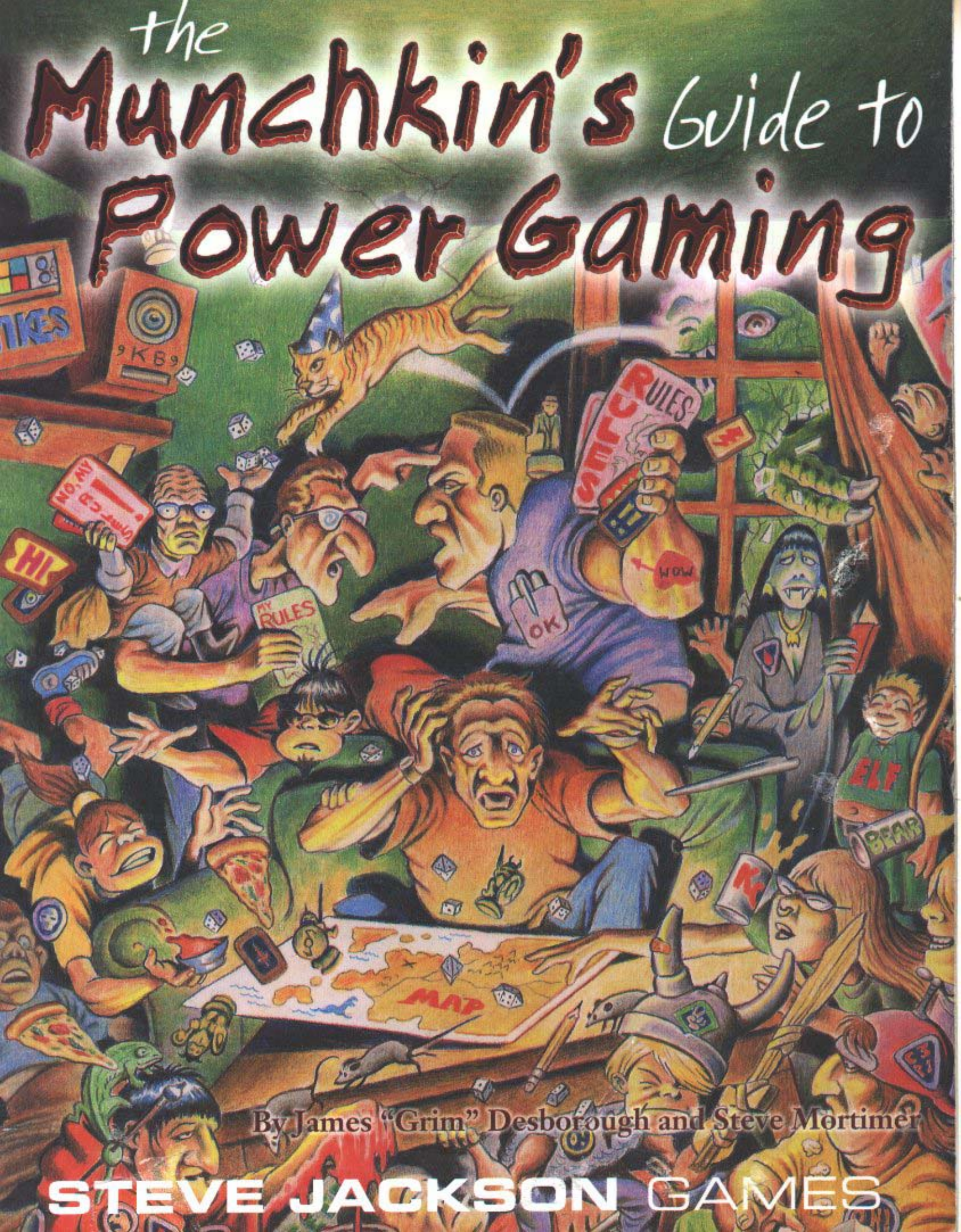


the Munchkin's Guide to Power Gaming



By James "Grim" Desborough and Steve Mortimer

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome –

Welcome, one and all to the *Munchkin's Guide to Power Gaming!*

What is a munchkin? Well, we're not referring to the cute little fellows from *The Wizard of Oz* (though even they might be capable of munchkinism after reading this book). We're talking about power-gamers, mini-maxers, twinkies, gun-bunnies, combat-wombats, and purveyors of ultra-violence. Those guys that demolish your average GM's intricately developed plots by killing everything in sight and somehow jumping straight to the end of your story without passing through the middle. They're the ones that you know have to be cheating with their dice when they claim to have three maximum stat rolls in a row; then, when you check, they roll

it again. They're that strange combination of luck, cheek, and aggression that most people seem to think is the bane of roleplaying today.

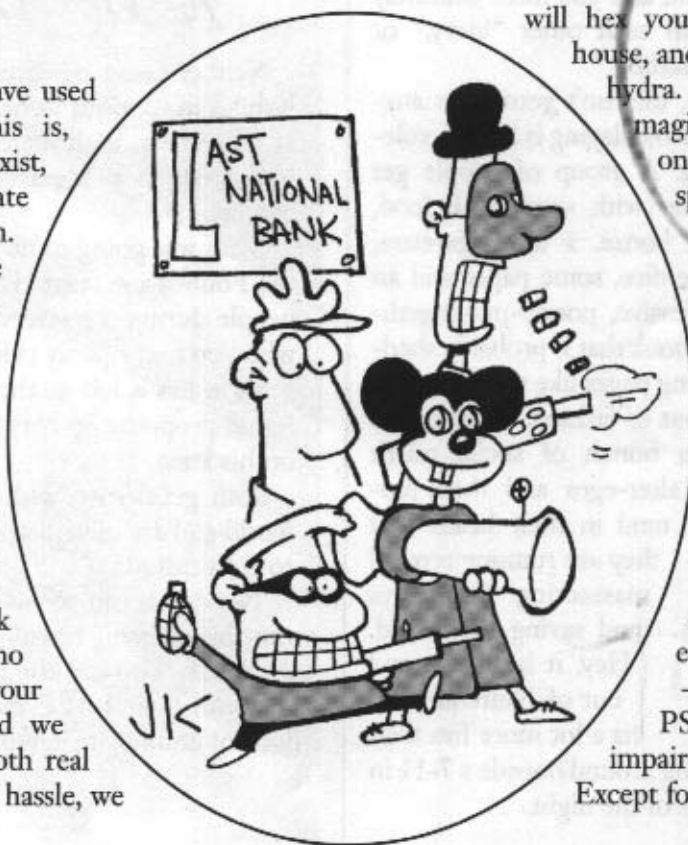
We're not here to judge. Most people are munchkins between the ages of eight and thirteen, but some just don't grow out of it. What you hold here in your hands is a guide to the very nature of the munchkin. What makes them tick? How do they fake those stupendous die rolls? How do they come up with a death machine when you're trying to play *Pixies and Flowers*™? How exactly do they make you allow them to play these characters? These questions, and more, will be answered inside. Welcome to the bloody, sweaty, testosterone-laden lair that is the home of the munchkin...

Pointless Stuff They Always Put at the Beginning of Roleplaying Books

DISCLAIMER

Throughout this book we have used the male pronoun "he." This is, of course, because we are sexist, misogynist scumbags who hate women and wish to insult them. This book also contains rude words, references to the occult, horrible, nasty, violent descriptions of things and general mickey-taking.

The authors obviously believe in magic and often sacrifice children. And we like to encourage satanic practices in others, especially impressionable young teenagers with a weak grasp on reality. We exist for no other purpose than to corrupt your children to the dark side, and we know that *AD&D* spells are both real and powerful. If you give us any hassle, we



will hex you until you glow, fireball your house, and *Polymorph Other* your cat into a hydra. For those of you of a similar magical persuasion there is, inscribed on this book in invisible runes, a special message just for you.

In addition to forming the Young Men's Satanic Association, we also like to keep our work extremely depressing, angsty, and horrible. This is in order to twist young minds into committing suicide or murder. Unlike most writers, we alone realize the value of wiping out most of our customer base and causing the rest to be incarcerated. Thank you for your attention.

– Grim & Steve

PS. For the terminally brain-impaired, we are of course teasing. Except for the hexing bit.

WHAT IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME?

Yeah, right. You buy this book and you don't know what a roleplaying game IS? Humph, well, on the off-chance that this book becomes a comedic cult classic and normal, boring people like you begin buying it, we'll cover the possibility. Though we don't really see the point.

A roleplaying game is like a board game. Only there is no board, or pieces, and you're not competing with each other. In fact it's not much like a board game at all come to think of it. Especially not *Monopoly*TM, *Risk*TM, or *Scrabble*TM now we come to mention them. OK, board games were a bad analogy. Let's try again.

Roleplaying is sort of like writing a book. No. Hang on, it isn't. You don't write down everything that happens, there's more than one writer, and the characters really do have a life of their own. Also, you don't get paid for it, or do book signings. All right, writing a book isn't the best example either. (Unless you're talking about some of the dime-a-dozen cheap cloned fantasy books out there, which may as well be a transcript of someone's gaming session. Only they are usually worse.)

Gaming is like theater. No, it's not. (Unless you're doing live-action, which is another kettle of fish.) You don't wear make-up, or costumes, you don't have any lines to remember, you don't move around a lot, and you most definitely do not call each other "luvvy," or indeed "darling."

Damn, this isn't getting us anywhere. Roleplaying is like . . . roleplaying. A group of people get together with some junk food, some booze, a few cigarettes, some dice, some paper and an expensive, poorly-put-together book that is probably shedding pages like they're going out of fashion. They create a bunch of social misfit alter-egos and then pretend in their heads that they are running around massacring bad guys and saving the world. Hey, it beats the cud out of Nintendo and is a lot more fun than

hanging around outside a 7-11 in the rain all hours of the night.

ABOUT SJ GAMES

Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid). Our online magazine covers the hobby's top games – *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, *Shadowrun*, and many more – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *In Nomine*, *INWO*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures*, and more. And *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online, to see (and comment on) new books before they're released.

Gamer input. We value your comments. We will consider them, not only for new products, but also when we update this book on later printings! Suggestions for especially evil munchkinism will be gleefully read.

Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for an online catalog, errata, updates, and hundreds of pages of information. We also have conferences on Compuserve and AOL. The *Munchkin's Guide* web page has updates, resources, and links at www.sjgames.com/munchkin.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Neither Grim nor Steve has done anything particularly of note. Both went to college, both had attempts at University, both match the stereotypical unhealthy, unpopular, "can't get no satisfaction" stereotype of gamers.

Grim was going to do illustration but never got past the Foundation stage due to his habit of arguing with people during the interview. He is a sad, lonely figure who you may openly ridicule.

Steve has a job in the real world and can often be found propping up bars and letting trusting women sit on his knee.

Both gentlemen wish to work further in the RPG world and are quite active despite being too poor to go to conventions.

Net-heads can see what they are up to at any given time by accessing <http://www.postmort.demon.co.uk>. At this site you can also pick up pictures of the dynamic duo and their LARP group, and read a load of unfunny material.

DEFINITIONS OF RPG TERMS

Adventure - An evening of drunken debauchery with maybe a game involved.

Fumble - Bad thing.

Campaign - A series of fights over several months.

Critical - Good thing.

D4 - The sharp pointy dice that hurt your foot when you tread on them.

D6 - The box-shaped dice that you will need a lot of as they are often used to roll damage, and some games take a sort of retro approach and use nothing else. Most players have a couple of bags full of these.

D8 - The first of the rarely-used curiosity dice.

D10 - Probably the most popular dice at the moment, due to the ever-increasing number of percentile systems and the rocket-speed conglomeration of White Wolf games. You will need half a ton of them.

D12 - The second of the rarely-used curiosity dice.

D20 - This dice first found fame with *AD&D*. Its near-spherical shape allows it to hurtle round your house with great speed. When you finally do need some d20s, you invariably discover that they are mostly disguised d10s and you don't have enough.

D100 - Normally two D10, but sometimes a huge munchkin-die. The D100 is used to enable percentile systems to give a false sense of scientific credibility.

Experience - Ways to increase your munchkinism.

Freeform - A more street-credible way of saying Live-Action.

FRP - Full-on Righteous Punch-up.

Genre - What determines whether you are slaughtering aliens or orcs.

Gamemaster - The enemy.

Hit Points - A number you want to be as high a possible.

Interactive Theater - A pretentious drama student way of saying freeform.

Level - The scale of munchkindom you have achieved.

Live-Action - What table-top gamers say they don't do; i.e. dressing up in costumes and hitting each other.

Magic Points - The number of times you can shout **FWACKOOM!** and deafen your GM.

Munchkin - Power-gamer, twink, combat-wombat, mini-maxer, gun-bunny... Read the book!

NPC - Cannon-fodder.

PC - Your character, dummy.

Player - You and your mates.

RPG - Rocket-Propelled Grenade.

Skills - One half of your munchkin potential.

Statistics - The other half.

Supplement - A book that adds on to the basic rules and background of the original game, complicating everyone's lives.

Table-Top - Not Live-Action or PBM or PBEM - role-playing in armchairs, with dice getting lost under the sofa and coffee getting spilled all over game books. (Only sad cases usually sit around a proper table.)

Then of course there are the exceptions. Live-action, where you *do* run around, in costume, and make-believe beating people on the head with plastic-and-foam wifflé-bats. Then there's interactive theater, where you walk about in costume and make-up, and *don't* hit people. There's Multi-User Dungeons on the Internet where you run up huge bills chatting up someone you think is a woman because their alter-ego is and then they turn out to be a 53-year-old management consultant from Felch Springs, Australia. Play-By-Mail, where you shell out mucho dinero for a few scrappy computer printouts. Play-By-E-Mail, where you receive a lot of e-mails telling you why your

GM can't send you your turn that week. Diceless Roleplaying, where the whole thing degenerates into an

argument about who can or can't do what. Collectable Card Games, which are rapidly overtaking crack as the most addictive and crime-inducing thing on the planet. There are all manner of spin-offs and sub-genres and people who roleplay who don't even realize that they're doing it.

Look, face it, the only way to understand roleplaying is to play. Nothing else is the same, or can convey the same feeling. It's like sex, or getting drunk; you never really know what it's like until you've done it. You can talk about it, watch it, listen in, read up on it, get magazines about it - but the only way to know is to experience it for yourself. Now take yourself out of our presence, you difficult person of questionable parentage.



EXAMPLE OF PLAY

Most RPG rulebooks give "examples of play," but these are invariably written to give absolutely no idea of how a real RPG session goes. The players are some kind of perfect caricatures that never get distracted and never get upset or do anything wrong. We have tried here to convey the sense of a REAL gaming session.

Jim has decided to get a game together. He's got all his friends to meet up, with enough snack foods to sink three Titanics, enough beer to float them again, dice by the bucketload, paper made from three deciduous forests, and crates of pens and pencils. We start as Jim looks for the notes that he has been meticulously preparing for days.

Jim: Sod, I left my folder at home. Give me a minute to come up with a plot will you, guys? And pass me the nachos.

Sharon: . . . and Terry's seeing Jane again.

Christina: Never!

Sharon: Oh, he is!

Antonio: (rustle, rustle) Anyone mind if I roll a spliff?

Jim: (pained sigh) All right, I'm ready. Pass the dip.

Stephen: Cool. Did I get that howitzer I talked about last game?

Jim: Huh? Yeah, whatever.

Stephen: Cool. (Rubs hands together in glee and makes note on character sheet.)

Jim: Right, let's get started then.

Jonathan: Hang on, I'm going down the shop for more cigarettes.

(Chorus of demands for cigarettes, drink, more munchies and chocolate. Jonathan is showered with change.)

Jim: (sigh.) All right, while we're waiting, can anyone remember where we were last time?

(Chorus of loud negatives.)

Antonio: Huh? Anyone got a gas lighter?

A quarter of an hour later.

Jonathan: (Staggering in under weight of shop goods.) Who had the kilogram chocolate bar?

Christina: Mine!

Jim: Sort it out in a minute! Let's get started.

Sharon: I need to go to the toilet.

Redd: By the way, do you like my new shirt? Funky huh?

Jim: It's divine. Now shut up. (Shuffles notes meaningfully.)

Antonio: (Lights up. Smoke envelops room.)

Jim: (Cough, back) Someone open a window.

(Complete lack of response.)

Jim: I'll bloody well do it then.

Sharon: I'm back.

Stephen: About bloody time. I want to get on and kill stuff.

Jim: Right, is everyone ready?

Sharon: So anyway, Terry said to me that . . .

Jim: SHUT UP! LET'S PLAY!

(Grumbling, the players finally shut up.)

Jim: Right then, let's see. As far as I remember, you were in a bar looking for Mitzi, the hostess, who is the current lover of the guy you've been hired to assassinate. She might know where he has run off to. Redd, since your last guy died in that friendly fire incident, Stephen I'm looking at you, your new mercenary has been hired to fill the gap in the team. You show up. Describe your new guy to everyone.

Redd: (Spends the next half hour describing exactly how funky his character is, right down to the design on his belt buckle.)

Introductions are made and the players discuss how to find Mitzi.

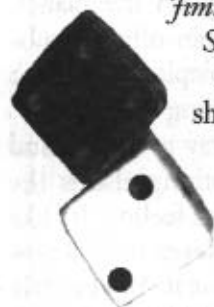
PLAYERS AND PCs

Another thing that RPG books always tell you is that the PCs are not the same as the players, and you mustn't get the two confused. You can PLAY a gun-toting psychopath or a blood-sucking vampire, but that doesn't mean that you yourself are anything but a nerdy wuss with bifocals held together with sticking plaster, acne, and a dose of sexual frustration that'd put a submarine crew to shame.

The books tell you this, partly in a pathetic and terrified attempt to stop a bunch of dumbass fundamentalists from going round saying that RPGs turn kids into blood-sucking, gun-toting psychopaths, but mostly because the writers sometimes play really stupid characters, possibly of a gender or sexuality different to their own. Munchkins, on the other hand, don't give a toss about religious nuts who are even less smart than themselves, and certainly don't go round playing anything they wouldn't want to be like in real life, if they could afford the steroids. They are happy to be confused with their PCs.

One consequence of this is that properly-written RPG books try not to use the word "player" when they mean "character." It's bad enough when loud-mouthed munchkins talk about how many orcs *they* killed last week, like they were *really* Grug the Barbarian; it's worse when GMs talk about how many players *they* slaughtered. (After all, one of these days, a GM who's had one too many games trashed by a pack of munchkins might Go Postal. And through some oversight, every legal system we know of still regards shooting munchkins as murder.)

But this book is about munchkins and the Munchkin Way. So when we say "player," we quite likely mean "character." And vice-versa. Try not to get confused.



MUNCHKINS, POWER-GAMERS, TWINKS . . .

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Some people distinguish between different types of player as described in this book. They say that munchkins are young gamers who act like annoying kids, power-gamers are players of any age who are in it for the macho fantasy of having something bigger than everyone else, gun-bunnies are sad cases who think that knowing every boring techie detail about machines for killing people is really cool . . .



Yeah, well, maybe. But let's face it, when you're facing any of these kill-crazed loons across a games table, with nothing to shield you but a half-eaten packet of biscuits and a GM's screen that your cat has covered with its foul leavings, you don't much care about the bloody dictionary, do you? They're all munchkins.

So we haven't bothered splitting hairs. Leave that to the rules-lawyers. (Who are an advanced form of older munchkin, of course.)

Stephen: I'll use these blocks of plastique to blow up the building so no-one can get away. Then we'll check through the rubble to find her.

Jonathan: Munchkin! No, I'll cruise around looking cool and suave, she's bound to come to me, I'm a veritable babe magnet. Looks ten, Charm ten, and the Pheromones advantage.

Christina: Huh? What me? Um, I'll stamp on his nads!

Jim: That was last week; now you're looking for Mitzi.

Christina: Who?

Jim: The target's girlfriend?

Christina: I'll go into the toilets and change.

Antonio: (Passing spliff and rolling up another.) I'll like . . . uh . . . what was the question?

Jim: (Exuding extreme patience.) Mitzi?

Antonio: Oh yeah. I'll, um, help Stephen's character.

Redd: I'll stand here looking funky. Someone will notice me, and since I look so streetwise, they'll spill everything.

Sharon: (Looking confused) Whatever he said.

Jim: OK. Stephen, you set the charges. Roll your demolitions skill, please.

Stephen: (Carefully selects a die and rolls, and rolls, and rolls.) Three hundred and ninety seven.

Jim: WHAT? What's your stat and skill together?

Stephen: Twenty altogether. I rolled a lot of tens if it helps.

Sharon: I thought high numbers were bad.

Redd: That was a different funky game, you daft moo.

Sharon: Isn't this a roleplaying game then?

Jim: (Throws hands in the air.) Sod it! Jonathan, you stroll around looking smooth, a couple of the ladies start to show interest, who wouldn't show interest in such a rampant stud. In fact, a couple of the guys in the bar are also looking at you. Christina, I dread to ask, what horrific ensemble are you changing into?

Christina: My Day-Glo body suit with the circuit-board pattern. The armored fishnet stockings. The electric blue mini dress, and I'm strapping my boosted .454 to my shoul-

der. The hot-pink one with the hollow-point ammo.

Antonio: (Giggling) I botched my demolitions roll. BOOM!

Jim: (Glaring at Stephen) At least some people are honest. Antonio, as you botch you accidentally detonate the block you are placing. An explosion rocks the club . . . take, (rolls) thirty points of explosive damage to every location. Hah!

Antonio: No problemo.

Jim: What do you mean, "No problemo?"

Antonio: Ceramic plate armor, skin-armor, kinetic dampening suit, sub-dermal armor-plating, composite skeleton and redundant organs.

Jim: And you're wearing all this to a nightclub?

Antonio: Yup.

Jim: (Sigh.) How are the rest of you reacting.

Stephen: I'll detonate the rest of the . . .

Jonathan: Hang on, there's something good on TV. Can we take a quick break?

Jim: Can I stop you?

(Two hours later, after various TV programs.

Antonio has continued to smoke dope and pass it around.)

Jim: Right, let's get back to the game. Guys? Guys?

(Snoring sounds.)

Jim: Useless hippie bastards.

Sharon: You guys are weird.

Are You a Munchkin?

Since you are reading this book, you are almost certainly either a munchkin, someone who has to deal with munchkins and who wants to know how their twisted little brains work, or some superior gimp who likes to sneer at munchkins despite being a bit of a munchkin himself. The following quiz will determine your precise level of munchkinism.

1. What is your favorite roleplaying game?
 - a. *Bunnies and Burrows*™.
 - b. *AD&D*™.
 - c. *Feng Shui*™.
2. What is your favorite character class?
 - a. Thief.
 - b. Warrior.
 - c. Fighter/Mage/Thief half-ogre with psionic powers.
3. Swords. What do you carry?
 - a. An epee.
 - b. A two-handed sword.
 - c. A two-handed greatsword that can only be lifted by someone with your superhuman strength, doubles your skill and damage, is totally indestructible, and was bequeathed to you by a god for no good reason.
4. Handguns. What's the bee's knees?
 - a. A .38 police special.
 - b. A .44 Magnum.
 - c. A .50 caliber Desert Eagle with laser-sighting, custom grips, extended barrel, autofire conversion and hand-packed rounds.



5. Ammunition. What do you pop to drop?
 - a. Standard rounds.
 - b. Hollow points.
 - c. DPU with a titanium core, and a hollow tip containing a powerful neurotoxin.
6. An enemy is fleeing; what do you shout?
 - a. Stop!
 - b. Stop or I shoot!
 - c. Blam! Blam! Blam! Blam! Blam! Blam! Freeze! (reload) Blam! Blam! Blam! Blam! Blam! Blam!
7. What superpowers?
 - a. Telepathy.
 - b. Super-speed.
 - c. Super-strength, toughness and the brain of a goat.
8. How does your garden grow?
 - a. A neatly rolled lawn.
 - b. Carnivorous plants.
 - c. Land-mines, watch-towers, razor-wire and dirt.
9. Which is your favorite character?
 - a. Your insane vampire stamp-collector who spends every game sorting through his collection of rare foreign first-day covers.
 - b. Your veteran soldier who, while crazy, has some deep pathos at his core.
 - c. Your 125th level fighter/mage/paladin who has become a god.
10. What do you keep your dice in?
 - a. A fluffy pencil-case.
 - b. A Tupperware box.
 - c. A finely crafted mahogany box lined with velvet. Each die is in its own tiny hole, unsullied by the touch of any other mortal.
11. What condition is your character sheet in?
 - a. Pristine in a plastic folder.
 - b. Crumpled and well-used in a ring binder.
 - c. Mashed and indecipherable in your pocket, but it doesn't matter . . . "You can remember it by heart."
12. What condition is your GM in?
 - a. Calm, relaxed, and confident.
 - b. On his toes, ready for anything.
 - c. In a loony bin bouncing off the walls mumbling "three criticals in a row" to himself.
13. Complete this sentence, "I love the smell of napalm in the morning, it smells like . . . "
 - a. Combusting petroleum derivative.
 - b. Victory.
 - c. Burning flesh, burning flesh! Die, die, die!
14. What do you drive?
 - a. A small-engined foreign car (probably French).
 - b. A Harley-Davidson™.
 - c. An interdimensional super-fortress, which converts into a giant battle-bot and crushes everything in its path.

15. What do you wear?
- Loose clothes made of hemp.
 - An armored business suit.
 - A completely self-contained composite power-suit, indestructible, armed to the teeth and left to you by your eccentric genius father for no good reason.
16. What music do you listen to?
- Ambient techno.
 - '70s heavy metal.
 - Norwegian black metal bands, only you think they're nancies 'cause they only burn down churches, not cities.
17. What book is on your bedside table?
- The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe.*
 - A Tom Clancy novel.
 - The Anarchists' Cookbook.*
18. What is your favorite Web page?
- Naked pictures of the Spice Girls/Boyzone.
 - Naked pictures of Gillian Anderson/David Duchovny.
 - Naked pictures of Brigitte Nielsen/John Wayne.
19. In regard to food, what are you?
- Vegetarian.
 - Omnivore.
 - Carnivore.
20. Comedy. Who makes you laugh?
- Jay Leno.
 - Dennis Leary.
 - Charles Manson.



WARGAMES AND CARD GAMES

We haven't really sounded off on these subjects in this book as this is primarily about roleplaying-game munchkins. We know you know that both of these other gaming activities have munchkins. Hell, some people are munchkin at Monopoly. So, here are the standard cracks about these games.

Wargames: A heavily overpriced hobby with stupidly big guns and spiky bits. Munchkinism takes the form of dice-roll cheating and spending more money on figures than your opponent.

Collectable Card Games: Crack for gamers. Heavily addictive, causing addicts to spend far more than they can afford on rare and unique cards. Munchkinism comes from palming cards, stacking the deck and spending more money than your opponent.

21. What pet do you own?
- Hamster.
 - Big dog.
 - Bruin the bear who you adopted because he was mistreated. Then you mistreated him as well to keep him mean.
22. What nationality do you admire?
- The French, for their culture and art.
 - The Germans, for their industry and enterprise.
 - The Americans, they got the bombs.
23. Adolf Hitler?
- A force for pure evil.
 - A nasty, petty little man.
 - A panty-waist liberal pinko.
24. When the end of the world comes you'll be . . .
- Praying for your life.
 - Running like hell.
 - Holed up in the Appalachians with your family and a case full of guns.
25. Blood. Is it . . .
- Icky?
 - Thicker than water?
 - Cool, huh-huh-huh-huh?

Results

Score 1 point for each (a), 2 points for each (b), and 3 points for each (c).

Deduct ten points if you thought to ask whether some of the questions related to the player or his favorite PC. Real munchkins want to BE their favorite PC.

25. You total nancy! With luck, and this book, you might just possibly be able to create a marginally munchkin character, given a couple of years' practice and the threat of a sound beating.

26-40. Hmm. Not much to work with, but we'll try. You have some munchkin tendencies. We'll do what we can to encourage them. Don't get your hopes up too high. What you really need to do is get rid of that little bit of leftover personality that you have.

41-60. Greatness awaits if you can just push yourself that little bit further. Eat more red meat and orange sweeties and drink more coffee. You'll get there.

61-74. Congratulations! You are an official munchkin.

75. Total munchkin. Well done! There is nothing more we can teach you! Return this book to the store you got it from. You probably think we're a bunch of wusses who have no idea what a real munchkin is anyway.

76+. You're a lying toad. This in and of itself *would* make you solid munchkin material, but you won't be able to cheat effectively if you can't do enough basic arithmetic to keep one step ahead of the GM.

1. Abusing The System



With a casual shrug, Mypeecee the hero leaps forward drawing his katana and chainsaw. Five seconds later, all the monsters are down. One, though, is faking, and surges up when Mypeecee turns his back. He spins on his heel, draws his magnum, and casually plugs it through the vitals. And somewhere, a voice screams.

*"What do you mean,
ANOTHER natural 20?"*

What's All This Then?

OK, so you think you're good. But all the munchkin tendencies in the world won't help in the slightest if that one critical die roll fails to appear. This section deals with this problem; you need no longer rely on the favor of the gods or fate to ensure a good roll. You can create your own gods.

Also covered here are such diverse topics as getting the GM on your side and what to do if the game starts getting boring and wussy. If any readers are practitioners of magick then contained in this section, written in invisible runes, are some easy 1-2-3 rituals for blessing/cursing dice, distracting people while you make subtle changes to your character-sheet, and other useful ruses. Now get out there and cheat your pants off.

Obfuscating the Random Number Generators (Fiddling Die Rolls)

HIDDEN ROLLS: THE HAND METHOD

When hiding die rolls, the hand is the most convenient shelter to use. Its main advantage is its availability; you are rarely without it. It does suffer from some drawbacks, however; it's small, it doesn't cover completely, and you may need to use it for something else – holding pens, character sheets, or whatever bizarre things you personally like fiddling with during a game.

HIDDEN ROLLS: THE BOOK METHOD

When partially opened, a book provides both a flat base to roll upon and a useful screen to prevent the GM seeing what you actually do roll. However, books are in constant demand by other players and the GM for looking things up, so you may not have access to one when you need it. To solve this problem, bring your own copy of the main rulebook or a book that has nothing to do with the game at all. Large hard-



backs are the best to employ when using this method of fixing die rolls; Mrs. Beeton's book of home cookery is a sound choice, as no one will want to look at it.

"I NEVER CHEAT, YOU KNOW THAT!"

A little "honesty" can go a long way. If you're making a roll that you don't really need to succeed at, use one of the other methods mentioned here, but make the result a botch. That way, the GM will remember that you screwed up and is less likely to think that you may cheat in future. Go on at length all the time about how you hate cheats and how it's "against the spirit of the game" to muck about. Tell on other players when they cheat in the slightest and generally creep around the GM. After a while, he will stop suspecting you of cheating. However, the other players will probably form a posse and hang you from the nearest tree. Should this occur, remember to swallow a pipe to keep your airway clear.

THE "COCKED DIE"

This excuse can lend you almost infinite re-rolls. The crux of the trick is to only ever roll your die on an uneven or unstable surface. These include thick fluffy carpets, untidy piles of books, other players, your legs, your hand, or munchies packets. If the die roll could be interpreted as being high you announce it. If it is too low you say "cocked die," and re-roll. Beware, this method does not work indefinitely; after about five re-rolls the GM or one of the other players will get fed up and pass, or throw, you a book to roll on. (See *The Book Method* above.)



EXCUSES FOR SMUGGLING A CAT INTO A GAME

"It's not a cat, it's my animatronic dice bag."

"Stroking it is stress relief and relieves my munchkin tendencies."

"But it's soooooooooooooo cute!"

"The kitten is going to NPC my panther sidekick."

"Every group needs a cute thing. Remember Snarf and Cringer?"

"Don't worry, I brought enough kitten treats for everyone."

"I thought cute animals might entice girls to join our gaming group."

THE PET

A cat can be a great boon to die rolling. Ideally, the die should be large and eye-catching. If they manufactured them with bells in, or smelling of catnip, that would be useful as well. The cat you purchase for this purpose should be kittenish and playful – the most skittish and active of the litter. To utilize the method, roll the die toward the cat to get its attention. This will induce it to pounce. It will then bat the die around until it will inevitably get knocked out of the room. You then get up, retrieve the die and announce any number you wish as the result of the roll.

JUMPING THE GUN

This technique requires two things; firstly, that the GM is distracted at the vital moment, and secondly, a partner in crime. The trick is simple. You wait until lots of stuff is going on. (A huge firefight is always good.) Then announce

I cast a fireball at the ones.

But you'll get caught
in the blast. ✓

So, I have an amulet of
fire protection. I'll be fine.

What about the other players?

Oh yeah... do I get experience
for killing them too?

quietly that you intend to do something over-the-top. The GM will say "Yeah, whatever, I'll get round to you in a minute." You proceed to make a token roll of your die, and when the GM asks what you want to do, you describe your excessive move. He will say, "OK, make your roll," to which you reply "I already rolled, I got 2697 and (*insert name of partner here*) witnessed it." The GM will sigh and accept this, as he is too busy to argue the point. This is quite difficult to set up but almost foolproof if you do manage it.

TOTAL PROTONIC REVERSAL

This method has two applications, the percentile application and the "69" (no laughing at the back please) application, making it one of the most versatile and easy-to-use methods of roll fixing known.

The percentile application relies on the ambiguity that exists about which die is the tens, and which is the units, when rolling a d100. Having two dice of the same color makes this one even easier to apply. Simply read off the highest digit as the tens unit for a high roll. (If you have to roll under a percentile, simply reverse the technique.)

WARNING! Do not, on any account, allow the GM to equip you with a genuine one hundred-sided die, or one of those d10s with 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 00 inscribed on it.

The "69" application (one more snigger and you're out!) relies on the ambiguity between the six and the nine on a d10. They are easily confused and you can turn sixes into nines to your hearts content, or vice versa. If your GM declares firmly that the dot denotes the bottom of the number, then you can fill in the dots with filler and repaint them in enamel the same color as the die you are using.



SPEED ROLLING

No, not the technique a nervous marijuana freak uses in public; something else entirely. To use this system of deceit, you must spend many hours in practice and meditation, honing your natural reflexes to a cat-like level.

(Scene shift to old temple and a bunch of bald monks in saffron robes sat round an old master who addresses them.)

"When you can catch the die before gravity takes hold, then you shall be ready,"

(Fade back to the real world.)

Shaolin B.S. aside, to use the speed-rolling system you must roll the die and then catch it before anyone gets a look at the number. You then announce your result; no-one can dispute it, as they didn't get a chance to see the number. This technique requires lightning-fast reflexes or a believable line. "Look, air!" is not a believable line. "Hey, he's pigging all the nachos!" is. "Hey look, naked people on Baywatch!" while a lie, will work.

GOOD METHODS OF DEFACING YOUR CHARACTER SHEET

So long as no-one can read your character sheet with any certainty, you can usually say what you like about your character's capabilities. This means that the typical munchkin's messy, scruffy nature is a positive advantage. The following are ways to optimize the effects:

1. Keeping it in your pocket for days at a time
2. Rubbing out and rewriting everything at least five times.
3. Having really awful, crippled-spider-having-a-fit handwriting. (Being a doctor, lawyer or school-teacher helps here.)
4. Leaving it out in the rain.
5. Tearing pieces off it.
6. Burning holes through it with a cigarette.
7. Spilling Coke on it.
8. Leaving it near chocolate on a hot day.
9. Letting your dog eat it.
10. Keeping it by the phone as a doodle-pad.

DAMBUSTERS



The bouncing dice method is a popular one used even by non-munchkins. It is so cunning that it is almost never noticed. All this technique requires is that you are rolling more

than one dice at a time; the more dice the better.

Damage rolls, d100 rolls, statistic rolls in many games, all of these are susceptible. Games where this really shines include the "Storyteller" series and *Shadowrun*, where every roll involves a large number of dice.

The technique is really simple to apply. Begin by rolling your first die. If it is a poo roll, bounce your second die into it to effectively re-roll it. Continue this for all the dice that you roll. This significantly increases your chances of getting a good high result. It is most effective for increasing the effect of already obscene die rolls. It exaggerates the munchkindom of your already-overpowered abilities, taking them into the realms of godlike power. From five dice you could, with the proper skill, effectively roll fifteen times, giving you the equivalent of the choice of three rolls per die.



**AD&D already offers these options.
Which just goes to show.*

System Quirks

Most systems have quirks, deficiencies and peculiarities that can be exploited to your advantage – ways that certain aspects of the system operate that are open for exploitation, all the way through from character creation to combat. You must try to find the particular parts of the system that you are playing that are ripe for abuse.

CHARACTER CREATION

Some systems use random rolls to generate characters, some use points allocation, some use templates and some have a choice between several methods. Most of these different character creation methods can be twisted around to allow you greater munchkin potential. Character creation is the most important part of any game's system to a munchkin, after combat. There is only so much you can do with a feeble set of statistics, even if you are a twink.

RANDOM NUMBER CHARACTER GENERATION

Adventurers generated by random rolls are the most ripe for abuse. You can use all the die-rolling tips we gave you earlier, and it's always possible that you did roll all your stats at 18 – at least it's possible *statistically*. Realistically trying to claim that you rolled that will get you beaten within an inch of your life. If you can swing it, get your GM to let you roll up the character by yourself with no supervision. That way you can lie your butt off and make up the character exactly as you want to, with all the skills, powers and items that you might not otherwise be allowed.

Example

GM: OK, new game. I want you all to make up characters one at a time while I supervise.

Munchkin: (*Whiny voice*) But that'll take ages! We want to get around to playing tonight!

GM: A lot of people don't know the system, though. I thought it would be best for me to help them.

Munchkin: I know the system, I'll be all right. You help them.

GM: I suppose it would save some time. All right then.

Munchkin: Woo-hoo-ha-ha-ha! (*Rubs hands in glee.*)

Other ways you can semi-cheat include rolling the numbers, and then assigning them to the statistics, or totaling up all the numbers and dividing them out like a points based system. You must doctor the total upward of course.*

Certain games systems allow you to make extra rolls on statistics provided your first roll is over a certain threshold. Palladium games work like this, and so does *Rolemaster* from ICE. In this case, it is in your interest to make sure as many statistics as possible are over this threshold.

POINTS-BASED CHARACTER GENERATION

On the face of it there isn't much you can do to cheat when creating characters with points, but very few GMs will be prepared to sit down and add up your statistics after generation to make sure that they are kosher. This is especially true after cybernetics, magical augmentation and racial bonuses have been added in. Hopefully you'll be able to get away with it long enough for experience to play its role so that your GM will never know the difference.

Some games give you extra bonuses to skills and abilities based on the level of the stats that you choose. *Cyberpunk*, for example, gives you bonus skill points based on adding your reflexes and intelligence statistics together. Suddenly, every character under the sun moves like lightning and has an IQ of 200. Funny that. This allows you to get those pistol and Ninjitsu skills at the maxed out levels that you wanted. Any bonuses you can get from any statistics should be ruthlessly exploited.

If you have one of the rare GMs that will actually bother to check up on your point totals, you're screwed. Just do the best you can, and report your GM to a mental institution as probably being obsessive/compulsive. Points-based creation requires more stealth and subtlety than other methods and benefits greatly from the "illegible character sheet" ploy.

Really complex points-based systems enable you to cheat by making "honest mistakes" in your calculations. After all, the effete innumerate arts students you're probably playing with genuinely screw up their arithmetic nine times out of ten, so they can hardly accuse *you* of cheating.

TEMPLATE CHARACTER CREATION

This is a tricky one. Ideally, you want to create your own template. The trouble is, no sane GM will let you. There do exist several methods to convince him and this really is the only chance you have of generating an utter munchkin in this type of character creation. (Unless you are playing *Feng Shui*, where everything is a munchkin anyway.)

Method One

Munchkin: Ohpleaseohpleaseohpleaseohplease!

GM: No.

