, this was a daunting task.

One of the key concerns to Thom Talamini, the company's director, was that "Warzone be both faithful to the works that have come before it and appealing to players new to the worlds of this game". While on the surface this sounds like a reasonable goal, it is in reality a more involved process than most realize. When Excelsior picked up this property, it did so with no materials to speak of. There were no data files, no archives, no art files, nothing. This means the project would have to start from near scratch. This however intimidating is not enough to deter people who have a genuine passion for the subject matter.

The end result of their extensive labors is a massive tome, coming in at 536 fully packed pages. This is larger than they wanted it to be but much smaller than the original manuscript, whose pages numbered over 1400 before they started pairing down. Some may ask that since so many pages were held out, what is missing from the core book. This is certainly fair. The answer however is that all the important and necessary information has been edited and shared here, while extra details and secondary newer units were held for supplements. As the supplement plan focuses on the planets for example, the detailed planetary information was pulled out for these books. SO having shared what was removed, let's look at what is being kept.

Anatomy of Warzone: Universe under Siege or What's in this Beast?

The book opens with a friendly, four-page introduction designed to introduce new players to the game of Warzone and the hobby of tabletop miniature war gaming at large. The explanation of how TTG's differ from other games, even ones that use pre-painted minis was an interesting and important discussion.

Following the introduction, the book launches into a comprehensive historical summary of the Mutant Chronicles universe that covers 24 very interesting and engaging pages. Scattered amid the History chapter are some wonderful pieces of art and some short pieces of fiction which serve to frame and accentuate the core story told here. Some of these short stories have been published before and reprinted here. Others have been updated from their original printing, and some are completely new. Overall it is an engaging tale, one that has been updated to incorporate the various details developed in the past game incarnations as well as the new aspects added by Excelsior.

What I found interesting here is the structure of the chapter. It begins with a four page, first person perspective on the history of the Mutant Chronicles universe as told by a Brotherhood Archivist named Lain Mathmoi. This character appears at various points throughout the book, adding a strangely comforting continuity to the book.

Chapter 2 is essentially the games chapter. It details the complete game mechanics for playing UWZ and is 116 pages long. This may sound like a lot of rules, but in truth the core mechanic only takes up just over 30 pages. The core rules to play are very much streamlined versions of what powers Chronopia and as such are very intuitive, easy to understand and very easy to teach others. This was a core concern that everyone had regarding the game and was a chief directive from the top. It had to flow, be logical and allow for anyone to be able to share it. Of course, this does not mean it lacks depth and strategy, just that it requires a certain basic knowledge to appreciate. I think what



is encompassed in these rules is more than most expect.

It begins appropriately enough with an explanation of how the game flows, how models are classified and rated, and how to assemble a force. Once a player understands the game flow and how models are rated, he then learns how to actually play the game, converting his metal figures into a tactical unit of strategic potency. Interestingly enough is how to read a model's individual qualities or stats. These numbers, spread across several categories, define the strengths and weakness of every model in the game.

What I found as a nice addition to the design of the models from their fantasy game Chronopia was the addition of a weapons quick reference with each and every model. In Chronopia, a model's weapons were listed in his entry but the actual details of the weapon are found in a centralized chart. To speed up play, UWZ recreates a quick version of the weapons abilities and reprints them along with them model's individual details. This small feature alone makes the analysis of units so much quicker and easier for a player and according to Thom was done based on feedback received on Chronopia, many points we all agreed would only make this project even better.

In fact, the overall design of a model's abilities seems designed to make it easy to find information and compare units. For example, consider the example below.

Fury Elite Decurion

Elite squad leader, required 1 per squad, mortal.

CC	RC	PW	LD	AC	WD	ST	MM	AR	SZ	PC
12	9	9	13	3	1	7	3	20	2	29

Equipment: Deliverer Blade, P-60 Punisher Handgun.

Special Abilities: Group Assault, Tactical Sense.

Weapon Stats:

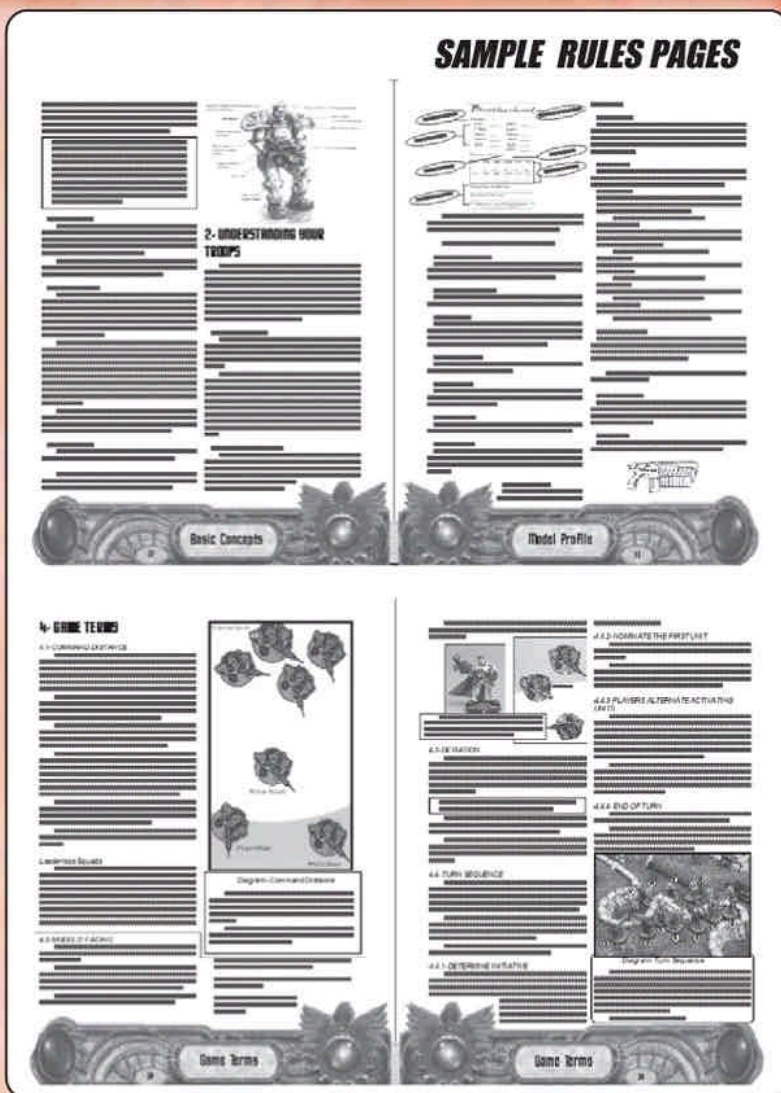
Deliverer Blade (slashing, radiant)

CC	PB	SR	MR	LR	ER	DM	SA
0	-	-	-	-	-	ST+5	See Chart

P-60 Punisher Handgun (ballistic)

CC	PB	SR	MR	LR	ER	DM	SA
0	2	1	-	-	-	9	-

SAMPLE RULES PAGES



You will note the name is easily seen at the start, followed by what role the model takes in army composition, how many may be taken in a group and what classification the model belongs to. Under this in the chart are the specific model attributes which have scores in them ranging from 1-30 (though in point of fact no model has the extreme ends of these numbers). The higher the number the more proficient the model is in the given category and a quick description is as follows:

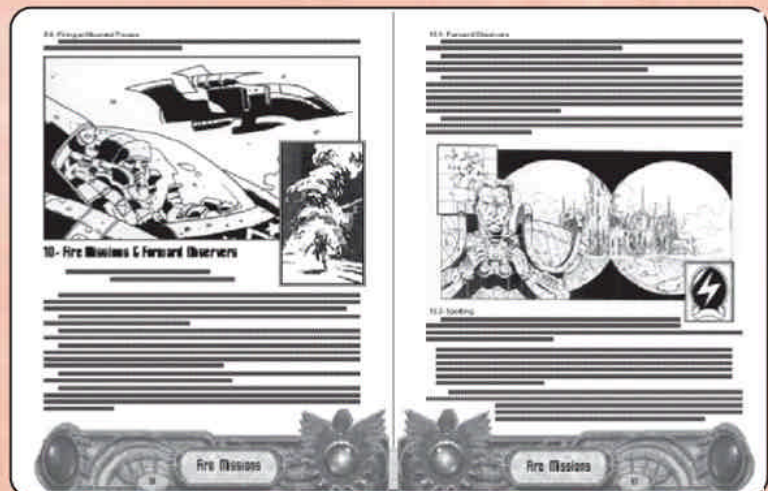
- **CC** stands for Close Combat training and represents a model's competency at hand to hand.
- **RC** stands for the Ranged Combat training a model has received.
- **PW** stands for Power, and represents a model's spiritual/psychic ability. This ability score is used mostly by models capable of channeling powers (the UWZ term for casting spells).
- **LD** represents a model's Leadership, the mental fortitude and intelligence it possesses.
- **AC** tells a player how many Actions a model may take in a given turn. Most have a 3 AC score.
- **WD** represents the life of your models and is referred to as its Wounds. Role-players will understand this concept easily enough. This statistic tells you how many times a model may sustain damage before it is killed or destroyed.
- **ST** is the model's Strength score. This score is most often used in conjunction with close combat damage, as the ST number is often added to damage.
- **MV** tells a player how many inches in each Action (AC) a model may spend Moving. A slower model will have a 2 score here, most standard soldiers have a 3. Units that are inherently fast have a 4 or better.
- **AR** represents a model's Armor value, basically how hard they are to wound. A standard human soldier will generally fall in between 17 AR and 20 AR.
- **SZ** shows a player how big a model is relative to other models in the game. And lastly,
- **PC** is the model's Point Cost, or how much this model is worth as compared to every other model in the game. As the point analysis program is quite extensive and there are numerous variables involved in each aspect of a model's stats, the final PC of a model represents quite a sophisticated statistical analysis.

Following the model's stats are the remaining aspects of it that are important to game play. The first details the equipment the model possesses. This equipment always includes the weapons possessed by the model as well as any miscellaneous items it might start the game with, things like gas masks, signal flares, etc....

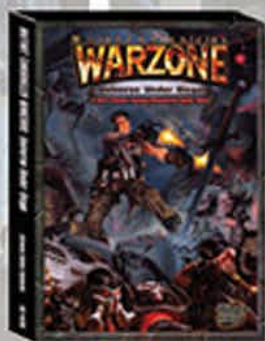
The next listing details the models Special Abilities, or those unique skills that a model may possess either by virtue of an innate ability or through important training. The last aspect of their entry is that quick reference list of their weapons. You'll note in the example that the Deliverer Blade has a "See Chart" reference in its listing. As this is a "quick reference", it is not meant to replace the master weapons chart with all of its details and specifics. When a model has additional information about its weapon, it will refer to the chart.

Once one gets a handle on how the game plays out, the remainder of the chapter fleshes out the details and nuances of UWZ, each additional section building on the previous. For example, once game play is covered, the next section of the chapter covers Special Abilities. These really exciting fourteen pages outline 95 unique special abilities possessed by the models in UWZ. These skills are organized alphabetically to make their referencing an easy process. Special Abilities include things like Close Combat Training, Paradeploy and Counter Insurgency.

While special abilities have existed in the game before, they have been escalated to a new level here. Sorry for the pun but that is actually one of the other unique improvements that were added to many of the Special Abilities in UWZ, that of levels.



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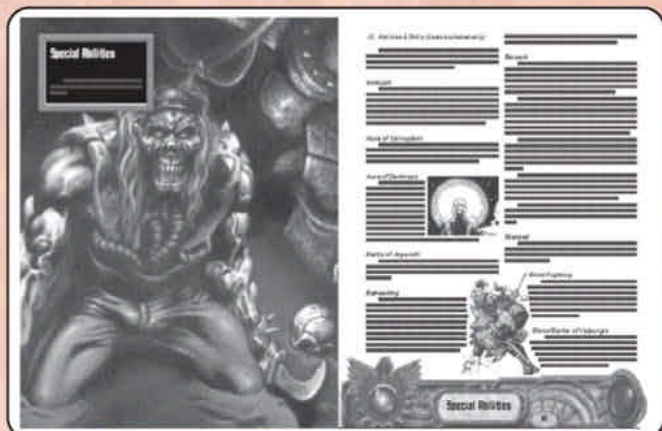
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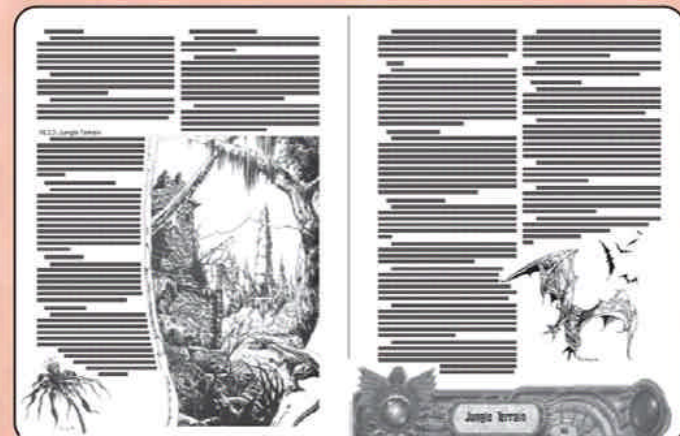
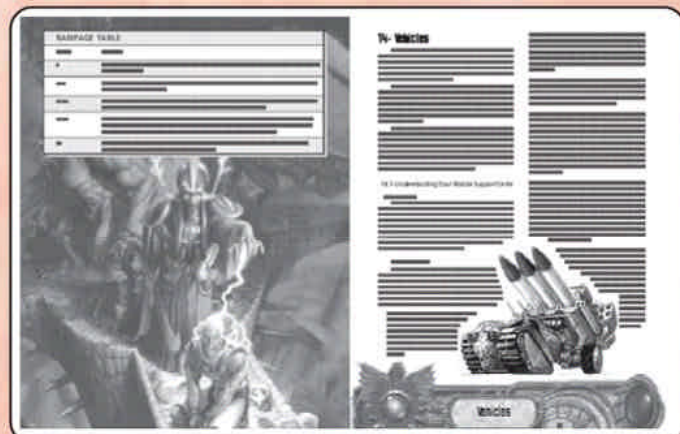
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"Having a skill at something is not, in and of itself, good enough. We wanted to be able to represent that while many models may possess a skill, they do not all excel at it in the same way." said Thom about the addition of levels.



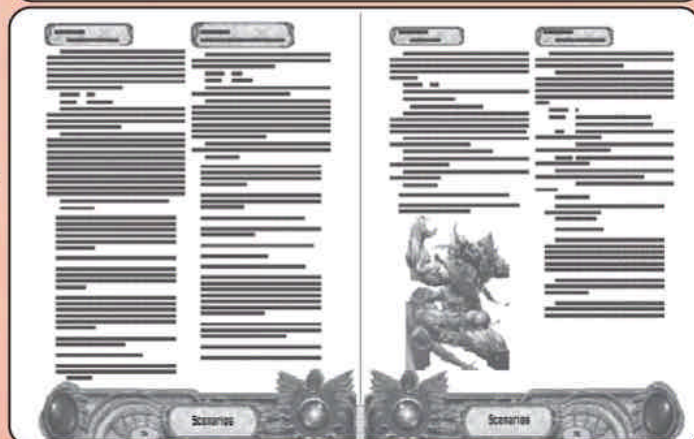
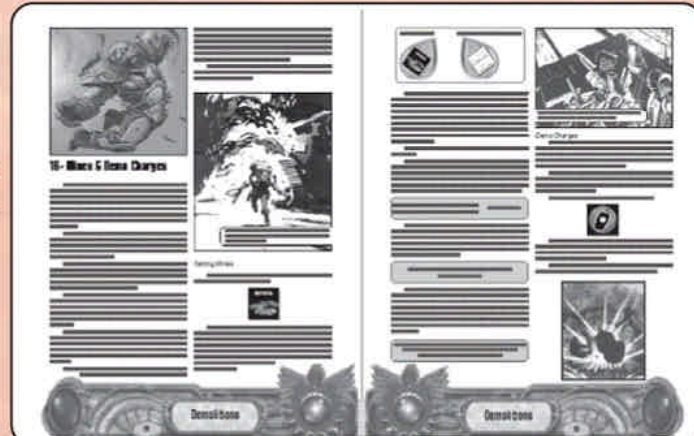
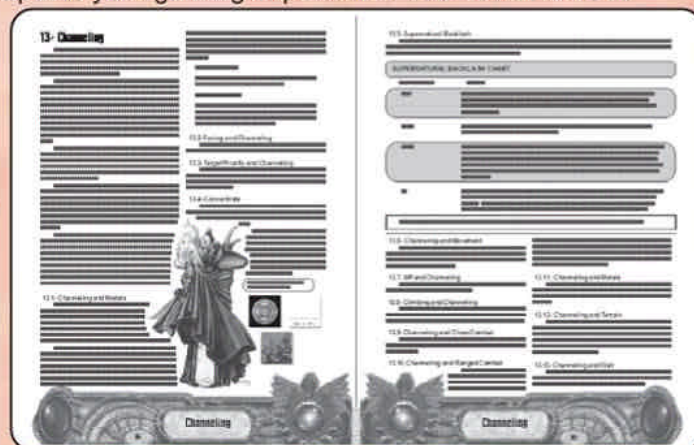
designate the environment you are playing on for example, but if you like this level of realism and depth, now you can.