Method Two

Munchkin: Look, I bought you this nice pizza and chocolate, and that whisky you like.

GM: No, you can't make up your own template. Not even if you get down on your hands and knees . . . No, that wasn't an invitation, get up, you're dirtying my carpet.

Method Three

(Ring, ring.)

GM: Hello?

Munchkin: I've got your girlfriend and your dog. Let me make up a template or I'll kill 'em both!

GM: This Game Master doesn't respond to threats.

Munchkin: RIGHT!

(Bang! Bang!)

GM: HA! You've just killed your only bargaining chips!

Munchkin: Bollocks.

Method Four

Do it anyway, but don't tell him. You'd be surprised how often this works. Refer to the *GM Attention Chart* to gain an idea of how likely you are to get away with it.

Method Five

Write out the template, DTP it so it looks genuine, and sneak it into the rulebook one night while the GM is asleep. Being a ninja in real life would be a boon here. Sleeping with the GM is another way to manage it. Mind you, if you were a real ninja you'd be too busy killing people, buying pajamas and not being seen to spend any time roleplaying.

If All Else Fails

Ah well, there's usually a "Macho Mercenary" or "Troll Thug" template somewhere in the book. And most template systems do give you a few free "option points" or similar to move around; remember to put them all into weapons skills.

BAD METHODS OF DEFACING YOUR CHARACTER SHEET

Okay, so there are limits to everything. Even a munchkin should only go so far in his efforts to keep a character sheet obscure. The following are really bad ideas:

1. Using it as an emergency rain-hat.
2. Using it as a groin protector for sport.
3. Feeding it to a baby.
4. Chewing it.
5. Dousing it in petrol and setting fire to it.
6. Spilling creme de menthe on it. (Yuck!)
7. Driving over it in your car.
8. Being shot while carrying it.
9. Being tarred and feathered while carrying it.
10. Cooking it into a lasagna.

RACIAL BONUSES

Most games have races with bonuses and unique powers, except modern ones where the only racial bonuses are a sense of rhythm, being able to do convincing Kung Fu moves, or a susceptibility to skin cancer. The racial bonus system can be manipulated to a greater or lesser degree to allow the true munchkin abilities to show through.

Technique One: Max Out

If you want to play a fighting munchkin, then pick a race that's strong, tough, and not too bright. If you want a magical/psionic munchkin then pick a super-smart-arse. This system is easy, so even those of you who only scored 25-40 on the munchkin quiz can do it, but for the advanced student...

Technique Two: The Hybrid

To use this method you need a very pliable GM. You pick the two most munchkin races in the game and play a hybrid of the two. But wait; we hear your cries of "How the f*** am I going to justify this!" In reply, we tell you to say:

"Well daddy was a troll who had a spell cast on him so he fell in love with an elf. They had a kid that kid fell in love with a dwarf and they had a kid and that's me."

Make sure you say it like that, no stops for breath. If they don't buy it as a justification then the odds are they didn't understand you and will agree just to avoid looking stupid. This may not be enough, so for the utter munchkin...

Technique Three: Genetic Engineering

This is by far the most munchkin of the three techniques, but it requires the most use of B.S. Here is your sample justification for this particular fix up.

"A long, long time ago in a galaxy far, far away, there lived a highly advanced race of beings who were experts at genetic manipulation. They were extremely aggressive and required a soldier race to fight their wars for them. They weren't interested in war despite their aggression, and wanted to devote their vast intellects to more cerebral pursuits, like Twister. They got their best scientists to take samples from the most powerful of the races of the universe and blend them into one super-being called Anus. Anus' descendants spread throughout the universe and eventually lost contact with their masters. They formed a group called "The Legion" who fight wars in exchange for cash. They spend their whole lives training for battle and are the best at it, and the best of the new breed is a man called Rell Kandor. This is my background. My space ranger kicks serious arse."

Long-winded, but if it works it's the most munchkin of munchkinisms. You can justify bonuses to every statistic, outrageous weapons skills and the potential to grow far more than anyone else's characters.

Race Munchkin Potential

Dwarf: Short, slow, fat and bearded with a liking for strong drink and hammers. (Sounds like the older gamers at most conventions.) Strong and tough, your average dwarf thinks nothing of cleaving all and sundry into pieces at the slightest provocation. Dwarves suffer a lot of racial prejudice, "stunty," "runt," and "short-arse" being the most common insults. These slurs are not as common as they could be, since those who shout them usually end up the same height as the dwarf due to a well placed axe-swing. If spiky balls of utter hatred directed toward the outside world are your cup of tea, then by all means go for the dwarf. Probably the main reason for them being so aggressive and munchkin is that they find it very hard to run away from anything and therefore have to fight it.

Elf: Elves tend to be fast in most games. Getting the first strike in often leads to victory. They also tend to get some kind of bonus when it comes to sticking people with arrows. On the downside, elves are wussy pantywaists who like flowers and trees and have really namby sounding names ending in "-iel" or "-las." Elves also display something of a talent for magic. Since they only ever use it for conjuring bunches of flowers it's hardly worth it. Unless pastel greens and yellows are your particular shade, it's not really worth being one of these.

Halfling: Naff-all use, except possibly as a snack for the troll, but they're a bit moreish. Contrary to popular belief, halflings do not make good thieves. They are too fat to climb through windows, they only ever steal from the pantry, and they eat what they steal before they can sell it anyway. It's a miracle that halflings have survived. The only possible reason we can surmise for their continued existence is that they are some alien intelligence's sapient equivalent of cattle – a smart domesticated food source.

Troll: Big, hard and dumb. This is the way to go if you're a straightforward munchkin who likes to beat seven bales of sh*t out of things. Trolls can often regenerate and sometimes have rock-hard skin. This makes them more resistant to damage (as if they need to be after receiving huge bonuses to their toughness and strength). You may have to eat the odd villager, NPCs will run from you in terror – but who cares? Nothing quite beats a troll as far as sheer brutality goes, with the obvious exception of the LAPD.

GM ATTENTION CHART

These percentages represent your effective bonus to character points in character-design systems, or your base chance of getting away with various munchkin techniques.

GM's level of attention

Fanatical number-crunching amphetamine addict.	0%
Keeps his books in plastic baggies.	5%
Owens every supplement from a game line.	10%
Officious jerk.	15%
One of the lads, tough but fair.	20%
Boozy beer-swiller.	25%
Fellow munchkin.	50%
Total marijuana freak.	100%
Vegetative state.	What you like.

LIFEPATHS

Using the lifepath system provided with several newer games is an excellent way to increase your munchkin potential under the pretense of "good roleplaying." It is possible, *statistically*, to roll the "find weapons and martial arts tutor" result, ten times in a row; think about all the extra roleplaying you can do with all these extra contacts!

(This is of course rubbish; all you really want to do is get the highest possible guns and martial arts skills and sod the sensei when you're done with him. Who wants to spend valuable fighting time eating rice and discussing philosophy?)

Some systems try to stop this happening by not including a lifepath system, but do not despair; Task Force Games saw fit to provide us with those munchkin bibles, the *Central Casting* series. By using this non-system-specific supplement, you can create the most over-powered, over-styled über-munchkin the world has ever seen. Depending on the genre, the Central Casting system can equip you with anything from a fully automatic crossbow of anything-slaying, to an inhabited and functioning Dyson sphere which has been lying, undiscovered, in your attic for the last twenty years.

The Central Casting system can be more twisted than a Microsoft programmer; you can be anything and do anything. All you have to do is follow the aforementioned methods (see Random Number Character Generation) and lie your bits off. The other option open to you is to memorize the tables and just lie about the die rolls. Since there are some 97 pages of tables we recommend the following method...

How to Get Around Central Casting

Get a piece of scrap paper and write down the best events from each section and their corresponding numbers. Use the roll hiding techniques mentioned above and read the result from the list on your "scrap paper."

The Central Casting system can help you in one other way before your character is complete; personality traits. Central Casting assigns you personality traits depending on events. The traits run across a range: lightside – neutral – darkside* – exotic. Your aim is to accumulate as many darkside traits as possible. With enough evil traits, you can be a totally remorseless git to everyone, and when the GM and the other players complain you just say "Well it's in my background, you were all there when we rolled it up. I don't know, I try to do some good roleplaying and all I get is gyp from you lot, fine. I'm leaving."

If all goes well they will apologize and not comment on your munchkin overkill for the next few games.

BACKGROUND OPTIONS

Other systems allow you to select a number of background options, typically from a list which includes Money, Skills, Objects, Status, Weirdness, and Contacts.

You will want to put all your points into either skills or objects. Money can be stolen, Contacts made, Status won, and Weirdness can be accrued. You're going to hope that you always roll the combat skills or the magical weapons, but this may not necessarily happen. (Unless you memorize the table and lie about your rolls – but you wouldn't do a thing like that, would you?)

If you choose to roll on the special items table you can combine all your rolls together into one item. There is, theoretically, nothing to stop you getting that +100 sword, or that combination laser/plasma/antimatter holdout blaster. You just need to force it through and be convincing when you lie.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Even the extensive list of Advantages and Disadvantages from *GURPS* is not enough for some people. They want more. They want to play people who have three tracheotomies, who smoke four cigarettes every five minutes and are addicted to so many designer drugs they keep whole national industries afloat. These people are the munchkins of Merits & Flaws.



*(But be careful; Central Casting has been known to define homosexuality as a Darkside Trait. Very embarrassing for a dedicated munchkin, who is likely to be a bit old-fashioned – i.e. prejudiced as hell – about such matters. But then again, Wynn and Kidd were munchkins... It's all rather confusing.)

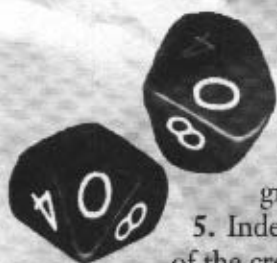
EXAMPLE ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES

Blessed

(1-5-point Merit)

You are blessed by an elder god. Enjoy.

1. Perfect glowing skin and shampoo-advert hair.
2. Preternatural grace.
3. Natural armor.
4. Holy weapon. (A flaming sword or axe, not a holy cheese-grater or chainsaw.)
5. Indestructible. Protected by the power of the creator.



Chocaholic

(2-point Disad)

Without a regular supply of smooth brown chocolate goodness you become snappy and irritable.

Your Charisma drops two points as you become convinced that nobody loves you and they are all out to have a go at you and make you feel inferior. You can take this at 4 points, at which level chocolate replaces all social interaction and food. You become fat and even more self-pitying. If you go more than three days without chocolate, you must, at the first opportunity, pig an entire tub of full-cream chocolate chip all to yourself.



Cursed

(1-5-point Flaw or Merit)

You are cursed by an elder god. Enjoy.

1. Suppurating boils. (Conclusive proof all fast food joints are run by devils).
2. Stumbling and clumsy, like a celebrity after the Oscars.
3. Putrescent rotting flesh, just the way Rover likes to eat it.
4. Hounded by Demons (like paparazzi but worse).
5. Face like a squid's behind.

End Product of Eugenics Experiment

(5-point Bennie)

You are the end product of a major experiment in human selective breeding; you are stronger, faster, tougher than everyone else. You are naturally better at any physical activity than all the rest. *You are a god!* If (when) the GM complains about this, tell him that as a side-effect, you suffer from a super-ego as well (no problem for you, it's just an excuse to get into more fights by being arrogant).

Firearms Aptitude

(2-point Utility)

You receive a +2 bonus with absolutely any firearm, even if you've never seen it before.

You're a natural. There is nothing you can't do with a gun. Drains blocked? Use a gun. Car won't start? No problem, use a gun.

Impotent

(4-point Slap)

You can't, like, do it. But what munchkin cares about sex? (It explains all those big guns and expensive cars, doesn't it?)

Terminal Illness

(5-point Weakness)

You have cancer or some other terminal disease which means you will die horribly in

around a year. This is no problem, the GM will forget, there is bound to be a magical or scientific cure at some point in the game, and few campaigns last as long as a year anyway.

Poor Impulse Control

(3-point Crock)

You are prone to bouts of sudden uncontrollable rage, attacking anything that ticks you off even slightly. Your bar isn't stocking your favorite beer? Blow them all to hell! Train late? Annihilate the station. Kind of an inverted Trouble Magnet.

Continued on next page...

EXAMPLE ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES (CONTINUED)

Stunt Double

(4-point Bonus)

Stunt Double allows you to escape from any fatal accident or stunt once per game. Instead you get up completely unharmed, but shaking your head, while your stunt double is carried off on a stretcher. Jackie Chan does not possess this Virtue.

Trouble Magnet

(3-point Incapacity)

You attract fights, fisticuffs or gun battles; even if you just pop out for some milk you will get hassled for a fight. If you try to ignore this, you will eventually end up with

the Me vs. The World problem, as they all gang up and come around to your house with burning torches.

N.B. You are a munchkin; fights are good, pacifists are bad. Go for it with both guns blazing.

Bloody Idiot

(3-point Convenience)

You have no stunt double, but after suffering terrible injuries you will give a cheeky smile, a thumbs up, and carry on as if nothing has happened, despite the fact that half your face is hanging off and the rest of your body is encased in plaster. Jackie Chan does have THIS Distinction.

Creating Your Own

To create your own Boons and Problems you first have to come up with the idea. You just think of something cool that sounds like it will be limiting but won't affect your munchkinism at all. A good example of this is *SLA Industries*, where almost every player takes the flaw "Sterile" or a 10-point fear of fish. Sounds reasonable, but the world of *SLA*, called "Mort," doesn't actually have any oceans, or rivers, or indeed fish outside of restaurants. Most reproduction is carried out in artificial wombs, and if you want a kid, you order one from a catalog.

Anyway, we've provided a handy list of Example Bennies and Liabilities. Read, learn, and enjoy.



SOUNDING CONVINCING WHEN LYING

You must learn to make yourself sound sincere even when you are not being in the slightest bit honest. Practice by lying to people outside your gaming group (policemen, girlfriends, your mother - unimportant people like that).

Body language is important. Police reports indicate that when people tell the truth they tend to glance up and to the left as they recall truthful events. Don't falter from eye contact, make open and friendly gestures. Conjure a genuine smile if you can. It all helps convey a feeling of honesty and helpfulness. Once you learn to lie effectively, you can apply it to all manner of situations. Convincing police officers that you weren't speeding, and telling people you love them, are just two.

COMBAT

Critical Hit Tables

A lot of games use critical hit tables, not as a method of increasing game play but as their main selling point. This appeals greatly to munchkins. They like to roll lots of dice in combat; it makes them feel good about themselves as people. The best examples of critical hit tables are to be found in any ICE game and *Blood!* (a hard-to-find roleplaying game of modern horror). Many other games have critical hit tables in them but none can equal the feeling of satisfaction when you hit someone with a VCR, get a critical strike, look up VCR in the *Blood!* book and lo and behold there it is, a VCR critical table 1-100.

Blood! had critical hit tables for everything from a sponge to a city block, but Iron Crown Enterprises have the edge in sheer number of critical tables. ICE games have 5 (count 'em) critical hit tables for every general weapon type, as well as for martial arts, falling, electric shocks, and all manner of other things.

PUSHING THE LIMITS

Some games impose a limit on the number of merits and flaws you can have on a single character. With a little argument you can expand this limit. Try saying something like "It cramps my creativity" or "Why does it matter if I go a little bit over?" (With responsible players it doesn't matter at all; you can exploit that as long as you can conceal the fact that you are an irresponsible power-gamer.)

CHARACTER ADVANTAGES EVERY MUNCHKIN SHOULD HAVE

Merit	Reason	Poison Resistance	So as not to get poisoned. (Duh!)
Firearms Aptitude	To shoot people, a lot, and well.	Luck	Obvious. (Makes you feel lucky, punk!)
Huge	Extra wounds, more stamina, look imposing.	Danger Sense	So you can say cool lines like "My beetle sense is tingling!"
Unshakable Will	"Give it up, Rex." "NO!"	Underworld Links	To get big guns.
Acute Senses	Hear baddies, shoot straighter, taste poisons, feel your way in the dark.	Berserker	So you can froth at the mouth and beat the living cud out of people.
Ambidextrous	Two guns! Two swords! Two grenades!		

CHARACTER DISADVANTAGES EVERY MUNCHKIN SHOULD HAVE

Flaw	Reason	Secret	Something you can kill people to protect.
Homicidal mania	A reason to kill people.	Sadomasochism	A reason to hurt people.
Short fuse	A reason to kill people.	Vengeance	A reason to kill people.
Phobia regarding man-made satellites	Like you're going to see many of those.	Scars	Look cool. Munchkin credibility.
Sociopath	A reason to kill people.	Enemy	A reason to kill people.
Socially inept	Who needs to talk?	Hunted	A reason to kill people.
Overconfident	You <i>are</i> indestructible.	Ward	Do you really care if they die? No!
Touchy	A reason to kill people.	Combat Reflexes	You get to shoot people before they shoot you. Indeed, you may shoot them before they even think about shooting you. Or before they even know you exist.
Flashbacks	See a rubber plant, flick to full auto. "Gooks in the treeline."		
Hatred	A reason to kill people.		
Intolerance	A reason to kill people.		
Addiction	PCP is a good one.		
	Something to turn you psychotic and make you think you're a god anyway.		

Concentrating Skills

If you have created your character properly, i.e. if you have concentrated everything in one single area of expertise, then there should be a weapon skill that you just can't fail at, regardless.

For the sake of example: Maximum Dexterity. Rifle Skill at maximum. Sniper Skill at maximum. All the sights and aids you can think of. A "Unique Weapon" Advantage. The merit "Natural Marksman."

At this level of skill, it matters little whether you are firing at a gnat or a tank, or how armored either of them is. Your ability is so high that you can call a ridiculous shot and still hit with little trouble. Shots such as taking off one of the gnat's wings, or sending the bullet down the barrel of the tank to ricochet inside, kill all the crew, and leave the tank intact, exiting via the exhaust port, become little problem. With proper concentration you can use the Boxing skill to take out an aircraft carrier!

The trick is to choose a combat skill that is versatile enough to be used in almost any situation. Gun Fu (see later) is a good example, being both close-up and ranged. Even seemingly limited skills can be put to good use in almost any situation. Being bothered by a helicopter gunship? Don't worry, use your thrown weapons skill and a small knife to annihilate the rotors. After all, a Welsh farmer once brought a plane down with a stone he threw at it when it was bothering his sheep. Honest.

Overpowered Abilities

We mean overpowered with regard to the game as a whole, not just in one instance. Maybe your system allows one little ninja to kick a cyborg across a room, or maybe a .22 can get through four flak vests and kill you in one shot. Maybe your standard sidearm can level cities with a couple of blasts. (Yes, we all love that Palladium "Mega-Damage.") Whatever the system, there is always one thing which is more munchkin than the rest of it. All you have to do is find out what, and exploit it. If your system of choice favors power tools as weapons of mass destruction then raid a B&Q, or a D.I.Y. freak's "shed" (read fortress).

Here is an example. The game is *Millennium's End* by the weirdly-named Chameleon Eclectic, a turn-of-the-millennium anti-terrorist game. The overpowered field in this game is firearms. They really labor the point about how dangerous guns are throughout the whole rulebook. It's true, guns are dangerous, but one punk with a .177 air pistol appears to be able to shoot through four .44 magnum-stopping-power vests and your lucky cigarette case, and kill you in one shot. You have the knowledge. Exploit it.

Customized Weapons

Most games allow you to customize your weaponry to some degree – some more than others. Modern and near-

future games are the ones that allow the most of this, "Dark Future" games being the worst culprits of all.

The catalogs of parts and upgrades for firearms as well as the multitude of different ammunition types usually fill several volumes. Much like the old listings of magical artifacts in fantasy games, and bearing a striking similarity to the home delivery catalogs of today. You've got sights, stocks, grips, barrels, ammunition, guided bullets, cybernetic interfaces, satellite links, gyro-stabilization, exo-mounts, computer assist and artificial intelligence. The works. Provided you're willing to spend enough money, and have the strength to use/lift the resulting firearm, then the sky's the limit. It often ends up with your favorite gun being at least as expensive as the house that you live in. Or indeed the district.

One example of a munchkin customized gun is "Mother." Three barrels, fully automatic, .50 caliber DPU ammunition with 100 rounds for each barrel. Electrothermal enhancement, an artificial sexy, but mothering, personality, gyro-stabilization, cybernetic linkage and an underslung grenade launcher (never used). A sort of squad support cannon, which believe it or not, started out its design life as a machine pistol. Things rapidly get out of hand with firearms. Just look at a copy of *Guns and Ammo*, by all that's munchkin, and those things are real!

STEALTH TECHNIQUES

Altering Your Character Sheet

As long as you are the one that looks after your adventurer's details, there is nothing to prevent you making a few alterations every week. A point here, a point there; no-one will be any the wiser as long as you keep the changes small. It's no good going from "Handgun +1" to "Handgun +10" overnight. People notice that. A couple of points a week in line with what you are also spending on experience should be just fine. You can always claim to have spent XP on anything you do to your character sheet. No GM that we are aware of keeps track of all of the XP that people have earned.

Losing Character Sheets and Rewriting Them

An old favorite of many a player. Play is about to start when you announce . . .

"I've forgotten my character sheet, but don't worry, I can remember it, I'll write it out again."

This gives you free rein to make up whatever the heck you want as far as your character is concerned. Over-use of this technique will make the GM hold onto your character sheets. Since the GM is as likely as anyone else to lose them, this shouldn't prove too much bother unless you have an organized GM with ring-binders, plastic folders, computer databases, and nylon slacks.

GM BRIBERY TABLE

Level of munchkin overkill	Cash required
Access to rare powers	\$25
Extra character points	\$1-10
Get hold of munchkin weaponry	\$15-100
Ignore merits and flaws limit	\$5-20
Peek at plot	\$1 (What plot?)
Re-roll	\$2
Survive a scene where you should be a bloody pulp	\$20
Use loaded dice	\$50
Use talismanic dice	\$100

BRIBING AND CORRUPTING THE GM

If all else fails, or if the GM starts to get wise to your little tricks, you may have to resort to bribery in order to get special dispensations. No-one is completely resistant to bribery and corruption. Everyone has a price. You just have to size up exactly what it will take to win over your particular GM and whether you can afford it. If you are, say, a huge multinational burger corporation which pays a lot of money in tax, then you are far more likely to win a legal battle than if you are an unemployed person on welfare. Take this example to heart and make yourself indispensable to the GM. Being a lover, business partner or Siamese twin is a good start.

Pizza (and Sundry Munchies)

This is the most basic approach to corrupting the GM. You will most likely be gaming at a friend's house. The GM will have traveled over, and since most GMs dedicate their time to trying to create more munchkin-resistant plots, they forget about things like food, personal hygiene, and breathing. This can be exploited. You tempt them with pizza, curry, nachos, caffeine and sugar. If they are hungry enough, you can get away with just about anything.

Sex

Unless you are a master of disguise, you will have to be of the sex that your GM prefers. (Unless they're bisexual, or asexual, or if they split like amoebas, or ...) Unless you want to cause scandal and problems, you should both be single, unless you merely want to flirt, in which case you can deny the whole thing should anyone bring it up. Mind you, denying rumors only seems to make them spread all the more.

Women have a distinct advantage in this field as by far the majority of players and GMs are men, and the appearance of a person of the female persuasion in a roleplaying group is enough to get dimly-remembered glands and organs working on overdrive. Even if she looks like a horse with impetigo.

If your GM starts to protest about some action that you are about to perform, pout, breathe interestingly, flash some leg or cleavage, or tighten your trousers. Fiddle with your dice in a suggestive way, suck the end of your pencil and if all else fails, whisper something lewd in the GM's ear. They should be putty in your hands. Or not as the case may be, but let's not get into that, you filthy little reprobates.

Money

The greatest of all bribes is the ever-present evil of cash. A GM *should* be impartial and incorruptible, but with an application of cash to the right extremities, (usually the hand) they can become *more* impartial where you are concerned.

The sums in the handy table we provide are based around a group subsisting at the student financial level; you may need to adjust the figures according to the make-up of your own group.

As you can see the bribes system, while allowing you to be the munchkin of your dreams, can become very expensive. If your GM is stinking rich, you may have a problem. Or not, if he got that way by being a greedy money-grubbing parasite.

Somewhere to Sleep

As we mentioned before, GMs pay little heed to the requirements of living in the real world. So when you have a game at any place other than the GM's house, you are almost guaranteed that they haven't thought about where they are going to bed down. You can offer them some bed space in exchange for favors in the game, or you can threaten to throw them out on the street if you think that they are being "unreasonable." GMs are happy to sleep anywhere. They're happy just to *sleep*, especially if they also write part time. Anywhere will do, on the floor, by a fridge, *in* the fridge. As long as they can curl up in a fetal position somewhere quiet without being asked for a page reference for five minutes, they're happy. Offering them use of your bed is probably excessive, although it might be a usefully subtle way of offering sex (see above) if you really want to go the whole hog.

Taking Them Out and About

Given the fact that most GMs have no social lives, you can usually get results with an offer to take them out to clubs, pubs and parties. If they are unsure about going out, just mention that they have the possibility of meeting some real girls rather than ogling their "Women of Fantasy" calendar for the umpteenth time. The possibility of touching someone of the opposite sex will corrupt even the most upstanding GM. Even if they will have to panic, wash the ink of their RPG tomes from their hands, and learn what deodorant is first.

Magick and the Art of Cheating

As we all know from reading our roleplaying books, magick is absolutely real and easily within the grasp of your average roleplayer and *Cradle of Filth* fan. Who amongst us hasn't accidentally summoned up Nyarlathotep during a session of *Call of Cthulhu*? We know we have. Dimensional shambler juice is a real bitch to get out of the shag pile, we'll tell you. Well, if we're going to be satanic, we may as well use it to our advantage.

MUNCHKIN SPELL LIST

Affect Normal Dice

Range: Touch

Components: S,M

Duration: As long as you hold the dice

Casting Time: 1 Rattle

Area of Effect: None

Saving Throw: None

This spell may only be used after the GM has confiscated your favorite dice after a spree of criticals. At this point, the GM will pass you some dice of his choice that are actually fair. You groan, roll your eyes, give the dice a rattle, and throw. You will then roll the best possible result straight away, causing the GM to return your usual dice.

Cantrip

Range: 5 feet

Components: S,V

Duration: 1 hour

Casting Time: 1 Minute

Area of Effect: N/A

Saving Throw: Perception

This spell causes various minor effects which will distract and disturb the GM and other players. In order to enact this you should wave your hand above your head while chanting the mantra "I hope this

works, please god make it work." Examples of effects are cigarette papers sticking to hands, leaky pens, and the amazing disappearing Pringles trick.

Charm GM

Range: 5 feet

Components: S,V

Duration: Rest of Game

Casting Time: 2 Minutes

Area of Effect: N/A

Saving Throw: Willpower, halved if caster is of the opposite sex

The casting procedure for this is to flutter your eyelashes and say "Oh please" in a really pathetic voice.

Cloud of Smoke

Range: 10 feet

Components: M

Duration: 7 minutes

Casting Time: 1 minute

Area of Effect: room

Saving Throw: Constitution

This spell requires your gaming group to contain at least four smokers. You offer all of them a cigarette; when they spark up, the ensuing cloud will fill the room, allowing you to make deft alterations to your character sheet and to lie about die rolls.

Distracting Audible Glamour

Range: 10 feet

Components: V

Duration: 10 seconds

Casting Time: N/A

Area of Effect: One room

Saving Throw: Intelligence

To enact this spell, simply recite the magic words "What was that, did anyone else hear something?" While everyone is cocking their ears, listening intently, and looking out of windows, you can do whatever it was you wanted to do.

ESP

Range: 20 feet

Components: M

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 2 hours.

Area of Effect: N/A

Saving Throw: Equal to edition number difference between copies

This spell requires you to have read the same module or adventure as the GM. This mystically enables you to anticipate traps, enemies and every other move the GM makes, allowing you to waltz through the adventure like a god.

Feign Botch

Range: Touch
Components: V
Duration: N/A
Casting Time: 10 seconds
Area of Effect: N/A
Saving Throw: None

This is a trick spell used at non-critical junctures of the game. You hold the dice aloft and say "Come on babies don't fail me now." Then you throw them; they come up a botch, proving that you don't cheat on your die rolls.

Friends

Range: 10 feet
Components: M,V
Duration: Game
Casting Time: 15 Minutes
Area of Effect: Room
Saving Throw: Constitution

The requirements for this spell are simple; you must have bought all the munchies for the game. The enchantment causes all the other players to back you up for no apparent reason when you say the power words "Do you think I'm being unreasonable, guys?"

Ink Spray

Range: 15 feet
Components: S
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: Instant
Area of Effect: GM's Notes
Saving Throw: Quality of Pen



This spell causes the GM's pen to explode (not just leak), all over his notes and NPC statistics. He thus becomes unprepared and has to do things off the cuff, making him far more susceptible to anything you might spring on him.

Invisibility

Range: Touch
Components: V
Duration: 20 minutes + 2 minutes/level
Casting Time: 30 seconds
Area of Effect: N/A
Saving Throw: Perception

This spell is used on the rare occasion that the GM has prepared a plot in advance; you lean over and touch his plot sheet while mumbling "Where the hell did I put my pencil?" The plot sheet will then disappear from sight, forcing the GM to wing it again.

Kristiana's Uncontrollable Fit of Giggles

Range: Line of Sight
Components: V
Duration: 10 minutes + 5 minutes/level
Casting time: 30 seconds
Area of Effect: N/A (but contagious)
Saving Throw: None

To induce Kristiana's Uncontrollable Giggle Fit, you must be looking at your target when you utter a sexual innuendo. It causes uncontrollable high-pitched giggles, which rapidly pass on to everyone in the room. This causes an atmosphere of joviality wherein you can get away with murder.

Power Word "Yeah, Whatever"

Range: 5 feet
Components: V
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 5 minutes
Area of Effect: N/A
Saving Throw: Half Wisdom

To enact this Power Word, you must first prepare the ground ahead by whining at the GM for five minutes. At the end of this time he will give up and reply "Yeah, whatever." You can use this to get a lot of stuff you wouldn't otherwise be allowed.

Ray of Despair

Range: Line of Sight

Components: V,S

Duration: Rest of Game

Casting Time: 1 hour

Area of Effect: N/A

Saving Throw: Wisdom



By whining and needling and moaning for an hour, and then pointing aggressively at the target (the GM), you can induce a state of total despair. At this point the GM will put his head in his hands and stop trying to curb your munchkin tendencies. Warning: Overuse of this spell can cause the GM to abandon the game completely.

TWISTING THE GAME

A few foolhardy GMs form an idea of what sort of game they want to run before their players make up their characters. They may even try to force you into playing certain types of character that you don't want to, limit your skills, and even keep you away from the big weapons! Needless to say, this kind of behavior cannot be tolerated. Where's the fun in playing a character that you aren't interested in? What motivation do you have to play a role that doesn't have the ability to level entire city blocks?

There are a couple of solutions to this thorny problem. You could find yourself another GM with more tolerant attitudes, or you could try to find loopholes or ways of getting what you want. (Which is of course a munchkin "Kill everything" game.) There are always ways around a GM's intentions.

Making it What You Want

Converting your GM's idea of what a good game should be into what everyone else thinks it should be is no easy task. If you were that hot on playing certain types of game, you'd get off your arse and run them yourselves. As it is, you need to shape the behavior of your existing GM. GMs are a tough and lonely breed and can be quite hard to get to, but everyone has their weak points. Achilles' heel, Smaug's belly, Bill Gates' law-suits. Just find the critical weakness in your GM.

Guilt trips: Make the GM feel guilty that he is forcing you to play a type of game that you really don't want to play. Let him know, constantly, that you'd rather be playing something else, anything else. Groan and sigh every time he makes another restriction. Throw your pencils and dice down in disgust. Threaten to leave and not to play. Say such restrictions limit your "creativity." Stare pointedly at the GM every time something goes badly wrong that could have been prevented by one of your normal character types. Really let him have it. Don't let up for a moment, even when you are not actually playing. Have loud conversations with other players about how rubbish the games have been recently. Rub salt into the wound.

Disinterest: This is perhaps the most effective way of getting the GM to abandon a non-munchkin-friendly game. It is also the most simple to apply. Go along with character generation and everything else until play actually starts. Then, apply the various forms of the technique:

a. Feigned ignorance. Pretend not to understand the basics of the game background, technology, social setting, or indeed anything else. Say that it "does your head in." Get the GM to explain every single thing that occurs, the minutiae of every rule, the operation of every skill; pretty soon, he'll give up on the idea and start a new game. Either that or die of a brain hemorrhage trying to sort you out.

b. Talking about other things. Anything other than the game. The latest soap opera or sitcom, who's seeing who, food, fashion, tigers, anything. Try philosophical arguments about religion, the nature of God, good and evil – things that the other players are bound to have an opinion on. With the constant distraction you will be providing for the other players, the GM should find it almost impossible to keep a coherent plotline going. If he has a go at you, simply reply that you were bored and had nothing interesting to do. That should carry the message across, loud and clear.

c. Do stuff. Go to the toilet, get drinks, go for munchies, mention that good things are on TV. This has the same distracting effect as (b) and has the same excuse, but physical interruptions are often more effective. No-one can ignore a TV screen. It's impossible. As soon as the flickering tube starts up people's eyes drift toward it, regardless of what mass-produced pap is playing. It's hypnotic and by far the most effective way of disrupting a game. This particular use of the TV is often employed by the non-gamers in a household. Whether they realize the effect or not is a moot point. They can completely disrupt a game by wandering through your play area and switching on *ER* or some other "unmissable" program. Then that's it. The game has had it.

d. Pay no attention. Stare at things, read, hum to yourself. When the GM asks you what you are going to do, go "huh?" and ask him to explain what was going on again. After having to do this five or six times the GM may lose interest in his boring arty-farty game idea and let you kill something like you want to.

Refusal to conform: This technique requires you to ignore whatever the GM says and just go with what you would normally do. Be as much of a munchkin as you can within his limits and find every nit-picking loophole that you can to create a total combat monster. Then use this character as you would normally in a munchkin-friendly game. Kill everything, use violence even when unnecessary, and blow all the major NPCs away (even the friendly ones). Pretty soon even the densest GM will realize that you never wanted to play in his poxy, farty game idea anyway and that you will not tolerate his attempts to make you anything but a munchkin, however well-intentioned he was.

2. THE FANTASY MUNCHKIN

There is a staircase leading down to a 10-by-10 corridor. There is a 50-foot dragon in a 20-foot room, and it's understandably unhappy. There are orcs and goblins and treasure and swords and wizards and (unfortunately) elves and halflings. And there are heroes. Or at least, there are munchkins . . .





You enter a 10' by 10' room. An Orc is guarding a chest, and noone knows why . . .

Welcome to the original home of the munchkin.

The fantasy genre is the protoplasmic ooze from which all subsequent munchkin species were spawned – from which all other forms of gaming sprang as they evolved legs or wings.

Just for a change, that statement was fairly serious. Being the oldest, the fantasy genre has the most advanced munchkins. Just look at Conan the Munchkin; 60 years and still going strong. Fantasy roleplaying has been around over 25 years, and therefore has had the most time to develop cheats, loopholes and abuses. This chapter shows how to raise yourself to the standards of the legendary heroes of munchkinism.

What if big swords and axes aren't your particular thing? Well, there is always magic or thievery to turn to. The fantasy realm has much to choose from. Open the door to the dungeon of munchkins past and present so you can take your place with the munchkins of the future.

Swords & Magical Weapons

What fantasy hero is complete without a magical weapon of some sort? Arthur had Excalibur, Elric had Stormbringer, and that guy in *Krull* had some kind of

poncy bladed chandelier. Whether they could fly, fight by themselves, cut through anything, or wake you up with a full English breakfast, all these weapons were badges of munchkinism. Thusly you will require one tailored to your specific needs. In fact, no hero is complete without *at least one*.

RETURNING WEAPONS

What a stupid bloody idea! A weapon that, when thrown, returns to you! Listen, when I throw a great big razor-sharp axe at someone, I want it to kill them, not come hurtling at me. If you insist on getting a weapon that returns to your hand then for Christ's sake get one that teleports there, or that moves slowly and carefully, like Hawk the Slayer's glowing green sword (only less wobbly and without the blatantly visible string).

TALKING WEAPONS

On the face of it this seems like another good idea. Believe me, it's not, for several reasons.

1. Talking swords tend to be more intelligent than their owners and will show you up all the time.
2. They can boast a more impressive string of deeds than you.
3. They nag when you don't clean them.
4. They never ever shut up.

An example; Gorthig, equipped with Trilgar, the wondrous longsword, which he recovered from the Lost City of Fring, is creeping up on a merchants' camp. He is trying to sneak past the ogre guards and into the money wagon without being noticed. He is doing fairly well until . . .

Trilgar: What's going on?





Gorthig: Shut up!

Trilgar: Pardon?

Gorthig: Shut! Up!

Trilgar: I can't hear you. This thrice-damned scabbard muffles the sound.

SHINNG! (Gorthig unsheathes Trilgar the wondrous.)

Gorthig: Now, shut -

Trilgar: AH! That's better, it's terribly stuffy in there you know, a fellow could rust. Now, what's afoot? Dragonslaying? Rescuing maidens? Slaughtering the undead minions of Ragnar the Evil? Cleaving armies of heathens who try to desecrate our holy land?

Gorthig: No, I'm trying to sneak past these ogre guards to nick some cash to pay off my horrendous bar tab.

Trilgar: SPLUTTER! COUGH! SNEAK! CHOKE! BAR TAB!

Ogre: 'Ere, wot woz dat den?

Other Ogre: Oi dunno mate. Were a feef probly.

Ogre: Better go and kill 'im then oi s'pose.

Other Ogre: Roight.

Gorthig: Oh you stupid gods-damned mithril mofo, you've screwed it all up!

Trilgar: I hardly think "mofo" is authentic for a fantasy world, do you? Fear not, TALLY HO! Kill them all! With me on your side you cannot fail! CHARGE!

Gorthig: Nadgers.

Ogres: Oi, you, feef!

SMASH! TINKLE! SLASH! STOMP! CRUNCH! BLEED! MAIM! TEAR!

Trilgar: Either of you two Ogre fellows fancy being the proud bearer of an authentic talking magical sword? I fought at The Battle Of Greenhill, you know . . .

POWERS FOR MAGICAL WEAPONS

Good Powers

Extra Damage

Extra Skill

Slaying

It hurts people more.

It lets you hit people more often. Just make sure it slays something either common, or tough. A sword of Orc-Slaying or Dragon-Slaying has a use. A sword of Pumpkin-Slaying does not.

Bound Demons

Make you and it really tough. Can confer all manner of excellent powers. (Most GMs rate them as a bad thing. Most munchkins think differently. Twinks are surprisingly willing to put up with eternal damnation.)

Blood Drinking

Hurts them from the strike, and then steals a load of blood as well! Two damaging effects for the price of one. Plus, as an extra special bonus, if the sword is particularly cunningly designed, you can drain off the blood later and sell it to a hospital.

Fireballs

FWACKOOM! Cool. More impressive than a crossbow, more damaging than a ballista and more wind-proof than a zippo.

Soul Drinking

Yes it's nasty, yes it's evil, yes it puts your very immortal essence in danger. On the other hand it's soooooo coooooool.

Animal Control

Lets you summon hordes of creatures to fight and do your bidding. Just make sure it controls something good and dangerous, not squirrels or moths.

Fights For Itself

You can relax and eat a picnic while it gets on with the tedious task of killing the third lot of Orcs today. Of course you don't get the experience, the sword does. But as long as it keeps winning that's no problem, is it?

Continued on next page . . .