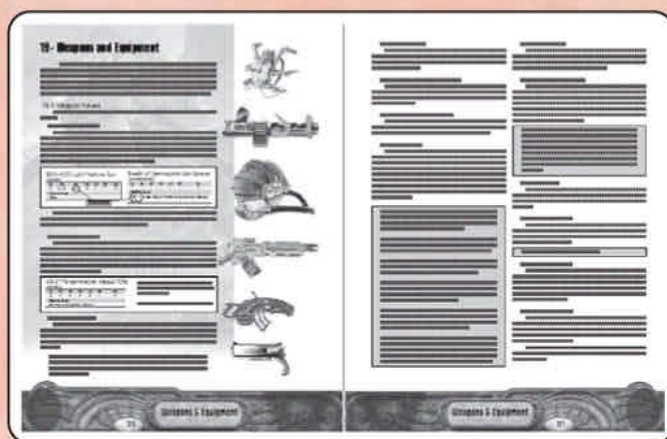
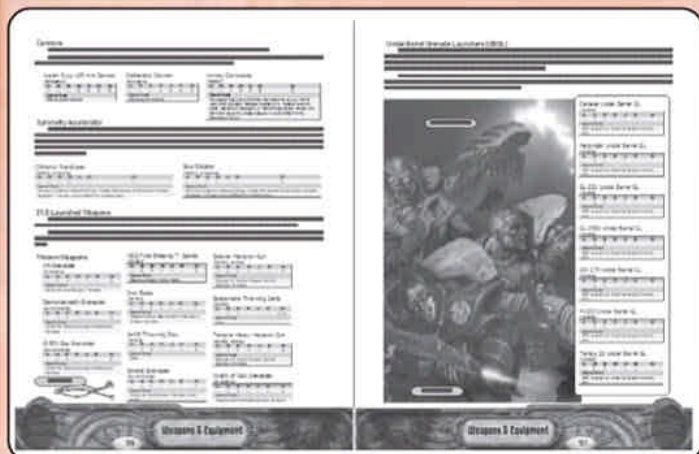
Seen here are various pages from Chapter 2: The Rules of War.

Certainly there are a lot of new abilities here, all refined and most new; but in my opinion the further addition of levels into the mixture makes for a superior product in the end.

The next 30 or so pages cover more nuances of the game, things like Channeling, Vehicles in the games, using terrain, playing with environmental rules, and of course, some sample scenarios. It is a wonderful and actually easy to follow section. Many of the rules presented here are optional and are included to add depth to your gaming experience. You do not have to



The chapter ends, much like in Chronopia, with a Master Armory. In these 26 pages are listed in detail every weapon in the game, divided up into categories and listed alphabetically. While an interested section full of hundreds of weapons, it ends with optional Load-Outs, those additional pieces of equipment that soldiers may purchase. In addition there are optional munitions for some launched weapons and demolitions.

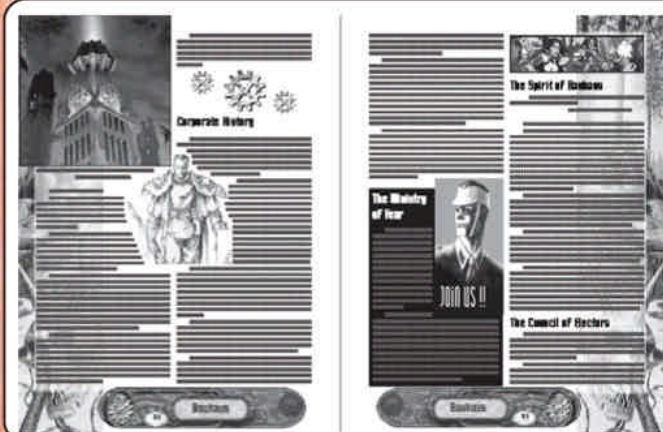


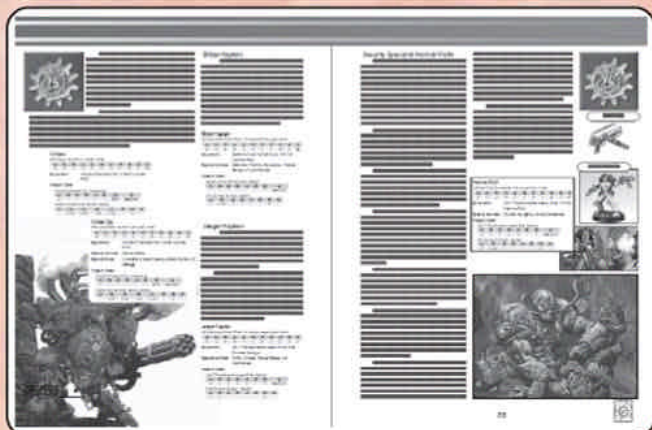
Following the rules is a wonderful color section which outlines how to paint a mini, adding details and decals to it, as well as discussing techniques for your brushwork. The section further talks about terrain and shows some nice table displays. A quick view of the armies you will find later in the book follows this with samples of their painted models and artwork.

It is obviously a lot to cram into such a small section and it could have easily taken up twice the space allotted to it, but nonetheless was a very nice presentation. In essence it expanded the color sections presented in Chronopia: War in the Eternal Realm, and is definitely geared to newer players and hobbyists.

So now here we sit at page 147 of UWZ and we have now just begun exploring the various armies of the Mutant Chronicles universe. From here on out, each chapter is devoted to one of these armies. Much like Chronopia, each chapter opens with a more detailed history of the army in question, including its current politics and areas of interest.

In general, the first 10-20 pages of every chapter are devoted to explaining in more detail who this force really is and what they are about. It is an excellent read and one that fires the imaginations quickly. Two examples can be seen below.





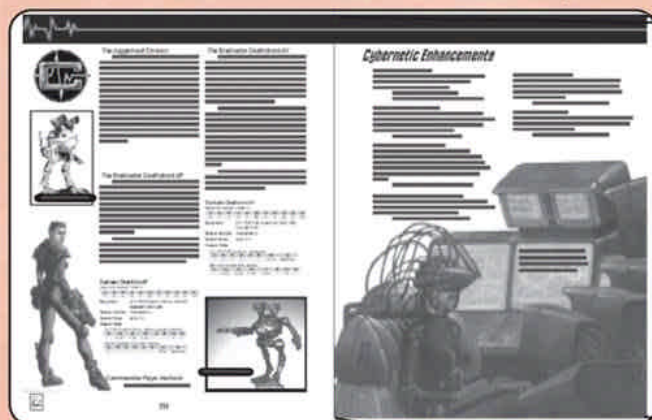
throughout the lists are photos of the models mentioned in the text to make it easy to identify them, as well as some excellent artwork and more short fiction. Each chapter is organized internally to make it easy to find the information you want. The table of contents does an excellent job of referencing many of the important aspects of these chapters for you.

Some chapters have additional information in them because of the unique aspect of the respective armies. By this I mean that not all armies are created the same way. Some, like Cybertronic, the Inheritors of Job and the Dark Cults, have troop Load Outs in addition to the ones they may have for equipment. These special load outs represent something unique to that particular army.

In the examples offered, Cybertronic has a list of available options that may be assigned to most of the models in that army. How many and even if a model may take these load outs is listed in the model's profile. In the case of the Cybertronic example, it would say:

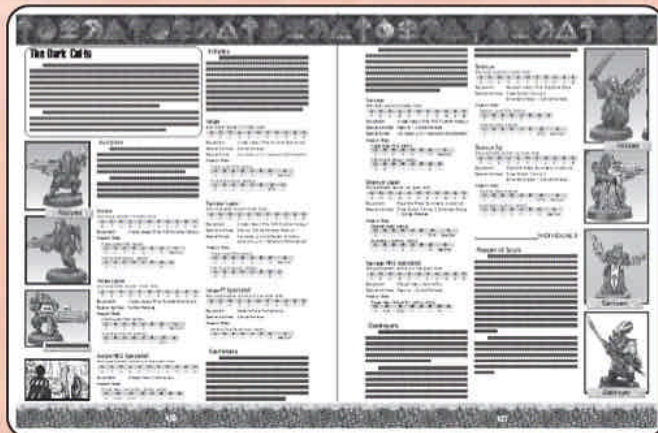
"May select up to XX Cybernetic Enhancements." where XX is some number.

Each model in a unit must be given the same enhancement and the additional points for these enhancements must be added to the unit in question for each model receiving it. It looks something like this:



Following each introduction is the actual army list for that force. Many are subdivided into categories based on organizations, while others represent one massive army. Regardless of this organization, each and every model in the game has an extensive background explaining its unique place in the world and offering ideas for how it should be used.

The Army lists are where you will ultimately draw your forces from so read through these pages carefully. They serve as a wonderful place to come up with campaign ideas and scenarios from as well as presenting some more good reading. Scattered



Cybernetic Enhancements

Optic Enhancement (1 pt):
This cybernetic device like the human eye of the recipient with infrared vision. This eye is not replaceable from regular eyes.
Add one extra point to the unit's overall point cost.
Add one extra point to the unit's overall point cost.

Call-Like Enhancement (1 pt):
By making a cybernetic connection into the recipient's brain, the enhancement allows the user to hear the recipient's and have a complete, unimpeded, unfiltered communication with the recipient.
Add one extra point to the unit's overall point cost.

Steel Skin Enhancement (2 pt):
A complex process whereby cybernetic parts are implanted and programmed to react to pressure applied against them. The steel skin enhancement is not a true part of the unit but an addition to the unit's armor. Its cost is not included in the unit's overall point cost.
Add one extra point to the unit's overall point cost.

Post-Perceptual Enhancement (2 pt):
By receiving the information of an enemy, the unit can see the enemy's position and the enemy's position. This enhancement is not a true part of the unit but an addition to the unit's armor. Its cost is not included in the unit's overall point cost.
Add one extra point to the unit's overall point cost.

Speed Enhancement (1 pt):
During a combat round, when the unit is in a combat round, the unit's speed is increased by one point. This enhancement is a general increase in the unit's speed.
Add one extra point to the unit's overall point cost.

Lag Enhancement (1 pt):
By receiving the information of the unit's position, the unit can see the unit's position and the unit's position. This enhancement is a general increase in the unit's speed.
Add one extra point to the unit's overall point cost.

Steel Skin Enhancement (2 pt):
A complex process whereby cybernetic parts are implanted and programmed to react to pressure applied against them. The steel skin enhancement is not a true part of the unit but an addition to the unit's armor. Its cost is not included in the unit's overall point cost.
Add one extra point to the unit's overall point cost.

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By receiving the information of an enemy, the unit can see the enemy's position and the enemy's position. This enhancement is not a true part of the unit but an addition to the unit's armor. Its cost is not included in the unit's overall point cost.
Add one extra point to the unit's overall point cost.

For the Inheritors of Job, they have the option of selecting special tattoos or Stigmata. Based on their unique background, these two categories represent the load outs available for the Inheritors. How they are assigned works much the same way as the others armies in that they must be assigned to every model in a given unit and their total point cost is added to the units overall purchase price.

There are counters that are placed into a Counter Keeper® that shows a unit may have taken a load out. On the opposite side of the counter, unseen by your opponent is the other counter that tells everyone exactly what load out the squad is equipped with. It is revealed only when the squad attacks or is attacked. The counter is then flipped over and accompanies the squad.

Necromantic Enhancements

Great technology of the present century is refined practice of necromantic, necrotic, infernal, and necromantic enhancements. These are designs of necromantic power enhancements designed to improve the human mind and the body. The Dark Lord uses the design technology. Necromantic enhancements are the design technology that is used to create and then to create the appearance and physical characteristics and to create the design technology. Necromantic enhancements are the design technology that is used to create the design technology.

Black Lungs (1)

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Mark of Alchemist (1)

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Bone Calcification (2)

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Dark Prevention (1)

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Micro-Resilience (1)

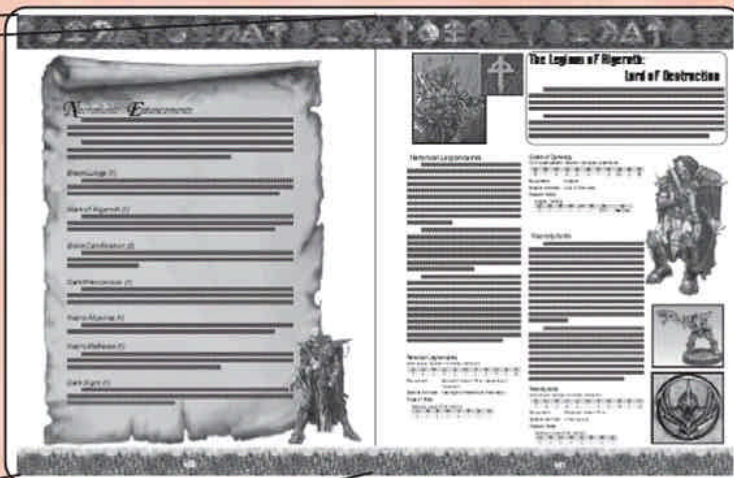
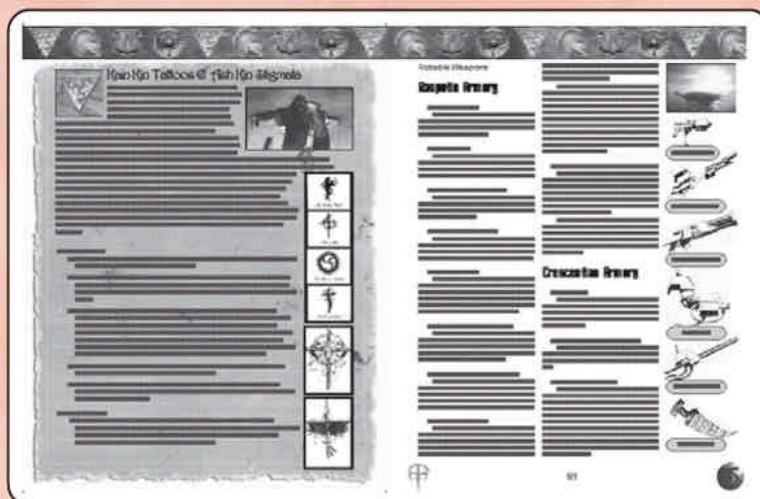
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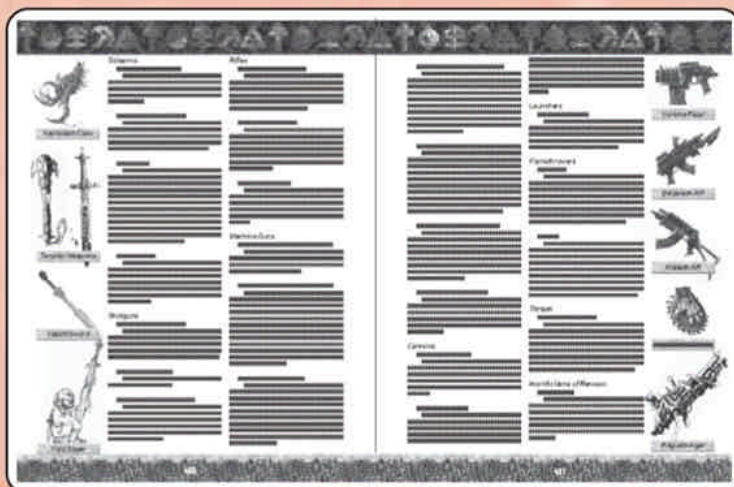
Dark Sight (1)

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Oh, and did I mention the pronunciation guide??? Well, I sincerely hope you found this enlightening and I look forward to facing many of you on the battlefield.

~ MC



GenCon SoCal Report

PRE GEN-CON

My trip to GenCon SoCal was initiated by not getting to go to GenCon Indy this year as I had hoped. I knew that SoCal would probably have a lower turnout but I planned to have a good time anyway. Also, being in Anaheim, close to where I lived for a few years, I figured I could also hook up with some old friends. There were several players from our local gaming group that wanted/planned to make the trek also, but real life and other local conventions conspired to keep them off of the roster for this year.

The trip ended up being a family affair as my in-laws live in San Diego and my Father and step-Mother live up in Seal Beach. We figured that we could take care of a whole lot of visiting and relaxing all at once. The plan was for all of us (me, my wife and three kids; 14, 9 and almost 1.5) to fly into San Diego where my wife and two youngest kids would stay with my Mother in-law while Bradley (my oldest son) and I would borrow my Mother in-laws car and drive up to the convention. After the convention the brood from San Diego would meet us in Anaheim and we'd all go to Disneyland the next day. Sounds like a plan to me!