WEAPON COOLNESS RATINGS

Weapon	Cool rating (1-10)
Bastard Sword	8 (Been done, but it's a cool, evil-sounding name.)
Battle Axe	6
Bow	3
Catapult	1-10 (Depends on how overkill it is to use this on your target.)
Crossbow	3
Dagger	2
Elven Longbow	1 (Elves are total nancies.)
Great Axe	10 (Kicks butt all over the place and looks nasty.)
Hand Axe	4
Longbow	5 (Robin Hood lends this weapon a certain panache.)
Long Sword	5 (Been done too many times, but has a certain swashbuckling appeal.)
Morningstar	7 (Looks cool and spiky.)
Quarterstaff	1 (2 if you are a mage.)
Repeating Crossbow	9 (Full-auto - Thwacka, Thwacka, Thwacka.)
Short Sword	3 (Been done too many times, and there is the "small weapon" Freudian thing.)
Slingshot	0
Spear	2
Throwing Axe	5

BEST WEAPON TYPES TO BE ENCHANTED

If you are going to go through all the hassle of enchanting a weapon, you may as well make it a good one. Let's face it, a slingshot is still a pouf's weapon even if it is a +5 Troll-Slayer. You do have your image to consider here; strips of leather impress no-one.*

Above all, try to be original in your choice of weapon. Magic swords are getting very tedious, common and boring. We have provided a list of weapons and their cool ratings. This will allow you to choose something a little more individual and chic. We've also provided an overview of possible enchantments. Follow this advice and no-one will laugh at your barbarian prince who had his loincloth enchanted with the powers of Blood Drain. They won't dare.

POWERS FOR MAGICAL WEAPONS (CONTINUED)

Blessed Good for boshing skeletons and other undead. Plus, you don't generally have to be a tam-bourine-bashing holy type yourself to use it. Any old mug can usually use a blessed sword (unless you are irredeemably evil of course).

Bad Powers

Speech For reasons discussed elsewhere. If it sings like the Spice Girls, destroy it, immediately.

Healing You can't have a sword of healing. What would be the point? Apart from that, who would be stupid enough to let you heal them by hacking at them with a bloody great sword?

Botany The mystical equivalent of a hedge-trimmer. You don't come up against killer privet often enough for it to be worth it. You can make some nice hedges around your castle between games, though.

Unbound Demons They'll just munch you. They will tear your soul apart in horrible and nasty ways as soon as you touch the sword and there is nothing you can do about it.

Fights Against You Bad. Apart from the practice. If it's better at fighting than you are, you're really in trouble.

Tin Opening Useful, but not in combat and not in the realms of fantasy where tinned food hasn't been invented yet.

Intelligence It'll be smarter than you. (Not entirely difficult if you're playing a warrior.)

Cursed Bad.

*Except perhaps tanners. Or they might impress people if it's your loincloth.

Mythical Beasts

What fantasy game has reached its full potential without at least ten ring-binders full to the brim with every kind of terrible, unfeasible monster imaginable? All of them serving no real purpose except to be killed by the players?

Frankly, we're surprised that, with so many monsters around, any humans are alive at all. Let alone that any of them live long enough to become heroes. It's a monster lucky-dip out there! Anyway, what monsters should you fight? Which can you hope to defeat? Which look most impressive on your résumé and which should you avoid because they're too comical or powerful?

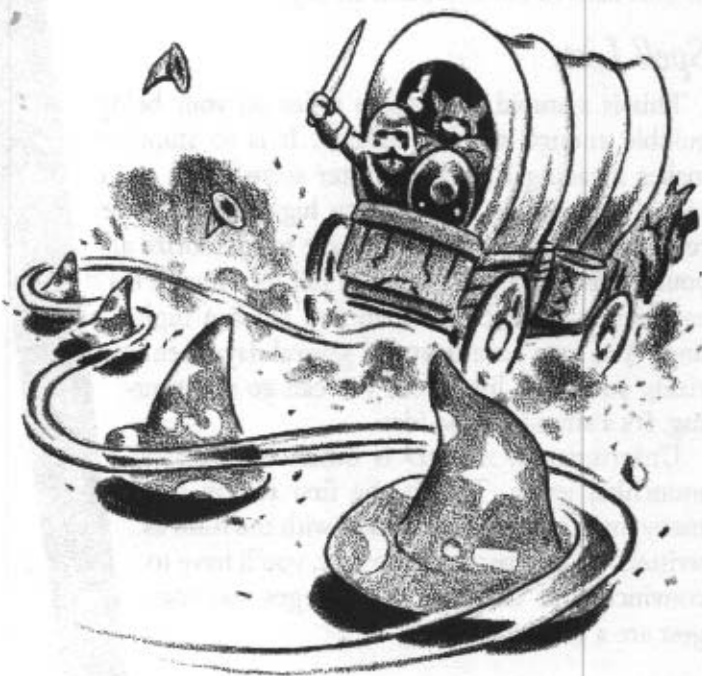
We'll tell you.

WHAT TO FIGHT

Ideally, you want a monster that, while being fairly tough, will not kick you into next week as soon as look at you. This does depend to a large degree on your level, munchkinism and degree of cunning. You have to learn to fight within your weight class.

Orcs are always acceptable sword-fodder and there are plenty of them about, but because everybody kills orcs you need to slaughter an inordinate number to even register on the Barbarian High Score Table (as posted in all disreputable taverns, souks and adventuring stores).

Trolls are more tricky; they are tough, they regenerate, and they have no manners and no conception of personal hygiene or dental care. Trolls do have some kudos in their destruction though, unlike orcs. They even make an acceptable addendum to your name; "Wayne the Trollslayer" sounds much better than "Wayne the Voleslayer."

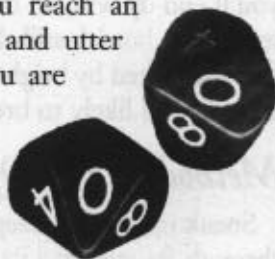


WHAT TO DO WITH A MONSTER CORPSE

Creature	Uses
Black Pudding Monster	Black pudding.
Demons	Use the horns as bull bars on your chariot.
Dragon	Making armored trench coats.
Evil Pig	Evil pork chops.
Evil Wizards	Collect the pointy hats and use them as traffic cones.
Gelatinous Cube	Jell-O.
Giant Insects	Scaring giant sisters.
Green Slime	Drano.
Medusas	Hang their heads outside to deter burglars and to complement your garden.
Orc	Green leather bucket seats for your chariot.
Troll	Makes great catapult ammo.

Dragons should generally be avoided. Although they are the ultimate prey of adventurers and have HUGE hordes of fabulous treasure, they never get out of bed the right side. Especially when some thieving human is trying to sneak off with their hard-won bed.

Demons are right out until you reach an almost unattainable level of total and utter munchkinism. Keep clear until you are powerful enough to traverse the planes of existence, then hit Hades hard and fast and get as many as you can before you leave.



HOW TO KILL THEM

With the majority of beasts it just a simple swinging action – hack and cleave – or a run-of-the-mill FWACK-OOM! Others require an altogether different approach.

In some cases, you will come up against something even more powerful than you are. We know it's hard to accept, but even you can get out of your league. The monsters in fantasy games are second to none, and starting dungeon-crawlers are incredibly wussy, particularly mages. You will require some stealth and cunning as well as the vicious streak of munchkinism which we already know dwells within you. For the purposes of an example, let us consider the slaying of a dragon.

Your opponent

Name: The Dragon.

Capabilities: Flight, breath weapon, talons, tail, teeth, magic, intelligence, smart-arse comments, and the inexplicable ability to get itself into the strangest places in dungeons despite being far too big to fit through any of the doors.

Weaknesses: Nearly always asleep, arrogant, fondness for gold, sweet tooth (likes halflings), vulnerable to weapons of dragonslaying, can't resist kidnapping beautiful women.

Hit points: Oodles.

Method 1: The Trojan Horse

Plate your armor in high-carat gold and then wait, very still, in the same room as the dragon, until it wakes up. When it does, it will espy you, and add you to its horde. When it falls asleep again (on you), spring into action and drive your sword into its soft underbelly, killing it outright.

Method 2: The Poison Halfling

Dope your party's halfling up on ale and dungeon fungi and then tell it to sneak in and swipe the dragon's treasure. When the halfling inevitably gets eaten, it will poison the dragon, who will then be in absolutely no condition to do anything about the rest of you stealing the treasure and killing it. (Unless an alka-seltzer beast happens by.)

Note that it is very important to use the *right* fungi. Send in a halfling tripping his head off on magic mushrooms and you'll end up with an hallucinating dragon. It might be easier to kill, but it's still dangerous. A dragon that thinks it is being attacked by bright pink bunny people who are after its shoes is still likely to breathe fire at them.

Method 3: The Optician's Approach

Sneak up on the sleeping dragon and plunge your sword through its eye into its brain. By rights, that should kill it outright. While this plan is in and of itself cunning and munchkin enough, certain hit-point-based RPG systems simply don't allow for such beautiful moves. Therefore, this method depends quite a lot on your out-of-character ability as well as your in-character ability. Argue the point with the GM.

"The sword's in its brain for chrissakes, that should be at least double damage and an impairment for being blind in one eye. If not dead straight away!"

Method 4: "Oh Poo, The Dragon's Awake"

All the previous methods required the target dragon to be asleep, and obviously this is always the best way to go. However, it is not always possible. In this event you should pretend to be the IRS come to audit the dragon's horde. Even dragons don't mess with the IRS. It's suicide.

Magic and Psionics

Everyone has this image of wizards and psionics as total cripples who can't even sit down without the help of a hired thug. Not true. While wizards and psionics are not as physically powerful as the huge muscle-bound hulks that parade around with their axes hanging everywhere, they do have a huge advantage, which is given away in their class names. Yes, wizards have magic and psionics have, well, psionics. You may well have a +12 axe of innard-spreading, but they have fireballs or mental attacks which your average thug just can't hope to cope with. Detailed below are the methods, means and motives involved in becoming a magical munchkin.

MAGIC POINTS VS. SPELL LISTS

There are two general methods of using magic in the fantasy realms. You can choose between magic points or spell lists. Each idea has its devotees, but one of them sucks big style, and that is the spell list system.

Magic Points

This system assumes that after you have spent five to ten years of your life studying magic in a tower with no chicks anywhere nearby, you will have quite a good memory. Basically, you learn your spell once and then you know it. That's it. No faffing around with piles of paper every morning. The only thing limiting your magical munchkinism is your power level, and if you have created the mage correctly, you will be maxed out and able to hurl balls of flame around all day.

Spell Lists

This is a stupid idea which relies on your being gullible enough to play *AD&D*. It is so stupid it makes invading Russia in winter seem like a good idea. Not only do you have to lug around whole reams of paper, but you also have to memorize all your spells when you get up in the morning. This can lead to a problem when you reach a higher level. You may have to spend several days memorizing your spell list before you can go adventuring. It's a stupid, stupid idea.

Unfortunately, *AD&D* is otherwise a classic munchkin game. This is the first reason why many munchkins start to tinker with the rules as written. Of course, if you do that, you'll have to convince your GM that the changes you suggest are a good idea.

HOW TO SELECT YOUR SPELLS

The most important thing for a Wizard is his spell list. This describes the type of munchkin effects you can deal out to people. There are some simple rules for selecting the spell complement that you should have.

Rule One

Attack good. Defense not so good. Healing bad (what are clerics for?). Anything else is abysmal and really not worth having. This rule should be pretty self-explanatory. You want spells which either fwackoom people, stop you being fwackoomed, or ideally reflect an enemy's fwackoom back onto him and his mates.

Rule Two

Flashy pyrotechnics. This is very important. Who gets remembered; a wizard who fwackooms someone with silent invisible flame, or a wizard who lets rip a huge gout of rainbow-colored fire while creating a sign out of moonbeams which reads "LOOK I'M FWACKOOMING YOUR KING" as a clap of magical thunder rolls around the land? We know who our money is on. Pyrotechnics scare people, increasing the intimidation effect of your magic and allowing you to keep whole groups of superstitious locals or guards out of your way.

Rule Three

Fire good. Ice okay. Wind wussy.

Your fwackoom spells require a medium to work in, and you usually have a choice of elements. The best is FIRE! It

looks cool, it burns people, and if you happen to have a telekinetic in the party, you can work together to produce a pre-cooked self-delivering meal.

There are also uses for the number two element, ice. It can allow you to freeze oceans so you don't have to worry about getting your feet wet when you cross to another continent and you don't have to trust boats. It can also be used to keep rations fresh and to check pools of water for waiting monsters.

Wind is so fundamentally pathetic as to not be worth mentioning.

Rule Four

Seemingly subtle and boring spells can be hideously abused by a competent munchkin into producing all manner of munchkin effects. Examine each and every spell carefully to see if you can spot a twink-worthy loophole. There are moral bonus points for demonstrating that some innocuous little "non-combat" spell can be used to make people's heads explode. For example, there's that dinky little spell that produces a pint or two of drinking water. This is supposed to be used by idiots who get stuck out in a desert without enough supplies. But check; does your rulebook say *where* this water can or cannot be produced? If not, how is that ogre going to feel when his brain suddenly has to share its skull-space with a pint of water?

Similarly, slowing or entangling spells rarely worry dragons much. But will they work for just a few seconds on a flying dragon? If so, don't forget the sound effects:

"neeeeeeeeeooooo OOOOOO WWWW-BOOM!"



CHOOSING BETWEEN MAGIC & PSIONICS

This is a difficult choice that many a munchkin has faced. What do you do? Do you play the fireball-hurling wizard or the brain-exploding psychic? Well fear not, for we are here once more to help you out with an in-depth and serious review and comparison of the two classes and their comparative strengths and weaknesses.

Magic

This is the original fantasy fwackoom-system, allowing you to combine flashy pyrotechnics with death and maximum collateral damage. The home of the original munchkins of lore is magic. Just look; what would Arthur be without Merlin? A useless wuss that's what. What about Bilbo without Gandalf? He'd be one dead hobbit, we assure you. Magic has the force of history on its side.

Still, if you decide against magic for some reason, remember there are always...

MAGIC: FOR AND AGAINST

For Magic

A cool pointy hat.

A powerful staff.

Big Explosions.

Cool light shows.

Repeater spells.

Enchanting weapons.

Stuffed alligator.

Respect.

Excellent tower to live in.

Familiars.

Huge library.

Against Magic

Have to wear a dress.

Must endure endless rounds of "A wizard's staff has a knob on the end" from Pratchett aficionados.

You might be in the blast radius.

Tells everyone where you are.

Physically draining. (Might kill you. This is bad.)

Get nicked by thugs on "Quests For The Righteous."

Foetus in a jar.

Stupid beard.

Stairs, lots of stairs.

Cat hair on robes.

People with matches.

PSIONICS: FOR AND AGAINST

For Psionics

Making people's heads explode.
Starting FIRES.
Turning parts of your body into lethal weapons.
Destroying whole cities by thinking about it.
Invading people's minds.

Chatting up women more effectively.

Groovy hair cut.
Being at one with everything.

Being able to spout semi-mystical B.S.

Against Psionics

Cleaning up afterward.
Starting fires in your sleep.

Getting a license for them.

Headaches.

Having to put up with "Mindscape" rubbish from cheap Sci-Fi movies.

Using too much power and exploding their heads.

Stupid monk-type robes.

Spending time contemplating your navel.

Having to put up with same.

SPELLS MUNCHKINS MUST HAVE

Spell

Charm

Cloud of Death

Create Zombie

Enlarge

Fireball

Flight

Invisibility

Lightning Bolt

Mell's Magic Meteors

Permanency

Power Word "Die"

Prismatic Sphere

Reason

To get hordes of followers.

It's death, but in cloud form. Cool.

Everyone you kill can rise up and help you.

Use it on your companions' arrows or to impress the ladies.

It's the defining munchkin spell, in a variety of colors and smells.

Combine with pebbles and the Enlarge spell for true munchkin effects.

If they can't see you then they can't hit you.

It makes a change from a fireball.

Full-auto fireball, cool.

Makes munchkin spells last for greater effect.

It kills people.

Many different ways to kill people all wrapped up in a sphere.

CREATIVE USES FOR SUPERNATURAL POWERS

Spell/Psi-Power

Body Weaponry

Damien's Death Neem

Fireball/Pyrokinesis

Flight/Telekinesis

Magic Missile

Mind Control

Power Words

Shapeshifting

Creative uses.

A brilliant Psi-Power. Use it to great effect in almost any situation. Sitting on the bad guy's head? Then turn your intestines into a steel spike. Pinned to the floor? Turn your jaws into a bear trap and bite off their family jewels. The possibilities for this one are too great to fully explore here; just be creative.

You can't really be *creative* with a spell that just kills everything in a twenty-mile radius except you. But then, who needs to be with such a cool spell?

Melting stuff onto people, setting internal organs on fire, burning down forests so you can aim the catapult at them, cooking your tea.

Flying over people and dropping poison into their water canteens, bouncing them off of solid things like mountains, or, if you are really good, bouncing the mountain onto them.

None really; it's a bit poo.

Exploding people's heads. Re-programming people's personalities so they become killing zombies. Never paying for anything, or, if you're really devious, getting your idol of the opposite sex to go on a date with you.

Much fun. Just think - Power Word "Breakdance" could lead to some interesting fight scenes.

Turn into a maggot then enter through enemy's ear and return to normal shape. **WARNING** - do not try this on trolls or anyone with an IQ lower than their shoe size; it could be painful and the inside of someone's head is not desirable real estate.

Psionics

Once called "the poor man's magic." That was before the advent of *Scanners*, whence we all learnt the first step on the true path of power. You can make people's heads explode in a really messy way, and hit those surrounding the target with dangerous fragments of bone.

As with magic, psionics has its heroes. Look at the stories that involve psionics. You've got Luke Skywalker, Yoda, Darth Vader, Michael Ironside in *Scanners*, numerous psionic monks from Hong Kong cinema, The Shadow, Professor X, and Jean Gray.

Psionics aren't just limited to making people's heads explode. You can create all manner of effects: flight, starting fires, creating weapons, choking people and lifting barbarians up off the floor and smashing them into walls. The possibilities are endless, and there are always new effects and applications that you can think of.

The Choice

So, you've consulted our tables; but perhaps you're still unsure. Well, what this all comes down to is, do you want to fwackoom people in a spectacular way or do you want to get in with the chicks? Think about it, weigh it up and decide.



CREATIVE USES FOR PSI POWERS AND SPELLS

So you've got your spell list or your psi powers and you're just dying to try them out. Wait, you can't just go out and fireball or choke someone. That's been done too many times before. You have to put some effort into coming up with some innovation. That's what all these munchkin powers are for. Remember, people don't notice just another fireball. If you want to get any attention you will have to go one better. Throw a fireball at a cliff face causing the cliff to melt and encase your enemy in molten stone. Even if he can survive red-hot molten stone, he's still trapped under it. So we've provided yet another list. (Well, this is the magic section, is it not?)

FAMILIARS

In many games, wizard characters can acquire themselves familiars. This may be a good or bad idea for a munchkin. It's Good if the familiar gives you extra spell points, fights viciously on your behalf, or spies for you and so saves you from having to think too much about tactics. It's Bad if the familiar is prone to getting killed and losing you all that work or experience or whatever you had to spend, or if other people start making jokes about your cuddly pet. It's very bad indeed if you take damage yourself when your familiar is killed.

A lot depends on the type of creature you get, of course. A little demonic imp could be cool, but some NPCs may notice it and turn difficult. If it has to be a normal animal, a Rottweiler would be good. A cat would be a bit dubious, but they are sneaky, vicious little bastards, and the girls often go all soppy over them. A white mouse would be terrible. A two-ton fighting bull sounds good, but if it insists on sitting on your shoulder you're stuffed.



GODS: YOU CHOOSE!

Good Choices

Old Testament Christian God
Big fat source of all evil badass
from hell Satan

God of Fire
God of Storms

God of the Sea
Volcano Gods
God of Hunting
God of War
God of the Harvest
God of the Underworld
Evil Gods
God of Beasts
Goddess of Lust

Reason

Floods and pillars of salt.

Produces the best music.

Fire, Fire, FIRE!!!

Impressive background noise. Often associated with hammers and smithying.

Good opportunities for magical weapons.

Cheap lively seafood and mermaids.

Rivers of lava scare the bejeezus out of people.

You need never go hungry, and you *may* be able to grow horns.

You'll be a munchkin.

Blood sacrifices. (Really. Look it up. You can even set fire to people!)

Power over death.

Slaughter is worship.

You're never short of a ride.

You're never short of a ride.

Bad choices

New Testament Christian God
Red guy with a pointy beard Satan
God of Love
God of Wine
The Earth Goddess

Reason

Too forgiving.

Hammer films are out of business.

You just want to hug everybody.

You're too drunk to hit anyone.

Eating bran and crispbread, chewing seaweed, going vegetarian and communing with nature isn't as much fun as it sounds. Even if tie-dye-clad young hippies like it.

Right out

The "Good News" Christian God
Little red mooning tattoo Satan

Reason

Instead of storming dungeons and slaying the denizens, you knock politely and offer them leaflets.

Look, you'll think it's cute to start with, but you'll regret it for the rest of your life.

THE THIRD PATH

There exists a way beyond both the path of magic and the path of mental powers. A third way. A way that depends on the intervention of a third party on your behalf. A way that allows – nay, encourages – you to play a bigoted racist psychopath who wishes to cleanse and burn the whole world.

This is the way of the Cleric.

The Cleric's powers are miracles given you by the gods. As all your power stems from your deity, you need to select very carefully which god to worship, especially since you are doing so for munchkin potential. See our handy table for guidelines regarding which gods to choose.



Artifacts

As well as magical weapons, there are many other items of magical value to be found within the realms of fantasy: clothing, bottles, rings, wands, carpets, helmets and cod-pieces to start with.

CREATING YOUR OWN

When you attain a high enough level of expertise, you may begin to construct your own magical artifacts. This is a damn good thing and you should make absolutely the best use of it that you can. This is what you've been waiting for; now you can have all the weapons and artifacts that you dreamed of. Here are a few suggestions on artifacts you could create.



Mower of Utter Devastation

First construct a large wooden frame with rear drive wheels and plenty of gears. This device should be about the width of a corridor. On the front, place a large wooden roller connected to the drive wheel so that it spins around at high speed. To this roller, attach all the old magical blades you have acquired and then forge a load more so that the roller is bristling with them. Then ride this baby up and down the ten-foot corridors, mincing anything that gets in your way. Between adventures you can earn some extra dough trimming hedges and harvesting farmers' crops. If you have a cocky talking sword, attaching it to one of these can teach it a little humility.



Sword of Anything Substantial Slaying

This is a long project but ultimately rewarding. There are two ways you can go about it, the quick and easy way, which looks a bit shoddy, or the long-winded way, which looks damn impressive. Both are as effective as each other.

The quick and easy way is to collect together all the party's weapons of slaying. Then break them into many shards. Take all the pieces and forge them into one single weapon and then enchant it to fill in the gaps. This looks a bit rag-tag but gets the job done.

The long-winded way is to make all the enchantments yourself. This will take months and in all probability cost you a lot of your life-force. This method requires a lot of patience, which, let's face it, most munchkins do not possess.

USEFUL ARTIFACTS

Artifact	Why So Useful?
Cloak of Invisibility	Start fights and then leave. Spy on people, or pull faces at them without them noticing. Set up important figures by goosing anyone they get close to.
Flying Carpet	Tasteful, <i>and</i> of strategic importance.
Genie Lamps	Your first wish should of course be for "an infinite number of wishes."
Magical Armor	Light, extra protection, cleans and waxes itself.
Portable Hole	Place it over a creature's belly and watch the innards come spilling out. Cool.
Potions	Some heal, some increase your stats, some make you invisible, most are positive, some are poisoned. Behold! Yet another use for the halfling. Just tell him it's soup and it'll be tested before you can say "You greedy little pig."
Scrolls	Allow low-level mages to look more impressive than they are, and non-magical professions to look slightly competent in magic.
Srying Devices	Spy on your enemies from a distance. See into the bath houses at nunneries. Check out dungeons before you go there.
Telepathic Helmet	Read your enemy's mind to tell his intent. "Aha, he is going to conk me on the head while I read his mind!" (CONK!)
Wand of Animal Control	Handy, if a bit subtle; e.g. a Wand of Fish Control can allow you (in the right environment) to set a squadron of killer turbot on your enemy.
Wands of Neeming	Any wand that fires bolts of magic at people is a good buy, be it fireballs, lightning, or the magickal equivalent of flicking cigarette butts at people.

Potion of Munchkinism

Take samples of blood from the most munchkin members of each class and race in the game. Distill their essences down into a draught of this potion. If prepared properly it should give you the keen intelligence and magical ability of a mage, the strength and sword arm of a fighter, the constitution and beard of a dwarf, the speed and accuracy of an elf, the stealth and deftness of a thief, the righteous presence of a paladin, the holiness of a cleric and the appetite of a halfling.

How long this effect lasts is entirely up to the GM, but a few well-placed threats and arguments should allow you to prolong the effects. But be careful that you do not also gain the feebleness and cowardice of a mage, the stupidity and foolhardiness of a fighter, the attitude and stench of a dwarf, the arrogance and dress sense of an elf, the selfishness and criminal record of a thief, the bigotry of a paladin, the hypocrisy of a cleric and the soft flabbiness of a halfling.

Wand of Utter and Total Destruction

The rough magical equivalent of a nuclear bomb. Enchant this wand with the combined effects of every single pyrotechnic and damaging spell in existence. Nothing will escape the blast. Not even you and your party of friends, so it's probably best to enchant a time delay as well and use these finely-crafted and expensive wands as grenades.



POTIONS

These magical brews and distillations are of incredible use to any munchkin. They allow you to increase already-overpowered statistics and to use powers that are outside your normal remit. However, as we have already mentioned, there is a certain amount of risk in taking the wrong one at the wrong time, especially since they are never labeled.

Potion	Use
Clairvoyance	Spying on other members of your party to make sure they're not hiding any extra treasure.
Fire-Breathing	A combination of Indian sub-continent cuisine and distilled petroleum, this potion can get even the most stubborn barbecue lit.
Glue	Coat your money-bag with this and no bugger will be able to steal it from you.
Growth	You too can intimidate frost giants and trample halflings.
Healing Potion	You should have a bandoleer of these, or one of those novelty baseball caps with the straws. Make sure you collect as many as possible.
Heroism	Avoid this one. While it can give you increased abilities for its duration it also incurs the "No, Let Me" syndrome, which makes you take all the risks. You <i>can</i> slip it into a water bottle of one of your companions so that they go ahead and trip traps and run into monsters first.
Invulnerability	Save these up for those times when the GM is certain that he's got you cornered and is about to kill you. They will allow you to stroll away unharmed and laugh in his face.

Continued on next page . . .

Miniwand

This consists of a box connecting a hand crank to six magic missile wands held together in a hexagonal shape, enchanted for around a hundred uses each. Turn the crank and the wands spin, cooling them off as the vast thaumaturgical expenditure of thirty magic missiles a second is unleashed at your opponent.

POTIONS (CONTINUED)

Love Philter	Throw this at enemy monsters and they'll do absolutely anything for you.	Slippery Oil	Besides its many uses in the bedroom, this is good for removing pursuers and frying your halfling in. <i>Don't</i> drink it.
Madness	Dosing up your halfling before you feed him to the dragon.	Speed	Hitting once a turn with a huge battle-axe is quite fun. Hitting three times a turn with a huge battle-axe is even better.
Monster Control	Using the big nasty monsters from dungeons to deal with all the other monsters. (Then finish off the last one you controlled when it's already injured.)	Strength	Gulp down a few of these and boost your strength into triple figures.
Shrinking	Getting through locked doors if you've mislaid your axe. Or feeding to big monsters so that you can squish them by treading on them.	Youth	Throw these at opponents to change them into babies, which are far easier to slaughter.

QUESTS VS. THEFT

Which is the best way to acquire items? Do you brave the depths of the dungeons yourself, fight innumerable monsters, risk death in a dragon's gullet and emerge with,

perhaps, one depleted magical item in need of a recharge? Or do you mug another adventurer who has already braved all the dangers and swipe his items?

Quests

Pros

You will have grand tales of adventure to tell.

You can gain a load of XP and gold as well.

You will have earned the right to use the items you find.

An entire dungeon might be easier to beat than another adventurer.

Your friends can help you get through the dungeon.

Theft

Pros

All the items are together in one place.

You can poison their ale.

You can kill them in their sleep.

It's easier.

Cons

But some will doubtless involve the rest of the party bailing you out.

But not as much as if you did it alone.

You can't be sure you'll find anything more powerful than a helm of mosquito repulsion.

Then again, you can't job over a dungeon while it's sleeping.

You'll have to beat off the rest of the party to get at the good items.

Cons

The owners must have been capable enough to take those items and hold onto them.

If they're students, they won't notice.

The rest of the party might hear you. "I saw a scorpion on his neck" isn't a viable excuse for beheading him.

You'll have to make up an adventure story, something hard for munchkins to do.

Stereotypes

Every character class or template has a certain stereotypical image and expectation that goes with it. When exaggerated by munchkinism these stereotypes become extremely silly. Allow us to present the munchkin view of the usual fantasy classes.

FIGHTER

Name: Hrud the Demonslayer.

Race: Dwarf.

Highest Statistics: Strength, Toughness.

Lowest Statistic: Intelligence.

Highest Skills: Weapon skills. (All of them.)

Magic Items: Huge Axe of Demonslaying (smeared with demon blood), enchanted full plate mail (smeared with demon blood), magic crossbow that fires 20 bolts a turn, bracers of strength, a bandolier of Healing Potions (or one of those novelty baseball caps with two potions on it and a straw leading to his mouth), an enchanted shield (smeared with demon blood), and a few rings to add to strength, toughness, and dexterity (and to sting a bit more when he punches people).

Mundane Items: 50' rope, clothes, a huge war-horse, a keg of ale, meat, flint and tinder. And a 10' pole (no-one knows why).

Most Heroic Tale: Going so far into a dungeon that he emerged in hell and an entire demonic army was sent to stop him, so he killed them.

MAGE

Name: Maladria the Jade Enchantress of the 12th Circle, holder of the sacred key of Nardor, advisor to King Mac and warden of the land of Peng.

Race: Human.

Highest Statistic: Intelligence.

Lowest Statistics: Strength, Toughness.

Highest Skills: Anything magical at all, however obscure.

Magic Items: The Sacred Key of Nardor (probably covered in sequins). A huge staff, two large sacks full of wands of various types, a bag of holding, the biggest spell book ever seen, more scrolls than you can shake a deciduous forest at, innumerable talismans and rings for all eventualities. A magical dagger, a big white tower somewhere.

Mundane Items: The sacks, a dress, 50' of rope.

Most Heroic Tale: Where she got the giant spell tome from; just don't ask her, because she won't shut up for the next hour and you won't be able to make any of it out through the long words anyway.

THIEF

Name: Farris the Ferret.

Race: Human, under absolutely no circumstances a halfling. Do you understand? Halflings do *not* make good thieves, heck, they don't make good halflings, got it?

Highest Statistic: Dexterity.

Lowest Statistic: Charisma.

Highest Skills: Pick lock, pick pocket, pick and mix. Stealth, climbing and others usually including ambush and back-stab.

Magic Items: Shoes of Sneaking, a magical dagger, enchanted climbing spikes, a Cloak of Invisibility and a Choker of Whininess (to elicit sympathy from watchmen).

Mundane Items: 50' rope (with grapnel), black clothing, flint and tinder.

Most Heroic Tale: Sneaking into a Dragon's hoard, disguised as a kettle, and getting out again with everything.

RANGER

Name: Galadiel of the Forest.

Race: Elven nancy pantywaist.

Highest Statistics: Dexterity, Intelligence, Wisdom.

Lowest Statistic: Machismo.

Highest Skills: Bow (to extreme munchkin levels), herbalism, tracking, being arrogant, having pointy ears.

Magic Items: Circlet of Animal Control (esp. squirrels), magical Elven Longbow, magical arrows.

Mundane Items: 50' rope, poncy green clothes, knapsack filled with nuts and berries, tofu, high-fiber bran-based cereals, books on jogging and aromatherapy scents.

Most Heroic Tale: Saving Snuffle the Squirrel King from the ravages of the evil hawk, protecting him through countless other perils, and receiving the Medal of the Hazelnut.

BARD

Name: Brian Silvertongue.

Race: Half-elf. (Never mind the science of it.)

Highest Statistic: Charisma.

Lowest Statistic: Modesty.

Highest Skills: Play instrument, sing, seduction, scrounge, nookie.

Magic Items: Satyr's Pipes, Lute of Lust, French Horn of . . . never mind.

Mundane Items: Bright clothing, rusty old knife, good running shoes. 50' rope.

Most Heroic Tale: Escaping from Old Henry the Innkeeper after having his wife on the bar-top.

PRIEST

Name: The Reverend Jim of the Church of the Perpetual Flame.

Race: Human.

Highest Statistics: Ignorance, Prejudice, Bigotry, Charisma, and maybe Wisdom.

Lowest Statistics: Intelligence, Warmth, Compassion.

Highest Skills: Theology, rabble-rousing.

Magic Items: Holy Symbol of Eternal Fire, Stave of Righteous Firestorms.

Mundane Items: Red and yellow frock, 50' rope.

Most Heroic Tale: Bringing the truth of the holy flame to the ignorant pagan half-men of the tropical islands near the rim of the world. (Doing this involved burning 80% of them for heresy.)



PALADIN

Name: Sir Headcase of Framley.

Race: Human.

Highest Statistics: Strength, Constitution, Dexterity.

Lowest Statistic: Intelligence.

Highest Skills: Recognize heathen, slaughter heathen.

Magic Items: Bastard sword with St. Nerris of the Thousand Wounds' little finger bone in it. Stupidly magical plate mail.

Mundane Items: A tolerant horse and a book of religion. 50' rope.

Most Heroic Tale: Pillaging and burning two cities in one day and still maintaining an aura of holy righteousness.

Alignments

Alignments are the mainstay of many a fantasy roleplaying game. They allow you to neatly pigeon-hole people into good and evil camps. This means you don't need to worry too much about moral dilemmas and can get on with the process of destroying the devil-worshipping heathens, or torturing people to death for kicks.

Good

This is your honest-to-goodness hero. Kind to his folks, works for the reward of seeing people happy, supports the underdog, has a well-developed sense of morals and honor. People of this alignment are usually blond, have straight teeth, wear white clothing and never smoke. They do not kill unnecessarily and always make allowances for the possibility that other people are just having a bad day.

Good side: The people love you and will back you up.

Bad side: It's hard to kill people when you have a conscience.

Example: Luke Skywalker (before he learned enough cool Force stuff to get on with wearing black and killing people).

Munchkin Potential: 0/10

Evil

This alignment is out and out *bad*. Torture is a hobby, and those of evil alignment think nothing of torching an entire village merely because they can't be bothered to collect firewood. For some reason, they have no trouble finding hordes of equally evil followers. Characters of this alignment tend to be of a racial minority, such as orcs or trolls. They wear black, have bad breath and smoke like chimneys.

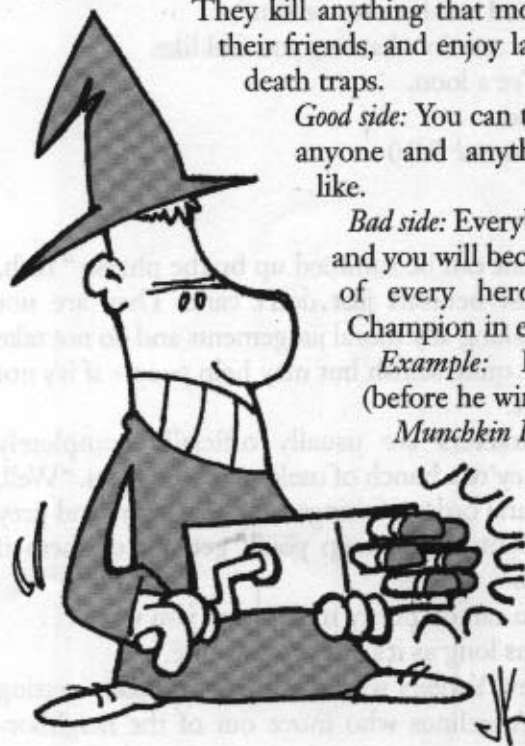
They kill anything that moves, including their friends, and enjoy laying elaborate death traps.

Good side: You can torture and kill anyone and anything that you like.

Bad side: Everybody hates you and you will become the target of every hero and King's Champion in existence.

Example: Darth Vader (before he wimped out).

Munchkin Potential: 10/10





Lawful

People of this alignment recognize the law of the land, whether they enforce it or follow it. This alignment leaves the moral judgements to others, the judges and lawmakers. It keeps its head down and out of trouble. It's a bit hard to be a thief of this alignment (unless you count lawyers and estate agents). Lawfuls tend to be stupid weasel-featured cretins always hunched over through fear, or lantern-jawed awe-inspiring enforcers of the letter of the law. They might smoke, but only in areas where it's allowed.

Good side: As an enforcer you can kick lawbreaker's heads in and hang people if the law allows. As a follower you know you have the power of the state on your side.

Bad side: The law may not always concur with what you want or desire.

Example: Judge Dredd.

Munchkin Potential: 8/10 for enforcers, 3/10 for the plebs.

Chaotic

"Do what thou wilt." This alignment acts on whim, doing whatever the hell they like, be it good or evil. They don't have a care. Spur-of-the-moment decisions are everything. The chaotic often has a fixed grin, wears bright colors, and laughs for no reason. They probably smoke, and if they do it's probably dried mushrooms or similar.

Good side: You can do whatever you feel like.

Bad side: You're a loon.

Example: Lobo.

Munchkin Potential: 9/10

Neutral

This alignment can be summed up by the phrase "Yeah, whatever." Most neutrals just don't care. They are not interested in making any moral judgements and do not take sides. They are quite selfish but may help people if it's not too much effort.

Druidic characters are usually officially completely Neutral, but they're a bunch of useless tree-huggers. "Well, it's like the natural order of things man, predators and prey y'know?" is about all the help you'll get out of them if you're attacked.

Good side: You can do pretty much what you want...

Bad side: ... as long as it's not too extreme.

Examples: New Yorkers who stroll past someone getting mugged, Los Angelinos who move out of the neighbor-

hood with the muggers and spend all their time worrying about endangered species of pigeon.

Munchkin Potential: 4/10

COMBOS

Lawful/Good

The honest lawyer, the kindly constable, the decent judge. Basically law-abiding but not narrow-minded; basically good but unwilling to bend the rules too far. However, a munchkin who plays a Lawful/Good character can easily emphasize the Lawful over the Good. "It is lawful to defend goodness. Goodness is defended by destroying Evil. Those Orcs are Evil." HACK! MAIM! KILL! "Oh look, a goblin baby - it'll grow up Evil. SKEWER!" Paladins, the quintessence of Lawful Good, sometimes end up compared to Hitler Youth. As a Munchkin you can claim that self-righteousness is virtue.

Munchkin Potential: -1/10 to 8/10 (depending on slant)

Neutral/Good

Doesn't really care about the greater battle between Good and Evil, but likes to think well of himself so he helps people out occasionally, because it makes him feel special. Puts goodness ahead of both law and freedom. Of course that's *their* interpretation of good...

Munchkin Potential: 4/10

Chaotic/Good

Tries to serve the greater good and doesn't care how he does it. Will happily break the law, steal, and even murder people to serve the higher purpose. "I'll do good when it suits me, but trying to MAKE me be nice is obviously Evil..."

Munchkin Potential: 7/10

Lawful/Evil

The crooked lawyer, the confidence trickster, the huckster, the hanging judge, the cruel landlord. These people use and abuse the law for their own ends. Usually both hard and organized, but the snag is that there's usually some bastard who outranks you in the hierarchy and who treats you as a disposable resource. Still, you can always scheme against him.