The trip out was surprisingly easy, especially considering that we were traveling with three kids and lots of bags. When I told my wife that I would be taking my miniatures (the metal ones at least) on board the plane in my Skirmishpack (which did its job just fine by the way) she said that I'd get strip searched and probed for sure. I've sent my figures through security before and had just received odd looks but never had any problems so I wasn't worried about it. Also, there was no way that I wanted to send them through regular baggage. Nope, wouldn't be prudent. In Dallas, security and check-in went off without a hitch and we were on our way. We landed in San Diego and headed off in a rush to Seal Beach where we would be staying for Wednesday and Thursday night and also meeting up with my Dad and step-Mother for a nice free meal. Never turn down a free meal!

THURSDAY

Things started off pretty well, except for not really having the operation of my Mother-in-Law's car alarm / keyless entry system. Yeah, I can hear you out there saying, "It's a friggin' car alarm. How hard can it be you dolt!" Well, in reality not too hard but we were in such a rush to leave the airport and drive up to convention that I only half listened to the instructions. Anyway, we end up leaving the hotel at about 0530 with the car alarm going off for about a minute or so. I'm sure the neighbors appreciate that...not! Everything goes smoothly on the drive and we find a very decent parking space in a hotel parking lot and will have to walk a very short distance to the convention site itself. Smoothly, except for the fact that my dumb ass has now gotten all of our stuff out of the car and proceeded to lock the keys inside! I was highly pissed, but only at myself. I even saw the door closing and it was like in slow motion with me reaching for it but it shutting right before I could catch it. Sixty-Five dollars later the keys were out and my frustration level had dropped down, at least a little bit. Of course, that was money allocated for buying new toys but I'm better off not dwelling on that since I'll get all pissed off again.

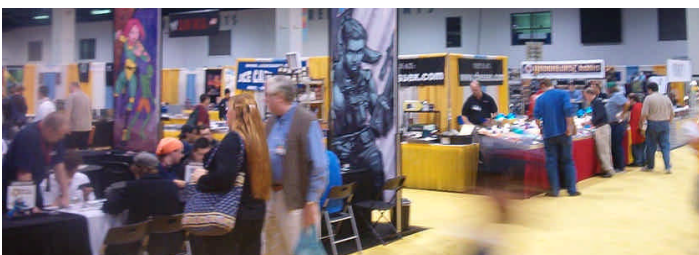
As you've surely read by now in other reports attendance and foot traffic was very light on Thursday. This was definitely the case but at 10:00 AM the line forming at the entrance to the dealer's room was quite large and must have contained everyone not already sitting down in a game at the time. I hung back for a few moments and watched but when I did venture forth it seemed



like there was one place that was getting the vast majority of attention and that was the Privateer Press booth, makers of Warmachine. Holy crap! Their booth had some of the best terrain (for demo games) that I've ever seen and their painted stuff was magnificent. Of course, they have painting master Mike McVey taking care of them on that end so how can they go wrong! In addition to all of the gorgeous stuff to look at they also had many new releases and I saw cash and credit cards being handed over at a furious pace. This kept up for the Privateer Press gang for pretty much the whole convention. The rest of the dealer room had some very nice stuff, but it was very light on the miniatures side.

I met Chris Fitzpatrick from Crocodile Games. A very nice guy with an interesting game and a very cool set of minis. They did not have the same terrain set up as in Indy though. If you were looking for clicky miniatures there were dealers with bins full of stuff and as you'd expect rpg stuff dominated the landscape. Brookhurst had a large and well stocked booth that was basically one-third Rackham/Confrontation, one-third Adiken and one-third I-Kore. They were right at the entrance to the dealer's room so anyone walking in had to go by them. More on the dealer's room as the days go on.

My sole gaming for Friday consisted of a D&D Miniatures Quickstrike tournament. The lack of attendance damaged this tournament in that there were only five players, but it was still a lot of fun and we got around one person getting a bye by everyone getting a single round off. If I recall correctly, I went 2-2 but got some good trades in. My son, Bradley (14yo) was starting his first of four days of playing Magic: The Gathering.



FRIDAY

Attendance picked up, but just a bit. I guess a lot of the locals were not very interested in taking a day off from work. I managed to keep from locking my keys in the car today so that was a very good start. We checked out of the hotel in Seal Beach and headed to our new accommodations in Anaheim, just a block away from the convention center. Ok, a bit about hotels here. Do not ever, ever, unless you have absolutely no choice whatsoever, stay in the convention hotel for the convention price. Even with the convention discount the adjacent (basically adjacent, it was a negligible walk) hotel was still 2-3 times the price of what I paid after searching on the Internet. I used Hotels.com (not an ad for them, use whatever discounter you like) and paid around \$50 a night for a very nice hotel and only had to walk across two parking lots (about a block) to get to the convention center. And if you're saying to yourself, "Just double or triple the number of people in the room and then it will cost next to nothing." I did that once or twice way back when I was in High School and vowed to never do it again. Two people, three max if you're getting a large suite, and you'll be a lot better off for it.

Maybe a slight increase in foot traffic today, but not by much. I took a look at the Bandai booth in the dealer's room and was very intrigued by their chess-like collectible miniature game that will be coming out soon. Out of all the collectible miniature games that are out right now this one kills them all in terms of figure look and feel and painting. Only one figure in each person's "army" is painted though. All but one are a dark gray (highlighted I think) and your "king" for lack of a better term is painted as you'd expect but not as you'd expect from a collectible miniature game as it is done to a higher standard than I've seen to date with any other game of its type. I'll be on the lookout for it. I met Chris Pramas from Green Ronin. A very nice guy who took a few minutes to actually talk about what they have coming out soon. The WOTC booth was both huge and very well done. It covered all of their games and was pretty full for the entire convention. Preview minis from the Dragoneye (more of that on Saturday) release for D&D Miniatures were on display and got many players drooling.

Today was Chronopia day for me. I was worried about attendance for this tournament for two reasons. 1) I was the only one pre-registered for it and 2) Excelsior would not be coming down from Pennsylvania for the convention. I can understand them not coming from a cost perspective but I think them being there would have been a natural draw for more players, both new and old. To be honest, I was worried about the tournament being cancelled and I had already made plans for my day if that occurred. Thankfully, it did not. There ended up being just two players and the referee showing up for Chronopia, but we did have a fairly decent number of people walk up and look at our minis and the great terrain that we played on and ask what we were playing. Our referee, being someone that could juggle both very effectively, was able to keep our scenario games on track (all of our games were scenario driven rather than simple kill 'em all) and talk to walk-ups that were interested in the game. My Blackblood army went 2-0-1 for the day and I won the tournament! Woo Hoo! I fought the Sons of Kronos (Barbarians if you have not yet been indoctrinated into the ways of Chronopia) and only one game was a blowout. The other two were very close and our tie was an exact



match on victory points. All told, it was a very good day. Bradley was into his second day of Magic. Oh, and if you're wondering why I'm not staying up until the break of dawn playing whatever game, those days are pretty much behind me. Yeah, just like the overstuffed hotel rooms. It would take something special (miniatures or rpg) to get me to stick with it until the wee hours of the morning. Not that I wouldn't, but it would have to be something very cool.



SATURDAY

Oh yeah! Dragoneye pre-release tournament day. I was highly looking forward to this because I expected lots of players, I was going to add to my D&D Miniatures collection and lots of those additions were going to be new stuff that I'd never seen before. There were over 90 participants at the start of the tournament. It was huge. Things started off late but the WOTC crew got things under control well and moved things along once everyone was situated. Everyone got their sealed Harbinger starter and two Dragoneye boosters and set off building their warband. We had 30 minutes to do this and some people got in just under the wire. Too much time spent taking in the new miniatures and not enough time spent building their army. Also, whenever anyone pulled a dragon everyone around them went, "Damn" because they figured it would be used against them. As it turns out the dragons didn't fare too well in these small-ish 100 point games. Sure, they could be devastating but they could also be brought down. One of my early games, maybe even my first, was against a gentleman that brought a Black Dragon (young) and an assortment of other creatures. It even got off its breath weapon early in the game, but I was able to finish it off and take the game. The Dragonbane ability is a real kick to the crotch for any dragon out there and I had someone with it. Get in there and do your thing! The start of this tournament did go well for me but then went straight into the toilet (more on those later). I think that I went 2-7 (or maybe 2-5, either way I got slapped around mightily) and just got hammered in the later games. As you can expect, some people registered just to get their hands on Dragoneye figures and left after just a round or two. In one of the later rounds they gave away another Dragoneye booster to everyone that completed the round. Of course, I just got my ass handed to me in that round, but opening the booster I was greeted with a Red Dragon (young) and my day of getting whipped got a little brighter. I ended the tournament with a loss (I know, you're not too surprised) but still had a great time and got to play with a lot of fun people. Kudos to the WOTC team that was running the event. They had a lot of people to deal with, quite a few that had played D&D before but had never seen the miniature rules before the tournament, and pulled





it off in fine fashion.

Foot traffic picked up and I've heard attendance estimates around 4,500 for the convention and I could believe that. The dealer room saw much more activity today and hopefully it made up (for the retailers) for the rather lackluster attendance of the first two days of the convention. Saturday's report is a bit shorter than Thursday or Friday, but not for a lack of activity on my part. The Dragoneye Pre-release tournament took up most of my day.



SUNDAY

Last day of the convention and my day to play some Warmachine. We got started a bit late but still had a good showing, especially considering that a couple people playing had been up until the wee hours of the night (or is that morning?). The first two rounds went pretty well with me going 1-1. I completely deserved the loss as I left my Warcaster in a position to get charged and she (Haley) went down to a Bonejack. Hmm, that last sentence could be taken the wrong way if you're not familiar with Warmachine. The second game saw me denying my opponent his strategy of getting in with a block of guys in the way that he planned. It turned into a mostly defensive fight for me and my only VP's were scored by killing the mercenary Mage-Hunter, but it was still a fun game filled with lots of tension on the battlefield about who would pull off the win. We had an odd number of players in the tournament and to eliminate the need for a bye I bowed out of the final round and let the eight remaining players duke it out for prizes. Before my Warmachine games I had a chance to play a demo game of Dark Age and it ended up being quite enjoyable. I spent some more time in the dealer room and spoke with Alain Adiken, of Adiken paints and miniatures, for a while. Alain is a very personable fellow and was a pleasure to talk to. I took the free time that I had for the rest of the day to just do some walking around the whole convention center and seeing what else was going on. I didn't see much of interest in the auction room, but didn't get more than one look in there.



Sunday night, the rest of my family joined us in Anaheim and after eating at Buco di Beppo (yes, you need to go there!) we settled in for some rest before heading off to Disneyland on Monday.

...and just a few random thoughts from my GenCon experience.

- I can't speak for the Women's bathroom, but is it possible to NOT piss all over the toilet when using the facilities? Sheesh! I swear, the bathrooms had more piss all over the place than when my wife and I were potty-training our kids. I know this is not everyone, but come on! I suppose this general lack of cleanliness is coming from the gamers that also don't believe in regular bathing or using a toothbrush/mouthwash. Yeah, the smelly, slacker, piss-slitting thing is really going to work for you in the real world.
- If you took a look at the GenCon catalog you could tell that miniature games were pretty under-represented, as a whole. Those that were there did pretty well, with Warmachine doing fantastic in terms of people playing their game and sales at their booth, but I can't help but think that if there had been a 'real' presence by a manufacturer of a sci-fi and/or fantasy miniature game attendance would have been (at least a little) higher (for tournaments) and they could have cleaned up on sales. Yes, Chris and his crew were there from Crocodile Games, but War Gods is still developing its audience and might not have been able to support a tournament at that time. I saw a handful (or two) of Warhammer players but, other than judges, no real presence from Games Workshop. Had I-Kore attended I'm sure that a VOID tournament would have been played in (maybe not Celtos yet though) and as hot as Confrontation is, not having any tournaments was a real shame. Battletech had, and pretty much always does, a good following of players at the convention, but the options available to miniature gamers was disappointing.



- The convention site was too big, at least for the first time out. It made the crowd look small even on Saturday. Sure, it made getting around easier and you had lots of elbow room but it just didn't look like a huge event. I'm glad to hear that they are committed to running GenCon SoCal next year and I hope that attendance, in players and retailers increases to make the convention more viable.
- The convention center, hotels and surrounding area were pretty good. I'd say not as good as Indy (I've been to Indy for business, not for GenCon yet though) but still very workable. What I did not like was it being in SoCal. Yes, we got to combine GenCon with a family vacation and had a great time but being on one coast or another does make travel more difficult (there are people that still want to drive and if you're hauling around a massive amount of terrain/figures do you really want to trust them to the baggage monkeys?) for a large part of the country. Also, the area already has a pretty good number of local conventions throughout the year. People (the bathing kind) can only attend so many. I would have preferred a more centrally located convention and I think attendance would have benefited from it too.



Mark Theurer

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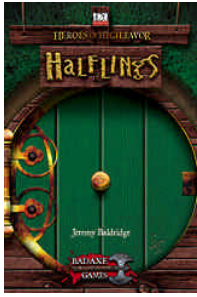
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RPG Product Reviews



At first glance...

Heroes of High Favor: Halflings is the first book published by Badaxe Games that I have read. This also marks the first time that I have read a book written by Jeremy Baldrige. The first thing I noticed is that this book is not a traditionally sized book, its dimensions are 6" x 9". After a bit of snooping around on the 'net I have found that this appears to be the standard that Badaxe Games uses. The cover of this 80 page perfect bound book is a picture of a green round door that appears to be the entrance to some subterranean house. The book, like the entire Heroes of High Favor series, focuses

on the featured races and the different multi-classing options available to them.

Okay what's really in it?

With this book being a mere 80 pages long the author, Jeremy Baldrige, wastes little time with his introduction. These 2 pages are spent in a basic discussion about halflings and their favored core class the rogue. Chapter 2 is taken up by new feats and skills. There are nineteen new feats that are applicable from combat (Power Throw) to non-combat situations (Guttersnipe, Crowdworker). Some of the feats are intended for halfling or general use, while others are more appropriate for fighter feats. The skill section covers four skills, some of these being new skills and others merely new ways of using old skills. Chapter 3 discusses various ways of using skills and abilities with your halfling rogue. Pick pocketing ideas and halfling graffiti are just two of the topics covered in this chapter. The next chapter covers the 10 prestige classes created by Mr. Baldrige. Each prestige class is intended for a different multi-classing player character. For example, the Mercurial is the prestige class obtained by a rogue-monk. Chapter 5 is a brief section of ideas for role-playing your halfling character. Using witty halfling proverbs, the author tries to give players ideas of the attitudes and behaviors that might be exhibited by halflings. The last chapter of the book is an introductory adventure for a halfling character. Only 9 pages long, this adventure will hopefully give you ideas to help use halflings in your games for more than just scouts.

What impressed me...

I really like the way the halfling character is handled in this book. By covering all ten multi-classing combinations, Jeremy Baldrige has really given light to something other than the light fingered short halfling that is traditionally played. The size of the book is really one of its benefits. By being so short, the writing style had to be brief and concise, and essential information and ideas are delivered wonderfully. I loved the skill section of this book. Listing new ways, and more importantly their DC's, of using skills in new situations is very helpful for a GM allowing his players a bit more creativity. I would have never thought to give craft (rope making) the ability to make different ropes for different purposes. The "knacks" of pick pocketing that are listed in chapter three help both GM's and PC's be more visual and descriptive as the specific way that you are stealing from someone influences the DC of the pick pocket. The size of the book also lowered its price. Where many people will not spend twenty to thirty dollars to try out a new player resource, the ten-dollar price tag places the Heroes of High Favor series into an uncrowded area of high quality low cost resources.

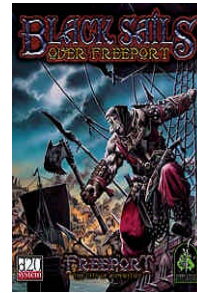
Nothing is perfect...

I felt that the prestige classes could have been fleshed out a bit better. I was expecting more unique abilities attached to each prestige class. While they are professions and classes that are goals for PC's, I feel that once many of them are achieved that PC's will be disappointed. The prestige classes function very well as templates for multi-classing, but more balanced and stronger characters can be achieved through storyline and character progression. In defense of Heroes of High Favor: Halflings I have yet to find very many prestige classes that really impress me.

And the overall impression is...

Heroes of High Favor: Halflings has really hit its mark. Even with the weaker than desired prestige classes, this sourcebook does so much more than I would have thought a \$10 book would have done. For the price of a starter deck

deck of some collectable card games, PC's have a resource to enhance their halfling experience. Even better, this book also discusses halflings in the abstract sense of small rogues, and many of the ideas and skills can easily be applied to any generic rogue character. I look forward to reading more books in the heroes of high favor series, and would recommend this book for anyone playing a rogue character.



BASICS

Black Sails Over Freeport (BSOF) is a massive (256 page) adventure set in the piratey world (city actually) of Freeport published by Green Ronin. This adventure has a retail price of \$32.95 USD and is designed for a party (containing four adventurers) of 6th level. It sports a very nice color cover depicting an attack by zombie pirates with what looks like a huge section of Freeport being set on fire. Even though the adventure is set in and around Freeport you could probably get by pretty well without it, using any sizeable port city that has a flexible moral compass.

INSIDE

The book starts off with a good introduction for the GM regarding the adventure and some information about Freeport itself. Again, you could pretty easily 'port things over to a city like Waterdeep without too much trouble. Even though it's just four pages in length the intro/adventure synopsis gave me a good idea about why everything is going on and how the adventure is designed to unfold. All of the interior artwork is black & white and while quite passable, and very good in some areas, it's not as nice as the cover.

I'll be getting into some, but not all, of the aspects of the adventure itself now so if you're planning on playing in BSOF you'll want to stop reading now or you'll definitely spoil some of the fun, and your GM will want to smack you around so let's avoid that too.

The adventure itself is broken up into three acts each with several sections and encounters. It all starts in Freeport as the party is confronted by a very nervous gnome who is looking for someone to hold on to a map for him, as he's currently being perused by some thugs. The encounters for Act I involve some fighting, some talking and some shopping, yes shopping. Encounter Levels range from one to eleven, but a resourceful party should be able to come out of the tougher ones intact. Most of Act I takes place in the city but we then set sail for more adventure on the high seas. Act I comes in at just under fifty pages in length and will probably take at least two or three 4-hour game sessions to play through. There are plenty of opportunities for role-playing in Act I even with a bunch of fighting going on. Several encounters are also trap-based, which I found to be a nice change of pace and was also very fitting for the pirate-city setting.

Encounters have shaded areas that are to be read aloud to the party and there are also some sidebars for possible NPC reactions and also blocks of information on important characters in the story. Also, one thing that I loved were the sections on plusses/minuses to experience above and beyond simple EL-based experience awards. They are for things like appropriate role-playing, good ideas (and bad ideas), etc... Things that I would have just tossed out a number that felt right, they have actually written up specific awards. A great idea and one that will benefit me in the future adventures when deciding how much experience to give out for these kinds of things.

The map that the gnome is trying to get them to hold onto is actually quite old and leads the party, eventually, to an island called Yarashad where a huge amount of treasure is said to be waiting. Of course, there is more to it than that, stuff like an ancient and mostly forgotten evil god that is trying to get his henchmen/followers to return him to our plane of existence. An artifact, a magical sextant, is the key to the party finding the island and the treasure, but it's also being sought by the cultists. Act I gets things in motion and either during or at the end of Act I each party member should advance one level.

Act II is the longest of the three coming in at over 100 pages in length. There are six separate parts to Act II (the exploration of multiple islands) and each has multiple encounters. Expect this section to last significantly longer (maybe twice as long) than Act I and we also get into some sailing, some spelunking and some dungeoneering. EL's here in Act II are also scaled up a bit so a party will need to keep their wits to be successful. There are some lower EL encounters too so they'll get a break from time to time.

By the end of Act II I'd expect at least another level coming under the belt of your players and maybe more depending on where they were experience point-wise at the end of Act I. Also, one thing that I really liked in Act II was a way to use all of the Simian miniatures from 100 Kingdoms that I've accumulated. Yes, your party will be fighting lots of big bad gorillas. There's even an EL 20 encounter here (Yikes!) to finish things off. Act II ends in a large and dangerous fight with a new monster, Treasure Golems. They are found in, you guessed it, a treasure chamber, which ends up making the monsters harder to spot, but they payoff at the end is rather large and there is an easier way through this encounter other than hacking away and hoping for the best. At the end of Act II the heroes should have a good feeling about how their adventure has unfolded; killing the minions of an evil god, collecting powerful magic items (artifacts) and tons of treasure. So, it's back to Freeport to spend your booty on women and wine, but...

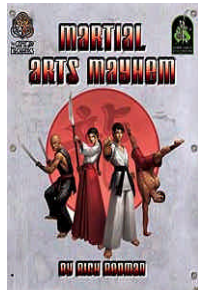
By the time the party gets back to Freeport for Act III a war has broken out between local elves and barbarians and the orcs have started an uprising in Freeport. And, on top of that, returning to Freeport with the artifacts has allowed Yarash (the evil god in question) to return. Oh, crap on a stick!

Act III is the shortest at under twenty pages but has some pretty far-reaching consequences for Freeport. For the most part EL's here are pretty high (teens) with the final one being another twenty, but there is also a bit of an easier way through this encounter as with the other EL 20 in Act II. With the adventure contained in BSOF over there is a whole page of possible "what's next" situations for the GM to flesh out to keep things in Freeport moving along.

There are four pages of handouts that you'll want to photocopy for your players. NPC and monster stats are presented in a section at the back of the book and while they are complete I would have liked them as part of each encounter instead. I'm sure this was done to keep any double entries, and therefore extra pages, out of the book, so it's understandable. The book ends in a 2-page map of Freeport. It's the same one as you got in the Freeport book (if you bought it) but if not and you don't have a map of Waterdeep handy or can't come up with a map of a port city it will be very useful to you.

VALUE

Over thirty dollars for an adventure, even a mega-adventure like this one, takes a bit of consideration before just blindly plunking down your hard-earned cash. I liked everything about this adventure, including its size and scope. It's a grand adventure that doesn't start out that way and one that allows the heroes to end up being real heroes, not just tomb robbers. Yes, they'll get plenty of treasure and kick the crap out of lots of monsters here but they also embark on an adventure where they can build a solid reputation. The only downside to mega-adventures like this one is having a party that's willing to devote enough game sessions to get through it. I'm thinking ten 4-hour sessions and that might be on the conservative side of things. The story is good enough to keep things moving and if your party is up to a nice ongoing adventure and is less fond of simple one-offs (not that I have anything against one-offs though as they are a great way to pass through 4-hours of game time) then this will be a great investment for you. If you're already running a Freeport campaign and have played through the previous adventures then BSOF is really a no-brainer. That's a "yes" go out and buy it.



BASICS

Martial Arts Mayhem is a 62-page *d20 Modern* supplement written by Rich Redman working for *The Game Mechanics* and published by *Green Ronin Publishing*. The soft cover is in full color and the interior is printed in black and white. It contains descriptions of eighteen martial arts schools, about forty new feats, over thirty secret techniques, stats for martial arts weapons, and campaign models. This volume retails for \$14.95.

INSIDE

This book is a printed compilation material originally released in PDF-format through *The Game Mechanics*. Rich Redman, who helped develop both *Dungeons and Dragons* and *d20 Modern* for Wizards of the Coast, is the author. The book is divided into an introduction and six chapters about the special elements this book provides.

The introduction covers a general overview of the martial arts (both real and as implemented in the *d20 Modern* rulebook), how to implement elements from this book into your *d20 Modern* game, and why certain design choices were made in this book. The chapter gives the reader insight into why the author thought a book on martial arts was necessary, and why he refrained from adding hundreds of new feats. The introduction also defines martial arts, its relationship to the law, and how both reality and *d20 Modern* favor firearms in combat as opposed to martial arts training.

The first chapter details melee combat rules and how this supplement affects them. It includes special rules on newly available grapple maneuvers. It explains why the Martial Artist advanced class is still a good class to choose. Special rules involving shields are implemented. Some optional rules on how a character obtains training including paying for classes, or spending ranks in the knowledge skill to gain the benefits of the school. It also has a small section on designing your own martial art suite/school.

The second chapter details the eighteen martial arts schools. Schools are slightly different from feat trees, and are not really advanced classes, although mastery of a school provides benefits similar to an advanced class's level related perks. Each school includes a short description of the style, and then details the different levels (usually three) of mastery for that style. Each level of mastery has prerequisites for that style that may include: attribute minimums, base attack bonus minimums, skill, and feat requirements. Most levels of mastery will have a benefit associated with it and possibly secret techniques, which are feats that can be obtained after the character gains that level of mastery.

The third chapter details the feats that are not detailed in the *d20 Modern* rulebook, but are requirements for the martial arts schools. This chapter also includes a detailed chart of feats (including the SRD feats) that includes which classes receive those feats as bonuses, prerequisites for those feats, and short description of the benefits of that feat.

The fourth chapter details the Secret Techniques, which are feats that become available after acquiring a certain level of mastery in a school. It begins with a chart that lists the secret techniques and at which level of mastery they become available to a particular school.



The fifth chapter deals with martial arts weaponry. It includes a nice table that details the damage, critical threat range, damage type, size, weight, and purchase DC of the weapons. The chapter includes descriptions of the more unique martial arts weapons. The section also details which weapons would be associated with certain schools.

The sixth chapter introduces campaign models that would work well in the scope of this supplement. The section begins with some of the archetypes associated with a martial arts campaign, the Fu level (how fantastic/realistic you want your campaign to be), and how to set up and run encounters in your scenarios. The section then turns to the campaign models. Each model includes: detail on the setting, the role the players have in the setting, the role of the fictional Department-7 agency, Three key traits that define the campaign, which rules from *Martial art Mayhem* that are applicable to the setting (as well as special campaign rules), the so-called fu level, and standard bad guys for the campaign.

The final two pages are an appendix of the martial arts quotes used in the book and a copy of the open gaming license.

VALUE

This book would be a great resource to the Game Master running a modern martial arts campaign and with very little work could add martial arts flavor to a medieval fantasy campaign. The schools may pose a bit of unbalance if used in a non martial arts based campaign, but a resourceful Game Master could overcome those issues with little problem.

As a martial artist I had a few issues with the material as presented. It would have been nice to see a martial arts school that focused on ground grappling, or throws and takedowns, or that represented Mixed Martial Arts training (such as those used in the UFC and Pride organizations). The styles and special abilities in the book seem to favor Chinese martial arts styles over others. The author seems to have little regard for Western Boxing (although it was nice that it was actually included). But, it should be noted that martial artist are a particularly picky lot (maybe even more so than gamers) and it would be impossible to please them all.



BASICS

"The Psychic's Handbook" is a 80-page soft cover supplement for d20 RPGs. The book has a full color cover with black and white illustrations inside. The book requires the use of the Player's Handbook, Third edition and is fully compatible with the 3.5 version of the d20 rules. It has a retail price of \$16.95 USD and is published by Green Ronin.

CONTENTS

"The Psychic's Handbook" is the latest in Green Ronin's Master Class series. This volume presents a new class, the Psychic, as well as associated prestige classes, abilities, and feats. The book also contains information on incorporating the psychic character and psionics in general into a fantasy campaign. There are also sections for incorporating the psychic into a d20 Modern campaign.

In addition to an introduction, the book is composed of four chapters. Chapter One introduces the Psychic class and the associated prestige classes. Chapter Two presents the new abilities associated with Psychics. Chapter Three covers new skills for the Psychic and Chapter Four discusses psychics and psionics in a campaign.

First off, the "The Psychic Handbook" draws a distinction between a psychic and a psionist as defined in the "Psionics Handbook". Both use mental powers to manipulate the environment, but the psionist is likened more to a sorcerer who learns a psionic talent/ability and then moves on to learn another. The psychic talent is more skill and ability based - as the character advances it gets better with practice and stamina. The psychic is more like a rogue.

There are six prestige classes based on the Psychic. Beastmaster, Fire-starter, Ghost Stalker, Psychic Adept, and Psychic Healer are all refinements of the generic Psychic. The sixth, Mind Hunter, is based on non-psychic classes as it is a type of character that is hunting down psychics and psionists.

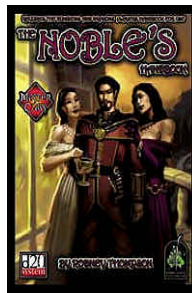
Since the Psychic is a skills-based character class, this volume is overflowing with psychic skills. Though crafted for the psychic, these 46 skills can be used by any psionic character. In addition, there are 48 feats for psychics. Some are psychic versions of other feats, such as craft item, but the majority are specifically for psionically enabled characters.

Introducing psionics into a campaign setting can be very unbalancing - even in a world of demons, devils, wizards, sorcerers, necromancers, and demigods. The fourth chapter of "The Psychic's Handbook" addresses the issues that can arise when integrating psionics into a fantasy setting whether medieval or modern. Topics such as psychic viruses, psychic impressions, keeping mysteries from psionic characters, psionic and magic interaction, as well as organizations both for and against psionic characters.

VALUE

This is an excellent volume. It is both well written and well thought out. Most RPGs, fantasy and otherwise, make psi powers out to be just magic. A psionist or psychic is a wizard who needs to verbal, semantic, or physical components to his spells. By making the psychic more of a learned discipline, like thievery, this book has changed the whole equation.

I highly recommend this book for every GM who's even thinking of including mind powers in his campaign - and I would not limit that suggestion to the fantasy genre. This book would work well in the others as well. Personally, I've avoided using the psionic rules from the rulebook in my Traveller T20 game because of the magic-like qualities they are given. I hope to use this volume as the basis for adding mind-benders to the political calculations of the Third Imperium. Look out, here come the Psi-Cops!



The Noble's Handbook introduces a new core class to the d20 system. Almost every social system has its elites that rule the teeming masses. As the daughters and sons of the rich and powerful, the nobles derive their power from breeding and influence, as well as the finest training and equipment money can buy. MSRP \$14.95

So says the editor of this offering from Green Ronin Publishing. The first thing that strikes me about this publication is its air of class. The production oozes quality, from the well-illustrated cover, with its glossy finish and excellent design, to the well-structured interior, clear prose and concise editing. Yes, this handbook suffers from seemingly endemic d20 typos but beyond that, it's a well thought out work. Internal illustrations are plentiful, although there is an alarming incongruity with their setting, some of the contents seeming alarmingly modern in their appearance, especially some of the female hairstyles, as well as the make-up, the plucked eyebrows, the modern-looking apparel and even a retort stand. Even the historically accurate clothing depictions cover some four centuries of European court fashion. Small matter I hear you say and rightly so, for these factors do not diminish the usefulness of this work.

We are introduced to five new prestige classes, namely the Commander, the Master Diplomat, the Impersonator, the Lord Knight and the Mastermind. With the exceptions of the obvious roles of Commander and Lord Knight, these new classes offer an ideal opportunity to 'pull strings' behind the scenes. In fact the Mastermind player will be very much behind the scenes, as all these classes can be played as supporters, providers and motivators but the Mastermind excels in being a purveyor and manipulator of information. Not all these classes are heavy on the diplomacy and etiquette aspects, as one would expect from characteristics taken from the upper echelons of a socially accepted class system, we are also treated to the prospect of role playing such luminaries as Crime-Lords.

I would suggest these new classes suit a more role-playing orientated gaming group, as opposed to a more roll-playing one, their nuances being wasted on a mainly hack and slash dungeoneering party. That said, the nobles' contacts, influences and the reputation of his House can still have a considerable part to play, even in these direct contact, interaction-free style games. The Nobles come into their own however, when you put them into a city, within a highly populated campaign setting, especially one with martial activity and political intrigue.

We are introduced to new class skills and many new feats, indeed, great pains are taken to distinguish between the seemingly similar skills and, not only are we given examples of skill usage but also of House interaction. The authors do a sterling job of justifying all the skill inclusions, of which there are some wonderful choices and said choices being dependent upon the class chosen. A nice 'noble' consistency, for me at least, is that the majority of new skills are language-dependent. We are also given some juicy examples of magical equipment, the recumbent heirlooms of once mighty men and influential families, awaiting but the request of an ambitious nephew or niece. All of which add to the 'spice' of these new character classes.

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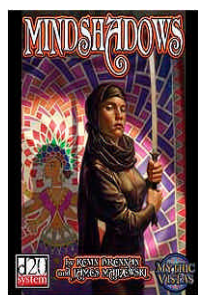


Feral Line infantry standard bearer By Alejandro Gutiérrez Franco

A new mechanism, for dueling, is introduced to us within these pages and, although at first glance, it seems little more than the usual combat scenario, presented slightly differently, there are enough nuances and move variations to rightly acclaim it new. The dueling cards provided on the last-but-one page, played in 'opposed' sequences, help to generate a real feeling of competition. Such a pity said cards are not provided in perforated format and on card instead of paper.

Much guidance is given the player and GM alike, on playing a Noble and integrating Noble characters and Noble Houses into a campaign setting. We are given examples of Noble Class archetypes and examples of 'famous' Noble Houses. I found it thus disappointing, if not a little disturbing that 'Monster Class' Nobles are not afforded similar courtesy indeed they are treated as no more than pale imitations of their 'Player Class' counterparts. A silly oversight from my perspective, to assume a 'monster' Noble would find it more difficult to sustain a lifestyle and sphere of influence within its own species or environment is just plain ludicrous. In the campaigns I enjoy most, the monster elements are not arbitrarily generated fodder but a viable and motivated force, within the established ecosystem and sometimes unbalancing it. Room for a further supplement from Green Ronin perhaps.

Ah, but one of my pet hates has caused me to digress. For the asking price, this is a valuable guide to enriching your campaign setting. In short, if your group likes to do more than role dice in their role-playing sessions, this is recommended reading.



On the distant island-continent of Naranjan, brave adventurers study the psychic arts under powerful gurus, battle treacherous yuan-ti in the depths of ancient dwarven ruins, and evade elven cannibal tribes in the tropical jungle. Third in the Mythic Vistas series from Green Ronin, Mindshadows blends the rich legends of Southeast Asia with furious martial arts action inspired by the Psionics Handbook. The first true psionic setting for the d20 system, Mindshadows can be dropped easily into any existing campaign. From the decadent city-states of the Spice Coast, to the treacherous capital

of the Sudarshan Empire, adventure awaits-for those brave enough to traverse this exotic land. MSRP \$22.95.