Munchkin Potential: 7/10

Neutral/Evil

These don't care about anyone or anything other than themselves and will do anything to get themselves higher up in the social and economic ladder. Harshly pragmatic and very ambitious. Very munchkin, of course, but a bit too tidy-minded, without the Lawful Evil character's backups.

Munchkin Potential: 8/10

Chaotic/Evil

Random acts of senseless violence! While an evil knight will burn down a village to keep warm, or to enforce their tyranny, a Chaotic/Evil Knight will do it for no reason at all. This type of villainous killer performs heinous acts with absolutely no forethought, planning, or true malicious intent. Sociopathic and criminally insane.

Munchkin Potential: 20/10

Lawful/Neutral

Boring; your average schmo. Doesn't care but keeps his nose clean. Works day in day out at a boring job and ekes out a miserable boring existence.

Munchkin Potential: -10/10

Chaotic/Neutral

Values freedom above niceness, but doesn't get any great kick from being nasty. Generally a bit of a loony, and when played by a munchkin, probably a selfish little bastard. When the GM notices, the character will be redefined as Chaotic/Evil, but a bit of fast-talking – "I'm only evil when it suits me" – can keep the Neutral part of the label in place for years.

Munchkin potential: 7/10

Uses for Halflings

On the face of it, halflings are completely useless, disgusting little fatbodies who are good for nothing. This first impression is pretty much correct. However, there are many uses for halflings which makes it worth your while to convince a couple of your fellow players to play them. You won't regret it. Especially since you'll be able to hog more of the glory.

CHECKING FOR TRAPS

Halflings are perfect for this job. Simply tell them that you can smell a cream bun at the end of the corridor and away they'll trot, setting off pitfalls, falling masonry and fireball traps as they go. A halfling tied to the end of a 10' pole can be used to prod flagstones to see if they are pressure-sensitive, or to push statuettes off suspect pedestals.

DISTRACTING MONSTERS

Because halflings are so tender and plump, they represent primary targets for monsters whose motivation is hunger. This draws attention away from you during combat, and while the monster is busy consuming the little fellow, you can strike with impunity. You can increase your halfling's food appeal by washing him regularly, putting an apple in his mouth, and making sure that he is corn-fed. Coating him in toffee doesn't hurt either. If blocked by a creature in a corri-

dor, you can tie a halfling to a 10' pole and use him to keep the monster at bay and busy while other members of your party pepper it with arrows. A halfling prepared this way can be offered up to intelligent monsters like a candy-apple.

FOOD

Halflings have a tendency to eat all your supplies, which can be a help as well as a hindrance. They also tend to be quite tough little buggers who cope quite well with deprivation. A string of halflings fattened up and taken with you make good emergency rations.



EMERGENCY CATAPULT AMMO

If no rocks are handy, halflings are about the right size and weight to substitute. Halflings also make good biological warfare weapons, as the majority of their pudgy little bodies is taken up with stomach and intestine. When 300 pounds of halfling meets rock at 100 miles an hour it creates quite a mess as all that biology gets instantly liberated. Feeding the halfling up on beans and fried onions can only increase this effect. If you are feeling particularly evil, make him eat a prawn vindaloo or a cheap Mexican meal before you fire him.

STRESS RELIEF

You can't get the temple door open, you can't shake the tracking hounds, you can't find the evil wizard. The life of an adventurer is a stressful one with frustration at every turn. Fortunately, you have a halfling. Halflings are like natural stress relief dolls. Tough, malleable and they can't stick up for themselves. If you start to feel stressed or angry, just give your halfling a drubbing.

Extra XP for Stupid Games

Some games have bizarre methods for gaining experience, and you should take full advantage of these quirks. Slaughtering monsters is a pretty stupid way to gain experience, and an awful lot of fantasy games use this as their primary method for advancing characters through arbitrary "levels."

ANT HILLS AND GOLD

The two best ways you can boost your experience more rapidly past the "level" threshold are these:

1. A certain well-known fantasy game dishes out experience not only for slaughtering monsters but also based on the amount of gold that you manage to extract in your dungeon haul. We therefore suggest that you either procure a bag of holding at first opportunity, or take a wagon along with you that you can really load up.

2. The second method is the "slaughtering creatures" approach. Killing anything gets you experience. So, if you are a couple of thousand XP short of going up a level, just seek out an ant-hill and pour a cauldron of boiling water onto it. Each ant must be worth at least 1 XP and how many live in an ant-hill? Especially if you include larvae?



How to Storm/Defend a Castle

One of the biggest and most difficult tasks a group of fantasy adventurers can face is the prospect of having to storm or defend a castle. There are a lot of "proper" and "approved" tactics for this. Siege towers, long boring periods of waiting, climbing the castle walls so the people inside can slaughter you, and so on. We, however, are going to almost completely ignore them.

An example:

GM: Alright, John, you're going in with the fighters to try and smash down the door, right?

John: That's right. We're going to use the covered battering ram with the mithril beak-shaped spike on the front. Archers will cover the flanks and provide covering fire, forcing the enemy to keep his head down. I'll make sure we take some ogres with us. They'll be needed to provide some oomph.

GM: Alright, Julie, what are you doing?

Julie: I'm preparing my spell.

GM: You've been doing that since the siege started.

Julie: I know.

GM: Alright, John. You slowly start to move toward the enemy, picking up speed as the momentum gathers. Your siege engines and archers start to fire, picking off a few enemies from the battlements. You hear the frightening sound of arrows thumping into the roof of the battering ram.

John: I'll keep my head down and keep pushing.

Julie: I keep preparing my spell.

GM: More arrows are hitting the roof, you can smell burning. Over the noise of the battlefield you hear some shouting in Latin and then suddenly a large portion of the roof is aflame.

John: "Don't fear, men! Keep pushing, I'll put out the flames!" I leap to the roof and beat out the flames with my cloak.

Julie: I keep preparing my spell.

GM: You're an irresistible target for the archers there John... *Makes some rolls.* Alright, your armor has saved you, you've taken three light wounds though and you have some arrows sticking out of your back.

John: Groaning, I swing back underneath and keep pushing.

Julie: Still preparing... *swigs from bottle of Coke*

GM: Finally, you reach the gates; some of your men are dead, picked off by lucky arrows. It's cost you dear but you're there...

John: Right, we get ready to beat down the door...

Julie: I cast Tyson's Lightning Fist on the gates. I've been preparing all game. *Rolls.* Ok, with bonuses that gives me the equivalent of . . . 30 Death-blows to the gate.

Stunned silence.

John: But . . .

Julie: Nice distraction.

GM: But . . .

Julie: I prepare my next spell.

Long pause.

GM: OK . . . John, as you reach the door a huge, fist-shaped bolt of lightning hits it, smashing it to smithereens. The back-blast kills your front two ogres. The rest of the troops are a little disheartened but charge in.

John: OK, I'll charge in with them, attacking the nearest defender.

A small melee develops; Julie keeps preparing; John is victorious but disappointed at the lack of a challenge.

GM: The last of the gate defenders falls dead at your feet, so now there is just the inner garrison. But what is this! Baron Alldread himself and a troop of his elite Raven Guard are spilling out into the courtyard, and already a good half of your attacking force is destroyed!

John: "Hah! At last a battle worthy of the name! Prepare to die, Alldread! I am Sir Borin of Hilchester, hero of Balinbridge, and I claim your life in the name of King Leoric!" I charge him, swinging my sword and yelling my best battle cry.

Julie: How badly do they outnumber John's force?

GM: Oh, a good four to one.

John: All the better, I love a proper tussle!

Julie: I use my teleport ring. The gate's open so it's line-of-sight. Then I cast Death Cloud, which I've been preparing for the last few turns. *Rolls.* Aha! A critical! *Kisses her lucky dice.* Double volume, plus spend some of the preparation turns to increase that and the damage. Three Death-blows to everyone in the castle.

Stunned silence.

John: But!

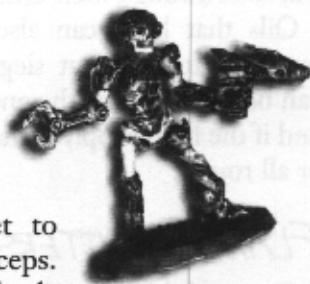
GM: Sod this, I'm going home.

Fade to protests and shouting.

MAGES/CLERICS

Storming

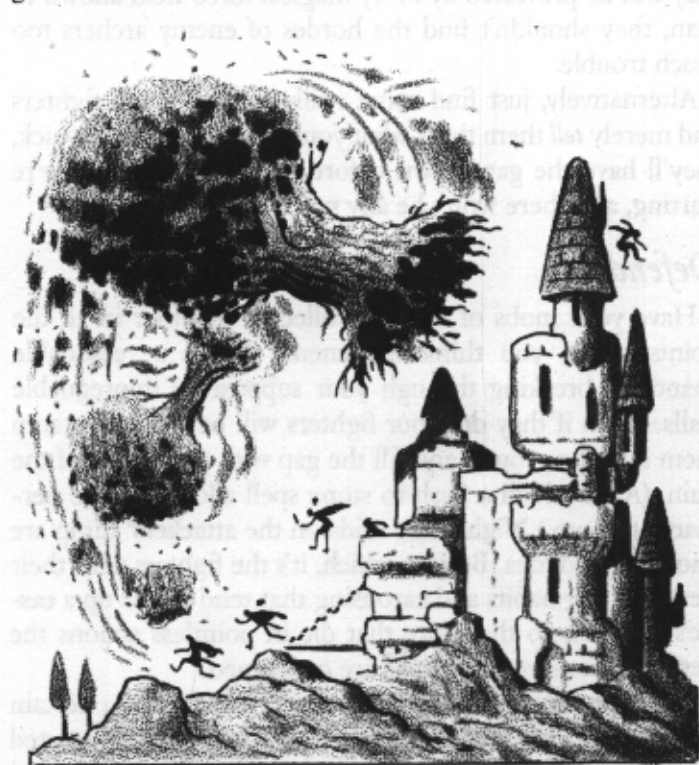
As we have just seen, when you're attacking a castle, the mages and clerics finally get to flex their thaumaturgical biceps. You need to get your hundred-strong army of bronze-chested, sword-wielding munchkins into the castle? Well look what we've got here . . . A flight, teleport or incorporeal passage spell. Even a dig-tunnels-bloody-fast spell will do. Mages



are cool, but they are even more cool when paired with clerics. If you've got a cleric you *know* you've got a god on your side.

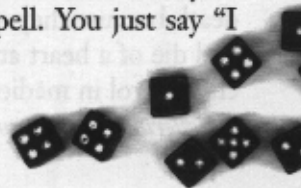
Clerical magic gets played down to the basics of healing and turning undead. This has to stop. If you've ever seen a castle being attacked (which you probably haven't), you'll know that with a few well placed elemental clerics, say fire and air, you'll have no problem defeating the defenders. Portable fire storm, anyone?

With a group of archers and a mage with an enlarge spell you can effectively bombard the castle with giant redwoods. Alternatively, you could fill a catapult with gravel and fire a granulated mountain.



Defending

Two words; Dispel Magic. This can be used to great effect with a few preparations. Simply line the courtyard with spikes, and when your foes try to fly over, cast Dispel Magic and watch as they plunge to their doom. Seemingly pointless spells can be used to great effect when you are defending a castle. Think how demoralizing it would be to see your own general apologize for causing any inconvenience and invite his enemy over for tea and muffins. The use of a Charm spell can facilitate this. Or Monster Summoning; here's an idea. Get a couple of mages to cast this as many times as they can into the enemy's camp and just sit back and watch the fun. The best munchkin way to defend your castle is with the Wish spell. You just say "I wish they were all dead."



MOBS OF FIGHTERS

Storming

On the face of it, attacking with mobs of fighters is both a stupid and a typical thing to do. Provided your fighters are properly equipped and protected by your other factions, a straightforward charge is as effective as anything else. Get all the magical armor, items and weaponry together and give it to one unit. Cast every protection spell in your magical arsenal on them and let them charge the main gate. They can chop it down and allow your conventional force inside. Since they will be protected by every magical force-field known to man, they shouldn't find the hordes of enemy archers too much trouble.

Alternatively, just find some really tough, stupid fighters and merely *tell* them that's what you're doing. With any luck, they'll have the gate down before they realize that they're hurting, and there won't be any survivors to complain.

Defending

Have your mobs of fighters collected together in all the points where you think the enemy stands a reasonable chance of breaking through your supposedly impregnable walls. Then if they do, your fighters will be ready to stamp them into the ground and fill the gap with the bodies of the slain. (After which a flesh to stone spell allows a more permanent fix-up.) Night-time raids on the attackers' camp are another good idea. Besides which, it's the fighters with their hearty eating habits and carousing that tend to use up a castle's supplies, so the more that die in pointless actions the better as far as your logistics are concerned.

Fighters are all professional warriors and have a certain camaraderie, so you could also try the old and trusted method of inviting your enemies in, getting them drunk, and slaughtering them while they are asleep.

BOILING OIL

Boiling oil is an old, realistic part of siege warfare. Munchkins can use it for *real* effectiveness.

Storming

When storming a castle, locate the weak points where they will be expecting you to attack and bombard them with cauldrons of boiling oil. This incinerates the enemy fighters on the other side and allows you to break through. As a more devious approach, you could boil down a load of beef fat and bombard their supplies. This will make all their food taste of lard. The result of the lard attack is they either starve to death because they can't stand the taste, or they eat the food and die of a heart attack. No-one knew the dangers of high cholesterol in medieval times.

Several months into the siege . . .

Sir Bunter: By the gods man, white bread and dripping again!

Sir Wigan: Verily, 'tis good of the enemy to supply us with such a fine repast.

Sir Ginster: I happen to love it!

Sir Bunter: I have dogbreath! My hair feels lardy, my skin feels greasy. I swear, by the Almighty, I can hear my blood oozing in my veins.

Sir Wigan: Why would it do that? Are you suggesting that a food upon which peasants live and work heartily is affecting thy humors?

Sir Ginster: Well, if you don't want yours . . .

Sir Bunter: Are those alarum bells? Another attack?

Sir Wigan: Sirrah, I hear nothing!

Sir Ginster: Aargh! My arm! My chest!

Sir Wigan: Sorcery! He is under attack!

Sir Ginster falls to the ground, clutching his arm and wheezing.

Sir Bunter: It is an attack! To arms! To arms!

Sir Wigan: Sirrah! Verily, I cannot!

Sir Bunter: Why not?

Sir Wigan: It would appear my impressive muscular girth is preventing me from getting up. Verily, I cannot reach the floor with my arms or legs.

Sir Bunter: Then guard our friend good knight, I must away to battle . . . Damn.

Sir Wigan: (Struggling to get up) What is it, sirrah?

Sir Bunter: Our hearty food has made me too virile and manly to fit in my armor. Getting through the door will be a squeeze . . . Damn again, stuck.

Marauding Knight: Take that!

Sir Bunter: Aaagh! Struck! Curse these saturated fats!

Defending

Supplies are going to be short, so you need to make maximum use of what you've got. Wait until the enemy fires their oil at you, get a mage or cleric of the air to capture it in flight, and load it into your cauldrons so you can heat it up and fire it back. Never, ever, under any circumstance allow the enemy to fire beef lard at your supplies.

The best stuff to use on attacking troops is thin oil. This will soak through their armor and burn them a lot.

Oils that burn can also be used in improvised hand grenades to take out siege towers. Also, flammable oils can be used to burn the enemies fighters when they attack, and if the food supply is that bad then it's crispy fried fighter all round!

FLYING CRITTERS

One cool thing that fantasy armies have and real medieval forces didn't is flying troops, whether they're really cool hawk-men races or squads of wizards with levitation spells. This changes the rules of siege warfare quite a bit, especially when munchkins are in charge.

Storming

Flying creatures have many advantages. They can carry boulders and containers of oil over the enemy – or propaganda pamphlets, or any other droppable thing; ravenous halflings for example. The main advantage of winged creatures is that, unlike magic users, they are not susceptible to the Dispel Magic solution to flying intruders, allowing you to give the finger to defending wizards who try it.

Defending

Big nasty flying creatures have many uses in defense. Firstly they can run for help, which allows the siege to be lifted by friends. Or they can ward off enemy air attacks, intercept catapult-launched projectiles, and drop rocks on enemy troops.

SIEGE ENGINES

Say what you like about magic swords and so on, there's no weapon in fantasy quite so cool as a plain old siege engine. It's chunky, it's impressive, and it can chuck something the size of a piano half a mile! (Which is probably the best thing a munchkin can think to do with a piano.)

Storming

Actually, there are a whole selection of big siege weapons that you can use. Towers are quite impressive as they trundle toward the enemy – and are set on fire by a fusillade of fire arrows and fireball spells. What you need there is fire-proofing – say, slabs of non-flammable stone. Then you'll need to get together your strongest troops, be they giants, trolls, or people with magical bracers, and use them to push it.

Catapults are always useful and can hurl absolutely everything at the enemy, from the perennial favorite, the boulder, to boiling oil, Greek Fire, animal carcasses, or even elite troops dosed up on invulnerability potions.

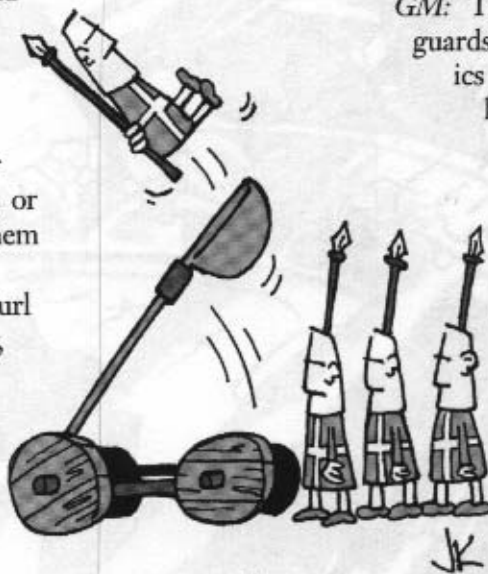
Battering rams are always useful for smashing down the gate. Tip yours with explosive potions, magical weapons, or even starving halflings if you coat the gate with cream first.

An example:

General Skoll: Ah, Pippy, just the little fellow I wanted to see!

Pippy: Sir! I must protest, your troops have taken all my provisions! I'm starving!

General Skoll: We need them and you for a special mission. Time you made yourself useful, Pippy.



Pippy: But I *am* useful already.

General Skoll: What do you actually *do* Pippy?

Pippy: Well . . . I . . . um . . . cook, and provide comic relief.

General Skoll: Exactly, you're totally useless. You're a bit of a Neelix really, aren't you?

GM: Hey! Keep it medieval please, I doubt they've seen that particular show on High Earth in 972!

Both: Sorry.

General Skoll: Well, now you're going to be made useful.

Pippy: Always glad to help, sir, but how?

General Skoll: Guards! Seize him and tie him to the battering ram with his other supply-grubbing friends!

Pippy: Nooooo! *Is dragged away.*

Guard: Here, put these in.

Pippy: What are they?

Guard: +3 Mithril dentures.

Pippy is tied to the ram.

General Skoll: Fire!

Halfling's entire food supply is fired at gates.

General Skoll: Dose the halflings!

Battering-ram halflings are fed appetite-enhancing potions.

General Skoll: Charge!

GM: The battering ram lurches forward; the guards in the castle are reduced to fits of hysterics at the sight of the moaning starving halflings strapped to the ram, and offer little resistance.

Pippy: Soooo hungry . . . must eat . . . door. *Munch, chew, gnash.*

Random Redshirt: Hey! General! He ate all the cakes! They had cream on!

General Skoll: Share, damn you! There's plenty for all!

Defending

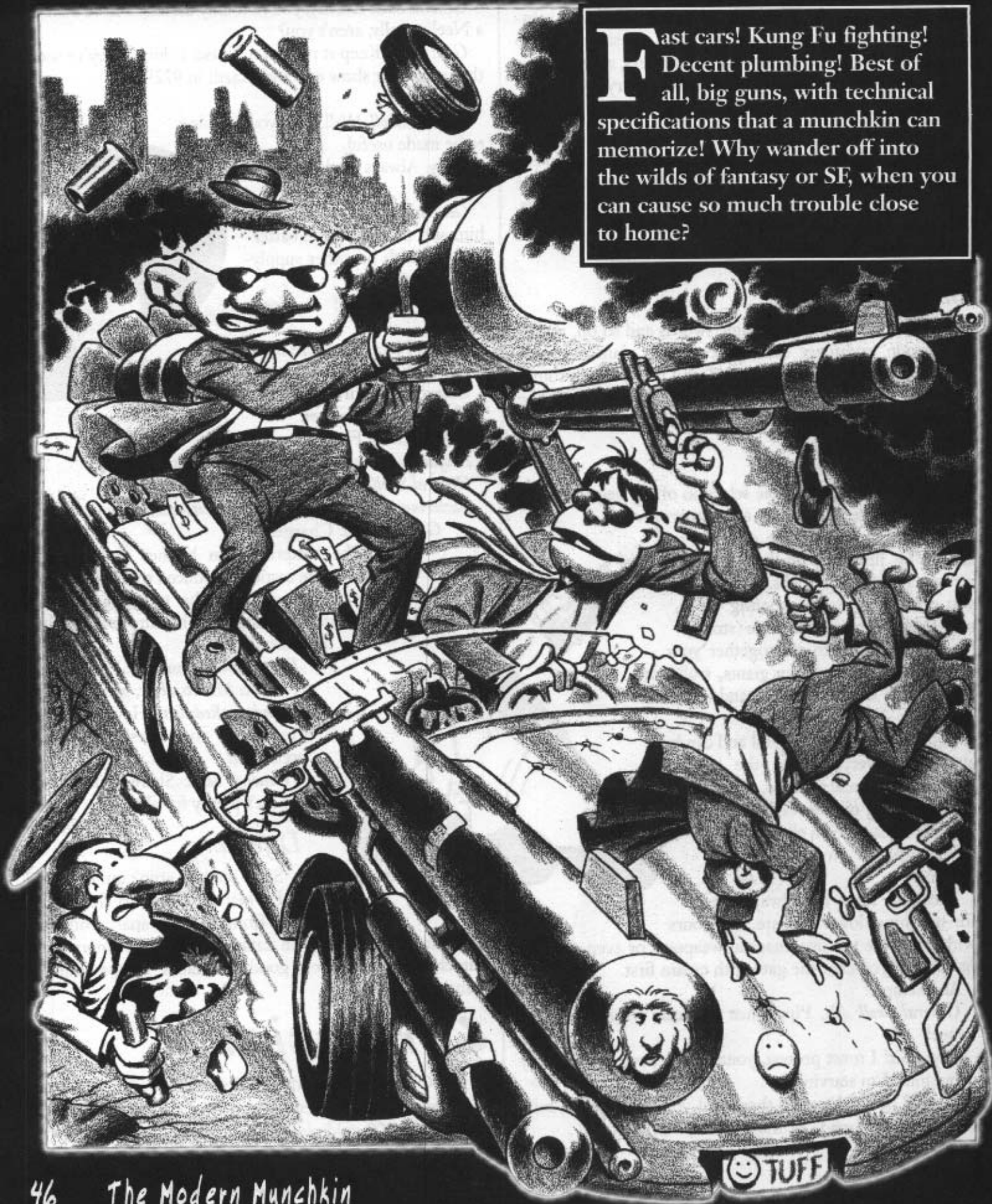
Siege engines aren't quite as useful when it comes to defending yourself from attack – apart from the catapult. A very powerful catapult and some improvised parachutes makes for a good alternative escape route if things get bad.

Conclusion

The Orc steps forward. You flex your newly munchkin-powered muscles and cut him in two. You open the chest and find 10,000 gold pieces, an ant farm, and a kettle.

3. THE MODERN MUNCHKIN

Fast cars! Kung Fu fighting! Decent plumbing! Best of all, big guns, with technical specifications that a munchkin can memorize! Why wander off into the wilds of fantasy or SF, when you can cause so much trouble close to home?



RPGs in a modern setting have become more and more popular since the advent of modern horror games. It's grown from that into conspiracy, action movie, spy, and Tarantino-style crime games.

Modern settings allow for a great variety of munchkinism. Action movie-style games are becoming so much more popular because they are gun-bunny friendly. They even encourage you to be creative in your munchkinism and to express yourself fully, be it through painting or full-auto interior redecoration.

THE GUN IS YOUR SKILL LIST

There simply is no substitute for a good gun and the skill and willpower to use it. A gun can replace almost every skill in any game's list if used correctly. Some examples:

Skill	Weapon Substitute
Gambling	KLIK! "A pair beats full house, doesn't it?"
Haggle	KLIK! "How much?"
Interrogation	"This is a 12 gauge sawn-off, and it's aimed at your wedding tackle. Now, tell me what I need to know."
Intimidation	.50 cal Desert Eagle or a huge revolver.
Leadership	"Do what I say or I'll blow your head off."
Lock Pick	Shotgun or pistol with explosive rounds.
Performance	KLIK! "You like my singing, DON'T YOU?"
Seduction	(Only works at gun conventions.)
Stealth	How can you be spotted if everyone in the compound has been shot dead?
Streetwise	Hold your gun to a street-punk's head and ask him if he would be so kind as to provide you with any info that you might need.
Style	No-one will diss your dress sense if you are wielding a hand cannon.
Survival	BLAM! "Lunch."
Teaching	Holding the gun to the student's head you ask them to recite their alphabet, and if the little sucker gets it wrong AGAIN, you pistol-whip them.
Zoology	"What kind of animal is that?" BLAM! "It's a dead animal."

Twinks have it particularly easy in the modern genre, as most munchkins are more knowledgeable about firearms than their GMs, and thus can get away with murder. Actually, with creative use of a gun you can overcome just about any situation imaginable, as well as committing murder. Guns overcome all adversity. Martial arts are little use against an SMG, and most melee skills have little effect against a two-pistol-firing gunfighter. The only martial art worth a damn is Gun-Fu, which will be covered later.

Tooling Up

ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT

Guns

A character's normal concerns when it comes to firearms will include such things as concealability, stopping power, reliability, accuracy and style. The player will spend a long time poring over the stats for the weaponry, looking at the pictures and weighing up a good all-round weapon.

The munchkin, on the other hand, cares little for such concerns. The only real reason to have a gun is damage. Accuracy is in there somewhere, as is rate of fire, but its raw damage that is the chief reason to have a firearm. If it can't tear someone in half and smear their bloody entrails over a wide area then it's not worth having.

Concealability matters not. Who is going to take issue with someone hefting a minigun in each hand? Better to have your weapons on display so as to be able to intimidate people.

Reliability? Well, the munchkin never fails on a die roll, by either luck, cheating or the divine providence of the dark gods of cheese he secretly worships.

Accuracy? If it can be improved it will, but the odds of a munchkin missing anything with the obscene levels of skill that they ensure themselves is as remote as the chances of finding a pearl in a hamburger bun.

Style? As far as the munchkin is concerned the only kind of style there is, is Brutalist. If it looks silly and people laugh, they'll soon change their tune when their legs are off.

Explosives

Sooner or later all munchkins run into something their meager weaponry is no match for: experimental robot armor, tanks, fortified positions, whatever. This is where explosives come in. Most GMs become flustered by the awesome power of bombs and will have to admit that such devices are capable of destroying their intricately-designed cannon-fodder.

A good munchkin will ensure that they are at least carrying a suitcase full of the stuff, in addition to the grenades and dynamite that festoon them like a Christmas tree in Beirut.



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Clothes

Most modern characters will want to dress stylishly, or at least appropriately for their personality and background. The cheese-weasel couldn't give a monkey's. The only concerns are protection, and modern roleplaying offers them effective protection against most things.

It's not unusual to see the modern munchkin in full bomb-squad ballistic armor, wearing a fireproof bodysuit underneath and with an extra flak-jacket on top. Their statistics are guaranteed to be astronomical, thusly ensuring that while they are performing an adequate impression of a pack-mule they can still run the four-minute mile.

Vehicles

Sedans for secret agents, limos for the wealthy, jeeps for soldiers, but for goobs? Converted vehicles with secret weapons coming out of their tail-pipes. Tanks. Gunships. Nothing else will do. Ex-diplomatic service Russian Zils suddenly receive an extra foot of armor plating, souped-up engines and headlight-mounted machine cannons. Every James Bond vehicle is gouged for ideas that are all rolled into one wonder machine, creating a sort of demonic Convertacar for a horrible pastiche of *Saving Private Ryan* beach-landing meets *Wacky Races*.

Housing

The munchkin's abode must be protected against all forms of attack – nuclear, chemical, biological – but most importantly of all, it must be proof against the game referee getting fed up and getting an NPC to break in while you are asleep, to kill you.

The only way to protect against that is for the munchkin to write all of his elaborate security precautions down and seal them in little envelopes. Then, when the game-ref tells you how some modern-day ninja sneaks into your home, *voila!* Pull out the envelope and triumphantly exclaim that the ninja has fallen for your death-of-a-thousand-rabid-hamsters trap.

Ammo

The rule here is the same as when purchasing any extra equipment. Here is the formula I call "Grim's Rule of Conservation of Munchkinism."

Q: Does it cause more devastation?

A: Yes. Buy it.

A: No. Keep looking.

Sundry Equipment

Munchkins require a bewildering array of additional equipment so that they can have an escape clause for every possible situation. When you are equipping your munchkin, ensure that you stock up on absolutely anything that might ever be considered to possibly have a use, ever.

An inflatable raft can make for a good combination emergency parachute and bouncy castle, as well as the more obvious (but often overlooked) boat.

An oxygen mask ensures that you can survive poison gas and water.

Dental floss is good for decapitating motorcyclists, fishing and a hundred other uses.

Anything your diseased imagination can find the remotest use for, purchase or take as free equipment.

GETTING HOLD OF MILITARY-GRADE WEAPONS

Always a top-listed priority for the modern munchkin is getting his sticky paws on some really huge guns. This usually means the military. But the military are notoriously stingy with regards to dishing out their toys, so here are some helpful hints on getting your restricted weapons.

Method One: The Hacker Technique

If you know a good enough hacker, you can get them to break into the military computer system and transfer a C-5 Galaxy full of weapons, ammo and equipment to your secret underground base, or to a field in the absence of a secret underground base.

Method Two: The Blatant Blag

Swipe an officer's uniform and stroll onto the base, load up a truck with all you want, and drive out again. This plan requires you to possess the modicum of intellect to realize that any military people asking you questions can be dealt with by just saying . . .

"Boy, I've been in this man's army for more years than you've been on this planet, now run along and bother someone else before I have you slammed in the stockade."

For an excellent example of how to use the military machine, read *The Stainless Steel Rat Gets Drafted* by Harry Harrison.

Alternatively, visit a National Guard or cadet armory with a pair of bolt clippers.

Method Three: The Mole Method

This requires a lot of digging. The basic concept is that you have a secret underground base and a digging machine. You dig a tunnel from your secret underground base to the military gun store, pop your head up and swipe everything. You then retreat and fill in the tunnel. Of course, should you pop your head up in the wrong place, you might get it shot off, but who cares?

Method Five:

The Mountain And Mohammed Method

This is a simple cause and effect technique. You cause a riot, and the effect is that the National Guard show up armed to the teeth. You just wander round and swipe what you want.

THE BLACK MARKET

If all the above methods fail, you might have to resort to paying money to buy the weapons on the black market. Black markets are far and away the easiest places to score weaponry; the dealer is pleased to see you and doesn't have to be threatened in order to give you stuff. If you do decide to threaten him and steal his goods, the odds are his protection is much less than that of a national army. On some black markets, you can purchase an AK-47 with a packet of cigarettes and still have enough change to give a lab-rat lung cancer. Should this need arise, use the list below to decide where you will go for your weapons:

The American Black Market

This is the best-publicized arena for dodgy deals, as befits the home of capitalism. You can get a lot of stuff from the American black market, but it's expensive, and the guns usually have a huge history of drive-by killings to answer for. Drive-thru to purchase your gun, then drive-by as you use it.

The British Black Market

Guns are rare in Britain, so you'll have a hard time getting anything good unless it's a shotgun. Britain is the worst place for weapons of any sort; we even have knife amnesties for Christ's sake. If you want a load of guns in Britain, good luck. The only way you'd have much chance would be museum pieces or reactivating demonstration models. (The munchkin appeal of some old guns is that that old musket shot can be far more devastating to the body than modern shot.)



The Russian Black Market

Everyone knows you can get anything dirt cheap in Russia: a T-72 for 200 cigarettes, or a nuke for a pair of Levis. But you have to remember, you get what you pay for; Russian weapons are inherently clunky, heavy and ugly. While they might be reliable, they're hardly cutting edge. They do have a certain retro-chic, though. Any electronic equipment is liable to involve vacuum tubes, and break.

The Italian Black Market

Even if you can put up with people with *stupid* names like Jimmy the Fish or Harry the Bull, all you are likely to get is a load of nicked Armanis and a re-sprayed Vespa. If you are extremely lucky, you could get some of Jimmy the Fish's mom's pasta. (Made to her own secret recipe, which includes people who inform on the mob.)



SHOTGUNS

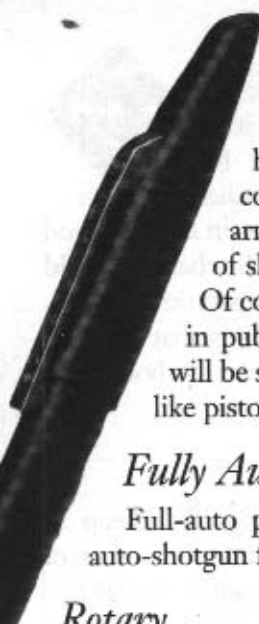
Shotguns are the munchkin's friend. You can fill the cartridges with anything of your choice, even Jell-O or razor blades if you wish. (Or even Jell-O *and* razor blades.) They already come with heaps and heaps of different wild-and-wacky ammunition types and all varieties of them can do something cool to some poor person's blood-filled body. Shotguns guarantee the kind of messy wounds that both munchkins and bacteria love to see.

Pump Action

Holds a good 12 rounds and can be pumped dramatically for a really cool and intimidating KA-CHUNK! Noise. Puts the fear of God into the bad guys. Certain games recognize the ballet-like beauty of the pump action and give you a bonus if you dramatically pump it before firing.

Lever Action

For Terminator buffs. You can spin it around your hand to work the action. Not as much ammo though, and not as cool as the pump action.



Break Action

Go for the big one; 10-gauge – more power, more damage, more mess. These hold the least ammo but are definitely the coolest to load. Smack the gun over your arm to break the barrel, slam in a couple of shells, flip it shut like a zippo and let rip! Of course, you can't be seen with one of these in public until you've sawn it off. Munchkins will be sure to carry two of these and wield them like pistols.

Fully Automatic

Full-auto people-eater. Only one thing beats the auto-shotgun for sheer carnage...

Rotary

... and this is it. Makes a cool whirring noise, too.

CUSTOM JOBS

No player in a modern game can leave anything alone. Their equipment, from the clothes they wear to the guns they fire, all has to be modified or changed to some degree. Clothes will gain armored linings, even if they are the most expensive designer labels on the market. No-one cares if all the neatly sewn seams and fine materials get ruined as long as they get the extra protection.

Vehicles will not be left alone either. Every single one will gain bullet-proof blacked-out windows, reinforced bumpers, armor plating, gun-ports, race tuning and nitro bottles. The engines will be replaced with something bigger. The tires will be armored or solid so that they can't be burst. (Sod the comfort factor.) The car will become completely airtight, with its own air supply, and will have an armored locker in the boot for weaponry. All the doors will be hooked up to the car battery to give anyone trying to get in a hefty, possibly lethal, shock. The more paranoid munchkin will wire his car up with explosives in case anyone *does* manage to break in.

Guns gain custom grips, laser sights, special ammunition, silencers and flash suppressors, autofire conversions, folding stocks, extended magazines, brass-catchers, telescopic night-sights, and a matte black finish. They will never know the simple pleasure of firing standard ammunition, instead subsisting on a diet of poisoned dum-dums, hollow-points and armor-piercing rounds.

The PCs' places of residence will become fortresses, with deep basements, gun cupboards, armored walls, bullet-proof glass, metal shutters, generators, intruder alarms and landmines. Characters will sleep in Kevlar sleeping bags in armored time-locked bedrooms with no windows. They will eat only food they grow themselves and drink only filtered rainwater. In short, they will get mad and paranoid.

Explosives

A good munchkin is never without something that goes bang. Explosives can usually solve the few problems that a huge gun cannot: opening bank vaults, bringing down bridges or whole buildings, and getting you out of your time-locked bedroom if you overslept.

COMMERCIAL EXPLOSIVES

Dynamite

The well-known and much-appreciated stick of dynamite, as used by all good cartoon characters, is relatively easy to get hold of and quite concealable. The best thing about dynamite is that it can be tied together in cool-looking bundles and the fuse can be lit in many cool ways. From a cigar, from a lighter (click, fssssssh...) or by shooting the tip of the fuse.

The other brilliant thing about dynamite from a munchkin point of view is that it sweats nitroglycerin when old. The pure stuff can be an awful lot of fun when carefully scraped from the stick.

C-4

Malleable plastic explosive, C-4 is perfect for bringing down buildings or slapping on to unsuspecting tanks as they rumble by. Plasticine can be used to make fun of your enemy before blowing them up, since it shares many qualities with play-dough. You can mold it into the shape of amusing animals or little voodoo dolls before placing it. You could even use it to replace the marzipan in your enemy's birthday cake. And the best thing about C-4 is you can get those cool red LED digital countdown timers for it. For extra amusement, set the timer to explode at 10, not 0, so that enemies can think they are about to defuse it, just in time, just before it goes off.

Blasting Caps

Primarily used for detonating other explosives, blasting caps can also be used to create little explosions in their own right. They are especially useful for blowing up locks, setting off petrol bombs, or as the combat freak's comedic equivalent of the whoopee cushion.

Thermite

Thermite burns very hot, very fast, and therefore has a definite use in starting fires in the rain. As well as this useful property, thermite can be used to burn through steel and other metals, making it a good armor penetrator. Don't use it to break into bank vaults though. It'll just set fire to all the cash and bonds, which makes the whole effort kind of pointless.

GET TO KNOW THE NEIGHBORS

To truly be a munchkin in a modern game, you should have an almost Zen-like awareness of your local area and all its back alleys, basements, sewers and abandoned lots. The modern munchkin must know where to run and how to hide huge caches of firearms everywhere.

Your character should spend at least four hours a day walking around the area, memorizing every little bit of the pavement. When they can do this as second nature, they should put on a blindfold and learn to navigate by the cracks and potholes alone.

Armed with a comprehensive knowledge of your locality, you can lead pursuers into bad areas and crack houses. Lose police by taking little-known shortcuts and hide little caches of weapons where no-one is likely to find them. Thus, when your home is overrun by enemy agents/the boss' enforcers/Men In Black, you can scurry off, find a hidden set of weaponry, come back, and blow them all away.

Get to know all the local gang members, hoboes and bar owners. Give drugs to the gang members to get them on your side, frequent all the bars and spend freely, give plenty of change to the homeless, and pretty soon the entire street will be on your side. Bad news for anyone trying to find you or harm you when you're out there hiding.

Shaped Charges

These are good because they focus most of their explosion one way, which allows you to observe from a little closer when you do set it off. Shaped charges are best used against very heavy armor and to take out specific parts of buildings rather than the whole thing. Munchkins will use shaped charges an awful lot of the time, merely for the fact that they usually have a higher penetration and damage factor, even if their area of effect is reduced. The true munchkin will claim that his shaped charge is so skillfully made that he can stand directly behind it while it explodes and then rush in, guns blazing, through the rubble.

Warheads

You know, those things at the ends of missiles. No matter how powerful a missile is, a munchkin will always want to make sure that it's at least twice as powerful as it needs to be. Munchkins are the kind of people who fire 1,000-pound high-explosive warheads into picnics because the ants are annoying them, or air-drop napalm onto their veggie patch because they've spotted a greenfly on their lettuce.