Enough of the blurb already, first things first and the first thing which strikes me is, this is a big source book, some 125 pages in all. The exterior is of the consistently high calibre I have happily come to expect of Green Ronin, with good illustration, excellent design and high gloss finish. The interior is of a no lesser quality, every one of its pages suitably adorned to match the theme and both pleasantly and prolifically illustrated. A very nice world map and key, along with the, very useful but for some astonishing reason rare, index, are to the rear extremis of the work.

Forgive me but I find myself having to repeat myself. This is a very large work, both in scope of subject and amount of information. Where to begin? Let us begin at the beginning, as in the source book itself we are introduced to the geography of the area, an island continent some 1000 miles long and 300 miles at its extreme width, its location in respect to the major gaming area of Freeport and a brief introduction to the populace. We are then given a potted history of the development of Psionics in this micro-world. This is perhaps the point at which one would stop the players from reading, after all Naranjan is supposed to be a semi-mythical land, talked about at drunken musings in dockside taverns. It is at this point we are given an extensive history of this 'brave new world', its major periods of development, the lives of its founding fathers and those whom have shaped the land into that which it now has become.

Secondly, we are introduced to the respective and 'so called' civilized provinces and city-states of the major powers of the area, along with neighbouring kingdoms. Not only do we receive physical descriptions of each area but also their respective attitudes to their neighbours and the ruling body, along with prevalent rumour and possible campaign themes. The non-interactive expanses of the island are not discussed at this point, they are wild and dangerous and only fit for foolhardy foreign devils with purses bigger than their brains, just your average adventuring group.

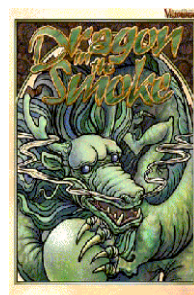
Ok, it's at this point that things get a little heavy-legged. The authors tell us that, Naranjan is based on Southeast Asia generally, and the Indian sub-continent in particular. Although some of the interior illustration and information intimates various Asian influences, it is in these next two sections, firstly of religion and cosmology, secondly of socio-political systems

and attitudes, that the evidence points squarely to the Indian sub-continent. If you are not familiar with this area or its peoples and beliefs, you would do well to supplement the information presented here with some background reading of your own, perhaps some travel books covering culture and customs. It is not that the information presented here is inadequate, it is simply this, that the environment you will be creating is vastly different from anything you will have experienced if you are from a northern hemisphere, occidental, euro-American background. If you do it well it will be an experience your gaming group will remember for a very long time, if done poorly it will be no more than an Hong Kong action movie version of Sinbad.

I digress but I cannot stress strongly enough, how well this island world could be portrayed, if the time and effort are put into the preparation, preferably by the players as well as the GM. Which brings us to the next installment, that of the non-human races and their lands, not all of which live in pleasant co-habitation. Apart from the wonderfully wild Elves and the nasty, nasty Yuan-ti, I really don't see why every player character non-human race has to be represented in these lands. It would have been a refreshing change to forego the inevitable, Dwarves, Halflings and Gnomes, in the interests of being 'different', indeed their respective roles and lands could easily have been filled by other human nations but perhaps this would have been too close to the historical Indian sub-continent.

Next up are the character classes. We have the Core classes and the Core Prestige classes explained to us in terms of the Naranjan environment, with detailed information regarding any limitations, affiliations and respective attitudes of the resident population. What we also get are thirteen new Prestige classes, count them, thirteen. You can be anything from Grasshopper to Tarzan, from Scorpio to Optimus Prime, from the one-armed Swordsman to Ghandi and with the Storm Riders thrown in for good measure. There are too many to mention in these few lines, the differences between some being difficult to distinguish and the range of skills and feats makes the old Psionic combat skills, from the DMs Guide, look pitiful by comparison. And this, coupled with some wonderfully exotic new weaponry.

There is a small section on how to get your party to Naranjan and how to integrate these lands into your gaming world and, although helpful, they are brief. If you want to game in a world that is completely different from that which you have previously experienced, this would be a good choice but bear in mind the preparation required to fully appreciate the difference. You get a lot for your money in this source book and it may not be to everyone's' taste but if you're into super heroes of the oriental type, look no further, you have found your Gandhara.



BASICS

"Dragon in the Smoke" is an introductory adventure for Heresy Gaming's Victoriana fantasy RPG. The soft-bound 56-page book has a full color-cover with black and white illustrations inside. It is published by Heresy Gaming and has a retail price of \$12.95 USD.

Centuries ago, before the time of Rome, most dragons were defeated. A few survived into the middle ages but were eventually eradicated by legendary dragon slayers. However, there was one old wyrm in China who was too strong to kill. A cabal of wizards were able to imprison the dragon's soul in a jade sculpture. The power of this dragon was such that it could affect peoples minds from inside its green prison. The wizards placed the jade dragon in an isolated monastery and set up hereditary guards to keep it safe.

Several millennia later, the Jade Dragon was stolen by an English traveler who prized it for its beauty. The stage is set - the serpent is trying to get out by making the unsuspecting antiquities collector perform the ritual required to set it free while the guards of the monastery are looking to recapture their draconic charge.

DETAILS

"The Dragon in the Smoke" is an adventure told in three acts. It is set in the upper and lower class parts of Victoriana London. There are a host of NPC's from all levels of society - from the kidnapped children of privilege to a halfling pimp, to a disreputable dwarf, and to the Tongs hiding in London. The adventure winds its way to the manors of the rich and the sewers of city.

The book also includes an appendix with rules for a Martial Artists class. These rules were intentionally left out of the basic rule book since it concentrates mainly on Victorian Europe and not the Orient. The rules are included now to further this adventure. With good pacing, the adventure should cover three to four 4 hour sessions - more if the players are inexperienced. There is quite a bit of information and background in the book for the referee but there is little in the way of props (i.e. handouts or maps).

IMPRESSIONS

The first adventure for a new game system is always important as it gives insight into how the designers think their work should be used. Starter adventures included in the rulesets are always crafted to help players learn the rules. Its the first stand alone adventure that really sets the tone of the game. This adventure reminds me more of a Doctor Who story, specifically The Talons of Weng-Chiang, than it does of a Sherlock Holmes mystery. If I was forced to make a comparison to Holmes, I would say that "The Dragon in the Smoke" is closest to "The Crucifer of Blood". There are definitely Sax Romer influences in this tale. Class and social ranking play a part in the adventure - however it is not central to the tale. The party must be able to move in both high and low society circles. The disparity between the classes and between rich and poor permeates the entire volume. This Dickensian environment is one of the central features of Victoriana. The adventure is well written - there is at least one red herring for the party to pursue - and enough plot twists to keep everyone interested.

RECOMMENDATION

This is a well written adventure. It captures the world of Victoriana in both the manor house parlors and the opium dens. The story is exciting and there's enough complications and twists to keep even the most jaded player involved. From the referee's point of view, the is is a rich setting that can start off a whole series of adventures for the fantastic Baker's Street Irregulars. In sort, this is a must have for a group of Victoriana players. For those who do not play Victoriana, this adventure can be readily adapted to other systems - it would work extremely well in a Pulp setting like Savage Worlds, Hero System, or Gaslight (the Victorian era Call of Cthulhu). "The Dragon in the Smoke" is more role-playing oriented, so it might need to be modified slightly for a more action oriented game. However, the stable of characters and the plot make such a modification worth while.

BASICS

"Into the Black: A Guide to Below" is a 96-page softcover book with a full-color cover. This volume is for fantasy dungeon crawls using version 3.5 of the Dungeons and Dragons rules. It has a retail price of \$22.95 USD and is published by Bastion Press.

CONTENTS

"Into the Black: A Guide to Below" is a details presentation of underground environments for a d20 fantasy RPG. The book has seven chapters which cover general subterranean life, caverns, catacombs, mines, sewers, and new equipment, and spells. A complete random encounter matrix is presented in the appendix. The first chapter deals with subterranean life. It provides the ecological background for subterranean flora and fauna. The differences between cave dwellers, transient creatures who live near the mouth of subterranean systems, and troglobites, creatures who live out their lives out of direct sunlight.

After this almost textbook introduction, the volume turns to natural cavern systems. The cave environment is described, with particular emphasis on plant and animal denizens. These are both fantastic and mundane but are not full-fledged encounters - these are reserved for the Monsters section. Seven new creatures are presented in great detail. There are animal-intelligence creatures like the Deviant Mimic, and intelligent creatures like the Mal'Orm (Cricket Men of the Deep). Each monster's entry includes a description, combat specialties, habitat and society, as well as campaign hooks. In addition to these monsters, there are sections on rocks and minerals as well as hazards such as disease and collapses.

The next chapter presents catacombs using the same format as for caverns. There are additional plants, animals, rocks, minerals, diseases, and traps. The monsters section is also rich with new critters - including the golem-like Crypt Guardian and a host of new undead. After the catacombs comes the chapter on Mines. Again you have details about the mining environment, rocks and minerals, and hazards - such as coal dust, floods, gases, and cave ins. Five new monsters round out this chapter. The final underground environ covered is the sewer. There is a detailed environment description followed by an extensive section on plant and animal life. The hazards section is composed of different diseases. There are five final monsters; many of which do not remain in the sewers.

The remaining twenty pages present new adventuring equipment, both magical and mundane, for trekking in the underground places. This is followed by a section on new materials. These can be used in place of existing material spell components to change the effect of some spells. There is also a section on new substances which can be used by alchemists and other craftsmen to create unusual devices or potions. The final chapter presents forty-two spells sprinkled around the all the basic spell-caster types. These are spells specifically for use in the underground environment. The random encounter matrices at the end of the book given tables for encounters, animals, plants, substances, and materials for each type of subterranean environment.

VALUE

The Fantasy RPG started off as a dungeon crawl and has grown from there. Most players cut their teeth exploring lost crypts and, even now, hanker to return to those innocent spelunking days when a gang of kobolds was an unknown enemy. This book provides the perfect excuse! Bastion Press has published a book that goes into great detail about those underground locations - and gives the DM more to work with than four kobolds in a 30' x 30' room. With this book, you can recapture the mystery and awe of those early explorations; even if you're 10th level! I highly recommend this book to any DM who wants to return to the dark days of yester-year when a dwarf with an axe and an innate sense of direction could lead his companions to the monster's lair. Of course, now he'll have to deal with a bad case of crack-foot and watch out for hemorrhagic fever while searching earnestly for that vein of bergasalt - the most lethal substance against undead that is known! Let's go caving!

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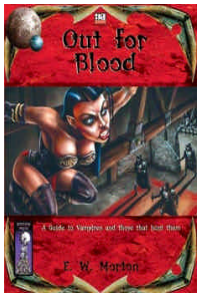
"I do not know what weapons will be used in World War III, but I assure you that World World IV will be fought with stones. "

-Albert Einstein

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RPG OBJECTS



BASICS

"Out for Blood: A Guide to Vampires and Those That Hunt Them" is a 96-page supplement for Dungeons and Dragons version 3.5. This vampire book has a full color cover and black and white illustrations on the inside. This book is published by Bastion Press and is priced at \$22.95 USD.

CONTENTS

"Out for Blood" is divided into three chapters and an appendix. The first chapter presents character creation rules, including new feats and new uses for existing skills. The first chapter also has eighteen

prestige classes. The second chapter presents creature rules, including details on the vampire subtype and its attack and defense modes. The chapter also includes seventeen new creatures. The third chapter covers campaign rules for vampires. This chapter includes seven secret organizations, a list of 25 adventure hooks, and a section on vampire lairs. The appendix presents fourteen spells; nine of which are in a new clerical domain.

DETAILS

Of all the supplements I've seen over the past year, those covering vampires outnumber those covering any other sub-genre. There's probably a sociology masters thesis in why this is the case. "Out for Blood" distinguishes itself from the pack in its organization. By splitting their volume into thirds, the authors have made it easy for both players and referees to find what they need quickly. In the character chapter, the section on new uses for skills is a good idea. Where as other volumes include new skills that are thinly veiled duplicates of existing ones, "Out for Blood" takes general existing skills and provides rules for using them in new ways that fit the vampire genre. For example, the Craft (Alchemy) skill can now be used to Identify Blood - determine from what creature it came and if multiple samples are from the same or different creatures.

The part of chapter one that is most interesting to players, however, is its list of vampire sub-genre prestige classes. Of the eighteen presented, 9 are vampire hunters (Arcane Pathologist, Death Guard, Exterminator, Fist of Light, Knight of the Dragon, Kresnik, Soul Catcher, Vampire Slayer, Watcher in the Shadows) and 7 are the vampire-esque (Blood Hunter, Dubbleauger, Knight of the Phoenix, Master of Sacrifice, Soul Collector, Vamp, Vampire Seneschal). The rest are aspects of the sub-genre (Fortune Teller, Gothic Pretender). The selection is broad - and can be used for any undead-themed campaign. Most of the vampire hunter prestige classes set themselves against the undead in general. The vampire-esque prestige classes are not true vampires - those are covered in the creatures chapter - but vampire-like, either trading in blood or souls.

Where chapter one interests players the most, referees will find chapter two a gold mine. The chapter begins with a discussion of the vampire undead subtype and how it plays in the game. The chapter then presents various vampires, some as templates to be applied to player or non-player characters. The list of these templates includes the Astral Vampire, the Deathgaze Vampire or Nelapsi, Death Ringer, Irontooth Vampire or Upyr, Kuang-Shi, Lesser Vampyr, Nosferatu, Plague Vampire or Nine-Kilelr, Vampyr, Voladlak or Undead Lycanthrope, and the day-walking Barbed-tongue Vampire among others. In addition, there are non-template vampire creatures such as the Callicantzaro, Chupacabra, Dhampir, Grave Soil, Iron Maiden, Lost Soul, and White Beast.

The combination of both templates and associated creatures gives the Referee a good stable of bad guys for his favorite party of adventures. However, that is just the beginning. The third chapter presents six secret societies - some for the elimination of vampires and some for their protection. These organizations are presented with information on its history, organization, leadership, membership, recruiting and encounters. There is also a section detailing the interaction of these organizations. And finally, there are 25 hooks to get the ball rolling.

VALUE

All in all, "Out for Blood" is a good supplement. It presents lots of new information and does it in a easy to use format. There is quite of bit of D&D goodness here for both players and referees. If you're fantasy campaign has gotten a little predictable, then you can use this book to take a side trip into a horror setting - and have your cleric become Van Helsing or revisit your own version of Ravenloft. For d20 fantasy RPG's players, this is a good supplement if you just want to dip into the vampire sub-genre. It is a good introduction to those that feed at night.



BASICS

Killing Fields is the latest supplement for Haven: City of Violence from Louis Porter Jr. Design. It's a 112-page (the last five pages are ads) sourcebook that focuses on martial arts and more firearms. It has a color cover but all interior art is black & white. It has a retail price of \$20.00 USD.

INSIDE

As with other Haven books this one starts off with a short editorial from Mr. Porter about the book. I had an opportunity to meet Louis at GenCon SoCal and in spite of having a cold at the time and being a

little under the weather he took the time to talk to me for several minutes and turned out to be a hell of a nice guy. We then get an introductory piece of fiction which is also typical of Haven products and just reinforces the mood and setting of the game. You'll notice that the font size is a bit larger than with most other RPG products and I did find some typos and awkward sentences while reading Killing Fields.

If you're a professional wrestling aficionado and a fan of Haven I think you'll really like their take on the squared circle that is found in Chapter 1. Imagine Pro-Wrestling mixed with Gladiatorial game (the ones where you really got hurt or killed) and you'll have a good idea of what's going on. It's an underground (mostly) affair with black market videos and secret fight locations but it satisfies the bloodlust of many of Haven's citizens. The major players are also described here but not all of them have full write-ups presented.

Lots of new Benefits and Drawbacks are presented and while many are combat oriented there are several that will be of great role-playing use like *Shy* and *Speech Impediment*. Actually, the latter could also prove fun in a firefight as Mr. Mouth-Full-Of-Marbles is trying to yell out to his partners where the enemies are and is just a stuttering, spitting mess. Four new character prototypes are also included; *Cat Burglar*, *Martial Arts Instructor*, *Pit Fighter* and *Reformed Ex-Con*.

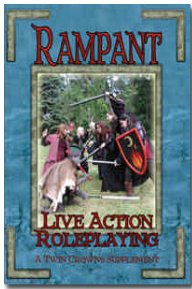
Chapter 2 gets us into Guns & Ammo and in addition to a pretty good list of firearms (nineteen, ranging from a single carbine to multiple automatic pistols) you'll find rules for modifying firearms with items like custom grips, replica (that doesn't suck quite as much as the ones that Vincent and Sol had in Snatch!) or even go for Full Auto Fire and lay down a serious curtain of lead. Alternate ammunition is also here for you to buy and I can see lots of characters taking advantage of Depleted Uranium or Copper Head rounds but I'd question just how many characters in Have will be taking Rubber bullets. I expect that one of the most interesting new features for Haven players will be the Expanded Hit Table and new Maximum Damage Table. It will allow to figure out exactly how screwed someone is after they get shot in the Kidney or Small Intestines. It's an added layer of detail but one that I think will be welcomed. This chapter ends with a few additional weapons like grenades, other explosives and gasses.