King of the Castle

Player: WHL

Character's Age: 17 Height: _____

Number of toes: 9 Religion: _____

Driver's license? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Strength (ST) 1000

Dexterity (DX) 1000

Religious Fervor (RF) 0

Obnoxiousness (OX) 2000

Psychosis (PS) 30000000

Type: (check one or more)

☐ Paranoid ☒ Homicidal

☐ Schizoid ☐ Suicidal

☐ Manic

A favorite move of a munchkin, worth noting at this point, is the ability to take out large armored vehicles with relatively small firearms. Faced with something their hand-cannon cannot hope to penetrate, they will target gun barrels or similar and roll stupendous to-hit rolls, detonating the shells or missiles.

HOME-BREWED EXPLOSIVES

It would be thoroughly irresponsible for us to tell you how to make home-made explosives in this book, and it would probably get us into all manner of legal trouble. Besides, you can get the information from any public library. Suffice to say you can make stuff almost as powerful as C-4, napalm, liquid explosives, and all manner of fun demolitions gear in the comfort of your own home. Armed with a knowledge of home chemistry, your firebug should have no trouble whatsoever in pulling off *A-Team*-style fantastic escapes from all manner of barns, outhouses, and wardrobes.

DETONATION METHODS

Timed detonations are best as they give the greatest potential for tension as the little red digital readout counts down with a dreadful *beep-beep-beep* noise. Motion detection detonators are also good for being nasty to your enemies. (One little wobble and BOOM! No more annoying cretin.) Radio detonators have some style, especially if concealed in your watch or belt-buckle or something. When they are in items such as this they can be used to cause distractions which should allow you to escape. Burning fuses are quite cool-looking but can be stopped by someone snipping the cord or putting the burning bit out, which is a bit of a downer to say the least.

Old fashioned "plunger" detonators are clunky but very dramatic; you can fall on them with your dying breath in order to set them off.

Survival Nuts

These people are essential to a modern-day game; they're the original real-world munchkins. They live in virtual fortresses armed to the teeth and with food and water enough to survive nearly any attack. Survival nuts take several forms:

Type One: Nuclear Nuts

These people are convinced that there is going to be a nuclear war soon and they are going to survive it. They have huge bunkers filled with radiation suits and Geiger counters. They are the least heavily-armed sub-sub-culture, preferring one or two heavy-stopping-power weapons and a lot of armor. They live for the day the world gets nuked so they can stand in the wreckage and say "I told you so."

(The Russians have of course rained on the Nuclear Nuts' parade a bit by shutting down the Soviet Union and taking away the obvious threat; typical commie deviousness. Still, an assortment of Arab states run by loonies with dodgy facial hair who have the temerity not to like the U.S.A., along with Red Army surplus garage sales, keep The Bomb going as a viable option for paranoia.)

Type Two: Invasion Nuts

These nuts are convinced that there is going to be an invasion of some description, either alien or communist or just cockroaches. Whatever, they don't care. All they care about is being tooled-up enough to survive the attack. These people usually have 4-6 heavy pistols, a couple of SMGs, one or two assault rifles, and something big and elephant-stopping. They are armed to the max and *will* shoot you.



Type Three: Urban Loonies

The name says it all. These people are usually ex-military and have got it into their heads that they are here to "Protect the Innocent." However, they do it through maximum firepower. Urban loonies are usually armed with a .44 magnum, a couple of Uzis and maybe a shotgun or two. Some of the extremists in this category also carry grenades and explosives.

Type Four: Total Isolationists

They live by themselves in hardened bunkers with enough weapons and ammo to make most military regiments look like a bunch of homeboys. They are nearly all insane and they will shoot to kill if you get too close to their favorite chain-link fence or guard tower. Mostly found in Texas or hiding in mountain ranges somewhere.

Summing Up

As you can see, these people are not exactly all present in the brain department. Well, in fact they are all total nutters, but . . . If you can con your GM into letting you play a survival nut then you are well away, and can use this as an excuse to get your hands on all sorts of huge guns and ammo. You can have your own little bunker with turret-mounted guns and a red ribbon tied round the whole lot.

The Perfect Crime

As far as most criminals would be concerned, the perfect crime would be one in which they pulled off the whole job without being detected and with no witnesses. The perfect crime for them is one where you can live the rest of your life on the proceeds from that one big job.

This is no good whatsoever for the munchkin.

The perfect crime for the munchkin is one which involves plenty of gun battles, hopefully a car chase, and some hostage-taking. One that provides enough money to get more and better guns for the next job and to pay off the extravagant drug habit they've taken among their flaws. Their perfect crime has no witnesses because they've killed them all.

THE BANK JOB

We call it a bank job, but it could just as easily be gold bullion or a case full of diamonds that they are attempting to steal. You could go for the "sneak in at night, drill through to the vault and take everything quietly" approach, but that's not especially munchkin and so we won't cover it. A munchkin-organized bank robbery runs something like this . . .

9:00 a.m. The group of robbers enters the bank wearing silly masks and brandishing large firearms. They threaten everyone and collect all the money from the cashiers and people in the bank. They break open the automatic tellers and take all the cash out of there, too.

9:05 a.m. The security guard tries to be a hero and gets thirty rounds from an Ingram for his trouble. There is much screaming and swearing.

9:06 a.m. A squad support machine gun is set up in the foyer to keep the police out.

9:07 a.m. Work begins on breaking into the vault.

9:09 a.m. The police arrive; the first ones in are shot down in a hail of fully-automatic fire. The police pull back and call for an armed response team.

9:15 a.m. One of the robbers tortures the manager to death in a back room for no readily apparent reason.

9:20 a.m. The robbers set booby traps on all the entrances.

9:25 a.m. One of the robbers has an illicit sexual encounter with one of the cashiers in the staff toilet for no readily apparent reason.

9:30 a.m. The armed response unit has a bash at getting into the building and get blown to hell. The police send for more back-up.

9:40 a.m. The robbers breach the vault and take a load of money and other valuables. They leave the hostages tied up in the vault with a bomb set for 9:50 a.m.



9:45 a.m. The robbers make good their escape by assaulting the police lines with military grade fully-automatic weaponry and a few grenades. The city's finest is slaughtered and the robbers take off in a few cars, hotly pursued by the police, who they continue to kill until they reach Mexico. They then blow all their cash on drugs, tequila and señoritas before heading back to the States to do it all over again.

HOSTAGE RANSOM

You'd think that a good target for a kidnapping would be the sickly child of a rich businessman, but no, if you are going to be a munchkin, you will have to do better than that. Typical targets for a munchkin kidnapping include:

The President. Because the army and secret service will do everything in their power to get him back rather than suffer the embarrassment of having the President missing. Besides which western governments "Never give in to terrorist demands."

Generals. Preferably Generals that lead special forces units so that they'll be sent against you and you'll be up against people of comparable skill to yourself.

Precocious Teenage Offspring Of Notoriously Stubborn And Evil Rich Men. All kinds of merriment ensues as the teenagers attempt to either fight, seduce or otherwise muck about with the heads of their captors while the father steadfastly refuses to pay up and hires mercenaries to track you down and kill you.

STEALING A PLOT DEVICE

This is by far the best choice for a munchkin crime. You steal what you think is gold, or jewels, or cash, and then it suddenly turns out to be a fragment of alien DNA, a bio-weapon, some government papers, Mafia financial records, or something. Since what you have stolen isn't directly any use to you, you are stuck with it until you can find someone to sell it to. All the while, the original owners and their rivals are all after you giving you ample reason to be in lots of gunfights and to generally kick a lot of arse.

Of course, being a munchkin you don't really want to sell it. On acquiring a Plot Device, your actions should run something like this:

5:00 a.m. Steal a big bag of diamonds in a heist.

6:00 a.m. Realize diamonds are not diamonds but a big drug stash belonging to the CIA and used in part to finance a black economy.

6.30 a.m. Call CIA and threaten to go to the press unless they pay a huge wedge of cash to you.

7:00 a.m. Meet CIA.

7:01 a.m. Doublecross CIA, kill their negotiators and steal the cash they brought.

8:00 a.m. Call the Mafia and offer to sell them the high grade drugs at half the street value.

9:00 a.m. Meet Mafia.

9:01 a.m. Running gun battle with Mob torpedoes as you steal their cash and murder their representatives.

10:00 a.m. Call the Yakuza to arrange drug sale.

11:00 a.m. Meet Yakuza in Little Tokyo (to give the fight some local flavor).

11:01 a.m. Doublecross Yakuza, steal their money.

12 noon Lunch (raw steak).

1:00 p.m. Call Triads to arrange drug sale.

2:00 p.m. Meet Triads in Hung Lo's Restaurant.

2:01 p.m. Guess.

3:00 p.m. Call Colombians . . .

4:00 p.m. Umm, Big Pedro's Cantina?

4:01 p.m. All these ethnic lunches in one day would make anybody violent.

5:00 p.m. Arrange to meet media.

6:00 p.m. Meet media in diner, sell story for lots of money. Get attacked by CIA hit squad. Kill them.

7:00 p.m. Hole up in building, take most of the drugs and roll giggling in the money. Get attacked by combined forces of CIA and drug cartels. Shout "I'm Tony" a lot, survive due to drug-induced lack of pain and heavy weaponry, and hope that the GM isn't get desperate enough to work in a *Predator 2* rip-off.

HIGH-PROFILE ASSASSINATION

When given an in-game mission to destabilize a government or corporation by assassinating a lowly, but nonetheless important, individual, your average gun-bunny will think he can do better than his employers. Why settle for an underling when the CEO/President/Don is a much better target for causing destabilization? Surely your creativity, style and elan will impress the employer?

(Sometimes, of course, it will turn out that the CEO/President/Don *is* your employer, working through intermediaries to get rid of an uppity or too-nosey underling. Oops. Well, serves him right for being too clever.)

Believe it or not, this is a time where you can impress your GM. Come up with an intricate and detailed plan of attack, account for every possible variable, investigate the target's guards, defenses, escape routes, everything. Get the GM all enthusiastic for this lovely, clean, well researched hit, then blow it all by storming the presidential villa with heavy weaponry or running over the target's limo in an APC.

Aliens!

Little green men, or according to current pop culture, little gray men with big heads; aliens can be the munchkin's best friend. After all, they have technology which can allow you to get Sci-Fi or Cyberpunk-type weapons and gear now. All you have to do is find them and persuade them to part with it.

Otherworldly beings also present expanded opportunities for the munchkin who has already killed every living thing that walks the face of this planet and needs to expand his repertoire.

Accomplished munchkins can also take on huge, faceless government conspiracies that try to cover up alien existence, or they can be part of the conspiracy. Either side has its appeal to the twink.

FINDING ALIENS

This theme has seen quite a big boost in popularity, as roleplayers, as a whole, follow shows like *The X-Files* and *Dark Skies*. In order to find aliens, you need certain special items of equipment and some special techniques.

First you will need a group of fellow conspirators (the other PCs), a secret base and some specialized alien-finding and restraint equipment. In order to form your cell you will need money, a site, some builders and a pistol.

GETTING THE CASH

Method One: Work for the Government

This is the easiest way to establish an alien-hunting cell. You get a job with the government to investigate all things weird and wonderful, and use that to get funding, equipment, and a base.

You are probably thinking "Where does the government get the cash from in the first place?" Well, the army doesn't really pay \$600 for a screwdriver or \$60 for a toilet roll when they build them for the space program; they use the money to fund UFO research. Also, since you are a high-level government employee, you can get access to all sorts of cool military weapons, vehicles, and equipment. You can con them into building you a base underground with its own attack

helicopter on 24-hour call and a supercomputer to calculate your budget.

The only real risks to this kind of operation are being found out by journalists and then investigated by a governmental committee and having your black budget taken away, not to mention the ridicule for hunting aliens.

Method Two: Be Stinking Rich to Start With

This is quite a good way to get stuff, as you will have an almost unlimited amount of cash to spend on bribing people in the government so you can get all the gooby military stuff that you will need to hunt the aliens down. You are also pretty much untouchable due to the fact that money talks and you should have enough to talk loud enough to drown out an atomic explosion at ground zero.

If you find that the GM won't let you be stinking rich as part of your background, go on a seven-state bank-robbing spree and spend the cash on the base.

Method Three: Work for an Eccentric Billionaire

Far and away the best solution; you get all the advantages of huge monetary backing, and since this guy is so rich and doubtless plugged in to The System, he can probably get you legal immunity. At the same time, you don't have to worry about managing the money yourself; you get on with the job while he gets the hassle.

As another upside to private funding, you don't have to share any of your findings with the government, who, as we all know from watching *The X-Files*, are the biggest bunch of conspirators in existence. Everything can be channeled into your boss' business and your own pockets. (Alas, the only eccentric billionaire rich enough to support such an operation is Bill Gates, and do you really want the grief you'll get from uppity nerds and your own computer if you use Microsoft products for everything?)

FINDING A LOCATION

This can prove to be almost as much fun as actually killing the little foreign saucer-flying gits. You need to consider location, protection, availability of nachos and pizza, etc., before coming to a decision.

We have provided a handy check-list of potential base locations. That part sorted, all you need now is...

BUILDERS & A PISTOL

You need to convince your construction crew that they are working for the best interests of their country and the human race as a whole; patriots are the best people to use for this purpose, as extreme nationalists are often gullible. If that fails, kidnap their families and force them into doing it by showing them your industrial-sized blender. Watch them all the time to make sure they don't shirk, although either way they've got plenty of motivation.

If you are particularly lucky, your organization will have a construction crew of its own who will need neither threats, fast-talking, nor fooling. However, since you are likely to be fighting your own organization at some point, getting someone other than the approved builders may be a good plan.



When they have finished building your secret base and all sundry add-ons, you use the pistol to put a bullet through each of their heads. This may sound cruel and unnecessary, but you don't want anything about your base getting out, do you? If anything did, it couldn't very well be secret any more, could it? You might need to slaughter their families as well in case any information was leaked to them. But ask yourself this; who cares about a few innocent lives when the fate of the world is at stake? If anyone gives you any trouble, just sing the national anthem.

ALIEN-HUNTING EQUIPMENT

In order to hunt aliens you will need specialist equipment, ranging from the Mark IV Alien Detector to the UFO Capture & Restraint System. All you need to find and capture UFOs and aliens is listed below in our usual easy-to-read style.



The Mark IV Alien Detector

Surround a field with motion detectors, infrared, ultraviolet, seismic scanners, magnetometers, every device you can think of. Keep a few surface to air missiles and anti-aircraft batteries around too. Then, build a raised platform in the middle of the field and tie a cow to it. Even if none of the other devices go off, you will be able to spot when the cow is mutilated, revealing the presence of a UFO!

Veal crates make a relatively portable version.

Alternatively, just fire your guns into the air until a bullet ricochets off an alien ship.

The UFO Capture & Restraint System

Like the above device, this one requires a field. Setting up your base in the home counties of England or the corn-belt in America is best.

First cover a field with camo-netting, then grow a fine field full of healthy, tall, straight corn, wheat or barley. Surround the field with multiple net launchers loaded with weighted nets all triggered by a central button. Now remove the camo-netting and watch.

Lured by this perfect field, the aliens will not be able to resist trying to make a crop-circle, at which point you fire the nets.

Alternatively, shoot it down.

The Alien Control Device

Used to control aliens. "But how is this possible?" we hear you ask. This unit is quite simply a cattle prod. (Starting to get the idea yet?) You prod the alien with the fwazakking end and they do what you want; if they don't, you fwazak them again until they do. Aliens are supposed to be technologically advanced and quite intelligent, so they should understand quite quickly that compliance means an end to the pain. If not, they are obviously overrated and you need to find the higher intelligence that's controlling them.

Psi Inhibitor

All aliens are reputed to have munchkin-level psionic powers at least comparable to your character if you play a psychic. This highly technical device deals with that problem. Any time you feel even a slight tickle in your brain you bosh the alien over the head with the Psi Inhibitor (a great big mallet) and say "NO." They will soon get the idea, just like Pavlov's dogs.

As you can see, the equipment needed to deal with the little gray sex-mad bastards is highly advanced and requires a lot of research to acquire. Or you could just go and buy most of it at K-Mart - yes, even the missiles (but only in Texas or the Ukraine).

So, now you've got your base, your backing and your equipment - go forth, our progeny, and kick scrawny gray alien butt!

SECRET BASES: LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Locations for a base, with their pros and cons:

Abandoned Building	Quite large, isolated, innocent enough appearance. Might get demolished. Abandoned buildings are often used as secret drinking spots and drug dens by teenagers.
Back Garden	Handy access for munchies runs to the local convenience store. Bit obvious. Not very big. Mother will keep bringing out lemonade and cookies for the investigators.
Desert	Hot, humid, wide open expanses, quite a lot of UFO activity. Sand gets everywhere. Your tan will make you too easy to spot should your mission take you to Canada or some other northern clime.
Jungle	Hard to get to and also hard to find. Dangerous, irritating wildlife. Provides opportunities for crossover Tarzan-like plots. Allows you to rationalize having a pet tiger/panther/snake.
On the Moon	A stupid idea. Not only is it one hell of a commute, but you also have to deal with pressure suits and life support. On the plus side, you do get to shoot down UFOs as they fly in from space, and locations don't get much more exotic.
Secret Submarine	Armed, underwater, with airfoil multi-environment flying attack subs. Usually has to have a stupid name like the <i>Ocean Adventure</i> .
Underground	Blast proof, controlled environment, loads of space. Can't get pizza delivered, need lifts for vehicles.
Underneath a Film Studio	Been done too many times; aliens avoid film studios now. Free popcorn and nachos, though, and starlets visiting for premieres.
Underwater	Hard to find, cheap sea food. Underwater UFOs. But one good puncture and you're dead.
Warehouse	Big, spacious, easy to destroy, not too secure, good access to truck routes/waterfront.

How to Deal with Government Conspiracies

On the other hand, you may end up on the other side of the whole alien infiltration scene. You might be the "seeker after truth" looking to prove to the world the existence of extra-terrestrials and free the people from the lies of a secretive government yadda-yadda-yadda blah, blah, blah.

To be honest, the munchkin is going to have absolutely no interest in playing a Fox Mulder type. The guy always drops his gun, for the love of munchkinism! Not a good role-model. As far as alien encounters go you should tend to model yourself after Ripley in *Aliens*. Now she was a munchkin; who else would gaffer-tape together so many weapons?

Realistically, the idea that a government is competent enough to hide the existence of aliens and cover up all the evidence is pretty stupid; they can't even cover up their leaders' little extra-marital indiscretions. But this is a game, after all. If you are going to crack open a government conspiracy, then you need to know a little about the people you are trying to bust open so that you can exploit their weaknesses and expose them to the world at large.

THE ENEMY

Your enemy will be a shadowy government organization which will have funds siphoned off to them from other projects, and access to crack teams of commandos as well as their usual Men In Black. They will have as much money as they could ever need to spend on equipment and supplies, and they will have few regrets about killing you and/or wiping your identity (as well as those of your family and partner) from existence. You will only see them as silhouettes or hear them on the end of the phone through a voice scrambler, and a large part of what they do is pretty much unfathomable to anyone except them. They have agents everywhere and will always be able to stop you regardless of what information or resources you have managed to scrape together.

In other words, you're stuffed. Or you would be, except for the fact that you are dedicated to truth, you have the GM on your side (or at least, intimidated), and most important of all, you are a munchkin.

(Any Fox Mulder types in real life, on the other hand, would be swimming in concrete boots inside a week.)



Conspiracy Weaknesses

The organization you are fighting against is secret, and therefore doesn't like to be exposed, or to do overtly public things. To give yourself some immunity from their power and resources, always make sure you are around a lot of people, especially those who could do something with the information should they find out. Good places to be are shopping malls, television studios, swinger parties and survivalist compounds. These organizations usually have secret budgets that are embezzled for them from other areas of expenditure, and therefore their greatest weakness is the audit. If you can convince a senator or someone else in a position of political power that the organization genuinely exists, you can get the government to investigate and whittle down their budget. This will slowly but surely reduce them to a two-man outfit with just enough money to buy a ballpoint pen every other year, and make them resort to traveling to UFO crash sites on a tandem bicycle.

Furthermore, few people who work for these kind of outfits actually know each other personally, so it is relatively easy for you to impersonate them and infiltrate certain areas of their operation. Their very secrecy is a weakness which a munchkin player can exploit to great effect - gaining access to their secret horde of alien weaponry, for a start.



GETTING INFORMATION

You should tap into every abductee group and UFO society in existence. You should monitor absolutely everything that is spotted or heard about, and you should investigate it all. At least nine out of ten, reports turn out to be genuine weird cases (at least in games and on TV they do), and you will find evidence of government conspiracy at every single one. In order to get useful information you should be willing to travel at a moment's notice, so that you can get to UFO crash sites before even the government can get there and deal with it. (By the way, you'll be pleased to know that UFO engineering is clearly crap; the things crash three times a week.*)

Computer hacking is another useful technique, since time and again it has been shown how vulnerable government systems are to a determined hacker. You should have no problems getting hold of some incriminating evidence or of getting access to the nuclear command and control system.

One other thing to remember when taking on any government organization is that anything used by the government has been constructed, programmed or overseen by the lowest bidder.

Keeping hold of the evidence after you collect it is another matter altogether.

Information that Will Convince the World

In order to convince the general public of the existence of UFOs and aliens, you will require some pretty drastic evidence, something completely irrefutable. We suggest any of the following:

- Getting a Gray on *Oprah* to do a live interview, and hopefully an abduction.
- Buzzing *The Late Show* in a captured UFO.
- Leaving a crop circle in the crowd at a stadium gig.
- Shooting Billy Ray Cyrus** live on national television with a disintegrator.
- Using alien mind control devices to make the President do a broadcast admitting the truth.
- Splicing alien genetic material into one of the *Baywatch* cast and letting them loose.

TV is the only real way to convince the general masses of anything. Hey, people buy Cheese Strings and Abmasters don't they? The power of suggestion can rarely be fought off forever.

*This is almost certain proof that the galactic arm we are in is the space equivalent of Albania and the aliens are all driving the spaceship equivalent of Yugos, Ladas and pre-Volkswagen Skodas.

**Europeans may substitute Björk or any member of Steps.

Spies

An underrepresented game genre; okay, spying is sometimes part of missions within other genres, but real spy work is far too subtle for munchkins to understand. This is a real pity, for what trainee munchkin hasn't watched Bond films while bouncing on his father's knee, wishing to be a smooth-talking, gun-toting maniac with rocket launchers behind his headlights and a Scottish accent? You can bet they'd pack something with more wallop than a sodding Walther PPK, too, pants gun that it is.

But munchkins aren't really suited to anything but the action parts of Bond movies. Bond works alone and doesn't have to put up with a "party" wandering around with him. Twinks just don't have the suaveness that Bond has. They'd try to pick up female agents by showing them their collection of guns; maybe they'd slide up all cool-looking with a drink, gaze deeply into her eyes, smile and then say "Fancy a shag?"*

"The name's Killkrazee, Slasher Killkrazee. License pending."

"Beer, in a can, not in a glass . . ."

"Hello Moneypenny, got time for a quick one over the desk?"

Not stylish.

CHARM

This part of the appeal of playing a super spy is often hard for your traditional munchkin to grasp. They're happy with a gun but wouldn't know what to do with a woman if they ever met one. They'd probably smear her with gun oil and



*This was written before the second *Austin Powers* film. Which just goes to show.

convert her to fully automatic. This is a pity and a waste since the principles of munchkinism can be applied to any area, including that of seduction. The classic spy, Bond, is a prime example of this, bedding an average of three women in each and every film and never suffering an STD despite never using contraception.

Seducing people can be a real boon. You gain contacts and loyal bodyguards, and the people you sleep with often turn out to be estranged lovers of the villain or in some other way wronged by them and will help you work out the plot. It's far more reliable than torture for getting secrets out of enemy agents, and as an added bonus you get to shag a lot! The drawback of all this is that a series of crippled and disfigured arch-villains will rig all their deathtraps so that they somehow threaten your manhood – laser beams to the nads, for example, or some kind of slowly constricting codpiece.

To play a charmer convincingly, you will have to make an intensive study of what makes a person appealing to the opposite sex. A brief local survey found that, unlike the authors, those people who had the most success with the opposite sex were stupid, ruthless, loose-moralled slaves to fashion, with puerile attitudes and a complete lack of any sense of embarrassment. As all roleplayers (and especially munchkins) know, the appeal of a bearded, pot-bellied, beer-swilling, sweat-stained gaming geek is horribly limited.

LICENSE TO KILL

Any secret agent worth his salt has a license to kill. This is a special dispensation from your government that allows you to commit murder in the national interest. You might think that this is all fine and dandy, but a license of this type just doesn't cover the sheer range of possibilities that a munchkin will need. If you are planning to play a secret agent, and you are a munchkin, you will need a license to kill, maim, mutilate, damage, demolish, blow up, irradiate, fold, crash, torture, slaughter, and burn. This should just about cover you for any eventuality.

A license to kill is bound to impress and makes a good substitute for VISA, Access, American Express or Diners Club International. When accompanied by a brandished gun this combination will also get you into any nightclub or bar that you wish to enter and will make sure that the bouncers lay off you.

On the downside, if you show your license off too much, people will start offering you more assassination contracts than you can handle. As a munchkin you probably think this is a good thing. Unfortunately your license is issued by your government and can easily be revoked.

TALKING TO THE AUTHORITIES

As a munchkin in a modern setting, you are bound to run afoul of the authorities at some point. The police, Interpol, the FBI, the CIA, the DEA, the NSA or some other busybody is going to try and interfere with what you are doing or raise unreasonable objections to your indiscriminate use of high explosives and fully automatic weapons. You are going to need ways to deal with this. Even members of top secret organizations need such solutions because, being so secret, they cannot afford to reveal their nature. Even if you are a "seeker after truth" from an established agency, hefting a mini-gun is not generally acceptable and calling a grenade launcher your "little holdout pistol" will be frowned upon by your superiors and may cost you your job.

Here is what you can say if caught out with weaponry you shouldn't have:

"It's not a pistol in my pocket, I'm just pleased to see you."

"I thank God you're here, officer, I think I just found a terrorist weapons stash."

"I see, and you're going to take these off me? You with the .38 police special and me with the Vulcan?"

KLICK! "No, YOU hand over YOUR weapon."

"Sure I got a permit, right here in the magazine, 21 of 'em."

"They're not mine, I'm looking after them for the Davidians."

"Afternoon agent, wanna buy a used 30 mil?"

"I'm going to a fancy dress party. As Operation Desert Storm."

"This isn't a tank! My Volvo has a hard-on."

"Of course I'm a member of a government agency; why else would I wear a black suit?"

"It was like that when I got here."

"Help! Some guy just tried to carjack me! Look, I wrestled his gun from him, and his rifle, and his grenades, and . . ."

"Those aren't real grenades. Look, just pull the pin, you'll see."

"Can't stop, those kids could be tramping on my lawn with every passing moment."

"My name is Abdullah and I claim diplomatic immunity in the name of the Saudi royal family."

"Mexican fireworks for the Fourth of July."

GADGETS

Gadgets, gizmos, tricks of the trade. Call 'em what you like but they are still the required identification of any spy worth his salt. You can impress people with your charm and wit, but when it comes down to it, you still need your secret gadgets to stand a chance against the members of the evil conspiracy S.P.A.R.R.O.W. Let's face it, how long would 007 last without his trusty cars? Would Napoleon Solo still be alive today without his watch/communicator/garrote/toaster-type thing? Without his shoe 'phone, Maxwell Smart would just be a tosser, rather than a tosser with a shoe 'phone. Secret agents need gadgets like most people need to breathe, so for your pleasure we have collected some of the more common devices with a brief explanation of what they can be expected to do:

Cars

Perhaps the single most necessary gadget is the car. It provides transport, weapons, armor, a back seat to bed enemy agents on, and other groovy stuff. You can use it to run away in, really fast, it looks cool in car chases in exotic locations, and as has been proven many times, chicks love cars.* Your entire credibility can depend on what you drive, so choose well; an Aston Martin is good, a Mini is terrible (unless you are Michael Caine). Try to avoid the Michael Knight syndrome, where the car is smarter, funnier and does better romantically than you. In fact, the same rule applies as with swords; don't give it a voice. Ever!

Remember that you aren't limited to the concealed weapons approach; just look at the RV from *Tango and Cash*. A space cruiser with a 20mm Vulcan cannon bolted on the side - cool or what? If you have obvious, extended weapons, then people are not likely to try and speed into your parking space. If they do, their car won't be there for long.

Watches

These can be very fun things; you can conceal garrotes, mini-lasers, radios, magnets, detonators, Geiger counters and even occasionally a timing device. If you are going to use a gadget watch, use its secret devices early, as, when you are captured, a watch is usually among the first things to be looted from your unconscious body.**

Pens

On a par with cars, pens can hold mini-lasers (again) or toxin darts, and can be used as the barrel of a breakdown gun. You know - packet of tabs, lighter, belt buckle, and pen as the barrel. These versatile gadgets have many uses, and pens look innocent. If all the gadgets in your pen fail you can still stab the enemy in the eye with it. Or write embarrassing things on their foreheads during a tussle.

*Even the Batmobile.

**Unless your GM is a James Bond purist, in which case it may be the only thing left on you.

Belts

On first appearances, you might think a belt is a bit restrictive as to its overall use, but you would be wrong. You can conceal a grapple line, a mini-camera, yet another mini-laser, a length of mono-wire, or even a complete set of throwing pins in a belt. Your trusty belt can also be fitted with a quick release buckle for when the lusty enemy spies, after seeing your cool car, want to shag your brains out.* With a bit of forethought on the part of the gadget department, you could be wearing your most lethal weapon around your pants, rather than in them.

GUNS AND OTHER WEAPONS

The single most important thing for a munchkin spy is their gun or other weapon of choice. You should try to avoid things like the Walther PPK as it is, in fact, largely poo. You should choose something small yet powerful. A good idea is to get a 7.62 mm hunting rifle, cut the action out, and fit a box magazine, a stubby barrel and a handle. It's easy to break down into small bits and can be assembled quite quickly. It also has the advantage of high stopping power and looks cool.

But don't forget melee weapons; a well-placed sword or switchblade can be just as good. You could get the boys in the gizmo department to make you a snap-out sword that you can hide in your trouser leg or a set of lethal knives disguised as cufflinks. Just be imaginative, will you?

Ah-Poo! (Kung Fu Fighting)

Despite what we said at the beginning of this chapter, Martial Arts do have their place in the modern-day munchkin game. Indeed, when the rules have been written by a fan of the right sort of action films, martial arts come into their own. After all, the GM might somehow find some excuse to take your guns away from you sometimes. (It's a horrible thought, we know, but some GMs do respond badly to munchkinism, and have no respect for basic munchkin needs and urges.) But with a sufficiently high level of skill in martial arts you are never defenseless. You need no other weapons than your fists. You can dent steel, break bones, shatter skulls, and more importantly, make some really cool noises.

There are many martial arts to choose from, each with their own moves, weapons, outfits and noises to shout while executing them. Most martial arts come from the Orient, but there are a few others that you should consider from elsewhere.

*For our British readers, this is known as the Essex effect.

****Not even French-speaking Belgians.**



KUNG FU

Kung Fu comes in many varieties, all of which have really cool names. Monkey style, Tiger style, Snake and Crane, Way of the Fleeing Weasel, Angry Wolverine style . . . For some reason, practitioners of Kung Fu seem to get to make all the best noises and generate the best overdubbed sound effects of any art.

Training is simple: drink an entire pack of beer by yourself and watch half-a-dozen Jackie Chan or Bruce Lee films. You will now have an unshakable belief you are a competent martial artist.

CAPOEIRA

A Brazilian martial art developed by slaves to be disguised as dancing. Capoeira is very acrobatic and musical, and has a lot of very spectacular moves – something like a cross between break-dancing and kick-boxing. Wearing half a ton of gold chain and a reversed baseball cap is optional. Baggy trousers may fit the image but cause drag, slowing your kicks.

SAVATE

A French martial art consisting largely of kicks. While it may be quite a powerful style, it's French. Nobody likes the French,** and you'll get into too many fights. Someone is bound to get lucky eventually.

MARTIAL ARTS NOISES

A glossary of terms and phrases for you to use to pep up your RPG martial arts scenes. This list should prove absolutely indispensable, especially in games of *Feng Shui*.

Phrase	Translation
Ah-poo!	Take that, you rotter.
Hi-yah!	Apart from watching Miss Piggy on the <i>Muppet Show</i> I have no knowledge of martial arts.
Awwwwwwwwwwww!	So, you reckon you're tough do you?
Yadadadadadadadada!	Take that, and that, and half a dozen of these.
Ho!	I am winning, Lady Lotus is my prisoner and my guards will soon finish you off; there is nothing you can do, you sorry chicken-shagging son of a rice farmer.
Nee-woo!	I meant to miss with that flying kick, I was just showing off.
Kai!	You hit me, but I don't care.
Hut!	Stand dumbfounded as I show you all my best moves.
Haaaaaaaaa!	I told you I was good, who's laughing now Mr. I-Choke-On-My-Own-Testicles?
Ya-ta!	Yeah? I don't care if I sound stupid.

All of these phrases should be accompanied by gestures, ranging from the wiggling eyebrow, through the penetrating stare and the smirk, to the sticking out of the little finger and the sly wink.

KARATE

Made popular by the media and the Karate Kid films, this style is in fact a bit boring. Look at it; any martial art where you can become a master by doing Roseanne Barr's bikini line "Wax on, Wax off" has suffered from far too much media hype. Okay, smashing bricks is classy, but true munchkins prefer to concentrate on smashing noses. Take it in preference to Aikido, but otherwise pick something else.

KENDO

Natty armor, a big stick and repetitive shouting; how can you go wrong? Or so it seems at first glance, anyway. But what initially appears to be a perfect martial art for munchkins is in fact, on closer inspection, a bit pants.

Yeah, the armor's nice, yeah it makes a cool noise when you hit it with that big-arse lump of bamboo, but there appears to be only one move. Hitting each other on the top of the head. Not very adaptable.

But keep a suit of the armor in your practice room anyway, because it looks good. Don't wear it all the time though; you'd look a bit of a berk walking to the shops in it.

SUMO

You get to pig out, get big and fat, wear thongs, and slap other fat bastards around. If that isn't fun, what is? Scoff sushi and rice 'til you burst. Get big and ornery and sweaty. With all that weight behind a munchkin's other stats, you will be unstoppable. Plus you can execute an inescapable hold just by sitting on the enemy.

BOXING

Boxing is a brutish kind of martial art. Well, it's not really an art, more of a wood-shop. Boxing could be looked on as a refined version of Boo-Tin (see below); the only real difference is that some guy in a bow tie keeps interfering. When you use this in real combat there won't be a guy in a bow tie, of course, so there is even less difference. While boxing develops upper body strength and allows you to mash people quite effectively with your fists, it does begin to suffer when you fight someone who can kick. Kicks have greater range and they will pummel you to death before you lay a fist on them.

NINJITSU

You can't learn Ninjitsu. It's far too secret. Anyone claiming to be able to teach it to you is lying. If they were a proper Ninja you wouldn't be able to see them; they're far too stealthy. Legend has it that ninjas wear black pajamas, so you may be able to catch one in the bedclothes section of a department store.

Should you capture a ninja or blag your GM into letting you play one, you will find that Ninjitsu is the only martial art you will ever need. It will supply you with endless fighting skills, the art of uncanny stealth, and as many free throwing stars as you want. You do have to purchase your own black pajamas, though. Munchkins adore ninjas, and with good reason, although traditionally the hordes of little black-clad suicide-killers act as enemies for the hero-munchkin. Still, it's too cool for you not to try and get hold of the training.

WING CHUN

Block, then smash. That's about it. Wing Chun works very close in, inside the effective fighting distance of most other martial arts, allowing you to get your jollies by rubbing yourself up and down against your opponent while you fight. It is often thought of as a branch of Kung Fu; if so, perhaps it should be called "The Way Of The Horny Dog."

TAI CHI CHUAN

Exercises made up of different stances like "The Tree," "The Crane," and "The Feeble Wuss." This isn't a martial art, it's muscle-tone exercises for pensioners. If you take it you're a weak nancy.

AIKIDO

A martial art which uses your enemy's strength against them. Aikido is all blocks and throws and is for wusses and poncy gits. There are no punches or flashy flying kicks. Avoid this one. If you take it, you're a pouf.

JUDO

Favored in '60s spy movies, before we saw all the other cool stuff that Hong Kong action films could offer, Judo is another rather wimpy, defensive art. It also depends too much on the opposition thoughtfully wearing loose, rugged jackets that you can grab and throw them by. Still, you could always concentrate on pinning your opponent down and strangling them with your dressing-gown belt.



BOO-TIN

An ancient and respected British martial art. Boo-tin masters train hard, drinking lager until closing time, then buying a curry and going out looking for a fight. The boo-tin vocabulary is limited to "Wotchoolokinat?" and "Cummanavvagoifyoothinkyoorhard-enuff!" but this does not prevent it from being a devastating form of attack. The art has two stages, the first of which is the attempt to get the opponent on the floor. To accomplish this the boo-tin master employs the Bottle, the Chin, the Forehead and the Fist technique. Once on the floor, the forte of the style may be employed. The Boot is brought into play, repeatedly striking at the enemy, cracking ribs, breaking bones and generally hurting.

Boo-Tin is a spectator sport best displayed by a team on the streets of a Friday night. Competitions may be seen in many British towns at around midnight.

GUN FU

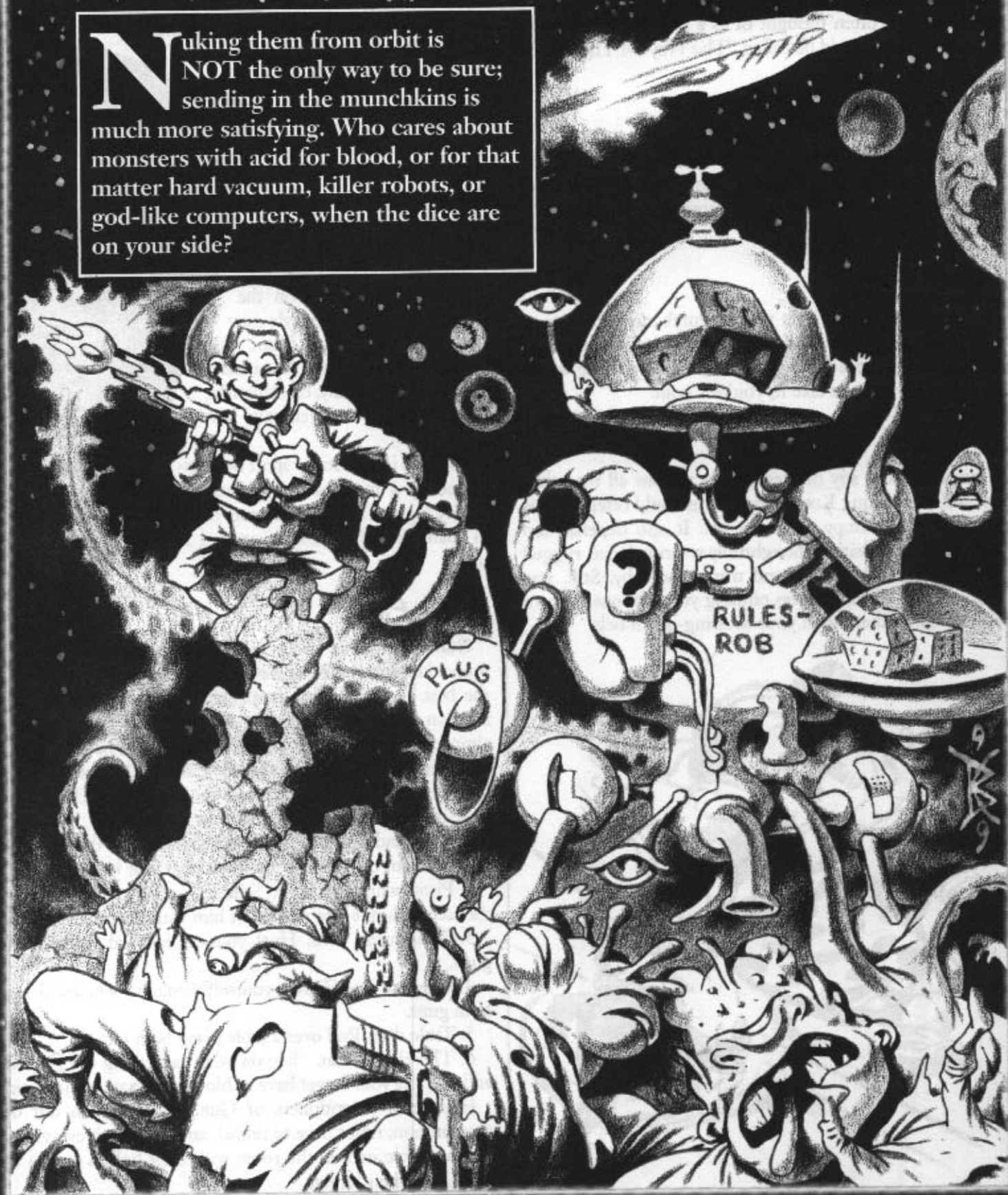
Gun Fu (name courtesy of the ever-munchkin-beloved *Feng Shui*) is far and away the best choice for any munchkin playing in a modern game. Gun Fu is a very physical and almost graceful art. For starters, you should have one gun in each hand. You should be able to fire both of them, rapidly, at anyone you choose to kill. The basic moves of Gun Fu are as follows.

1. Draw and fire. Whip out your guns and let the guy right in front of you have it with at least four bullets.
2. Pistol-whip and shoot. Smack your opponent round the face with one gun and shoot him with the other.
3. Lengthwise dive. Hurl yourself forward firing both guns.
4. Window dive. Throw yourself through a window firing both guns.
5. Table dive. Roll over a table firing both guns.
6. The ejector seat. Slide on your back along the ground and then let your target have it, blowing him up into the air.

High-level practitioners of Gun Fu never run out of ammunition, never have to reload, and can smash every single breakable item in the room with their bullets as well as taking out their targets.

4. MUNCHKINS IN SPACE

Nuking them from orbit is NOT the only way to be sure; sending in the munchkins is much more satisfying. Who cares about monsters with acid for blood, or for that matter hard vacuum, killer robots, or god-like computers, when the dice are on your side?



This is the section on creating munchkins for use in their natural habitat; the science fiction game. Be the ultimate ray-wielding, alien-kicking, square-jawed hero! Let's face it, there is nothing more satisfying than grinding some poor green-skinned alga-eating numbskull into the dirt. It's humanity vs. the rest of the universe and we're going to win, damn it! How could we not, with genocidal loonies like you on our side? Quake in your slimy broth, evil ones! We're coming for you and we've got some really cool guns!

Creating a Sci-Fi Munchkin

Creating a Sci-Fi munchkin follows the same basic pattern as creating a munchkin in any other genre. Weapon skills are the most important and can be used as substitutes for most others. There's also an added bonus; with the advent of Artificial Intelligence, you can now threaten and beat the cud out of machines as well!

Or can you?

Pre-Artificial Intelligence

Coffee machine: Phut . . .

Munchkin: Goddamned female-parent-copulating piece of tin! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Coffee machine: SMASH! BREAK! TINKLE!

Post-Artificial Intelligence

Coffee machine: Phut . . .

Munchkin: KA-CHING! Don't give me this crap, you goddamned Taiwanese piece of crud! I've been kicking alien butt all night and I need coffee. Give me some or I'll give your circuits the old heat-ray treatment!

Coffee machine: OK, OK, just don't shoot! I'm sorry! (Burple, burble, dribble.)

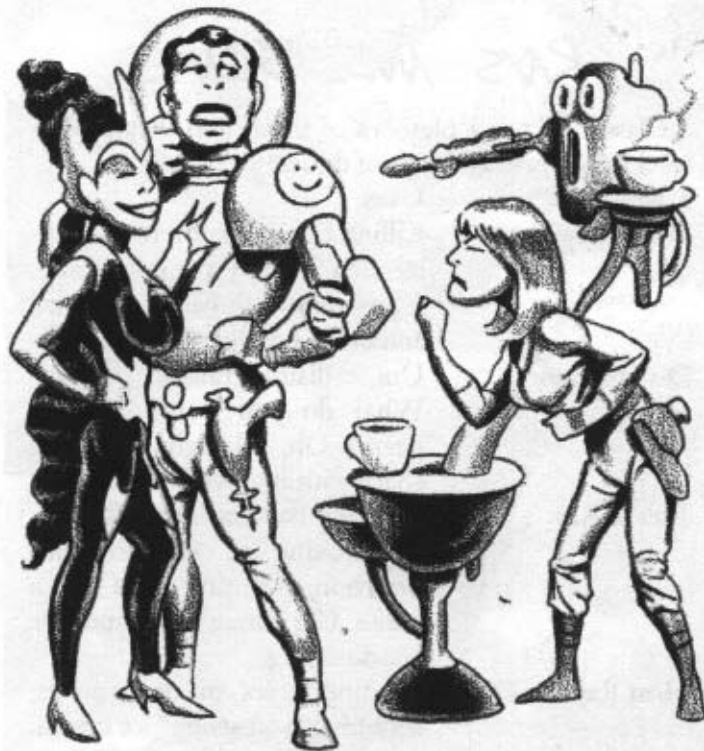
Munchkin: Ah, damn fine cup of coffee.

I want to use a spike to hack into the computer's AI subroutine. That'll set off ALL of its defensive programs.

No prob - I have a guardian program built in to my deck.

What about the thousands of users jacked in? They'll be fried!

Oh yeah... do I get experience for killing them?



But AIs Can Get Uppity . . .

Coffee machine: I don't feel like making coffee today.

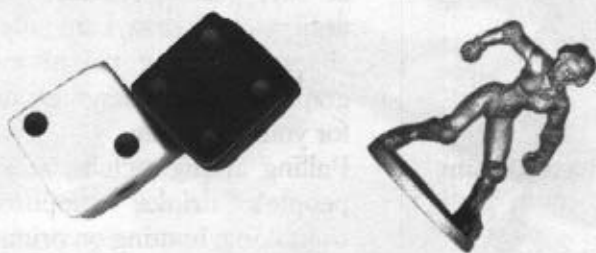
Munchkin: RIGHT! KA-CHING!

Coffee machine: You lay a finger on me and I'll tell Space Cadet Janet about your midnight liaison with Princess Savlon in this very kitchen.

Munchkin: You wouldn't dare!

Coffee machine: Try me!

Out-munchkined by a hot drinks dispenser, how embarrassing. Of course, some machines already have these exasperating features: cigarette machines, change dispensers, pay-phones, and stuff like that.



Yes, Sci-Fi munchkins do suffer from drawbacks. You won't be able to completely concentrate on weapon skills, as the hardships of space demand that you spend your hard-won skill points on tedious things such as Vac-Suit Operation, Zero-Gee combat, Piloting, Xenobiology, and hosts of other scientific skills that you really aren't interested in.

The best way to get around this problem is to buy a ship with an autopilot and then make sure all the other players in the group take the intellectual types so that you can get on with the important task of beating the vital bodily fluids out of various ugly alien hordes.

RAYS AND BEAMS

Classic SF has a plethora of these, and they can be used to perform all kinds of duties.

Ray	Uses
Death Ray	Killing things (duh!); much better than fly spray; use it for (carefully!) removing head lice, ticks, and other bodily infestations.
Disintegrator	Um, disintegrating things? What do you want? Shakespeare? Oh, all right, you can shave with it as well.
Freeze Ray	Freezing baddies into nifty statues; making ice cubes for your bourbon; winning bets on a white Christmas; substitute air conditioning.
Heat Ray	Burning holes in deck plates; softening "soft scoop" ice cream; melting polar ice caps; substitute hot water bottle and cigarette lighter.
Laser Beams	Looking pretty; making a totally unrealistic but cool "Neem!" sound when you fire it; in case you go to see Marillion and have left your lighter at home.
Mind Control	Pulling at night-clubs; convincing the GM that you're NOT a munchkin; never having to pay for anything.
Repulsors	Keeping over-affectionate aunts at bay; pushing enemies back until your other rays are fully recharged; getting rid of autograph hunters; emergency drive for your spaceship.
Tractor Beams	Pulling at night-clubs; stealing people's drinks; shoplifting; overtaking; hunting on primitive planets. (When combined with a heat ray you get self-delivering pre-cooked meals!)

The best ray-pistols can perform all these functions – a kind of Swiss army knife of the future. Just don't go trying to remove stones from horses' hooves with your disintegrator set on maximum power and aperture. Sci-Fi guns can substitute for even more skills than normal guns (as seen on p. 47).

EXAMPLE MUNCHKIN SCI-FI CHARACTER

Name: Flash Kinnison. (A combination of two of the most powerful SF munchkin names in existence.)

Homeworld: High-gravity planet, populated by vicious animal and plant life. (This should provide increased strength and toughness as well as basic combat and survival skills and a healthy dislike for most other life forms.)

Profession: Hunter/Fighter. (Munchkins always concentrate on combat skills, of course; combined with his homeworld choice, this career gives the player an excuse for making the character really lethal.)

Statistics: Strength, Speed, Dexterity, Constitution. (Who needs Intelligence? By concentrating on these, he increases his combat potential and survivability; you can always raise other stats later, and you'll survive long enough to do it. Strength sometimes seems irrelevant in SF games, but munchkins want to be able to carry the biggest possible weapons.)

Skills: Shooting stuff, hitting stuff, blowing stuff up, spotting stuff. (The player would be happy to leave it at that, but undoubtedly the GM will insist he takes some survival and other useless skills because of his background; if they're free bonuses don't argue, otherwise moan and hope he gives in.)

Equipment: Multi-function ray-gun, combat knife, sealed battle-armor, a share in the starship, a force shield and some explosives. (That's really all you need; the ray-gun can substitute for lock-picking, intimidation, survival and many, many other skills. See *The Gun is your Skill List*, p. 47.)

Justification to GM: "He comes from a dangerous planet you see? Since he was a child he's had to fight the terrible creatures and plants of his homeworld. This has honed his combat skills to a high degree, especially since he became a hunter on that world. He'll be hardened and won't like most other life-forms since they've all been the enemy before. That should make for some interesting roleplay when we meet with aliens." (This is, of course, a lie. It will lead to some interesting and short fights.)



SF OUTERWEAR

Sci-Fi Name	Layman's Terms	Use
Hostile Environment Suit	Armored Space Suit	Making you feel more secure in a vacuum. However, one tiny hole and you're history.
Armorsilk	Implausible	Looking nice and stopping bullets.
Reflec	Mirrors	Bouncing lasers and beams. Looking really groovy at discos.
Spun Silicon	Spider Web	Stopping knives and other blades, scaring people who are afraid of bugs.
Diffusion Suit	Big Radiator	Stopping heat rays and laser guns. Keeping frosty at the beach.
Impact Absorption Fabric	Kevlar	Stopping bullets and kinetic damage.
Impact Absorption Cloth	Thicker Kevlar	Stopping bigger bullets and larger amounts of kinetic damage.
Power Armor	Big Metal Suit	Stopping most things and giving you that essential "Stormtrooper" look.
Exo-Armor	Really Big Metal Suit	Stopping everything. Boosting your ego.
Duralloy Armor	Small starship	Breaking things. Getting stuck in narrow corridors. Walking through suns. Intimidating people.

Classic SF

This is by far the best environment for the Sci-Fi munchkin. There need be no basis in real science for any of the devices, weapons, space-ships or races in this genre. Classic SF is straightforward, simple, and munchkin-friendly. Aliens are there to be killed. (Unless they're humanoid, and often this doesn't matter anyway.) Planets are there to be leveled, or to be used to level other, bigger planets. Black holes are no more of a problem than a slight head cold, and the vast reaches of the universe can be traversed in an instant.

FORCEFIELDS AND ARMOR

Immensely powerful fields of force should be available for you to strap to your person. These may be cool and glow all the time, or they may just flash when something hits them. Either way, they can be worn over your normal armor, providing an extra degree of protection. But beware, there is always some weakness in force-fields.

The best force-fields come as belts, glow, and make excellent humming and crackling noises when people hit them. The really good ones severely, or even fatally, harm people who touch them and reflect laser blasts straight back so they stir-fry your attacker.

Armor in Classic SF games comes in various kinds, all with cool pseudo-scientific names. Everything from the thin silk-like bullet-proof smock to the multi-ton power-suit made of some stuff called Impregaron, or something similar.

PLANET-SIZED BEAMWIELDING MONSTROSITIES

Or space ships, as lesser mortals like to call them. The typical munchkin battle cruisers should incorporate:

WHAT TO MAKE YOUR SHIP OUT OF

Material	Reason
An Asteroid	Cheap, and can take a lot of punishment.
Cockroaches	Everyone knows they're totally indestructible.
Hollowed-out neutron star	Tricky, but tough. Worth it if you can manage it.
Implausibly-named alloy	You can get away with murder making up miraculous properties of the material.
Just Force-Fields	360-degree vision, looks utterly weird, can be switched off and carried in your pocket.
Paper Ships You've Destroyed	Disposable.
	Gets bigger all the time, serves as a warning, can be disguised as junk.

STARSHIP POWER SOURCES

Power source	Reason	
Coal	None whatsoever.	Matter/Antimatter
Hamsters in Wheels	None really. Unreliable, sleep all day – but they do work for peanuts.	
Harnessed Singularity	Powerful, but tends to have all kinds of bad side-effects; time-shifts, wobbly swirly things and so on.	Petrol
Nuclear Fission	You can dump the waste on your enemies, if you're going to be destroyed – there's a fair chance you'll take 'em with you.	Solar Power
Fusion	Runs off hydrogen, which can be got from water. There's a better chance you'll take your enemies with you. If the worst comes to the worst, you can electrolyze your crew-mates for fuel.	



STARSHIP DRIVES

Propulsion	Reason	
Cat and Toast Drive	A cheap version of anti-gravity. Take a cat and tie a piece of buttered toast face-up on to its back. Now drop the cat. As we all know, cats always land on their feet and toast always lands butter-side-down. The cat hovers and spins and can be attached to a larger vessel, imparting the ability to levitate.	Ion Thrusters
		Bussard Ram-Scoop
		Jumpgates
Hyperdrive	Cool swirly patterns when you enter and leave hyperspace, excellent revving-up noise. Of course, in some games, bad things live in hyperspace.	Keyhole Drive
"Impeller" Drive	Fast, and pseudo-scientific, so once again you can get away with murder. A bit close to a few copyrights, though.	Propellers
Inertialess	Fast, damn fast. If it fails, however, everything instantly regains the inertia it should have and goes splat. A good way to make pizza.	Oars
		Rockets
		Turbines

Mucho power, makes WOM-WOM-WOM! noises, and best of all for taking enemies with you when you blow up. You can fire your whole power-plant at really powerful enemies. It's expensive, and suffers from "fill her up" gags, but the engine does make proper VROOM! Noises. Cutting off sunlight from enemies' planets. It's free as well.

Again, none really. Slow. Dunno – what happens when you ram bussards and scoop them up? Usually left all over the place by some obliging elder race. Need have no explanation as to how they work. Downside; just where *did* all the aliens go? Opens wormholes in space allowing instant travel through cool swirly things. To sound credible you will have had to have read past the introduction to *A Brief History Of Time*. None. Useless in space, no atmosphere. Now we're just being silly. Expensive, but cool, leave streamers of fire behind you as you fly away. Look, we've told you once. No air, OK?

SPACESHIP WEAPON OPTIONS

Weaponry

Anti-Matter Weapons

Lasers

Plasma Weapons

Rail Guns

Torpedoes

Planetary Attack Weapons

Reason

Munchkindom distilled into its pure form. Anti-matter annihilates normal matter with a big fwackoom, completely wiping out your enemy.

Pretty colors, can be overloaded for extra damage, make cool "Neem!" noises.

No-one realizes they can be warded off with a magnetic field. Pretty colors again.

They're big, they sometimes ignore force shields and they tear bloody great holes out of your enemy. Not clean, not precise – but who gives a damn?

Plasma, anti-matter, photon, quantum, quark, proton, electron, ether or any other prefix you want to add. The smaller the thing that is described by the prefix, the larger the explosion, it seems. So the order "Fire Dolph Lundgren's brain torpedoes!" should result in a satisfying detonation.

Sink continents, destroy polar ice-caps, cut planets in half. These weapons usually closely resemble natural phenomena, comets, meteorites etc. They certainly have the same sort of devastating effect.

PSIONICS

Psionic powers probably ought to be restricted to fantasy games, but they are often introduced into Sci-Fi under the pretense that "science will eventually accept and refine the idea of such things." The real reason that they're included is to encourage die-hard magic-user players from fantasy games to play Sci-Fi. They allow you to be even more of a munchkin.

If you can wangle psionics as well as your other skills you are doing very well.

Psi Power

Psychic Healing

Telepathy

Telekinesis

Various

Attack Powers

Munchkin Uses

Removing hangovers. Healing bruise damage from firing a gun too big for you. Going without sleep.

Untraceable obscene "phone calls." Calling for help. Calling for pizza. Discovering people's secret fantasies and then blackmailing them. Controlling minds.

Making things float in an eerie fashion. Firing loads of guns at the same time. Throttling people from a distance for having the poor taste to wear a gray uniform. Emergency parachute for when your rocket pants fail. Force shields.

Killing things via fire, ice, radiation, "Body Weapons," etc., etc.

Essentials

Minimal cabin space. Powerful shields. Even more powerful weapons of various kinds. No escape pod (ripped out so the space could be used for weapons). An AI to pilot it (invariably female and in love with you despite the total lack of hormones and functional apparatus). A big stereo with *Ride of the Valkyries* on chip. A HUGE engine. A powerful hyperdrive. Some kind of cloaking device (not used to escape, used to ambush).

Optional Extras

An entire troop of marines from a high-G world, armed to the teeth with heavy weapons and massive suits of power armor. Kinetic weapons (in case the lasers, plasma throwers and other energy weapons pack up). The rest of the party.

Naming Your Ship

This beauty should have a short, catchy name – something to instill fear in your enemies, something macho, something that expresses the full power at your disposal.

Good Names: Repulse, Rottweiler, Lion, Sword, Pitbull,

Tiger, Panther, the USS "Don't Even Think It Buster," Magnum (the gun, not the group), Nova, Sunburst, Dragon, Red Giant, Hard Bastard, Los Angeles, Yorkshire, Schwarzenegger.

When nobody is looking
I put the dead
monkeys in my pack.

Cyberpunk

Cyberpunk is the genre of choice for the younger munchkin, and on the surface it looks easy; chaos in the cities, gangs ruling the streets, huge Megacorporations fighting it out with real troops, powerful technology, cybernetics to make you more dangerous, big powerful guns, orbital lasers, home-made nukes – the list goes on. But it's not that simple.

AREN'T ALL CYBERPUNKS MUNCHKINS?

An obvious first worry; you may run into cyberpunk NPCs who are as munchkin as you are.

True, all characters in cyberpunk games have access to all the weaponry and cybernetics that everyone else has; even a total wuss, once his brain has been transplanted into a ten-foot killing machine, can wipe the floor with a normal munchkin. But this just means you have to be more creative and devious, or get *your* brain transplanted into an *eleven-foot-tall* killing machine.

To make your munchkin stand out, take a combat-oriented class, then specialize all your skills in shooting people and beating the cud out of them. All your cybernetics should be of use for either stopping damage or dishing more out. None of these sat-nav or phone-splice things, those are for pussies, we want blades in our hands and howitzers instead of stomachs! Some games try to stop you munchkinizing out by making you more and more aggressive, antisocial and violent the more cybernetics you have. Good! Start out playing a homicidal lunatic and no-one will notice the difference, plus you can argue that you can keep the character in play since he started out that way. If your GM moans too much, get a behavior chip and pull a face at him.

There are two ways you can go in the cyberpunk genre, the "Blow People Away" route or the "Beat The Living Cud Out Of People" route. These can be sub-classified into the "Blow People Away Up Close" and "Blow People Away From A Distance" schools and the "Beat People With Weapons" and "Beat People With Your Bare Hands" schools.

Cyberpunk-game martial arts tend to be pretty damn deadly, especially if you take them at munchkin levels and choose a particularly brutal art. This combined with cybernetic strength makes the martial artist a viable cyberpunk munchkin.

But guns is the real place to be. Calibers only dreamed of before and more ammunition types than you can shake a very large tree at – all the way from flechette to 30 mm DPU.

If you **REALLY** want to munchkin out, take a combination of the two and Gun-Fu your way to a better tomorrow!

OK, I sneak up on
the paladin, then shout
"Look! The Gnomes!"
while he's looking
around, I pull out my
poisoned dagger and
back-stab him.

CORPORATIONS ARE MUNCHKINS TOO

Traditionally, the cyberpunk corporation is the bad guy, but a munchkin should feel a certain kinship with the corp. Think about it; the corporations have huge quantities of cash, armies, covert teams, orbital weaponry, and over-zealous R&D scientists. They will stop at nothing to achieve their aims and have no regard for safety, law, or innocent bystanders. Rather like munchkins.

The smart munchkin, if that is not a contradiction in terms, will side **WITH** the corporations. He will ask to be used for experimental cyberwear, will put ammo costs down as expenses, and will draw on the resources of the corp for his own ends.

There is some trade-off of course; the corporation will probably implant a bomb in the munchkin's head, but as far as he is concerned this is merely another back-up weapon. If you've created your munchkin properly, half a kilo of plastique going off in his skull will only cause a slight headache anyway.



MOOLAH, GREEN, CRED\$, CASH, CABBAGE, DINERO AND WONGA

No cyberpunk munchkin is complete without a huge bank balance. If possible, start off with one, so you can spend it all on powerful weapons and cybernetics. If that's not possible, kill lots of rich people, steal their money and sell their internal organs to hospitals – common practice in the genre.

Money is everything in cyberpunk, and you need it for everything, especially guns, ammo, cyberware and armor/clothes. If you don't look rich, you won't get paid high rates. Money can be used to bribe, corrupt, pacify, and twist loyalties. These effects can also be achieved by brandishing huge guns, but you need the cash to get the huge guns. Everyone in Cyberpunk is a mercenary and cash speaks far louder than a rarely used Fast-Talk skill (but not as loud as a .50 cal to the temple).

CRITERIA FOR A GOOD GUN

1. Caliber. The larger the number after the point the better. For example: .22 abysmal, .50 good! For those working on the metric system, 5mm bad, 9mm so-so, 30mm good. (This is, of course, for man-portable weaponry.)

2. Rate of Fire. Largely dependent on caliber; generally caliber is paramount, but if you can find something that will loose off a thousand rounds a turn then by all means use it. If those thousand rounds are all 30mm then this is an added bonus.

3. Ammunition. Forget all that non-lethal crap. Rubber? Plastic? Plywood? Pffft! All pooey. No, we want a real man's ammo! Hi-ex, incendiary, armor-piercing, armor-piercing incendiary, armor piercing fin-stabilized discarding sabot, dumdum, hollow-point, poisoned rounds and acid; high-explosive-armor-piercing-dumdum-hollowpoint-acid-poison-incendiary-DPU would be perfect, if the length of the gun's barrel will allow it.

4. Concealability. The lower the better. Munchkins carry guns to intimidate and harm people, not to hide. Be proud of your gun.

5. Accuracy. Not an issue unless you're playing a sniper munchkin. You're going to be putting it to their heads, so who cares if the barrel's a little out of line?

HIGH TECH WEAPONS IN CYBERPUNK

Rail-Guns

Big, intimidating and the little brother of those orbital rock chucks, though the person you hit with it is just as dead as if you hit them with an orbital rock. The downside of these weapons is that they are big, unwieldy, don't carry much

ACQUIRING FUNDS

Ways to Get Lots of Cash at the Start

1. Convince your GM that there would be lots of excellent roleplaying opportunities if you played the head of a multi-billion-cred corporation and experimental weapons lab, or a rich recluse who puts on a mask and cape at night to kick perpetrator butt.
2. Threaten not to protect the rest of the party unless they lend you cash.
3. Tell your GM that you want to "explore the personality of" a really evil bastard who sold his entire family for medical research.
4. Play a religious type and steal all the money from the collection boxes.
5. Sell one kidney, one lung and any limbs or organs you intend to replace with cyberware.

Ways to Get Lots of Cash in Play

1. Sell the bodies and equipment of anyone you kill.
2. Work for the bad guys, double-cross them as well as the good guys, and escape with the cash.
3. Put a gun to a hacker's head, and make him do a suicide run on the Vatican bank to transfer all the money to your account.
4. Follow a rich corporate until he gets mugged, save him, and then ask for a reward.
5. Mug previously-mentioned corporate.

ammo and tend to get you arrested. The upside of the weapon is that it is big, intimidating, you don't NEED much ammo, and would *you* arrest someone carrying a rail-cannon?

Lasers

The little brother of the satellite lasers. Unfortunately, in most cyberpunk games, lasers haven't progressed that far and are of limited use. They don't hurt people very much, they eat battery power and they don't make cool "Neem!" noises. The best thing to do with them is to bolt loads of under-barrel lasers around your favorite big gun and fire them all at once at someone. The upside to lasers is that you can get them in all kinds of cool colors.

Mono-Edges

Ooh, nasty! These leave really grievous and fascinating wounds. Swipe at your enemy then stand back and watch as they at first appear to be unharmed, take a step forward and then fall in half. Very humorous, and gives you plenty of opportunities to gloat.

CYBERPUNK MEETS FANTASY

You all know what we're talking about here, um, "Darkjogger," you know the one. While personally we find the idea of elves and pixies being part of the cyberpunk genre laughable, for the sake of completeness we'll include some material on this.

Mixing the two genres allows you to munchkin out in ways only previously thought of under the influence of speckled, brightly-colored mushrooms. Just think, you can now maximize combat skills, magic, cybernetics, and racial characteristics all at once! The troll-sorcerer who packs a punch with a pistol and has had his entire body sealed inside power armor cannot be far off.

The principles are the same as in other SF, but mix and match some ideas from the fantasy chapter. Magic items, for example; if only *D&D* had had the +3 Howitzer. Elves become even less desirable, of course, as they are inherently wussy, and trying to take on a tank with a bow and arrow is not going to work, however many arrows you can loose off a turn.

METAL GOOD, FLESH BAD

If you are going to munchkin out in cyberpunk you have to cyber yourself up to the maximum. No half-hearted piddling about with this and that nerve booster, umming and ahing about armored skin; get on with the hardware installation!

Games tend to penalize this with loss of "Humanity"; mostly-metal characters slowly transform into soulless psychopaths. This has little to do with any original cyberpunk novels, being merely a pathetic attempt to twink-proof a munchkin-friendly genre. However, no self-respecting combat-wombat would regard being turned into a soulless psychopath as any sort of penalty.

Here is a brief checklist:

Neural Interface

Plug in to your gun and your car! The first boosts accuracy and means that you get a reminder before you embarrassingly run out of ammo at a crucial moment (but don't ask what a psychiatrist would make of it); the latter means that you can use your hands for important stuff while driving (such as shooting little old men in old family cars when they get in your way).

Plugging direct into the 'net isn't especially munchkin, although it may be an advantage when you locate the porn sites.

Nerve Boosters

For speed, increased dexterity, gun skills, initiative and being able to keep up with teenage girls in gossipy conversations.

Armor

Sub-dermal armor plates and skin woven with Kevlar to stop all but the most persistent bullets. Also good for warding off the things other players throw/shoot at you when you munchkin out and kill every enemy before their guns have cleared their holsters.

Implanted Weaponry

Anything, implanted anywhere. For real munchkin hand-to-hand ability, get blades in your fingertips, knuckles and forearm; you can hit people with all three sets in one strike! From personal experience we do not recommend implanting weaponry in the genitalia as kickback can be somewhat painful.

Cyberlimbs

Good for crushing things, breaking stuff, using guns you wouldn't normally be able to lift, punching through brick walls, and carrying toast from the toaster to your plate without getting singed fingers.

Muscle Grafts, Skeletal Reinforcement, etc.

Combined with cyberlimbs, these will enable you to throw cars at people, run through walls, and carry all your cyberwear maintenance gear back from Radio Shack without suffering a hernia.



Hard Science Fiction

"Hard SF" at first presents a problem for your average munchkin. Everything is governed by real scientific laws or someone's best guess. You won't generally find the more exotic ray-guns in this genre. But don't be disheartened; the universal "concentrate on combat skills" rule still applies, even though you will probably be forced to take all sorts of unessential skills as in most Sci-Fi games.

REALISM CAN BE YOUR FRIEND

Realistic space travel provides far more ways for people to die than in the other sub-genres. Many far more horrible ways to die, in fact. For example, if your suit gets ruptured in classic SF, you just patch it up. If it gets ruptured in Hard SF, you explode, boil and freeze all at the same time.

So Hard SF presents more sneaky ways to kill people, and while sneaky isn't truly in line with the ethos of the munchkin, a kill is a kill. Try removing the radiation shielding from someone's work-station, fiddling with their space-suit, or sabotaging the space-toilet so the "flush" cycle takes effect while they're sat on it.

Zero gravity can also be a help rather than a hindrance; if your guns are modified to fire in a vacuum, an autofire burst can return you to your ship. You can drown people in bubbles of water, or throw them miles away from the ship (provided that you are securely fastened). Aerosol cans can become improvised rockets, and bone breaking becomes easier as prolonged exposure to zero-gee weakens bone structure.

HIGH TECH = BIGGER GUNS

Your GM will bang on about the fact that higher tech level worlds will have sweeping vistas of elegant cities held aloft by anti-gravity machines, cloning technology and all kinds of wonderment. We're not interested in any of this; to us, the higher the tech level, the more interesting ways to kill people are available. See our tech level table for the important stuff.

TECH LEVELS

Note: These Tech Levels are based on munchkin perceptions of the passage of time and the advance of technology, and have nothing to do with certain over-complicated games with a formula for everything.

Level

0. (Stone Age)

1. (Bronze/Iron Age)

2. (Renaissance)

3. (Industrial Age)

4. (Silicon Age)

5. (Fusion Age)

6. (Interstellar Age)

7. (Imperial Age)

8. (Super-Advanced)

9. (God-Like)

10. (God)

Ways to harm other sentient life forms

Rocks, fists, bad breath, bones, excessive facial hair.

Swords, knives, arrows, clubs, riding a horse over them.

Primitive guns, crushing people's heads in the first printing presses, landing a wooden helicopter on them.

Proper guns and cannons, tying people to railway tracks, poaching them with steam.

Computers, nuclear weaponry (Yeah!), fully automatic guns that rarely jam.

Workable lasers, fusion bombs, pushing people out of airlocks.

Feeding people to aliens, pushing people out of airlocks into hyperspace, some of the cool ray guns now available.

Reporting people to the Imperial authorities, setting robots on them. Feeding people to a more interesting array of aliens. Psionics may be about by this stage, so cash in on them.

Terraform a planet to be poisonous, then dump someone there. Crash a planet into their house. Focus the energy from the sun into a beam to attack them. Send them black holes in the mail. Inertialess space travel and star-boiling weaponry is now available.

By this time you will be too advanced to bother with killing anybody; everyone will be immortal. Of course, you can pick on more primitive races, getting them to attack each other. That's very god-like.

We don't know. Ask him. If you get a reply it'll be an important philosophical step for mankind. However we dread to think of what would happen if God returned to his munchkin-like behavior of the Old Testament. It just goes to show, even all-powerful superbeings aren't above picking on people.



Giant Killer Robots of Doom

Another flavor of Sci-Fi is the Giant Robot sub-genre. Giant robots are also known as "Mecha," "Labors," or "Armor." A rough definition follows:

Mecha (n.) Any huge armored battle-robot at least twelve feet tall, bristling with guns and missiles, with foot-thick armor and a badly-drawn pilot with green hair. See also *Anime*, *Manga*, and **KA-BOOM!**

Giant robots have instant and lasting appeal to a munchkin. As children, gaming twinks probably tortured ants under magnifying glasses, stamped on beetles, and plucked the wings from flies. When this comes through in the context of this type of game, they are burning fleeing civilians under their high-powered lasers, stamping on tanks, and pulling the wings off aircraft.

The idea of being in command of your own unstoppable battle machine is irresistible. The sheer power of the machines and the destructive potential of their weapons aren't the only reasons; most mecha are humanoid in shape and thusly the combat freak can empathize with them and use all his martial arts moves while inside them.

To be successful as a giant robot munchkin, you will need to tune in to the Japanese Anime mind-set. So, die your hair blue, stretch your eyes, get an obsession with girls' pants and molesting tentacles, and away we go!



STEREOTYPES

Anime mecha games lend themselves particularly well to stereotyping. In every manga video, there are characters who fall within certain specifications. You will do well to work within one of these stereotypes, and to exploit all its little quirks to best advantage.

Young Cocky Hero

Requirements: To fulfill this stereotype, your hero should be between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one. You should be a total prodigy at your area of expertise. Your hair should fall across one side of your face, completely covering one eye and totally disabling your depth perception. You should never wear anything except your jump suit. You should be involved in a complex love triangle with two female leads. You should do things without asking the proper permission.

Advantages: Natural talent, youth, vigor, speed, looks, cockiness.

Disadvantages: Annoying, clean-cut, devotion to duty and family values.

Munchkin Features: Speed, piloting, luck.

Old Grizzled Mentor

Requirements: You should be at least 50 years old. You should have at least three days' growth of stubble. Your clothes should be oil-stained and you should have eye trouble of some kind. (Eyes that bulge or pop out are good. Having one eye inordinately larger than the other is another good idea.) You should have a cybernetic replacement for at least one limb, which you lost in the last war. You should know everything there is to know about combat and Mecha. Even though you are a virtual cripple, you should have an impressive array of combat skills.

Advantages: Experience, finely honed skill, respect of younger pilots.

Disadvantages: Age, prosthetic limbs, depression and caffeine addiction.

Munchkin Features: Combat skills, tactics, experience.

Nubile Young Thing

Requirements: Horribly annoying squeaky voice. Green, blue, pink or otherwise freaked-out hair color. HUGE eyes. IQ in single digits. You should be totally and utterly oblivious to everything that goes on around you and should never realize what kind of danger you are in.

Advantages: Cute. Everyone loves you and will look out for you and prevent you coming to any harm.

Disadvantages: Dappy. A total airhead who would float away if her shoes weren't so heavy. Tends to get kidnapped and menaced by the alien invaders.

Munchkin Features: None. Do not play.

Ice Queen

Requirements: A normal hair color. A stern stare. No sense of humor whatsoever. Rigid and inflexible dedication to duty. No social life at all, no lovers, no real friends and a total avoidance of alcohol. A stiff stance and an uncompromising attitude toward all Young Cocky Heroes. You should have excessively high levels in tactical and ship's weapons skills but such low charm that no one will listen to you.

Advantages: Good concentration, authority, dedication to duty, good overall knowledge.

Disadvantages: The most common target for gossip and practical jokes.

Munchkin Features: Starship operations, intimidation, tactics.

Drunken Ace

Requirements: A European name such as "Jake" or "Dirk." Blond hair is normal. You should be a ladies' man with a high level of skill in seduction. Apart from that, your only abilities should be intimidation (for haranguing new recruits) and the skills of your particular trade. You should be an irredeemable alcoholic with a preference for spirits, and your mecha should have some unique design painted on it so friends and enemies alike can tell who you are.

Advantages: Obscene levels of skill, luck with the ladies, admiration.

Disadvantages: Usually dies saving a Young Cocky Hero from having his arse shot off.

Munchkin Features: Piloting, weapon skills, consumption of alcohol.

Dirty Old Man

Requirements: An age in triple figures. A hyperactive libido which absolutely cannot be controlled by anything short of a nuclear strike to the groin. Shockingly white hair, and an arrogant and superior attitude. Supreme technical skill, making you absolutely essential to the war effort, and you know it. Stunted size, odd looking eyes, one tooth and a tendency to laugh for no good reason.

Advantages: Libido like a horny young goat. Massive intellect. Indispensable to the greater battle.

Disadvantages: Really old and feeble. Gets slapped a lot.

Munchkin Features: Lust, scientific or obscure knowledge.



GIANT ROBOT PAINTWORK

The paint job you give your mecha is very important. Remember what we said about wizards and pyrotechnics earlier? Well, much the same thing applies to mecha and a cool paint job. What's the point of having a fifty-foot killing robot that's armed to the teeth and armored enough to stop a nuke if its paint job is boring?

Paint Style Black

Good And Bad Things About It

Black is THE cool color, and can be used to make your mecha look like a ninja. But the other members of your squad might complain about not being able to see you.

Psychedelic

This is best used if you can make the mech spin at high speeds. Why? Because you can use your mech as a hypnodisk and really trip out the enemy. From another point of view, however, you will probably just look like a sad seventies reject. It will also become compulsory for you to play *Sergeant Pepper* from your mech's speakers.

Funky

Like psychedelic but with bell-bottomed flares and a huge wire wool afro. Quite silly, really.

Gray

Serviceable, and blends into clouds and buildings quite well. But it's boring.

Gunmetal

Ah, the color of the munchkin! If you apply this paint in the correct manner, you could get your mech to look like a giant gun. As a downside, if you look like a giant gun, people will blow the hell out of you as a reflex action.

Heraldry

On one side, this paint job is damn impressive and you can tell everyone about your great deeds. On the flip side, every bad guy from here to hell will know it was you who did over his sister/mother/father/dog/goldfish (delete as applicable).

Metallic

Good idea, but metallic paint tends to scratch at the first sight of a missile salvo. It does look damn cool, though.

Military Camo

Pretty cool idea, but you have to make sure that you get the right camo job; an urban camo mech in the desert will stick out a bit.

Neon Colored

This is usually reserved for "cute" mecha, as the bright colors allow them to be even more ingratiatingly loveable and fluffy. On the other hand, remember that fad for neon socks? Yeah, the eighties have a lot to answer for.



MECHA TYPES

There are many different types of mecha to choose from. You as a munchkin will probably want the super-battle-fortress type, but any sane GM will instantly say "NO!" and hit you with a big stick that has a nail through it, so we have prepared for this by giving you some information on the other types commonly found – the ones that your GM will not instantly slap you for suggesting.

Humanoid

This is the generic mecha, with two arms, two legs, a torso and a head. The mecha will usually have the pilot in the torso or head and a huge array of weapons.

The humanoid mecha is the backbone of most mecha-oriented militaries, and is often found as a mass-produced grunt model. This makes it just a tad predictable; everyone who has a mecha has probably owned a humanoid one at some point and therefore knows all its weaknesses and quirks. The other problem with this style is that, due to its use as a front-line grunt soldier, everyone knows that the pilot is in the torso or the head, so everyone shoots out the torso section, or blows off the head, at the first opportunity.

The humanoid mecha has one main advantage over the other types; it has hands. These wonderful appendages can be used not only for firing really big mecha cannons but also for picking up things to use as improvised melee weapons. When we say improvised we mean improvised; sections of road, buildings, other mecha – anything at all can be used to kick tin-plated butt if you think about it enough.

But the true mecha fan will probably want something slightly better than your typical humanoid mech, so we recommend...

Transforming Mecha

It's a car, it's a toaster, it's a fighter, it's a giant robot about to stamp on your nads, it's a fighter again. Get it yet? These mecha, as the name suggests, can transform from one thing to another and back again. This allows them to deliver the maximum damage on any terrain. There are several different forms that transforming mecha may be able to adopt; virtually all have a humanoid form as the basis.