Hand-to-Hand combat takes up just under 30 pages in Chapter 3 and it introduces eighteen martial arts. Each has minimum training requirements and an amount of Experience Points that must be given up. There are also three levels of training in each art and each will allow you to use new maneuvers. If you're not interested in expanding your character's hand-to-hand role into that of a fightin' machine and just plan to shoot until you need to get into a girlie-slap-fight kind of scuffle you'll probably find this section the least useful of the book, but if you want to do some real Kung-Fu fighting in addition to lots of shooting then you'll get a lot out of it. Several new martial arts weapons are also presented.

The last chapter of the book is information for the G.O.D. and includes NPC character sheets and much greater detail about these characters and their place and motivations in Haven.

VALUE

While this book packs a lot of PC information in it I see it more likely to be purchased by your G.O.D. and then having the needed information farmed out to the players and keeping the behind-the-scenes stuff to himself. For a Haven campaign it will be a pretty easy sell and some of the information could also find its way into a d20 Modern game like converting the Benefits into Feats and using the storyline information in that campaign, but its main audience will be Haven G.O.D.'s and it should not disappoint them.



"Rampant - Live Action Roleplaying" by Living Imagination (\$24.95) As noted on the book's cover, this is "A Twin Crown's Supplement". Note carefully the use of the word 'supplement' - the information in this book is designed for those who want to take their tabletop adventures in the Twin Crown's campaign setting out-of-doors. Instead of rolling dice, players make and use boffer weapons (of PVC pipe, duct tape and foam) and spell packets (cloth bags of birdseed) to resolve combat.

After a brief introduction to role-playing, Chapter One dives right into character creation. There are a dozen different non-human races from which to choose, and a brief write-up on each details their strengths, weaknesses and attitudes. The method given for visually portraying a non-human in a LARP is rather elegant, involving face-paint and (possibly) minor costuming. Elves and half-elves, for example, will need pointy latex ears and facial makeup, the color of which shows the sub-species (black for dark elves, white for high elves, etc.).

I found the skill-based system slightly difficult to make sense of at first, but well thought out once grasped. All skills fall into one of twelve categories called headers. With the exception of the catch-all header "Miscellaneous", it is possible to spend Character Points (CP) to buy a header to get a reduced CP cost on the skills in that header. There are also some skills that are so esoteric that they may only be learned after buying the skill header. So a character that is primarily a melee fighter could pick up a few spells to toss their opponents a nasty surprise, but will not be able to create magical scrolls or perform rites and rituals available to a character devoted to the magical arts.

Magic is also a convoluted topic. In addition to the somewhat standard division of priestly (Divine) and wizardly (Arcane) magics, there are three different strengths - spells, rites and rituals. Spells just involve reciting aloud a short phrase loud enough for your target to hear and hitting said target with a spell packet. Rites are more potent, but require an uninterrupted 60 seconds to cast, which is something of a luxury when everyone around you is swinging away with their foam-covered pipes. Rituals are more powerful still, take longer (5-10 minutes) to cast, and can be hazardous to the well-being of the spellcaster if not executed successfully. Fortunately, one can enlist the aid assistants for casting rituals - just be sure they're not secretly trying to undermine its success!

Bardic magic and thieving both get their own chapter. The procedure for picking pockets is really quite ingenious. The would-be thief must attach a paperclip with a bit of string tied to it onto their unsuspecting victim, with more skilled thieves getting longer strings. Once this is done, a game marshal or neutral player is called in to assist. If the adjudicator can touch the end of the string to the item the thief is trying to steal without changing the natural hang of the victim's clothing, the thief has successfully stolen the item.

The chapter on the religious beliefs of the Rampant setting is interesting. It lays out the tenets of the twelve different deities, their dogma and the special powers that may be granted to the exemplary members of the faiths. One very glaring omission must be mentioned. Apparently, the deities are arrayed on something called The Wheel of the Gods, with those friendly towards each other being adjacent and those diametrically opposed on opposite sides. However, this is never clearly described or depicted.

The artwork in the book (other than the page borders) is simply black-and-white photographs of costumed LARPer engaged in game activities. Most are quite good and give some useful insight into appropriate costuming, but a handful are simply printed too darkly to be seen clearly. A very few are just downright awful.

Overall, I found the book to be difficult to follow at first, which I attribute to my unfamiliarity with the setting. There are quite a few clever game mechanics that could be adapted to just about any LARP, but several topics (such as the availability of reagents for alchemy) are glossed over with the phrase "consult your local Rampant chapter". If you're a LARPer and your area has a Rampant chapter (or you're up to the task of starting one!), or if you already have a LARP group and are looking for some new ideas to incorporate, this book is a gold mine. If you're not in that audience, this book will be of limited use.

Note: If you're interested in more information on Rampant events or help to get a Rampant chapter started, the contact information is:

LIONE Rampant, LLC
PO Box 67
Brookfield, CT 06804

e-mail: board@lione.net
website: www.lione.net



BASICS

Kult, Beyond the Veil is published by 7th Circle games and is a re-print of the original game book with the addition of the complete magic system. It's a 304-page soft cover book that has a color cover and several black & white internal images. It's priced at \$35.00 USD. As the back cover indicates the world as we know it is a lie and a much darker reality lies beyond. It's a world where God and Satan have both abandoned their posts and angels and demons wander with motives of their own. It's a very dark world that is only suitable for mature audiences.

INSIDE

The book is divided into three main sections with a 3-page character sheet to finish things off. The text was all pretty clear and easy to read and the artwork ranges from good to not so good (IMHO) and some of it does show some nudity and graphic violence. Its 'mature audience' suggestion is pretty on the mark.

The first section, The Lie, is for players and GM's as it describes part of the world, explains character creation, skill use and combat. The basic game mechanic involves rolling a d20 lower is generally better. How well you do is determined by the difference in your roll when compared to the particular skill rating. For example, if you have a 15 in a skill and try to use it and roll a 2 on the d20 you have achieved a normal success. It takes a difference of 16+ to get beyond the normal range and getting this kind of difference is either accomplished through various modifiers or having exceedingly high skill levels.

You can go through simplified character creation or jump straight into the whole process. The simplified version provides you with nine archetypes to choose from (Agent, Artist, Company Careerist, Dealer, Doctor, Femme Fatale, Plainclothes Cop, Private Investigator and Student) and a set of skills for you to assign ratings to. Your abilities are determined by rolling 2d10 for each in the simplified version but when you build completely from scratch you get a number of points to spread around in abilities and skills. It really boils down to how much customization you want in character creation. Advantages and disadvantages flesh your character out and they can range from Drug Addiction (cigarettes, speed, alcohol, etc) to Code of Honor.

Skills are associated with certain abilities, like Throwing being based on Strength, and while you can raise your Throwing skill above your Strength rating it will cost you lots of points to do this. Guns are Agility based so invest in that ability if you plan on painting the walls with your opponents. Speaking of shooting, combat is handled like other skills. You roll a d20 and compare the result to your skill, add/subtract modifiers and then see how well/bad you did. If your target is wearing armor they get a saving roll. If they blow this then you check, or just have on your character sheet, the damage done by the gun and then compare that to how well/bad you hit and determine damage. It's not the most complicated of systems but also not the most elegant. So, how bad does it hurt? In Kult, wounds are rated as scratches, light wounds, serious wounds and fatal wounds. Ok, the easiest first. If you take enough damage to get a fatal wound your pretty much done, but if you accumulate lesser wounds and get to the fatal level that way you are KO'd and only might die. Let's say that I shot someone for a modified total of 9 damage. That will end up being a light wound, but depending on his Constitution he might be able to take anywhere between two and 6 light wounds before being bumped up to serious status. This damage scheme reminded me a little of how hits are doled out in Confrontation, but with more variables thrown in which I didn't care too much for. It's possible that I've been jaded by the simplicity of the d20 system, but it just seemed like a lot to go through to put a bullet into someone.

There is a five page section on purchasing equipment but it's dated from 1996. I would have expected a longer section or at least an updated one. It's written that a much more expansive list of items can be found in the second part of the book, The Rumors, but I found none.

After adventures you earn between one and seven experience points which are used just like character creation points. You can also get better through practice but this gets expensive, takes time and is not guaranteed.

The second section of the book is mostly for GM use and includes rules for possession, exorcisms and the like along with new disadvantages and lots of other new rules. Yes, there is a cannibalism disadvantage and no I won't be going into further detail of it.

Pretty extensive rules for environmental effects are given but are you really going to write an adventure that states how many volts are running through the sparking wire that the PC hero (or they could just as easily be a degenerate villain) just picked up? Not me, I'd be happier with a variable amount of damage that's easily generated. Poisons and drugs are also detailed and if you want to get hopped up on LSD or speed it has the effects, both beneficial (if you can call them than) and detrimental.

The magic system does not shy away at all from the dark imagery of the setting and in fact, makes it even more pronounced. If you want your character to be a Satan Worshipper then you've found your game because there's an archetype for it. I'll pass. Lots of spells are presented and, again, they are true to the very dark setting of the game.

In the third section, The Truth, we get a look at the monsters that you'll be fighting. Actually, I'm not really sure if they are any better or worse than many parties of player characters will turn out. Much of the rest of The Truth is devoted to the actual reality of the world around us and it's not a pretty place. Death, re-birth, animation of the dead, temporal paradoxes, madmen, hallucinations, and sexual deviancy are all here.

The section specifically for the GM on running the game and setting the tone for the players is adequate, but still kind of short. A few pages are devoted to creating adventures and this, along with the mini-adventure, will get GM's started off on the right foot. The inclusion of a mini-adventure is a definite positive and it could be 'ported over to another horror systems without too much trouble if you like.

VALUE

Thirty-five dollars for a book this size is a good value but you're really going to have to be sold on the setting to warrant picking it up. I hadn't played or read any Kult material before seeing this re-issue of the book, but have done a

good amount of horror role-playing, mainly with Call of Cthulhu, but this setting just didn't thrill me. Yes, it's disturbing and I know that's what the authors are going for here, so in that matter they definitely succeeded. You can find many of the same kinds of things presented here in other horror games but it just seemed (to me anyway) to be just too deliberately in your face for my taste.

If you're a previous Kult player I'd expect that you already have most or all of the information here so you're not too likely to pick it up. As a new player, or group that wants to run a horror game, it's definitely one way to go (especially if you're looking for a really dark and sinister setting) but really take a look at the material presented in the book before you plunk down your cash.



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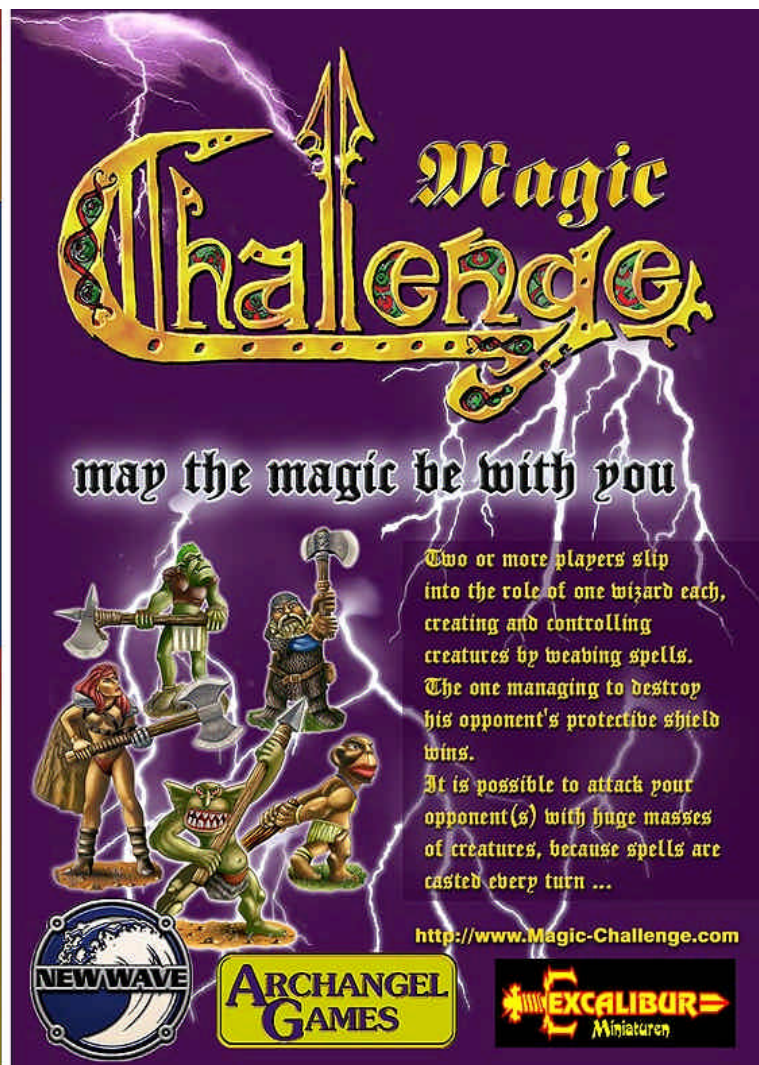
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Adventure



Dangerous Dealings and Marvelous Maidens, Part 2 A Continuing 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!

This is the second part of the adventure and does not stand on its own. The first part was published in the September 03 issue of Fictional Reality. You can download that adventure from the Fictional Reality website (<http://www.fictionalreality.org>).

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.

The Story So Far...

The trip from Los Angeles to San Francisco aboard the Bay Liner express started out as normal on Friday, July 6, 1934. The party was enjoying a leisurely train ride to LA in the company of young and blonde Wilma Deering, when the train came to a stop. A farmer's truck had broken down while crossing the tracks. As the conductor and other train hands worked to move the cart, a group of heavies enter the train and try to kidnap Wilma. Our heroes prevent this, sending the surviving mooks fleeing into the nearby woods.

Arriving in Los Angeles, Detective Queen questions the party and they meet Professor Alistair Gordon. The professor is the guardian of Wilma. The professor is in town to present his rocket pack invention to a military conference. He has been receiving phone calls from a mysterious man named Dr. Boskone, who wants to buy the plans to the rocket pack. The professor has thus far refused, so Dr. Boskone turned to more persuasive means. He attempted to kidnap Wilma to force the professor to turn over his plans.

The professor thanks the party for their help in saving his daughter, and asks one more favor. Could they accompany him to a meeting with Dr. Boskone? The professor wants to end this madness and he wants to cooperate with this mysterious doctor.

The meeting is to be held tonight at an old mining ghost town in the hills above San Francisco. When the professor and the party arrive, the minions of Doctor Boskone jump them. The mooks are now lead by a giant Minotaur named Grond.

Episode 3: Descent into the Dark

Location: Devil's Draw ghost town

Time: Saturday, July 7 1934, 12:30 a.m.

Summary: The party follows the minions of Dr. Boskone into the old abandoned mine.

After the Battle

If the police weren't already at the scene, they will soon show up – along with an ambulance.

While the party is resting up, and getting any needed medical attention they need from the ambulance team, Detective Queen brings them up to date with what has happened while they were gone.

Detective Queen says shortly after the party left for the mining town, the professor's plans were stolen from the precinct station where they had been put for "safe keeping".

The desk sergeant and the few officers in the building at the time said they were attacked by a group of thugs who knocked them out with some kind of blue gas. When they woke up the professor's plans were gone.

The thugs did leave a note – it reads:

Dear flatfoots,
Sorry for the gas – a little headache is better than being shot, don't you think?
Have some donuts and coffee and you'll be just ducky!

Thanks for keeping the plans safe for me – but I need them now. Everything is falling into place – by the time you read this, my associate Grond will have the professor in his bovine clutches. He will then help me build my army of rocket men.

I will contact you shortly with my demands!

Dr. Boskone.

Detective Queen is confused by both the reference to Grond and bovine. He's also curious about these so called "rocket men". There are two possible outcomes of Episode 2. In either case, the party will need to follow Grond into the old abandoned mine.

Grond has kidnapped the Professor!

Despite the heroic actions of the party, Grond grabbed the professor and headed off into the workings of the old mine. With the professor and the plans, who knows what the evil Doctor can do? There is but one thing to do – go after him!

Grond didn't get the Professor!

The professor was saved – that's good. But the news of the plans is not. Obviously the Minotaur and the thugs are connected to Dr. Boskone in some way. The only way to find out what is going on is to follow them into the mine.

The professor will explain that "rocket men" is what he calls the soldiers who were to be equipped with his new rocket pack. He does say that if Dr. Boskone has the plans, he probably has the resources to equip his thugs with the rocket packs. If he does that, there's not much that can be done to stop him.

The professor is too tired to join the party, so he will ride back into town with the ambulance and Detective Queen. However, the detective will leave some of the SFPD here to help the party when they go into the mine.