Fighters: Mecha with this transformation option can convert themselves into mach-capable, missile-firing, death-dealing munchkin machines. Your standard humanoid mecha folds back its arms and legs, the head flips up into a cockpit, and wings sprout from the side. All the weapons become either underwing-mounted (guns and beams) or pop-up-and-open pods (missiles and rockets). The fighter mode often gives you higher speed and maneuverability at the cost of decreased weapon accuracy (you are going too fast for the targeting computer to keep up). Mecha fighters' main advantage is that they can pull off some really impressive-looking moves; come swooping in as a fighter, and then

transform using your feet as braking jets and slam through a few building to bring yourself to a halt. Awesome.

Hybrids: The hybrid transformation is sort of a cross between a humanoid and a fighter. They have wings and thruster engines but they also have arms and legs, so not only can you carry underwing-mounted machine guns, you can also have another two guns (one in each hand) plus the standard missile/rocket pods, and you can ninja kick people at speeds of up to mach 8, which is going to need more than a plaster.

On the downside, hybrid mechs look stupid, sort of like an F-16 that has had a high-speed and terminal argument with the Statue of Liberty.

Cars & Bikes: Another fine mecha tradition is the car or bike which transforms into either a mini-mecha or a glorified suit of power armor. This might sound like it's a bit wussy; that's because compared to the other types it is, but compared to the normal human or standard anime munchkin, it has the potential to wipe the floor with them and come back for seconds.

The transforming bike idea is much more popular than the transforming car. This is for several reasons:

1. You can't do a skid and transform move as well in a car.
2. Bike mecha are better for speed.
3. Cars (with a few exceptions) look really sh*t.
4. A bike transforming into battle mech form looks cooler than a car doing the same thing.
5. Bike mecha are easier to look after and maintain than car mecha.
6. Bikes are easier to park.

The whole anime genre is biased against cars; this is because people who drive cars are scared to take a risk like bike riders, and are therefore not suitable for hero types.

Household Goods: Mecha that transform into household goods are very rarely seen. This is for a good reason; IT'S A STUPID BLOODY IDEA. A fifty-foot killer robot that transforms into a carton of milk? How is a milk carton supposed to intimidate anything? It just doesn't happen. "Hold still or I will neem you with sour milk" just doesn't cut it, we're afraid. The only time this could be viable is if you transform and stash yourself in the evil baron's shopping (even bad guys have to eat), wait until you get back to his command ship, then transform into robot form to go kick some ass.

Other household goods available to turn into are things like stereos and washing machines. Unfortunately, most Japanese electrical goods are just too damn miniaturized to make good mecha, unless you are a midget. Plus they are expensive. One thing to bear in mind when playing the pilot of transforming electrical goods is that voltages and plug sockets vary from country to country.

Tanks: The mecha tank is a good compromise between the humanoid and vehicle mecha. Transforming into a tank confers several advantages; you provide a smaller cross-section

for attack, you get to mount bigger guns on the head (turret), and you get tracks which allow you to move across any semi-solid surface. Should things get too hot, you can transform into a robot, Junior Jet Boy your way out of there and then come back with a bigger and badder mech.

As a downside, tanks are often slow and get shot at an awful lot. The expression "F**k! It's a tank! Blast it, Skeeter!" is not entirely unknown on the battlefield. Should you want a mecha tank, then you should go for a big bastard with loads of armor and guns; sod the speed, you're a tank for Christ's sake. Roll over people, slowly, while laughing.

Animal-Like

Animal mecha can provide many interesting alternatives with many specialist attacks and weapons, based on the animal they model. The trick, of course, lies in choosing the right animal.

Onifury Mechasnake-X would get a coiling crushing attack and armor-piercing laser fangs. Gorilloid Type-0 would have powerful punch attacks and a sonic roar. Experimental Fusion Panther Seven would have claws, a powerful leap attack, vicious teeth, and a plasma hairball function.

On the other hand, Powermecium would be a single-celled mecha and impossible to climb into, Special Woodlouse Zord would trundle about invulnerable but ineffective in dry conditions, and Elite Platypus Armor Force would only swim about and make the enemy laugh.

To be on the safe side, choose a predatory animal.

Combiners

A combiner is a giant mecha made out of several other mecha which link together. These are really powerful, and can panel-beat any opposition into the ground. Combiners take several mecha, usually five, one for each section of the body, and combine them into one huge indestructible battle-droid. You get weapons five times the size and five times as powerful, you can often summon up colossal and powerful energy swords from nowhere, and you get to stamp on everyone else's robots which are only a fifth of your size.

This is a pity, because munchkins really don't work well as teams. If you try to integrate yourself into a combiner team, all you'll find is that you get into lethal arguments about who should be in the head, who gets to fire the NN-762 Hyperwave cannon, whose turn it is to summon the mighty electron saber, and who gets stuck as the torso.

Cute

Diddy little mecha with big heads, bigger eyes and amusing weaponry like custard pie launchers or ink sprays.

Kill on sight. These mecha are also known as "Super Deformed"; the only thing going for them is that they can never be killed.

HUGE!!!!

These mecha dwarf absolutely everything else on the battlefield, but stop short of the Super Battle-Fortress class. They are usually the focus for a battle to happen around, but it doesn't have to be that way. Provided you can convince your GM to let you, then there is no reason for you not to use a colossal mech.

These mecha are usually around one hundred times the size of any other thing on the battlefield and somehow ignore the pressure they exert on the ground. Their weapons are huge, difficult to aim, and take a hell of a long time on their recharge cycle. On the other hand, you can wade through platoons of lesser mecha without suffering any ill-effects, crushing all underfoot and laughing maniacally.

SUPER BATTLE-FORTRESSES

The Super Battle-Fortress might sound like the ideal munchkin vessel, but this is not entirely true. As a true munchkin, you will want up-close-and-personal combat, involving plenty of hitting people on the head with axes or shooting them with lots of missiles. A battle fortress deprives you of the personal touch; you can't pull a trigger and obliterate a mech. You have to order other people (the crew) to fire the Ultra-Transdimensional-Electro Cannon or the Anti-Mecha Missile Batteries. Yes, you do have the potential to destroy entire fleets of aliens with one well-placed "neem" (*SDF-1 Macross* for example), but where's the fun in that? The most fun to be had with mecha is in the you-vs.-twenty-enemies close-in fighting scenes.

All the above is true . . . but you still need to have a battle-fortress from which to launch your munchkin attacks. So don't forget to work on the GM to give you the biggest and most munchkin mobile base imaginable from which to launch your squadron of elite combat mecha - your own *SDF-1 Macross* equivalent. Unreliable space cannons capable of turning planets into doughnuts are optional.

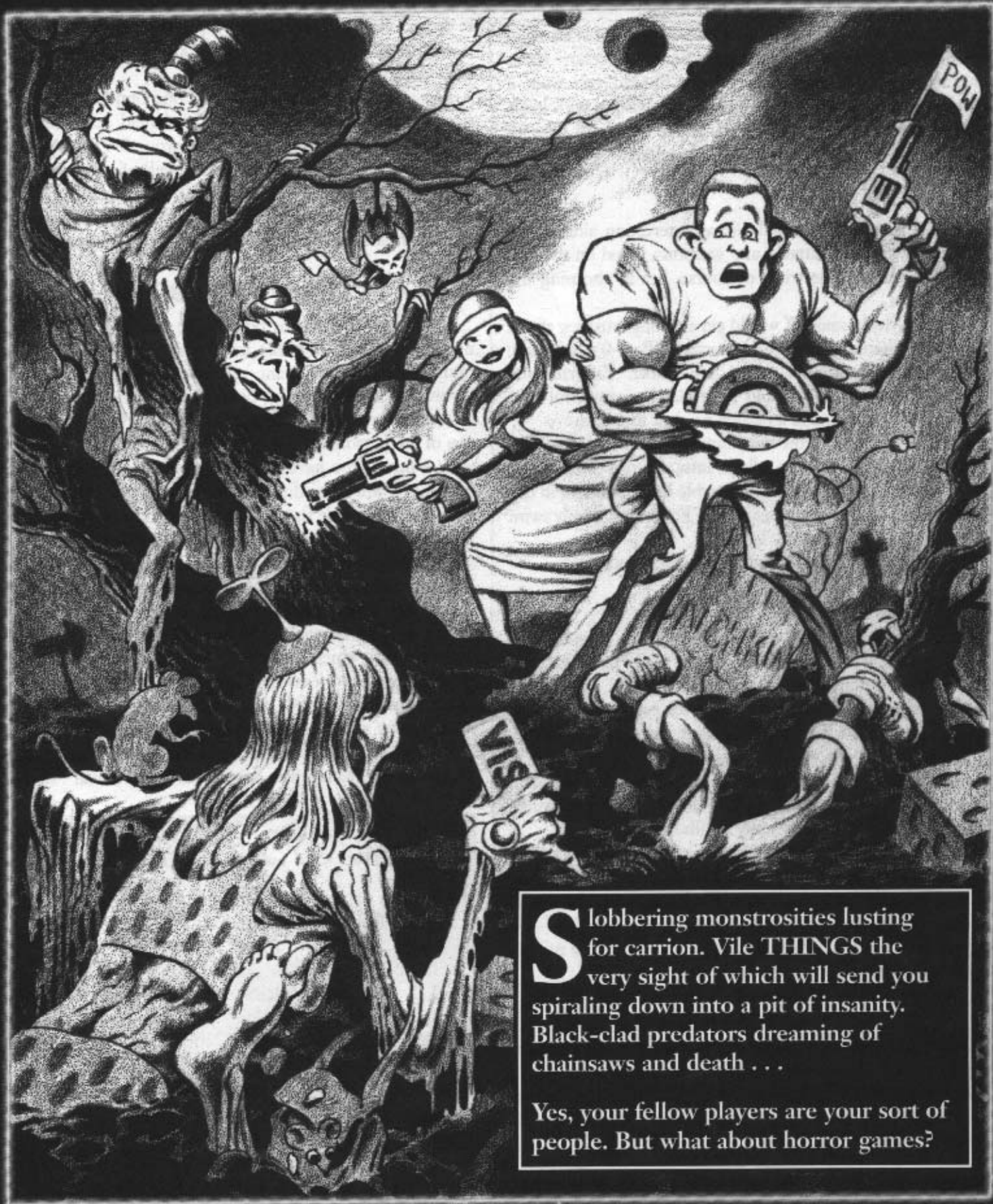
NAMING YOUR MECHA

Select a name by combining one element from each column. Roll a d10 four times if inspiration fails.

	Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4
1.	Super	Mecha	Panther	Zero
2.	Ultra	Robot	Falcon	Alpha
3.	Mega	Bot	Saber	Zeta
4.	Power	Robo	Electron	One
5.	Energy	Zorn	Laser	Prime
6.	Hyper	Armor	Atom	Beta
7.	Fighting	Suit	Psion	Gamma
8.	Destroyer	Frame	Prototype	Seven
9.	Avenger	Waldo	Defender	Sword
10.	Ninja	Borg	Nova	X

*Well, all right, you're a munchkin, destroying entire fleets in a single blast is what you want to do. What were we thinking?

5. MUNCHKIN: THE HORROR!



Slobbering monstrosities lusting for carrion. Vile THINGS the very sight of which will send you spiraling down into a pit of insanity. Black-clad predators dreaming of chainsaws and death . . .

Yes, your fellow players are your sort of people. But what about horror games?

The horror munchkin is an interesting creature. To understand it, you must first be aware of the several varieties.

Horror can be *Splatterpunk*, *Gothic*, or *Modern*. Under each of these headings, you can further categorize characters by whether they are professional monster-hunters or innocent, normal people swept up into an unearthly situation.

Splatterpunk

Professional Investigator: This is usually a grizzled cop who refuses to believe in the supernatural and eats doughnuts at murder scenes. He is likely to be the only character with a gun, and will mistakenly believe that he has authority to arrest slaver beasts from beyond.

Innocents: Read "Victims." A couple of skinny-dipping teenagers, an underage couple grabbing a crafty shag, or someone whose car has broken down.

Gothic

Professional Investigator: Someone who has dedicated his entire life to the study of the supernatural. Usually some musty old fuddy-duddy who looks like everyone's stereotype of a pedophile. Smelling faintly of cough medicine,

he prowls around libraries and university campuses predicting doom of some kind.

Innocents: People who have become creatures of the night or whose friends and relatives have. They will run around a lot bemoaning their lot in life, overdosing on absinthe, and putting on very poor British accents.

Modern

Professional Investigator: Someone who is "In The Know" – often a member of a secret organization. He knows about the "Things in the Shadow," and preaches about them to anyone who will listen.

Innocents: See Splatterpunk above, only with microscopically better survival prospects.

PECULIARITIES OF THE SPLATTERPUNK MUNCHKIN

The splatterpunk munchkin comes in a bewildering array of types, from the survival nut, the military special operations officer, and the private investigator, to mere "concerned members of the public." They can all be identified by the habit of finding and using weapons that fit the situation (shotguns, chainsaws, paired .45s, etc.) and their innate ability to pick up seemingly mundane items and use them to club a bloodthirsty zombie into oblivion without sustaining a single wound. These weapons of opportunity include TVs, doors, ashtrays, and fluffy toys.

One thing that binds all splatterpunk munchkins together is that if they sustain a life-threatening wound, they will perform DIY surgery on themselves utilizing a number of handy items – live ammo, chainsaws, Jack Daniels, etc. After surgery they declare themselves "already dead," gather up masses of weaponry, and make a heroic last stand as their friends escape. Of course, as we know, the monsters are far more likely to go after the unarmed people who are running away than the munchkin with the arsenal. The munchkin knows this too.

A SHOCKED GM IS A PLIANT GM

Horror games, particularly splatterpunk ones, are geared toward schlock, grossness and large amounts of blood, as well as rape, torture, the slaughtering of children and animals, and all the other lovely goings-on you find between the covers of a Sean Hutson novel. But most people work within a certain decency threshold. They describe things up to a point, and then leave others' imaginations and sick little minds to work out the rest.

You can use this to your advantage. Describe in awful and lurid detail every little horrid thing that your psycho does. Shock your GM, be bestial, horrible, conscienceless; leave nothing to the imagination, be florid in your language, use words like "pus" and "sore" – really work on it. Do things that are too grossly stomach-wrenching for even the most lurid horror films or books. And look like you are enjoying it.

If you've pulled it off, you will have severely disturbed the GM and the other players, and whenever it comes around to you doing anything, the GM will skim over you quickly without paying due attention, allowing you to get away with murder.

Horror Antagonists

Typical horror enemies, especially in a splatterpunk or modern game, have to fulfill the criteria of the genre as regards monsters.

They have to be disgusting, ruthless, practically unstoppable, capable of slaughtering all the PCs – and they have to spray a lot of blood or ichor about the place.

Zombies

Zombies are the classic splatterpunk antagonist. Dead people, rising and lurching about in search of fresh meat. We don't mean Haitian mind-control-type zombies; we mean George Romero-type zombies, unrelenting seekers of human flesh.

These guys are great; they will not stop, they spread their condition with their bite, and their numbers increase more and more as time goes on. The only thing that stops them is either a head shot, which necessarily splatters brains over a wide area, or gratuitous dismemberment and wholesale destruction of the body.

The most fun to be had with zombies is when one of your party becomes potentially infected and the GM refuses to give any clues as to whether they'll develop the disease or not. Being a munchkin, you should kill them straight away. If you get bitten, however, just keep quiet.

The best things to use to destroy zombies are fire, big guns, and sharp pointy objects. Power tools tear them apart impressively, but it's slow, hard work. Zombies that have risen from the grave are the most flammable, being dried-out husks filled with stuffing and formaldehyde. Newer zombies don't burn as easily, but torching them is still effective as it tightens their tendons and muscles so they can't move. They'll never do the monster mash again, at any rate.

One of the most satisfying ways to kill zombies is to fit crampons on your boots and kick them in the head. Guns can be used to shoot them through the head, after which they drop like a sack of potatoes with blood and cranial tissue issuing forth in a satisfying manner. Guns run out of ammo though, and soon you will be playing a more survivalist-type game as the zombies take over the world. Sharp pointy objects are the most cost-effective method of dealing with them. They cost nothing, and provided you are willing to engage in a hand-to-hand combat you can generally beat them.



Cannibals

Fighting cannibals can be confusing for munchkins, who aren't above cannibalism themselves. When the PCs are all shut in a mountain cabin under an avalanche the munchkin starts looking hungrily at other characters within five minutes of the last Twinkie being eaten.

In the cannibal, the munchkin often finds a kindred soul, and if there is any truth to the idea that eating your enemy steals his power, then the munchkins will be eating everyone in sight.

Cannibals can come in various styles, from the classic "boil in the bag," steaming cauldron jungle tribe, through those made cannibalistic by disease or religion, to those who were forced by circumstance and acquired the taste...

A good approach would be to tell the cannibals you were British, had eaten roast beef every day of your life, and didn't give two hoots for this supposed *Mad Cow Disease*. That may save your life, but it's not very munchkin since no-one gets hurt.

Some cannibals eat people raw, but most will try to cook you. If roasted over an open fire, simply use your munchkin levels of strength and agility to ensure your bonds are burned first. Then pick up a burning stick and give them a flaming taste of their own medicine. Another possibility is to carry some cheap BBQ lighting fluid on you and at the right moment throw it into the fire. It will make a delightful "Woomph" noise and you should be able to get away as they wince from the flames.

If you know you are to encounter cannibals, start to fatten yourself up, especially around the belly. Eat all the pies you can find. You may think this will make you more

EXOTIC MURDERS

appealing to eat, and yes it will, but it will also create a fiendish weapon. While being roasted, grasp your beer-gut in your hands and point it at the nearest cannibal. Being a munchkin, sitting in a bonfire cooking for a few minutes shouldn't phase you in the slightest. When you reach the appropriate temperature, hot fat will explode from your stomach and horribly burn the cannibals, letting you make a quick escape.

If you are boiled instead of roasted, simply wait until the pot boils and then knock it over, horribly scalding your less munchkin dinner dates and creating a pool of hot juices they can't follow you over.

If all else fails, you can concentrate on being very, very stressed. Stress increases the toxins in your body and if you get a munchkin enough roll and blag your GM you should be able to poison those who eat you, thusly gaining posthumous munchkin revenge.

One last option is open, if cannibals in your game do gain power from those they eat. Convince your ref that you are so strong-willed that as they take your power you are able to possess them. Stranger things have happened in horror games.

Serial Killers

Real-world serial killers are deeply disturbed individuals with peculiar psychoses that lead them to kill. In popular culture, however, they are strange people with masks who stab teenagers, are usually scarred, and come back from the dead in the third or fourth installment of the franchise.

Most game refs subscribe to popular culture, which will actually provide a challenge. If they provide you with a thoughtful, intelligent foe like Hannibal Lecter, you will

have cut him in half with a chainsaw before the second scene of the game. Pop culture serial killers, however, are designed rather like munchkins and should provide a more satisfying game.

This similarity should enable you to weasel a few more concessions from your GM. After all, if the serial killer gains extra strength and toughness and a resistance to pain from being insane, surely so can you.

"That last encounter unhinged me, I'm starting to imitate the man who has been stalking us. So, what do I get? +20 Strength? +20 Stamina? +20 Pain Resistance?"

If the NPCs have it, there is no reason you shouldn't. Continue on this tack until the GM accedes to your demands.

The trigger for serial killers in games and pop culture is usually quite simplistic. Hideously scarred and hates the world, never got a date for the prom, didn't get his shirt folded right at the laundrette, something of that ilk. They then turn on a certain type of person (almost always teenagers staying in log cabins or similar) and kill them (most often while they're *in flagrante delicto*).

So, set a trap. Kidnap a teenage couple and force them at gunpoint to make out while you hide in the bushes awaiting the killer. Smelling a slasher flick cliché they will be unable to resist and whammo, you can ambush them.

WILD ANIMALS

We're not talking bunnies here (well, maybe devil-bunnies). Killer animals are one of the favorite splatterpunk concepts. You can get away with almost any type of killer animal, but they do suffer from one small flaw; commercially-available animal-killing materials. You get attacked by a fleet of four-foot-long killer wasps, so you just spray them with wasp-killer, or deodorant.

Admittedly, you will need some seriously big cans of wasp-killer to get rid of a swarm of four-foot killer wasps, so for the munchkin who's got everything, we present the giant insect killer. Well, actually, it's a flame-thrower filled with bug spray. Same difference. The more classically minded amongst you will most likely prefer just to stick with a flame-thrower.

But wasps are not the only killer animal you will have to deal with . . .

Rats

One of the classic bad, evil sewer animals, rats will attack in large numbers, so if their originality doesn't kill you, they will swarm over you and chew your flesh from you bones. Solution: *rat poison* in large quantities. Ideally, you will stuff a terrier full of the stuff and let it loose near the rats' nest. If the GM's being particularly original, the rats will have a hive mind, so finding the lead rat and splatting it should do the trick.



Insects

A great many people are disgusted by insects and find them particularly unappealing. Some scientists postulate that this ungrounded fear is based on some kind of ancient racial memory. On the off-chance that this is the case* you could have your character perform home brain surgery and remove the more primitive parts of the brain, rendering you unaffected by these fears.

In the more likely event that people fear insects because they are hairy, have nasty looking eyes and an external skeleton, and do all kinds of horrible things like laying eggs under people's skins, you'll have to rely on other methods. Being well-armed is a staple against any creature, insects included. Other distinct possibilities include electrified mosquito netting, car-mounted fly-swatters, and city-block sized bug-zapper machines.

The final course you can take against killer insects is to utilize their complete lack of credibility. If you know your game ref is planning a horror game based around insects, make sure your group has seen lots of awful insect B-movies such as *Them!*, *The Deadly Mantis*, or suchlike '50s products. This will guarantee that they will not be able to help rolling about the floor in laughter as your GM describes the hideous exoskeletal menace.

Rabid Animals

This threat is most often encountered as part of a larger horror game background. The rabid or crazed animal roams the aftermath of a plagued land, or the devastation of some other event.

Nit-picking is a good way to deal with these. Difficult questions may cause your GM to abandon the whole encounter altogether.

"If we can't find anything to eat, how come it's still alive?"

"It's the first animal we've seen in ages, where did it catch rabies?"

If this doesn't work, you will no doubt be forced to fight the beast. Being a munchkin you will do this easily with any given weapon you have found (or even your bare hands); if you want to be truly munchkin, though, we suggest you frighten off the rabid animal (now mortally afraid of water) with a few drops from your canteen.

If your ref has had any real previous experience with players of your ilk, he will have gone for the more credible scenario of having an epidemic of rabid people and animals spreading throughout the land. Fight fire with fire. Take advantage of the confusion to wrest control of a biological warfare lab and release another plague on the world, killing all the infected people and animals and saving the lives of the rest. Which will probably just be you and your party, as you will have the antidote.

Spiders

The eight-legged menace suffers from many of the problems of insects; too many superimposed tarantula and rubber spider movies.

Spiders deserve some modicum of respect from you though. They are the munchkins of the animal kingdom, displaying the cunning required to develop deadly toxins, weave webs, and build traps. Any creature which can kill with one bite deserves to be treated as an equal. You'll still kill it of course, fellow-feeling being an alien concept to a munchkin.

Spiders will either be monstrously huge** or small and poisonous. If they are small and poisonous, the odds are the game will include lots of them. Stamping on them is not going to provide the solution and no amount of glasses and pieces of paper will trap them all. Water is no use, as anyone who has washed a spider down the drain will tell you. Shooting them is difficult, as they are small and numerous. Given that you will most likely be unable to acquire atomic weapons, fire and poison seem to be the way to go.

Most people will settle for poisoning or burning the nest of such creatures, but this is in no way certain and is just not munchkin enough. Burn towns. Destroy cornfields. Poison entire neighborhoods. Use the deadliest toxins and the most flammable fuels you can find.

Failing that, make a desperate high speed trip to a mountain observatory and use their telescope like a giant magnifying glass to fry each and every one of the little blighters. This also works a treat on killer ants.



*Or that you can browbeat your GM into believing it to be true.

**In which case, apply the B-movie credibility trick.

Fish, Shellfish, etc.

Most people consider piranhas and sharks to be the only piscine life with any credibility when it comes to horror and killing. They *are* the most likely to be used, but you can't rely on your referee being lazy enough to select these creatures as your adversary.

Piranhas can strip a fully-grown horse to the bone in seconds. So be sure to take a fully-grown horse with you everywhere. Horses are not great swimmers and those seconds may be vital to your escape.

Sharks can smell blood from many miles away and detect electric impulses. So, cut another member of the party before going swimming, and carry a taser.

But if your GM has much in the way of creativity, he will have realized that the sea also abounds with poisonous creatures, most of them very beautiful to look at.* Australia is full of noxious wildlife, and nowhere is quite so lively with deadly creatures as its oceans and reefs. No small wonder the Aussies cook everything on barbecues; burning removes a great many deadly substances, and even the soil seems poisonous in Oz. Make sure your munchkin kit includes anti-venoms, and should you encounter deadly sea-dwellers of this type, steal their poison to use in a later game. Turn the GM's attempts to kill you against him.

Jellyfish are horrible and poisonous and swarm, which can make them a good choice for an antagonist. They aren't very scary once you are out of the water though, and a few passes with an outboard motor will tear a swarm to pieces. But for god's sake don't be stupid enough to use depth charges. Yes, it *will* kill them, but it will also spatter the decks of the ship with fragments of stinging jellyfish flesh. You can do this, but make sure you are in full diving gear first and have cajoled another PC into offering to swab the decks.

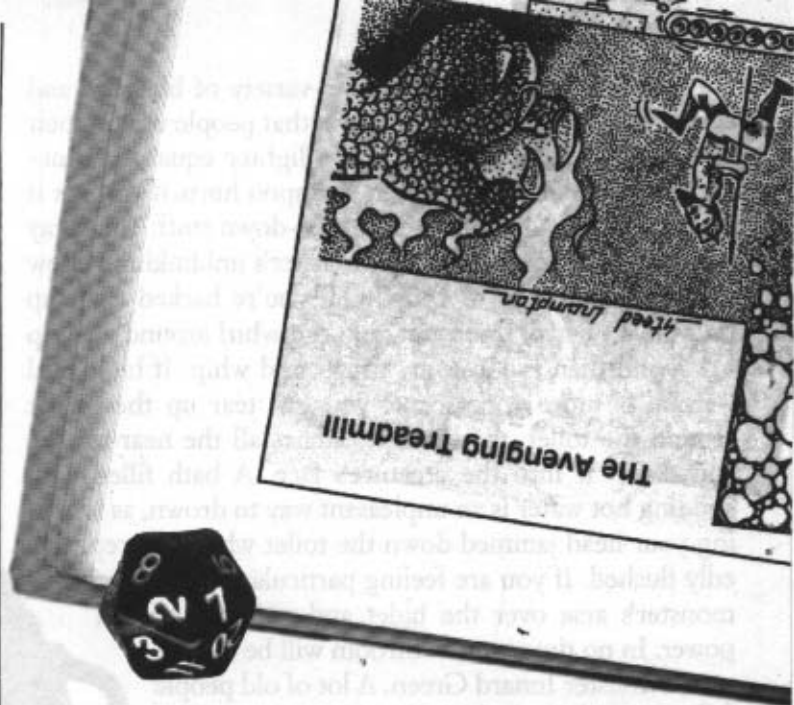
Household Weapons

Any house is full to the brim with seemingly innocent items which if applied properly can cause mass destruction. For a start, any house contains the materials to make some quite powerful explosives, gases, acids and other horrible chemical abominations. For previously-mentioned legal reasons, we won't go into these. However, there are many more mundane items that don't need judicious application of the cookery skill.

The Kitchen

Kitchens are wonderful places to find improvised weapons. Simply open the cutlery drawer and you instantly have both a wide selection of bladed instruments and a high-capacity

*Munchkin translation: "beautiful" usually means good loot in any other context.



missile weapon store. Steak knives and Chinese cleavers are the best weapons to use hand-to-hand. Potato peelers, vegetable knives and sundry other blades are better used for throwing, in volume. Forks are quite effective for poking enemies in the eye. (Eyes burst quite easily and there is just something satisfying about using a fork to do it with.) Butter knives are no real use unless the kitchen contains a motorized knife sharpener, in which case you can run the knife through the sharpener and then throw it. Spoons are very little use as weapons, though being blunt, they can hurt quite a bit when you do use them on someone. Two spoons can also be used to do a passable impression of a rattlesnake in order to scare off any prowling serial killer.

As well as the contents of the cutlery drawer, we have all the labor-saving devices. A fridge makes quite an effective weapon if balanced over a door. Freezers also work, but are far better used for pushing enemies into. Ovens are also good for this; turn the dials right up and cram 'em in. Microwaves are a godsend. Their deadly rays cause enemies to cook from the inside and explode as steam builds up inside. And remember *Gremlins*? Do you have a blender? Grab the monster's arm/tentacle/ganglion and stuff it in. It will be yanked in and shredded before you can say "Die hellspawn!"

The cupboards and drawers around the kitchen usually contain a huge variety of spices, sauces and food additives that can burn, sting and otherwise cause pain when applied to eyes, mouths or open wounds. Chili is good, as are vinegar, mustard and salt. The cupboard under the sink supplies you with bleach (nasty), methylated spirits (firebombs), and all manner of dangerous cleaners, sprays and powders. Oven cleaner is incredibly nasty; the acid that the xenomorphs in *Aliens* bleed has absolutely nothing on it. Sugar is no good, except for distracting giant ants or making into explosives by munchkin chemists. And spraying ketchup around in horror games can lead to a lot of confusion about blood.

The Bathroom

The bathroom often contains a variety of bleaches and cleaners. Then there are the things that people use on their bodies and hair. Hair-spray and a lighter equals a flame-thrower. You know how much shampoo hurts if you get it in your eye? Well, that's the watered-down stuff. You spray concentrated shampoo into a monster's unblinking yellow pupil and it's going to know it. If you're backed right up into the corner of the room, you can whirl around a damp towel and then use it as an improvised whip. If biological warfare is more your scene, you can tear up the carpet around the toilet, the bit that catches all the near-misses, and thrust it into the creature's face. A bath filled with scalding hot water is an unpleasant way to drown, as is having your head jammed down the toilet while it is repeatedly flushed. If you are feeling particularly nasty, jam a monster's arse over the bidet and switch it to full power. In no time your bathroom will be redecorated Monster Innard Green. A lot of old people fall over and die in bathrooms due to the slipperiness of the bath or the tiles; thus, a particularly vicious way to deal with an ancient monster is to remove the rubberized safety-grip mat from the bath.

Make sure that your character either shaves with straight razors (good for slashing people open) or classic razor-blades (as usually used for suicides in movies). Classic razor-blades can be thrown, thrust edge-up into the carpet to slash people's feet, or loaded into shotgun cartridges. If the bath is full, or the shower is on, take a toaster or radio on an extension cord and drop it in when the enemy looks for you in there.

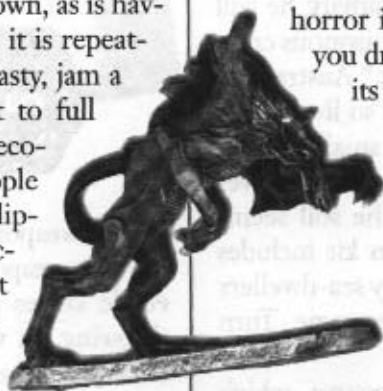
The Tool Shed

The tool shed can be a wonderful place for mass death, or as a fortress during a prolonged raid. In order to get your GM to agree that your shed contains a huge array of death-dealing weapons, you should stress the following points in character generation:

1. Your investigator devotes every spare minute of time to the acquisition of more DIY tools and to DIY projects (a good excuse for power drills to be left around the house).

2. Your hero should at one point have worked at a industrial complex that shut down its machine shop. This means that you can have more DIY tools than you could ever possibly need at a discount price (you tipped the doorman to look the other way and swiped all the stuff they were going to throw out).

3. Your character should construct his own shed out of mahogany, giant redwood or good old English oak. This makes the "shed" almost totally resistant to bullets, fire (ever tried to get oak to burn?), LAW rockets, and sometimes even tank shells.



Once you have got your shed built and equipped, you should have a base of operations for the inevitable monster attack. You have the equipment to build impromptu bazookas (pipe, gas, lighter and frozen orange), armor plating, vehicles, flame-throwers, etc. However, some games value power tools over firearms; this is when your Shed of Doom comes into its own. If stocked correctly you should have at least four power-drills, four different types of power saw (jigsaw, buzz-saw, rip-saw and circular saw), bench-mounted power tools (band-saw, pillar drill, bench sander, bench-saw), some form of polishing/trimming device (power-plane, power sander, hedge trimmer or the like), a semi-auto nail gun, and so many chisels, drill bits, knives, hand-saws and other sundry blades that any attacking horror is going to get a fatal surprise. Not only can you drill holes in it, sand/plane its face off, nail-gun its genitals to the floor and trim its limbs off, but you can then chop it up into little bits.

Other things to keep in mind are the applications of slight modifications to tools. A semi-auto nail gun can be converted to a full-auto death dealing munchkin nail cannon by just the application of a few screwdriver twists.

Mind you, if your GM runs a "possessed machinery" plot, you're soooooo screwed.

The Lounge

The lounge, at first glance, seems like a useless place to be stuck. You would be wrong in assuming this; the lounge contains many a deadly weapon. It is, after all, the home of the most dreaded cushion.



TYPICAL CRITICAL TABLES

Horror games are nothing without some gratuitous and over-the-top critical hit tables. While a good GM can make up his own gory images and sound effects, everyone gets tired and irritable, and in some cases just can't be bothered to invent anything. Here is a glowing example of the sort of thing that a decent game provides you to cover these moments:



Small Cushion (SC)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>01 A glancing blow ricochets off your opponent's face, distracting him slightly. -1 on his next attack.</p> <p>02-07 Your cushion impacts heavily with your opponent's leg. He must make a STR check at -5 or wobble his knee slightly.</p> <p>08-13 A wild upswing with the cushion pushes back the fingers on your opponent's hand, clicking them. +1 damage.</p> <p>14-19 The cushion slams into your opponent's belly. STA check at -5 or giggle; -10 if cushion has a frilly edge. +1 damage.</p> <p>20-25 The cushion bashes heavily into your opponent's knee, sending him down on one leg. +2 damage.</p> <p>26-31 The cushion whacks heavily into your opponent's side, winding him slightly and pushing him sideways. +2 damage, stunned 1 turn.</p> <p>32-37 The cushion whacks into his arm; he drops any weapon he is carrying as his hand flies backward into the arm of a chair with a whack. +4 damage.</p> <p>38-43 You lunge past and bring the cushion back, hard, into his buttocks, propelling him forward into the wall. +5 damage, STA check at -5 or stunned.</p> <p>44-49 You feint to the left, you feint to the right, then you whack the cushion into his groin. The well-packed cushion impacts hard. Your opponent doubles up in agony. Double damage, stunned d6 turns.</p> | <p>50-55 You whip out with the cushion, smashing into his fingers. There is a crack as one is dislocated. +6 damage. STA at -5 or stunned d6 turns.</p> <p>56-61 The cushion whips out, and the zipper catches your opponent in the eye. +6 damage. STA check at -5 or stunned. Blind in one eye, -5 to ranged attacks.</p> <p>62-67 You shake the cushion, packing all the stuffing into one corner. Then you smash the cushion hard into his forehead. Momentarily stunned, he keels over, banging his head on the ground. +3d6 damage. STA at -10 or knocked out.</p> <p>68-73 You lash out with the cushion, applying a barrage of lightning-fast blows to your opponent's head. Reeling, he can't avoid the wall of soft fluffy death. Triple damage. Lose next turn.</p> <p>74-79 Holding the cushion over your head, you charge full on into your opponent's midriff. There is a whoosh of air as he is winded, the crack of a breaking rib, and the thud of him hitting the carpet. Double damage, lose next d6 actions. STA at -10 or knocked out.</p> <p>80-85 Feeling a bit cheeky, you grab a second cushion by its corner and whirl both around in a web of death like a pair of spongy nunchuks. Then you slap each cushion either side of your foe's head. Stunned, double damage. 40% chance of bursting eardrums.</p> <p>86-90 You strike so hard that the cushion bursts asunder on the enemy's head, surrounding him with feathers and bits of foam. Double damage, effectively blind, half normal chance to hit on any attack. STA at -15 or stunned 2d6 turns.</p> <p>91-95 Your enemy proves to be violently allergic to the feathers in your pillow. He comes out in hives, his flesh goes all lumpy, he vomits copiously and he dies in d6 hours unless he gets medical attention.</p> <p>96-97 The zipper comes open and somehow hooks the foe's neck, taking out a sizable chunk of flesh. Triple damage and will die of blood loss in 2d6 turns.</p> <p>98-99 Your cushion strike tickles the enemy; he giggles too hard and has a brain hemorrhage. Dead in d6 turns.</p> <p>00 Shouting "Choke, damn you, choke!" you stuff the cushion into his mouth, forcing it into his gullet and causing him to rapidly suffocate. Thoroughly dead.</p> |
|--|---|

STANDARD WEAPONS

Standard Weapon Crossbow

Munchkin Function

Silent, and home-made bolts make it cheap on reloads. Used for pinning zombies to doors, bursting tires, and as a grapple-line thrower.

Bowie knife

Rugged, with a heavy blade. Good for whittling, sharpening stakes, cutting ropes, and pinning zombies to floors.

Spear

Good ranged weapon, easy to make and replace, useful for pinning zombies to trees.

Paired .45s

Rapid but accurate fire. Looks good. Useful for propelling zombies into doors via ballistic shock.

Sniper rifle

Good, accurate, long range. Difficult to get ammo, but if you are a real munchkin you can make your own. Used for propelling zombies' brains into doors.

Sawn-off shotgun

Excellent close-quarters hand-cannon. Easy to reload and get ammo. Used for propelling zombies' heads to the four winds.

Large-bore shotgun

Similar to the above but better at medium range. Sounds more impressive as well. Used for propelling most of the zombie through a door.

Hilarity aside though, the lounge does contain some pretty munchkin weapons. You have got furniture; this can be used to ram into monsters' legs, cower behind, throw at monsters, and even to sit on. There are often TVs and VCRs; both can be used as weapons and will really hurt the person/thing on the receiving end of a video to the head. (It is even possible to use the TV and VCR in a combined attack; you smash the TV over the enemy's head and follow up with a VCR to the happy sacks - gonna need a band aid.) The lounge is also the preferred dwelling-place of the collection of SHATTERABLE GLASS ornaments; these can be used to great effect by throwing them at the monster's feet or face. You will often find pictures; there are two main types, the heavy-framed and glass-coated type, and the light-framed and easily-breakable type. For bashing monsters over the head, we recommend the heavy glass-coated

version; heavy frame equals much pain, and shattering glass has to count as AP. (The lighter type should be thrown edge-on while you look round for something heftier.) The other main feature of the lounge is the 'phone; this can be used for several things, including calling your mates for help, ordering pizza, or ramming down the evil hell-spawn's throat.

In the last resort, you can always turn the TV on and pray that the monster is a soap opera fan or addicted to Oprah.

The Study

The study is a good place for a pitched battle, as this is where most people keep their guns. Who doesn't keep a couple of .44 magnums in their work desk? Also, studies tend to contain computers and letter-openers. A computer is good; you shoot the monster with the .44, he falls over, you then repeatedly cosh him on the head with the computer. If the monster won't stay still, use the letter-openers to pin his hands and feet to the floor. Another fixture of the study is the big globe/drinks cabinet; this can be opened in the face of a monster to distract it, or with the addition of a handkerchief and a zippo you can make Molotov cocktails to throw. For the munchkin who has enough martial arts to cause damage with anything, remember that there are bound to be stacks of paper in the study; you can inflict a really nasty paper-cut, and with enough training you could even decapitate a monster with but a single sheet of letter-quality.