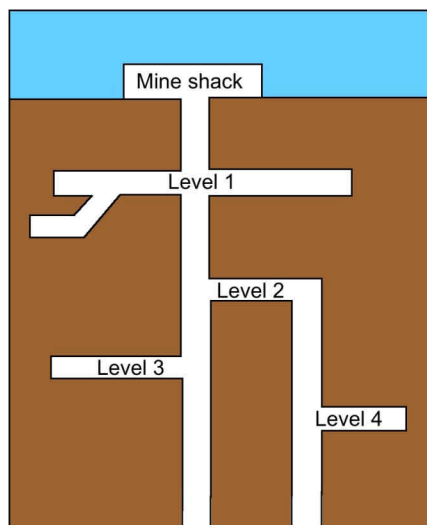
The Mine

This episode takes place in the mine workings. A depth view of the workings is shown. Each level is covered in detail in the following section.

Mine Shack

The mine shack is a large timber building with an iron beam frame. 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 (TN +2 to pick the lock; TN +4 to break it).

2.



Inside the mine shack is years of accumulated debris. A thorough search will reveal almost any type of mining equipment, though it is worn and rusted. A quick search of the place will show that there have been lots of people moving between the doors the elevator workings. The party will also find 3 battery operated lanterns (with a 3-hour charge) and 6 helmets with lights (with a 2-hour charge).

A close search (TN+2) will reveal that there might be some non-human footprints in the dust, but nothing definite.

Like the doors, the elevator is in good condition. The workings have been cleaned up and oiled and appear to be working correctly. The controls look simple enough to operate (TN 4) though a failure will jam the elevator so it can't operate any more.

The elevator itself is a metal caged platform with a wooden slat floor that is lowered by a double set of cables. There is an up and a down button on the elevator itself as well as the outside control panel. The elevator fills the shaft with a 6" gap around the edge. One edge of the shaft has a ladder bolted to it that runs all the way down.

The elevator stops at Levels 1 through 3 and the top. There is a safety device that will stop the elevator from going any lower than Level 3. The ladder, however, goes on down to where the mine collapsed – about 400 yards below Level 3.

The elevator moves slowly – it takes it about 5 minutes to go between each level.

The current position of the elevator depends on how episode 2 turned out.

Grond has kidnapped the Professor!

After making his escape, Grond rode the elevator down to Level 2 and took the Professor to Level 4. Figuring he'll be followed, Grond has placed 3 guards on the elevator platform with shotguns. Since they are standing on the elevator, the guards will be ready for the party and will come up guns blazing. The party may be surprised.

Grond didn't get the Professor!

After failing to get the professor, Grond headed back to his lair for orders. Grond has sent two henchmen with shotguns guard the shack. They will start the elevator coming up from Level 3 shortly after the party enters the shack.

Shotgun Henchmen

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

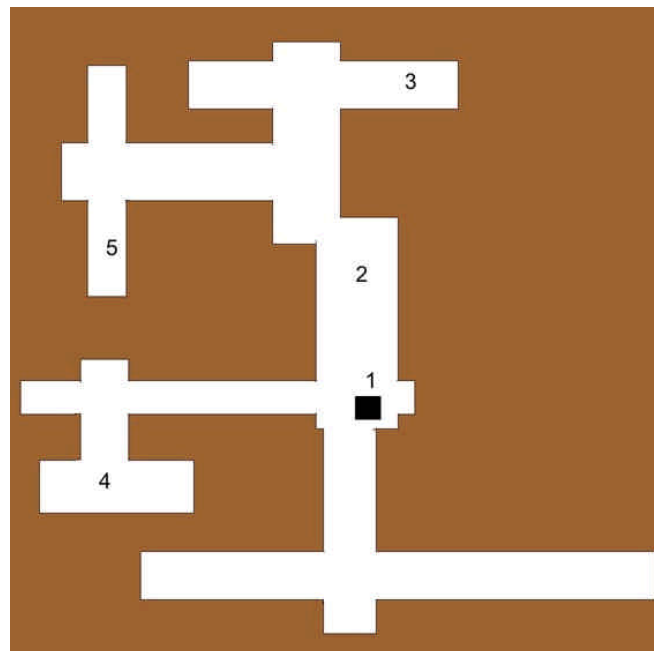
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Shooting d6.

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

Gear: Double-barreled 12 Ga. (12/24/48, 1-3d6, ROF 1-2, +2 to hit).

Special Abilities: None.

Due to the acoustics of the mine – and the noise made by the elevator, no one in the mine will hear any shooting that might occur.





YOU WOULDN'T LIKE HIM WHEN HE'S ANGRY.

He's 400 pounds of meat and blubber, none too bright, and easily upset. His people call themselves the "grael," but the rest of Caribdus call them "sea lions." You'll call him "sir."

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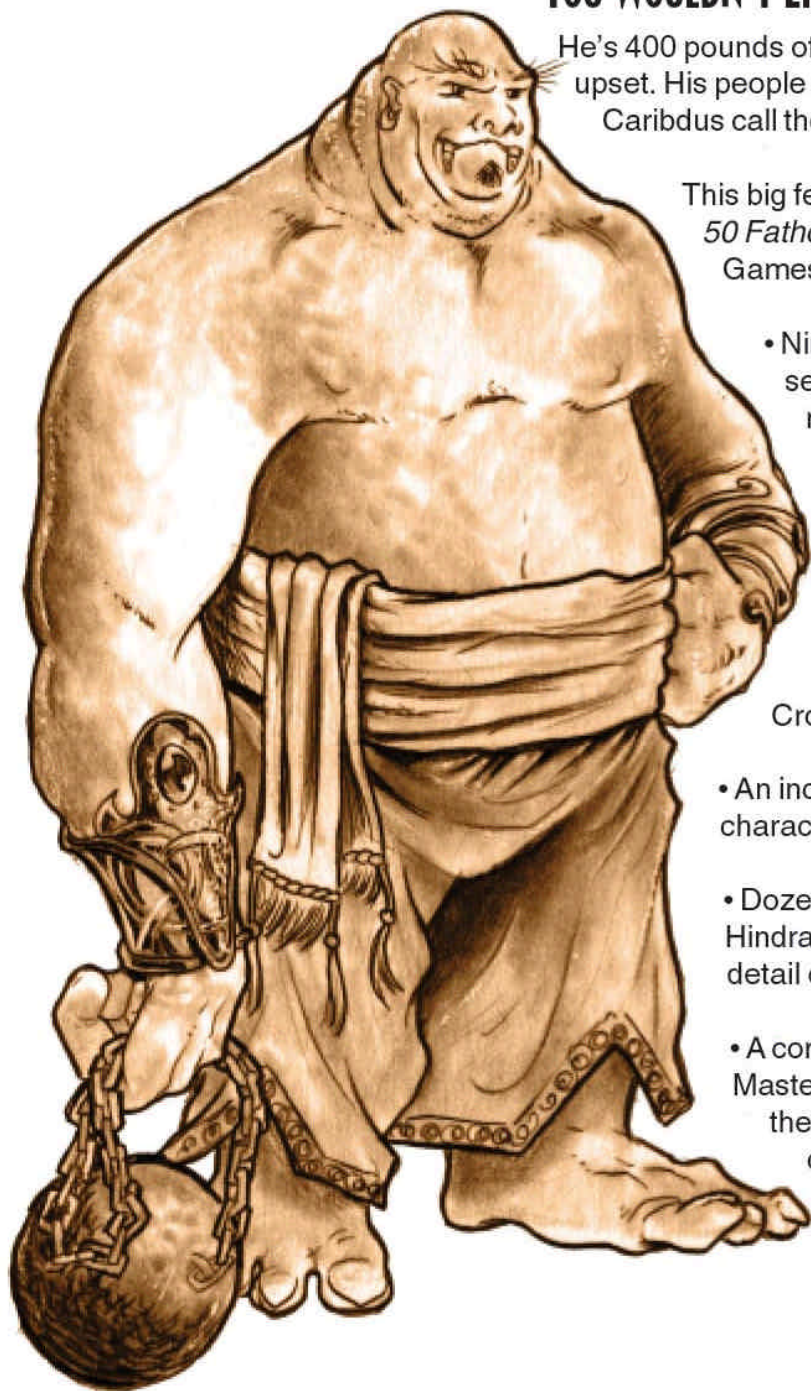
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Level One

The corridors and shafts of the mine are all rough-hewn and supported by timbers. Most of these are still sound and the whole mine is stable. Unless otherwise stated, the mine is dark. There are incandescent lights strung down all the corridors but most of them are turned off. The light controls are always next to the elevator shaft.

The corridors are at least wide enough for two men to comfortably walk abreast. The ceiling is averages 8' high. On Level One, the corridors are dry and dusty. The rails for the ore cars run down the center of these corridors. The packed earth deadens sound, so the place is very quite and it is hard to hear anything going on. This is a -2 modifier to all listen checks.

Individual points of interest are listed below.

1. **Elevator Shaft.** This is the elevator shaft that connects Level One with the other levels of the mine. The controls here are minimal – just a call button, which will summon the elevator to this floor, and a bank of five knife switches for the lights. The controls are in good working order. This area of the mine is lit by strings of incandescent bulbs. In addition, there is a red light by the elevator shaft that lights up when the elevator has stopped on this floor.
2. **Dining Area.** This lit area is where the miners used to break for lunch. There are five picnic tables here as well as two sinks with running water. There is also a portable toilet and boxes of supplies. The supplies are stacked such that they block line of site from the elevator to a group of men sitting at one of the tables. Four shotgun henchmen are currently sitting here playing poker and drinking beer. They are so absorbed in their game, that they won't notice the elevator light. Unless the party makes a very loud noise or some other ruckus, they will have surprise on these men.

Shotgun 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: Double-barreled 12 Ga. (12/24/48, 1-3d6, ROF 1-2, +2 to hit).
Special Abilities: None.

3. **Barracks.** This lit area has been made into a bunkhouse. There are ten wooden bunk beds lining the walls. At the end of each is a military style wooden footlocker. A close examination of one of the lockers will reveal newspaper clippings about Dr. Boskone's original caper. A second footlocker has a letter written by one of the henchmen to his girl, Sally, who lives in Tacoma. In the letter, the henchman (Sam) says that his current job at the mine is good, but he's got something on the side that will turn out to make lots of money so they can get married. The letter closes with a cryptic note telling Sally to listen to the radio for big news from California. A third footlocker has a large envelope with some newspaper clippings in them. The newspaper clippings tell of a successful bank robbery in Amarillo, Texas, about four weeks ago. Certain parts of the articles have been underlined.
4. **Lower Corridor.** This unlit area is accessible by a corridor that slopes down rapidly. It is about 15 feet below the level of the floor. Shortly after the party enters this area, they feel a rumbling. Quickly the ground starts shaking and dust and small rocks fall from the ceiling. Before they can move, a Giant Cave Worm (see page 130 of the Savage Worlds rulebook) erupts from the wall just opposite the party.

Giant Cave Worm

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d6 (A), Spirit d10, Strength d12+10, Vigor d12.
Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Notice d10, Stealth d10.
Pace: 6, Parry: 5, Toughness: 22.
Gear: None.
Special Abilities: Armor +4, Bite: Str +3, Burrow 20", Huge +4 to Fight or Shoot the Cave Worm, Size +10, Slam 4d6 damage.

Treasure Stash. There is treasure hidden in this unlit portion of the mine. One of the henchmen robbed a bank in Amarillo before joining Dr. Boskone. He slipped his stolen money into the mine with him and hid it here in a small crack in the wall. There are seventeen Federal Reserve bags full of money (\$10,450) stashed here. They are visible because one of the bags has torn open and the cash has spilled out. Close examination of the bag will reveal that insects have eaten it.

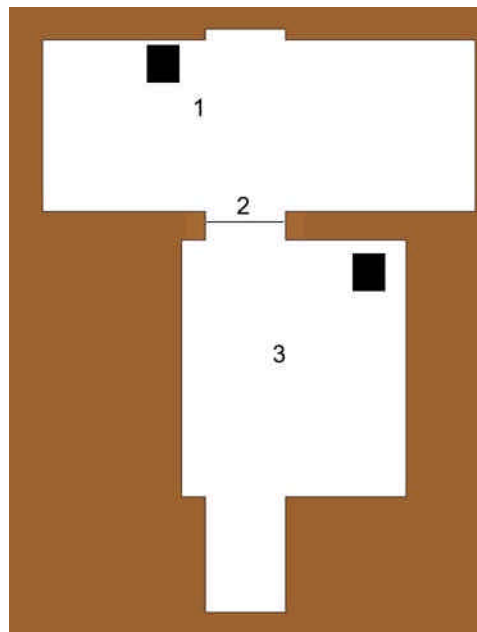
Anyone trying to reach the moneybags will be attacked by a swarm of scorpions (see page 134 of the Savage Worlds rulebook).

Level Two

The environment on Level 2 is like that of Level 1, dark and quiet. However, there is a strange, musty smell that permeates the entire level.

Unless otherwise stated, the mine is dark. There are incandescent lights strung down all the corridors but most of them are turned off. The light controls are always next to the elevator shaft.

The corridors are at least wide enough



for two men to comfortably walk abreast. The ceiling is averages 8' high. On Level One, the corridors are dry and dusty. The rails for the ore cars run down the center of these corridors.

The packed earth deadens sound, so the place is very quite and it is hard to hear anything going on. This is a -2 modifier to all listen checks. Individual points of interest are listed below.

1. **Elevator Shaft.** This is the elevator shaft that connects Level Two with other levels of the mine. The controls here are minimal – just a call button, which will summon the elevator to this floor, and a bank of five knife switches for the lights. The controls are in good working order. This area of the mine is dark. There is a red light by the elevator shaft that lights up when the elevator has stopped on this floor. This area appears to have once been a storage area. Lots of debris and rocks lie around, but there is nothing of value.

To the south, there are some small points of light.

2. **Metal Doors.** A double set of doors has been set into the wall and fills most of the opening. Some light leaks through near the hinges and this is visible at the elevator. These doors are made from an oily looking silver metal. They are very smooth and cold to the touch. They are made of Venusium, a metal from the planet Venus. Venusium is impervious to heat, cold, and bullets. It can only be forged in the great heat of the Venusian volcanoes. There is a great latch in the center of the door that, when lifted, will allow the left-hand door to be opened. The latch is trapped (TN +2 to notice in the dark). Anyone opening the door will take 1d6 electrical damage.
3. **Second Elevator.** On the other side of the door is a well-lit room and another elevator shaft. Between the door and the elevator are two automatons – Death Robots of Venus! The Robots are programmed to kill any human that comes through the doors. They will fight to the death.

Death Robots of Venus

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit: d6, Strength: d8, Vigor d8.
Skills: Fighting d6, Shootng d6, Guts d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6.
Pace: 6, Parry: 5, Toughness: 8
Gear: Armored skin +2, bladed arm (Str +2), gun arm (12/24/48, 2d6 +1, ROF 1, Shots 5, AP 1).
Special Abilities: Flamethrower: the Robots of Death are fitted with a single use Flamethrower where their mouths should be. (Cone template, 2d10, ROF 1, Minim STR d6, Ignores Armor)

Behind the Robots is a second elevator. The mechanism is the same as the elevator in the other room; however, this one is made of Venusium and uses magnetic force rather than cables to go up and down. The operation of the elevator is the same as the other.

The sound of heavy machinery echoes up the elevator shaft.

Level Three

There is no map for Level Three as it is entirely a red herring. If the party goes to this level, they are off-course. Make up the layout as they move along. There are no encounters here, so after awhile they'll get bored and go back to Level 2.

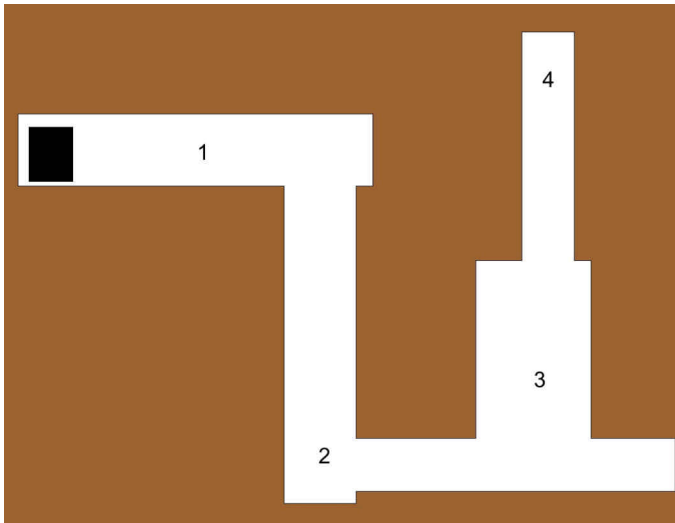
There are no lights on this level. Hopefully they won't use up all of the batteries on their lamps.

Level Four

The corridors of Level Four are glass smooth with no visible supports. They appear to have been melted into a tube shape.

The entire level is bathed in a slightly greenish light from a strip in the center of the ceiling. The corridors are at wide enough for three men to comfortably walk abreast. The ceiling is 8' high. The sound of machinery is almost deafening – the players will have to shout to be heard.

Individual points of interest are listed below.



1. Guards. Two more Death Robots are stationed at the bottom of the elevator shaft. Their orders are to kill any human that gets off the elevator platform without saying the correct Venusian password.

Death Robots of Venus

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit: d6, Strength: d8, Vigor d8.
Skills: Fighting d6, Shooting d6, Guts d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6.
Pace: 6, Parry: 5, Toughness: 8
Gear: Armored skin +2, bladed arm (Str +2), gun arm (12/24/48, 2d6 +1, ROF 1, Shots 5, AP 1).
Special Abilities: Flamethrower: the Robots of Death are fitted with a single use Flamethrower where their mouths should be. (Cone template, 2d10, ROF 1, Minim STR d6, Ignores Armor)

2. More Guards. At the south end of the hall are more guards – but these are Murder-bots – an upgraded Death Robot. These Robots will open fire on any non-Venusian that enters this corridor.

Murder-bots of Venus

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit: d6, Strength: d8, Vigor d8.
Skills: Fighting d6, Shooting d6, Guts d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d6.
Pace: 6, Parry: 5, Toughness: 8
Gear: Armored skin +1, gun arm (12/24/48, 2d8 +1, ROF 3, Shots 30, AP 2).
Special Abilities: Scope: the Murder-bots are fitted with telescopic eyes which act as a gun site (+1 to shooting).

Just past the Murder-bot, there is a shimmering golden field. Close inspection will reveal two figures on the other side – one human-shaped and one Minotaur! This force field can easily be moved through – it is mainly a sound-damping field. On the other side, all is quiet.

3. Dr. Boskone! This room is lavishly furnished as a throne room. At the north end is a large, ornately carved throne. On this throne sits a tall, thin man in red and gold robes. He is wearing a golden skullcap and sports a beard like Fu Manchu. Yes, this is Dr. Boskone! Behind the throne is a large, elaborate tapestry. Standing on either side of Dr. Boskone are two more Murder-bots.

Standing at the south end of the room is Grond. If he successfully captured the Professor in the last adventure, then Professor Gordon will be handcuffed and standing next to the Minotaur. If the professor had escaped, then there will be a Death Robot next to Grond.

When the party enters, Dr. Boskone will make some appropriate villain speech – something along the lines of:

“Foolish men! You think you’ve captured Dr. Boskone? I may not have the rocket packs, but you don’t have me either! Grond! Kill them all!”

This is your chance to ham it up – Dr. Boskone is every pulp villain all rolled into one and his farewell speech should be over the top! Before the party can do anything, Dr. Boskone will disappear behind the tapestry, and the robots and Grond will attack!

4. Escape! As the party comes through the tapestry, they see Dr. Boskone step into a column of shimmering light – a transmat beam. As he fades from site, all you can hear is his laughing voice taunting you.

You may have won for the moment, but you have not heard the last of Dr. Boskone! Piled against the wall are many uncompleted rocket packs. Obviously Dr. Boskone was unable to get them working in time.

Explosions

As all good pulp stories end with a frantic rush out of the bad guys hide out, so should this one.

Give the party a few minutes to look around after defeating Grond – or after they see the Doctor disappear. Then tell them they feel the whole mine shake. When the Doctor left, he started the self-destruct mechanism!

It will take a little time to collapse the entire mine, but if the party waits too long, they'll be crushed. Keep the pressure up on the party – have stones and timbers come crashing down around them. If there are any police officers with the party, have one or two crushed in the debris.

Anyway, once the party has escaped the mine, have the entire thing collapse, with the mine shack falling down on top of everything – obliterating all the evidence of the Venusians and Dr. Boskone's evil plan.

Aftermath

The next day, as the players are reading of their adventures in the paper, one of them comes upon the following in the classified ads:

To the Heroes,

You foiled my plans today, but there is always tomorrow. My allies on Venus are already sending reinforcements. We will meet again, and next time you won't be so lucky!

Dr. Boskone

Cue the theme song and credits! This adventure's a wrap. However, Dr. Boskone is still out there – and the Venusians are more determined than ever. What will happen next? That, my friend, is up to you to write!

Historical Reality

Issue 0

March 2004



A J Michael Tisdell & Mark Theurer Publication

Historical Reality

"Win with ability, not with numbers"

- Field Marshal Prince Aleksandr V. Suvorov

Hello and welcome to Historical Reality. This is something new for us here in the cloistered halls of Fictional Reality - a magazine focusing on historical games rather than fantastical. As this is a departure from what we've done in the past, it warrants some explanation.

Over the past year, both Mark and I have been approached by lots of readers. They've all had their say - some have complimented the magazine, some have pointed out its short comings, and some have asked to help, but mostly they have asked questions. How do you make the magazine? How did you get started? Have we heard of such and such game. The questions cover many topics, but one that keeps coming up time after time is: Why don't you do a historical magazine?

Now Mark and I are old school gamers - we've played historical games as long as we've played fantastic ones. We have our favorites - both in mechanics and in periods - so we know the genre.

However, we don't know how to do a historical magazine. We didn't know how to do a fantasy/sci-fi magazine before Fictional Reality either. With that thought in our mind, we decided to test the waters - and this is the result: issue 0 of Historical Reality.

No, its not a full magazine - its just a "test mag". For this, we've pulled together some interesting articles. One is a review of "Habet! Hoc Habet!", a game of gladiatorial combat, while the other is a getting started guide for "De Bellus Multitudinous", the popular Ancients and Medieval system.

So take a moment and read HR0 then take another moment and let us know what you think. What do you like? What is stinky? And, most importantly, should there be an HR1?

I look forward to comments - but until then, enjoy!

Michael Tisdell

Getting Started in DBM

Part I. What is DBM and what are the advantages it offers

Many gamers at some point in time have read about the military campaigns of Julius Caesar or Alexander the Great, thereby becoming inspired to become a great general or leader of a bygone age. If you have ever had such desires then DBM, which stands for De Bellis Multitudinis, might be the game system for you.

DBM is a "wargames rules system for ancient and medieval warfare." The game offers several clear and distinct advantages when compared to other wargames rules systems. The first and possibly most important is cost. To obtain the rules and one army book it will cost around \$30 dollars, which in consideration to many other historical and fantasy wargames systems is relatively cheap. In addition, there are a multitude of companies that produce miniatures for the game system, which operates on a 15mm system. An individual army will generally cost somewhere between \$80-\$130 dollars, which compared to some of the more popular leading fantasy game systems is well priced. Perhaps the greatest strength and appeal however is the flexibility of armies and styles of armies to choose from.

A gamer has the option of choosing from a plethora of armies. There are four books that are published that cover the historical range from 3000 BCE to 1500 CE. This allows players to choose armies such as Sumerian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Huns, Mongols, Franks, and even Japanese armies! With each army comes a distinctly different feel and style of play. For example would you be interested in an infantry horde, a small elite army, or an army based on cavalry. The flexibility gives players many options.

A final advantage is the game is well supported. There are many people around the world who play this game. In addition there are many tournaments held in various U.S. cities.

Part. II Purchasing an army and understanding the game.

If you have decided this game appeals to you then probably the most logical step is to first purchase the rules along with one of the four army books. Generally speaking most gamers found they enjoy armies from a certain period such as the ancient world, the dark ages, or the medieval world. You should purchase a book of a period that has the greatest appeal to you.

The next step is to begin reading through the rules and gathering a feel for how the game is played. One of the most important aspects of the game is the concept of army control. Commands are labeled as regular or irregular which

makes a drastic difference to game play. An army that has an irregular command which effectively means he has a harder time controlling his army has cheaper troops, but there will be times where his command does not effectively do what he desires. As the name suggests a regular command has a much easier time controlling troops on the battlefield. If the army contains large numbers of troops that are counted as impetuous then the effects are similar to that of an irregular command since a general may not always find his army completely functioning as he desires.

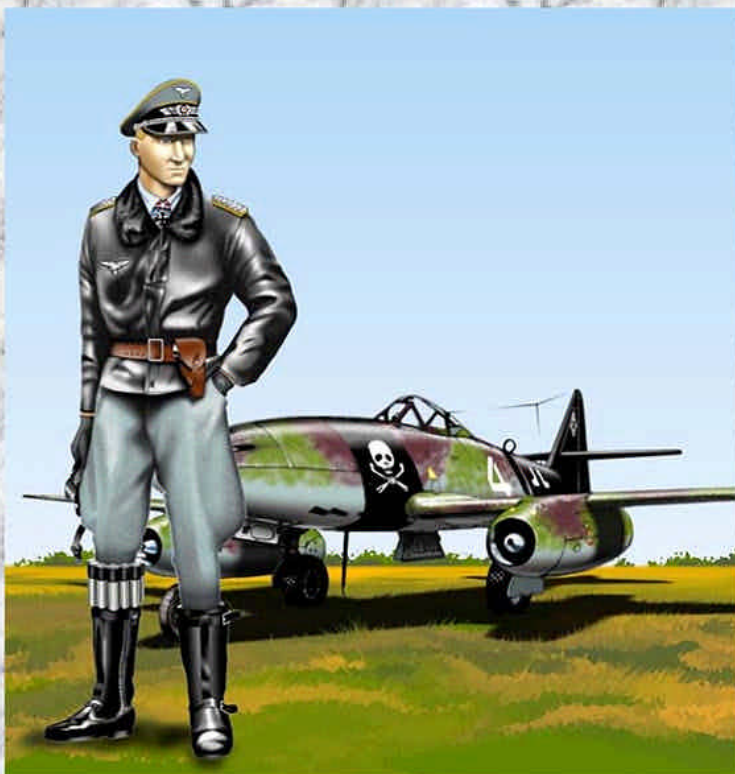
Here is an example of the aforementioned advice. The first stage is that a person decides to purchase the rules and his first love is that of the ancient world so he purchases his first army book along with the rules. He recalls that he always enjoys the ancient Egyptians, Sumerians, and Early Greek armies so he thinks he will decide between the three. After recalling the historical style of play he then discards the Sumerians since they are not defensive enough for personal tastes. Now it is time to decide between the Egyptians or the Greeks. After looking through the army list he realizes that even though both armies have regular commands the Egyptians have high numbers of impetuous troops. Since our gamer would prefer an army that he feels he has more control over he now chooses the Greeks.

The next step is purchasing an army. There are many manufacturers that produce the 15mm miniatures and can be found online. Within every army there are certain troops that are required. For example, the mentioned Greek army would require at least thirty-two stands of hoplite spearmen and a few command stands. When purchasing an army you should make sure to meet the minimum requirements of these troops then purchase some supporting troops that may compliment your force. For example if you were playing the Greeks then you may want to consider employing some skirmishers to help cover your advance.

After acquiring the army and assembling your army you should begin playing. Most DBM players choose armies ranging from 300-400 pts so a game could be finished in an afternoon or evening. The rules often confuse people by the way they are written so if you can find a friend who knows the rules then do a few test games with this person. Like any game, you should not expect to win your first couple of games, but treat them as learning experiences. The best way to learn the rules is to quickly run through them before each game and then review them after you are done playing that way you can research any rules questions you may have. By this point you should be on your way to enjoying the glory which is DBM.

Best of Luck and Good Gaming!

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Game Reviews



BASICS

"Habet, Hoc Habet!" is the phrase the roman crowds would shout when a gladiator fell in combat. Loosely translated it means, "He's down, he's had it!" **Habet, Hoc, Habet!** (HHH!) is also a set of rules for recreating gladiatorial combat from ancient Rome using 25mm miniatures. The game is quick paced, bloody, and does a good job of capturing the "feel" (slightly tongue in cheek) of gladiatorial combat. The game is published by [Flagship Games](#) and can be purchased on-line for \$20, or you can purchase a "Starter Deal" which includes the rules and a set of [Foundry](#) 28mm gladiator miniatures (enough for two people to start playing) for \$35.

INSIDE

The **HHH!** rulebook is spiral bound, LXX pages long (that's 70 pages for those not apt in roman numerals), and printed in black and white. The rules cover everything for man-to-man combat, man-to-animal combat, chariot racing, combat while racing chariots, and a fantasy version of Gladiator. The spiral binding makes it easier to backfold to keep it open to a useful page without damaging the book. The rules start with a Glossary that describes the Roman terms used throughout the book; i.e. A *sammite* is a heavy gladiator who fought with a short sword called a *gladius*, a *thraex* is a gladiator who fought in light armor and a sharply angled sword called a *sica*, a *tiro* is a novice gladiator, a *ludus* is a gladiatorial training school, and most important a *lanista* is the owner of a troop of gladiators (the player takes on the role of the *lanista* in **HHH!**).

Next, the basics of the game are described. There are 4 levels of gladiators, which are from lowest to highest: Novice (*tiro*), Fighter, Warrior, and Champion (*primus palus*). Each level requires a certain number of experience points and gets a different number of actions a turn and will fatigues slower in combat. Each gladiator is also described their stats (Strength, Size, Health, Speed, Agility, Luck, and Popularity) and skills (Grappling, Dagger, Sword, etc...). The game mainly uses 10-sided dice, but 4, 6, 8, 12, and 20-sided dice are also used from time to time and a deck of regular playing cards are used as "action cards". The combat turn is divided into the Initiative phase (action cards are dealt out), the Action phase (all action cards are played and actions are resolved), and the End phase (all gladiators who attacked this turn get an additional fatigue point).

Each gladiator gets an action when they play their action card. The action cards must be played in sequence with a King being played first down to 2 being played last (the suit order is Spade-Heart-Club-Diamond). Aces and Jokers are kept in the deck. An Ace is a "free" action that acts like an interrupt, even interrupting an action (except a die roll) in progress. A Joker allows a free re-roll that may be used for any die roll that turn, even if the die roll does not effect the player playing the Joker. If a player is dealt an Ace or Joker in the initiative phase they get another action card to "replace" the Ace or Joker.

Gladiators gain fatigue counters for performing such action as running, sprinting, or charging. A fatigue counter is also earned each turn a gladiator attacks in melee, no matter how many times they attack. Once a gladiator has earned five or more fatigue counters, they must roll a die (a d8, d10, d12, or d20 depending on their level) greater than or equal to the number of fatigue counters before they performing an action. If the gladiator fails the roll then they must rest for that action in which case they loose 1 to 4 fatigue counters.

A combat action can be made when a model is within range of your weapon and in your front facing. Depending on the size of your HtH weapon, the range can be anywhere from base-to-base contact or up to 2" away. If the model is not in range, then you have the option of charging, which is combining a running or sprinting action with a fighting action. The gladiator gets a bonus for charging, but also suffers a minus on their defenses until their next action which leaves them open to a counter attack. This is a good time to pull out that Ace and get an immediate follow-up to your charge, preventing anyone from taking advantage of your weakened defenses. Close combat is resolved by rolling a modified 6 or better on a d10. If successful the defender also has a chance to parry by rolling a modified 6 or better on a d10. If the parry is successful, then the parrying weapon's defense value is subtracted from any damage that the attack may cause before it is applied to the hit location. If any damage makes it past they parry then the hit location is rolled. If that location is protected by any armor then the armor save is made (to see if the armor was hit in that location) and if successful then the armor's defense value is subtracted from the remaining damage before applying it to the defending model. Ranged combat functions like close combat, except that the range is measured after the attack is declared, and if the target is out of range the attack automatically misses. Crits and Fumbles happen in combat when an attack or parry rolls a natural 10 (for a Crit) or 1 (for a Fumble). They can be devastating with a critical doing maximum possible damage, damaging armor and parrying weapons in its path, and a fumble meaning that you could have done something stupid like slipping on a banana peel. The game is much more bloody because of Crits and Fumbles.

CAMPAIGN GAME

Expect a one-off game to last anywhere from 10 to 45 minutes. But this game was meant to be played as a campaign game, not as a single battle. When you are a *lanista* all you care about is the wealth and reputation of your *ludis* (the gladiator school). While it might be disappointing that the newly trained gladiator is killed on his first battle, if he dies a spectacular death the reputation of the *ludis* will increase!

The campaign game starts off with between 4 to 8 *lanista* each starting off with the same amount of money which they use later on to purchase one or more slaves. After this an *Editor* will be chosen for the month from among the *lanista*. It is the *Editor's* responsibility to roll to determine what slaves are available for purchase that can be trained into gladiators determine what kind of gladiatorial game will be held that month. The *lanista* select which gladiators will fight in the games and then the games will be played. After the games the players determine what happened to the wounded gladiators, calculate their experience and Popularity. They then spend experience to improve the gladiator's stats or skills and can train any gladiators who did not participate in this month's games. The *ludis* will use any money gained from the games to maintain their *ludis* and purchase and train new gladiators (always a necessity since you always seem to be loosing them).

VARIANTS

HHH! also contains rules for chariot racing, mounted combat, and beasts. The beast rules are used for special campaign events called *venatio* which pits against beast in combat. The beasts could be lions, bears, wild boars (the dangerous beasts) or zebras, giraffes, elephants (classified as "harmless" but can still do a lot of damage, especially if injured) The rules not only contain the characteristics and skills for various beasts, but an action chart which makes fighting a beast a bit more unpredictable and seemingly realistic.

CONCLUSION

If you are looking for a fun, easy to play, and fast paced game for 4 to eight players, then "Habet, Hoc Habet!" is a great choice. I recommend spending the \$35 for a rulebook and 6 miniatures, playing a few single combats to get the feel for the mechanics and then start a campaign with at least 4 people.