The study is also the traditional place for the secret passage, usually behind a fake bookcase or something. The placement of this passage is crucial as it represents your escape route; it should lead to the best-defended area of the grounds, usually the shed, or to the secret weapons store so you can tool up and go for it. A secret passage should never lead to a locked room, a dead end, or a flower garden.

The Bedroom

Certain bedrooms are better than others, and different types of bedroom have different items of use within them. A young girl's room will make you totally immune to many monsters, since most hell-spawned creatures would not be seen dead around that much pink plastic and soft cuddly plush. Teen-age boys' rooms are good to hide in since they are so full of junk that the mere act of diving in will conceal you utterly from detection. (On the downside, the sheer number of used pants, socks and half-eaten stale pizzas provides a horror almost as great as any monster your GM could come up with.) Women's bedrooms have the pink factor, with extra frills, and also have items that may be used as weapons: alcohol-based perfumes, hair-spray, depilatory cream (good for use against werewolves, for the embarrassment), steel combs (very nasty), hair dryers (which can get very hot), and heated tongs (which smart a bit when applied to sensitive areas).

Bedrooms which belong to S&M freaks are by far the most defensible and the best for weaponry. They are often some kind of dungeon, and contain leather gear, which can be used for armor. As well as the studded leather, there will be a wide variety of whips, clubs, coshes, handcuffs and nipple electrifiers, and all manner of other groovy gear which will make the average psycho or zombie think twice about having a go at you.

Bedrooms are usually upstairs, limiting your escape potential, so be careful not to get cornered in one. If you are, your only recourse is to hurl yourself from the window and hope that you land on something soft that doesn't want to kill and eat you.

The Attic

You should only ever end up in the attic if you've become trapped and there is no other place to hide. But you can then pull up the ladder, making it very hard for any monsters or psychopaths to get up there and kill you. (And hey, go see *Shallow Grave* for ideas on how you can treat any psychos who do join you up there.)

Once ensconced in the attic, you can find many old items – TVs, prams, radios, abandoned school projects – to drop on any monster foolish enough to wander under the trapdoor. Attics also contain water tanks, which can be used to hide in, and being at the top of the house and full of insulation, the attic keeps pretty warm. You can last out quite a long siege in there. All you are short of is food.

However, attics are dark and scary and full of dust, cobwebs and fiberglass; not the most healthy place to be. They are easier to escape from than they first appear, though. Roof tiles can easily be knocked through, giving you access to the outside. Once there, you can hurl the remaining tiles at any opposition and plan a more effective escape route. If several houses are linked together, you can traipse from one to another, breaking in and stealing whatever you want from each one as you pass it. A row of houses should provide you with a semi-decent car and enough weapons and food to escape your town and make it to the relative safety of Somewhere Else.

On Getting Gothic

Gothic horror has had something of a surge over the last few years, largely thanks to White Wolf's

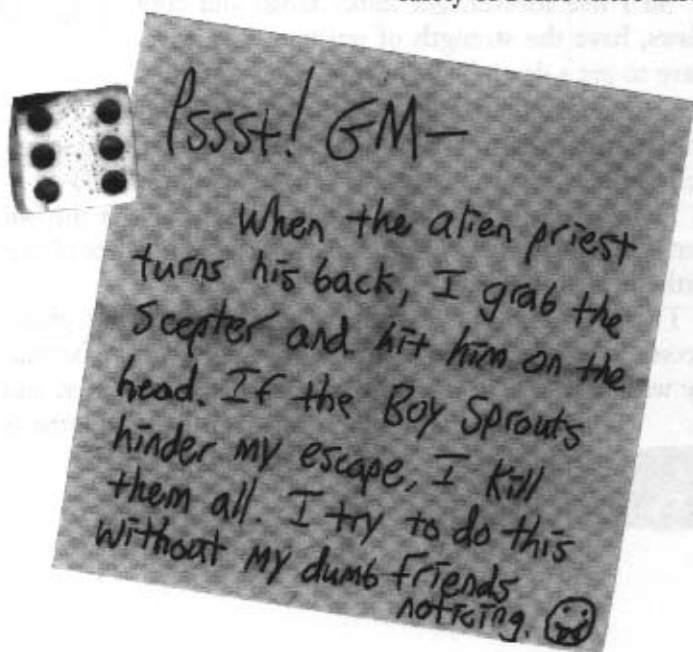


games. Now, we don't only have to put up with bearded proto-dwarves with damp armpits and pens in their top pockets haranguing us into playing *AD&D*, twitchy people in spiky leather extolling the virtues of their full 'borg conversion

Cyberpunk characters, and wacky folk in bright shirts trying to get us to play *Toon*. No, now we have a load of pale-faced black-clad people in ill-fitting jumpers poncing about the place coughing into hankies and trying to bite people on the neck.

Unlike splatterpunk or modern games, gothic horror isn't primarily about killing nasties. Indeed, players are prone to announcing "we are the monsters" (angst, angst). But just because gothic horror tends to appeal to people in plastic trousers and frilly shirts doesn't mean that there is no room for munchkins. After all, death is a central gothic theme. Plagues and diseases often figure, and the whole ambience has a certain munchkin appeal – black clothing, skulls, scavenging birds and so on.

You don't have to be a Trent Reznor look-alike to enjoy gothic horror, but it helps. Otherwise, you may miss the finer points of the games; you may kill the bad guy you're supposed to empathize with, or you may even slaughter your way through a game supposed to contain no combat at all. But even if you do all that, the angsty players should be grateful; you've given them something else to go "Woe!" about.



THE GOTHIC GET-UP TABLE

Item of Clothing	Reason for Wearing	Munchkin Reason
Baggy black jumper	Keeps you warm and makes you look as fat as Robert Smith.	If you get lost you can unravel the wool to leave a trail.
Black DMs	An ugly, practical boot is a rejection of societal norms and shows individuality.	Big nasty boots for kicking people, very hard, in the nads.
Black pointy boots	These can be adorned with chain, chromed tips and other stuff. Mundanes rarely decorate their footwear.	They have a really vicious point which hurts when you kick people.
Black socks	To complete the effect.	They don't show stains; you can wear them for months. Disguise!
Dyed black hair	All Goths must have black hair.	You can catch fish in them.
Fishnet tights	Rebellious and controversial.	Think of all the fights you can get into because bigots assume that you are gay!
Frilly shirt	You are challenging sexual stereotyping.	You can conceal rifle-sized firearms under it.
Long black dress	<i>De rigueur</i> , and different from what the fashion victims are wearing.	Blood wipes right off.
PVC Jeans	Emphasize your waif-like figure.	Should the bomb go off you'll have something to trade.
Silver jewelry	Contrasts nicely with the black.	Spikes hurt, a lot.
Spike-heeled boots	By dressing in what people call a 'tarty fashion,' you are rejecting stereotype and demonstrating your inner strength.	

WEARING BLACK

This is an important part of gothic-genre RPGs, regardless of whether you consider yourself part of the "romantic" scene or not. A black T-shirt suffering the bleaching effects of one too many washes and some gray jeans just won't cut it. You have to wear black like you mean it, and have a hair-cut which is, in some way shape or form, drastic. To a cursory glance you should appear to be a pillar of black from your feet to the tips of your hair.

But you don't want to shell out large amounts of cash only to end up looking like an item of lingerie. Being a munchkin, you will want to get some other use out of the items of clothing you must buy in order to become a fully integrated part of a Gothic Horror roleplaying group; see our handy table. If, on the other hand, you are not a munchkin in real life as well as your fantasy life, then there is one other reason to transmute yourself into a goth. Goths may get abused, picked on, ridiculed, beaten up and pilloried, but they have lent a certain street credibility to roleplaying that was absent before. Before you were a nerd; now you are a freak of nature. Cool, huh?

CONTRASTING WITH GOTHs

Once, body-snatcher like, you have taken on the appearance of your prey, you need to know how to make your playing style interact, overpower and otherwise stomp all over their game. This should come naturally. If they are all playing creatures of the night then it is incredibly likely that they will be concentrating on the terrible personal angst and horror of the whole thing. In you come . . .

"So I live forever, get funky fangs and cool claws, have the strength of ten men and never have to get a day job? Groovy!"

. . . and ruin the whole thing for them, stamping all over the plot, slaughtering left right and center, revealing yourself to the world and generally causing trouble.

The problem with this is that you may soon get thrown out of the group for "Destroying the dark ambience of our little theatrical pieces."

There are several ways you can avoid this. Having cheap access to white face make-up is one, working in a pharmacy with a staff discount on black hair dye is another, and knowing how to brew your own absinthe is a surefire killer.



ANGST TRIGGERS

Things You Should Show Angst About:

- Having to kill a friend or ex-lover.
- Having to kill anyone.
- The death of a pet or loved one.
- Your return to drugs/drink/self-abuse.
- Becoming a creature of the night.
- Finding out a trusted teacher is a cultist.
- The suicide of a friend or family member.

Things You Shouldn't Show Angst About:

- Someone scratching your car.
- Whether or not you should buy a lottery ticket.
- Running out of hollow-point ammunition.
- Losing a poker game.
- Having enough money to buy lots of clothes and makeup and being able to afford to go to expensive nightclubs.
- Your watch stopping.
- Your pen running out of ink.
- Being called a "bitch" in a rather camp tone of voice.

SPOILING THE ATMOSPHERE

GM: You enter the house to look for your mentor and tutor Dr. Lang. Lightning flashes and thunder rolls overhead. In the grounds a tree releases a horde of crows into the sky in response. The door is slightly ajar and the wind rocks it back and forth.

Felicia: I push open the door and step inside.

Others: We follow.

GM: The door creaks open and leaves swirl in as you admit the wind. The hallway is large, with polished oak stairs on one side and several doors leading off. It begins to rain outside and at the rear of the hall you see raindrops strike the window, rolling down it. A mournful sobbing can be heard from upstairs.

Felicia: I warily start up the stairs.

Tarquin: No, it may be dangerous; I'll go first, you follow me.

Others: We'll follow them up.

GM: You reach the top of the stairs. It's dark, very dark, and a flickering light spills out from under the door of the study. The sobbing is coming from there.

Tarquin: I slowly and carefully open the door.

GM: Dr. Lang is hunched over the dead body of his maid. Blood is at her throat and at his lips. He sees you coming in. "Dear God what have I become? What have I done? I'm a monster! A monster! You have to help me!"

Munchkin: I charge in and let him have it with both barrels of my sawn-off shotgun. (roll) I hit, it's a critical. (roll) To the head. (roll) Doing 300 points of damage. That's enough for a decapitation effectively, which kills vampires dead.

ANGST AND THE MUNCHKIN

Forget it. You can't show angst. Decisions are easy for a munchkin. Everything can be shot, burned, crushed, destroyed and gotten over or around without a backward glance. You have no qualms about using a person as a shield or throwing a nun in front of an oncoming tank in order to buy some time. Worrying about such actions doesn't even occur to you. Still, if you are to fit in to a gothic roleplaying group, you will need to at least *look* like you understand angst. So, fake it.

Displaying angst requires you to look a little panicked, put a quaver into your voice and hit the drink/drugs/yourself. Pressing your hand to your forehead and professing to have "problems" is optional. We know that as a twink you know exactly what to do in every situation, but you will have to pretend that you don't and will have to roleplay through the whole decision-making process, including worrying about "innocents."



Be wary, though. Angsty, arty gamers will try to re-educate you with *Star Trek*-like moralistic points in the game, trying to make you see the "fun" in not being a munchkin. Whatever you do, don't give in. Use their points to make your own.

GM: The dread forces of the coven leader are closing on you fast. Your inhumanity toward others has finally led them to declare you beast and come after you . . .

Twink: Great, this game was boring until now. I press my foot to the floor and drive away from them at top speed.

GM: They stay with you, in spite of your mad headlong rush, the road eaten up by your tires like the souls you have sundered from their bodies, so much black asphalt under your wheels . . .

Twink: Yeah, yeah, whatever.

GM: Suddenly, a woman with a pram steps out into the road in front of you. If you stop they will catch you, but perhaps, in the final act of compassion, you can regain what you lost and find redemption . . .

Twink: Bollocks to that, plough right through them.

GM: What?!?

Twink: The pursuers from the coven will stop, they give a toss about things like that, I don't. So I'll be able to get away. Excellent.

GM: sobs quietly



Outer Horrors, Welcome to the 20th Century!

The mainstay of most horror games is the ever-present threat of a huge ancient meanie from beyond time coming through to this world and stomping on your swede in a rather aggressive manner. This is fine for most roleplaying groups, who will do their utmost to prevent the arrival of this outer horror and so save the world from another terrible fate (as if the Earth hasn't got enough of its own).

However, as a munchkin, you won't want this. You will want to spend the whole game tracking down a good weapons dealer so you can tool up for its eventual arrival and kick its butt back to the outer realms. How is this possible? Come closer and we will tell you . . .

THE TIME DIFFERENTIAL

Most huge munchkin outer horrors were banished from the realm of the tellurian many, many centuries ago. This leaves them at a distinct disadvantage. They have missed many, many centuries of technological advance in the department of things that go BOOM!

This means that they are totally unprepared for explosives, full-auto weapons, armor piercing rounds, anti-aircraft missiles and nuclear bombs. Face it, the outer horror is going to be a tad unready for 20kg of C-4, a couple of .50-cal mini-guns loaded with armor-piercing, a volley of flak and a nuclear detonation. Even the Great And Evil Ones are going to be a little distracted by such an attack. This leaves an opening for you to deliver your killing blow; a Spice Girls concert.

The Magical Decline

Along with the huge weapons advances made since the time of their exile, the big bad munchkins will also have to deal with one very potent fact. Not too many people believe in magic anymore. This causes problems when it comes to their tried and tested "smite everything with fireballs" approach. It might not work. If enough people can believe that something isn't going to happen, the odds are it won't.

Insanity

One of the problems even munchkins have to face when they stand up to the loathesome dark children of Tsh'thog'og'og'mnar'peng'warrang or some other unpronounceable creature is the possibility of being driven insane by its sheer "otherness." This is more easily dealt with than most people think. For starters, you could create your

COMMON WEAKNESSES

Most Huge Outer Horrors have one big weakness. It varies for each different Outer Munchkin, but the most common ones are:

1. A spell or magical rite which will cast them back into limbo.
2. A single vulnerable spot where a good thwack will kill them.
3. Having to have a physical conduit to maintain their power. You know - the type that can be physically destroyed.
4. Having to inhabit a human body.
5. Needing a certain planetary conjunction to regain their power.

These may seem pretty daunting for normal players. But you are a munchkin, so for you these are trivial problems and the solutions are easy:

1. Get the spell and force a magician or cultist to cast/perform it.
2. Fire a cruise missile at the spot. Or at every part of them, for that matter.
3. Chuck it in a nuclear reactor.
4. Kill the body.
5. Find out which planets and destroy the most crucial one. No conjunction, no monster.

character as being already insane, so insane they couldn't possibly sink any deeper into the depths. Just make sure you choose a useful insanity such as an obsession with firearms.

Another way to avoid being driven insane by these things is simply not to look at them. At the slightest hint of anything eldritch, shut your eyes, block your ears with cheese, and without looking, unload your entire arsenal in the general direction of the bad thing. Extreme munchkins will take this a step further, learning astounding levels of blind-fighting skills from ancient Masters and then poking their own eyes out so they can't be driven mad.

Yet another way to avoid insanity is to train yourself to become inured to the disgusting and the incomprehensible. Start by watching an endless stream of Jerry Springer shows, then try to get inside David Lynch's head. Move on to Czechoslovakian animations for the advanced stage and finish up by reading *A Brief History Of Time* in one sitting. No Keeper could possibly argue with such a grueling regime.

Stupidly Named Artifacts

Lovecraftian or similar horror games are littered with stupidly named items. Mirrors of Leng, Stars Of M'nar and Jodhpurs of Fl'ching abound, all of them having some incredibly wazzy effect and often being central to the plot.

If this turns out to be the case in your game, you have a new angle on which to munchkin out, both in and out of character. Play an occult researcher in-game, and out of game never fail to be seen with an appropriate horror novel in hand. Use this out-of-character credibility along with your in-character abilities to confuse your Keeper/GM.

Munchkin: So, in short, I'm using my researches to produce a Tube Of Warrang to make short shrift of these shambling fiends when we go to the temple.

Game Ref: A what?

Munchkin: A Tube of Warrang, from an unpublished 1922 story I found printed in an old fanzine. You see the Lichen From S'doff in this story were using the Shamblers in their fiendish plot to . . .

Game Ref: I bow to your superior knowledge. *sigh*

If you're a good enough fast-talker you can think of almost any munchkin device you want so long as you give it a stupid enough name. Even things as ridiculous as flying space-time clocks can be yours.

Cults

The basis of an awful lot of the Big-Squiggly-Thing Mythos and the most common type of cannon fodder you will come across, cults within these games are insidious, fanatical and often have access to spells, creatures and artifacts akin to those you can weasel out of your GM. The upside to this is that when you kill them you too can summon the creatures, use the artifacts and learn the spells they used to use.

I'm carrying my spell book, my pistol, a whip, a hacksaw, some wire and rope, a can of gasoline, an axe, a flashlight, some grenades, a shovel, some torches and matches, and extra silver bullets. And a gas mask and my scuba gear. I'm wearing full armor, a cross, and brass knuckles.

Bob, you'll weigh more than Cthulu himself! You're gonna walk into a police station like that? No, I crash my van through the lobby Terminator-style, and keep driving.

Cultists are far easier to kill than the green horrible things from beyond and you won't have to shut your eyes while you fight them. As a munchkin, you should probably take the BATF/FBI approach to cults, and assault them with heavy armor. Anything less would be seen as amateurish and less than munchkin.

Making the GM Give Up in Despair

The problem with horror games, and with Outer Horrors in particular, for GMs, is maintaining the feeling of that horror. Sometimes they do quite well – low lighting, hushed voices and so on add a lot – but something always happens to spoil the mood. The pizza arrives, someone spills their drink, or someone's little sister runs through the playing area dancing like a Spice Girl. One of the particular problems that occurs is as follows:

Keeper: You crawl deeper and deeper into the dank tunnel, water drips down your neck, unnamed things slip and slide next to you in the dark as you clamber lower and lower. Suddenly you emerge into a larger tunnel, it seems crafted somehow . . . artificial . . . you hear, something, slithering closer, crawling, the wet horrible sound coming closer and closer. Suddenly, your electric lamps catch the creature and you see it in its terrifying glory!

The keeper slams an expensive and well-painted figurine down onto the table with a bang. The players stare at it and start to giggle.

Player: Let me get this straight, we're face to face with a green traffic cone? With what looks like an air-horn strapped to one of its arms? *snigger*

You can play up on this. No description and no figurine can put across the horror the GM is trying to portray, so treat every creature and encounter with humorous disdain. Once the Keeper doesn't care about his plot or NPCs any more, they are that much the easier to kill, and you can run riot over the plot.

Munchkins, there is a life beyond this rickety table and your heap of weird dice! In muddy fields and rented halls across the world, whole new vistas of munchkindom are being explored! Strap on your rubber sword, learn to cheat at rock-paper-scissors, and get out there and munchkin!

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Live-action games are gaining in popularity. The appeal of acting out your fantasies and immersing yourself nearly entirely in the role has developed to the point where it outweighs the stigma of dressing like a complete dork and having stick-on ears.

Live-action players come in two distinct flavors: those who like beer and mud, and those who like wine and Formica. Each camp has a dislike for the other, despite quite a lot of crossover between them. The first lot enjoy bashing each other hard over the head with sticks, while the second prefer to talk things over and then pretend to bash each other over the head. The tendency for the first group to suffer permanent brain damage is balanced by the second group's helplessness in the face of overwhelming pretension.

Mud and Beer

So, today's twink is now likely to find himself out in a muddy field, without dice to fiddle or even much in the way of rulebooks to misquote. This calls for some new variations on the fine old traditions of munchkinism.

GO FOR THE FACE!

The first and most important rule for a munchkin in a live-action game is to go for the face. Some sites say that head hits don't count. This may be true as far as the rules are concerned, but an opponent unconscious, suffering from concussion, or with a terminal nosebleed cannot protect their other locations, enabling you to beat them into a pulp with impunity.

Boffer weapons may be covered in foam, but a wild swing to the nose, eyes or mouth can still have devastating reper-

cussions. If you can't hit the face, then other good locations to pick are the groin or the breasts – both sensitive areas that don't appreciate a sound wallop. Well, in most cases anyway.

WHAT TO WEAR

Armor

In most games you are limited in what armor you can have by what you can scrounge up. A leather jacket becomes a leather jerkin, leather jeans become britches, nylon becomes a shirt of repulsion. You however have advantages that the true knight never had. For one thing, you have lighter metals. A chainmail shirt made of aluminum is far, far lighter than ones made of iron or steel. Hell, if you've got money to burn, make it out of titanium. Or if you haven't got money to burn, steal a load of titanium rings from mountain bike enthusiasts – they've more money than sense anyway. Plate mail can be made of fiberglass or plastic.

On a more practical note, getting smashed around the face with a sword, however padded, smarts a little. Make sure you are well padded and protected there. Putting a cooking pan over your head will not do. Colanders have a certain chic appeal, but you really should invest in a proper helmet. You could steal a cycle helmet while you're mugging a mountain bike rider for his titanium, and cover it in leather strips.

To protect your body, you should wear at least three T-shirts and a jacket as well as your costume. Incoming blows will just bounce off, and you can claim not to have noticed the hits at all. Laying down a huge beer-gut will also help. (Less of a six-pack, more of a crate.) Two or three yards of tough blubber will do wonders for your defensive powers.

When protecting your legs, you should start with two pairs of pants and a groin protector. Add to this two layers of heavy trousers, denim or leather for preference, then shin guards and finally your costume. Arms can be protected by raiding Judas Priest's dressing rooms and stealing all those studded arm-bands. One of the studded codpieces wouldn't go amiss either.

When you have gathered together all this gear (and recovered from heat exhaustion), you are almost ready to take on the best that your live-ac group has to offer. If however you don't like looking like Sir Lard of Wobblebuttock, there is an alternative...

Distracting Clothing

Rather than going for the heavily-armored look, you could go for the bright and distracting approach. A vermilion shirt with lemon-yellow PVC trousers and purple boots should do the trick, topped off with a lime-green jacket and an orange hat. Patterning can also work. Stripes and zig-zags are quite effective, but the best thing to use against beer-swillers is the hypno-disc pattern – guaranteed to promote dizziness and nausea in the stoutest of drinkers.



INCONGRUITIES

Perhaps the best method you can use to distract your enemies in a LARP is the "incongruous prop" approach. Such items and devices as digital watches, Sony Walkmans, trainers, Motorhead T-shirts and mobile phones can all serve to shock people out of their fantasy reverie, allowing you to get in the killing blow while they are readjusting.

If you've got the figure for it, and don't live somewhere cold like Canada or Britain, then the fur bikini/jockstrap approach can also work as a distraction. If you *don't* have the figure for it, it can still work, by virtue of people laughing at your potato-like flabby folds of goose-pimpled flesh hanging out on show.

Clothes that make noise or reflect light can also be distracting; try silver or sequined battle-dress, jerkins covered in bells, footwear that lights up when you put your foot down, a cloak made of wobble-board material that makes a hilarious noise as you walk, or britches with whoopee cushions sewn in the buttocks. Use your imagination! Dress to impress and distract!

CONSTRUCTING YOUR WEAPON

The most important thing for a live-action munchkin is his weapon (appropriate quotes from a well-known MTV duo can be inserted here). To create the perfect live-action sidearm, you need to consider several things. To start with, the type is quite important; for more information on cool choices, see p. 28. Then there's:

SPECIAL EFFECTS

If you are playing a spell-caster in live-action, then you need an effective way to represent your various spells and effects so that there is no doubt about what you have just cast. Most people will suggest such things as balls with streamers tied to them, beanbags and the like. This is quite patently Not Good Enough for a live-action twink; you need far more effective representations.

Live-action munchkins often advocate the use of pyrotechnics, and these can soon get completely out of hand. Balls of paraffin wax doused in lighter fluid can be used as fireballs, spray snow stands for ice blasts, throwing knives for magic missiles, and so on and so forth. Taking a shower before going to the game could probably count as a charm spell for all intents and purposes.

1. The bit you hold onto. This is very important, because without it you will be absolutely hopeless at hitting anyone. It should be constructed of something strong, weighty and comfortable to grip. We suggest oak, lead piping, high-density plastic, or if you are very strong, osmium. This bit of the weapon should also have a loop of leather to go around your hand so you can't drop it.*

2. The bit you hit people with. This is arguably the most important part. It should have a surface area roughly the size of a person's head, and should be slightly padded so you can get it through weapons checks. If you want to be really munchkin, which is the point of this book after all, you can fit a lead weight to the inside of the weapon (hammers are best for this), so it really hurts when you hit people.

3. The finish. Your paint job is important; it defines who you are. Good ideas are flame, intricate carvings, dragons, or an inscribed message; something like "KISS MY AXE!" is always good.

Some live-action groups have stupid weapon control rules so you can't hit people with solid lumps of steel or use real arrows in your bow. To get around this, you can consider:

Bribery

Tried and tested, proven to work and reliable, this is the second easiest method of persuasion. For details of the methodology, see "Bribing your GM," p. 21.

Reasoning

No. Anyone who thinks that talking things through is a good idea is a wuss, and should not be allowed to touch, let alone read, this book.

Force

The easiest method of persuasion, force is the first choice of the true munchkin. All you have to do is hit the weapons control people with your extremely dangerous and munchkin weapon and they will stop objecting to you using it. Don't you worry about them getting up again, these people are usually the same type of people who were milk monitors at school, so they will collapse like the wusses they are.

HIT LOCATIONS

In live-action games, like tabletop games, you have a certain number of hit points for each location. But as already mentioned, some systems don't count head hits, so you can use the method of protection called . . .

Head Deflection

This is simple; you put your head in front of any oncoming attacks and you won't lose any hit points. Of course this idea has a couple of drawbacks, but the true munchkin won't

*A rubberized grip is essential if you can't pull your blows and end up with a blood-covered boffer weapon.

worry about long-term effects. We include them for completeness, however:

1. It might hurt. This is a really wimpish excuse and if you use it you are a shandy-drinking nancy, go on, run home crying to mummy.

2. It might leave a mark. This is also a pathetic excuse, used only by people who don't appreciate the finer qualities of a good scar.

3. Lasting brain damage. This is a bit more of a viable excuse. Brain damage is quite a serious thing, but you can prevent it. Simply bang your head against a sheet steel plate twenty or thirty times a day and your skull will soon toughen up so it can take it. Besides which, munchkins don't need brains, just a big axe.

COPING WITH OTHERS' HATRED

A common problem with being a live-action munchkin is that people soon start to resent and hate you, which can soon lead to them refusing to play with you. In order to avoid this problem you can:

1. Buy them all beer. A costly but simple approach; when you go down the pub with the other members of your troupe, you buy them all lots of beer so they feel that they owe you and play out of obligation.

2. Issue threats. You simply tell everyone that if they don't play, you will blow their car up, spit-roast their pets and burn their house down.

3. Make promises. This only works if the rest of the troupe are of the opposite sex. You lull them into a false sense of hope with promises of sexual favors and then just string them along. If your troupe are particularly repressed, this can work for years.

Wine and Cheese

A freeform is an altogether more genteel form of live-action. If that hasn't put off all you munchkins already, read on. Even when indoors, without the comfort of a boffer weapon or the protection of armor, armed only with a vague set of social interaction rules, you *can* still munchkin out.

FREEFORM TECHNIQUES

Freeforms tend to be based more on conversation and diplomacy than fighting, which in some ways is good because a munchkin stands out and has little competition. This will allow you to pretty much run amok.

Freeformers tend to distance themselves from both live-action and tabletop roleplaying and to suffer from something of a superiority complex. You get a lot of jobsworths, little Napoleons and rules-lawyers, since freeforms require more administration than a mere single GM. This makes greasing the wheels a lot more difficult, since you need to bribe and corrupt many more people. They are, however, vulnerable to

INTERACTIVE THEATRE

People who call their form of live-action "Interactive Theatre" are even more pretentious and stuck-up than freeformers. They try to completely avoid the stigma of being a roleplayer by calling it something totally unrelated. This fools no-one, least of all other roleplayers. "Interactive Theatre," huh, bloody drama queens...

They are probably best avoided by munchkins (and everybody else, for that matter). The only good thing is that they *may* have heard the old theatrical line about not "blocking." In plain English, this means that you can say that you're doing whatever you like, and they can't contradict you; they have to try and fit it into their plot. So you can hit them with a few munchkin grossities. Or just say that they're all dead.

another form of corruption; flattery goes straight to the ego, their vulnerable spot. You will find that a few well placed "Great game," "Good idea" and "Nice bit of roleplaying" comments can get you a long way.

But simple munchkinism is not generally enough for you to get what you want in this context. An ability to manipulate gossip and to really read and understand people will get you a long way. Mind you, being a munchkin in with this lot is like being a fox in a hen-house. They have no way to escape, simply cannot comprehend the mindset of the munchkin, and will not know what to do about you.

One of the best examples of the freeform style is White Wolf's *Minds Eye Theater* series, which ties in with their "World of Darkness" universe. The political setup of their vampire-ruled cities is perfect for the pretentious power-mongers that this form of live-ac attracts, and you can have endless fun putting the wind up them by blowing things up and slaughtering them! (We won't bother telling you how to cheat under the MET rules specifically; any munchkin who can't fudge at rock-paper-scissors should go home and shoot themselves now.)

BLOOD ON THE CANAPÉS

Thus, surprisingly, being a munchkin in the Freeform or Interactive Theater scene is easier than being a munchkin in the mud and beer side of things. To be a brutal munchkin in rubber sword live-action, it helps a great deal if you are 8 feet tall and built like the proverbial brick sh*thouse. This denies the physical coward the enjoyment of indulging his powergaming fantasies. However, in Freeform there is little or no physical contact, and games rely instead on rules and other ways of resolving conflict. This allows the munchkin to tweak his character and be an undefeatable combat bunny without having to have the physique of a tank.

7. REAL MEN WEAR THEIR BRIEFS ON THE OUTSIDE

Look, pal, the cloak and tights aren't compulsory. No, really – we'll even let you wear a really cool black death's-head bodysuit. But remember, it's not the costume, it's the munchkin inside it that counts. Along with some rules-lawyering and a few dodgy dice rolls, of course.



No genre of roleplaying is as ripe for exploitation by the munchkin as the superheroic. This is a type of game that actually encourages over-the-top statistics and powers. Enough strength to hurl trucks around, speed that allows you to create whirlwinds, bulletproof flesh, flight, laser beams from the eyes, the whole shebang.

Unfortunately, the superhero genre has been relatively poorly represented as far as roleplaying games go. There are innumerable fantasy and science-fiction systems but relatively few superhero games. Most of them find it hard to cope with the sheer range of power levels that are part of the concept. Scaling the stats becomes a problem when one guy can shrink to (and have the strength of) an ant and another can eat skyscrapers for breakfast and still have room for Roseanne Barr. The favored solution seems to be to use a tricky "geometric" scale, which can permit a munchkin with higher-than-anyone stats to get *really* gross; mind you, if you can swing a proper Superman-level strength rating in a game with linear scales, the damage you'll do with a punch is gross beyond the dreams of munchkindom.

The big-name tie-in games are fine if you like Marvel or DC and want to pit characters that you know from the comics against each other. *GURPS Supers*, *Heroes Unlimited*, and *Champions* are all good if you want a more generic "create your own" feel to the game, while the late munchkin-lamented *Underground* combined superheroics, big guns, satire and institutionalized cannibalism in one big munchkin-friendly package. *Aberrant* and *Trinity* from White Wolf also count as superhero games in spite of the thin veneer of Alan Mooresque angst to them.

Of course, you have to wear a stupid looking skin-tight costume and mask, but that is a small price to pay for the ability to flick off people's heads with your little finger.



Superhero Types

BIG, STRONG, STUPID

For some reason, in most cases, the bigger and stronger the superhero the more gruff and stupid they are. Witness the Hulk, Lobo, The Thing . . . It's an unfortunate side-effect of having the strength to snap battleships in two that the IQ drops into single digits. Perhaps the increased muscle mass starves the brain of oxygen. Perhaps the bull-like neck presses against the brain. Who knows? And who needs intelligence when you can squash people like bugs, anyway?

OBSCENELY POWERFUL, PATRIOTIC

Superman is the prime example of a superhero of this type; strong, clean-living, and moral to the point of rank stupidity. Superman is just another immigrant in the good ol' U.S. of A. Quite why an alien being from Krypton would be so attached to the country responsible for *Friends*, *Seinfeld*, *COPS*, survivalism, MacDonalds, and crack is beyond us. But then, access to hard drugs might explain some of his powers.

If you are going to play a supremely powerful patriotic superhero, your GM will probably let you get away with it because he will, like most people, automatically think of Superman. True, if you were playing an "All American" superhero you would be all "Freedom, Justice and Apple Pie for all." But you are a munchkin, so if you are going to be a patriotic supermunchkin pick a country that will allow you to be an evil bastard and massacre villains. Captain Saudi, granted the ability to publicly decapitate people with but a single thought! Lashman, defender of Singapore, dispensing instant justice to vandals everywhere! Madame France, sinker of annoying ships and terror of evil snails!

You get the idea.

DARK AND MOODY

Superheroes in this category don't tend to have obscenely powerful superpowers, but make up for this by tenacity and sheer 'orneriness. Wolverine is a prime example. The comics based around these characters follow a simple pattern. Brood-Fight-Brood-Fight-Flashback-Brood-Fight. Playing this type of hero gives you ample excuse to beat the hell out of anything that you want to, since you are playing the kind of messed-up loner that does whatever it takes to get the job done.

SECRET FORMULAE

These superheroes get their powers from drugs and injections of serum or some other dubious substance. Witness the power of MACH 1 (from the past of 2000 A.D.), who with the aid of thousands of needles gained immense strength and power. Never mind that the only thing most people get from thousands of needles is an overdose and AIDS. Captain America is another good example of a drug-based hero, who then goes on to fight against the evil drug cartels. (Go figure.) Realistically, the only superheroes you should get from the use of drugs are Munchy Man, Cold Turkey, The Giggler, The Amazing Overdose, Inflated Ego Boy and Nosebleed Girl. The best thing about being a drug-induced superhero is that you can take a flaw: Addiction to your superdrug, so that you are always dosed up on it 24 hours a day.

ANGSTRIDDEN

These heroes don't tend to fall into the normal superhero category. They tend to come from the "mature readers" lines of comic books. The Punisher is a prime example, as is Lady Justice. Two sides of the same coin, we'll grant you. One sits around brooding and *then* kills people, while the other just blows people away in a healthy expression of his inner turmoil. Then of course you get the odd occasion where the coin lands on its edge. This is the domain of the Silver Surfer; he broods, has moral dilemmas, and then he kicks butt. What can you say? These heroes are different from the dark and moody ones because they have at least something you can sympathize with them about. They have real tragedies inflicted on them, which aren't brought about by themselves.

Leave this kind of hero to the people that dress in black and smell of patchouli oil. Except the Punisher-style ones, who you can play to your heart's content.

GODLIKE POWER

The superheroes you will find in this category are, as the name suggests, equipped with godlike power. Whether this is a result of being a god, being given powers, acquiring them by being a subtle sort of mega-munchkin off-stage, or stealing stuff from gods, is irrelevant. They all have one thing in common; the ability to squish most other superbeings like bugs. Witness Thor, or the New Gods.

These people are sub-divided into two groups; those who worry about overusing their power and accidentally killing loads of innocent people, and those who just don't care. Thor falls into the first group, whereas people like Loki or Lobo (who gained immortality from beating up heaven and hell) fall smack bang into the second.

Whatever their sub-class, these people are still very, very powerful. In order to keep such munchkins in line, the comics that spawn them sometimes create a hero who is just

TEAMS

If you are playing in a group, it's likely that the superheroes are going to work together as a group. A team, as seen in the comics.

The most famous teams are the Fantastic Four, the Justice League, the Avengers and the X-Men. These all rely on complimentary powers working together to defeat any foe (when they aren't all squabbling like kids), and roleplayers tend to pick up such ideas. If you are the sole munchkin then you will have no problem. Everyone else will want to play the psychics and the magicians and the telekinetics, leaving you free to play the huge muscle-bound lunk. But if you are in a group of munchkins, you will have more of a problem. Teamwork can be good, but most munchkins have problems getting on with other people, by definition, let alone deciding which of them gets to play the indestructible giant who can smash up whole cities when he feels like it.

One way to get around this is to concentrate the entire team on one area – one in which you all want to play. Make everyone's hero a fighting twink if that is what you want. Your GM will have no choice but to comply with your wishes or the game simply won't work. There is something to be said for diversity, though. It allows each of you to totally overkill one area and then combine your powers to devastating effect. For example, say, have one person with a hugely powerful extendible force-field and another with a hugely powerful ray blast...

too munchkin for words, Dark Angel from *Overkill* being a good example. These characters are without a doubt noble, honorable and duty-bound to fight bad guys and have words with anyone who causes too much hassle. If you can persuade your GM to let you play a character like this, then go for it. Just ignore the stuff about honor and duty.

HIGH-TECH HEROES

These are characters who get their superpowers through technological assistance. They are not to be confused with the superjunkies mentioned earlier in this chapter; these guys generally have a whole host of hi-tech gizmos and implants to help them. Prime examples of this type are Death's Head II, Harley Davis, Iron Man, Deathstroke the Terminator, Deathlok... the list goes on and on. These people have usually got impressive sounding names, often with the word "Death" in them somewhere. High-tech heroes can be split into sub-categories:



Cyborgs

Cyborgization can mean anything from a couple of alterations to your voice box so you can cause people's heads to explode when you scream at them, a la Harley Davis' "Motormouth," to the more extreme forms, where some loony scientist strips all your flesh, muscle and sinew away from your skeleton and bonds you onto a molybdenum-adamantium combat chassis with a multiple function T-1000 style weapon arm and 104 separate personalities. (Stop that drooling there. We know it's dead munchkin.)

Whatever you do with cybernetics, remember, regular maintenance is essential, so getting an autorepair system is vital. It could get embarrassing if you were to blow a gasket and cease to function just as your were gloating over the villain you have captured.

Psyborg: You really thought I'd let you get away with your plan to destroy the world's supply of pirate software? The black economy and thousands of people's livelihoods depend on their illegal earnings.

Dr Not-Nice: Curse you, Psyborg, finish it . . .

Psyborg: So be it!

Fzzzt!

Psyborg: Damn, my obliterator has hung, I need to reboot . . .

Power Suits

The power suit approach is simple, really. You just get into a car accident, have a sort of munchkin pacemaker fitted to your heart, and then decide to have a suit built around it that can power all sorts of wonderful gizmos. But remember, you will need to recharge at regular intervals or your heart will stop and you will die. Or there is always the "Steel" approach, where you get a big black dude and put him in a steel suit, give him a big sledgehammer, and tell him to go kick some butt. Whatever you do with a power-suit, though, remember that you may well still need a cool set of . . .

Futuristic Guns

These are the first thing a true munchkin thinks of when hi-tech heroes are mentioned. Just look once more at the Marvel universe and you will see:

The Warheads: Munchkin dimension jumpers with big guns. One even had a talking gun. (Remember what we said earlier about talking swords? Same applies.)

Cable: Futuristic time-traveling munchkin with a really cool big gun.

Bishop: Futuristic time-traveling munchkin with a wide array of ridiculously huge hand cannons and munchkin rifles.

Most of these guns have one thing in common; a voice-activated multiple ammunition system. (Judge Dredd, anyone?) This is almost essential for a street-credible futuristic gun; you can walk up to someone and say "Hey, look at my cool futuristic gun!" but without at least some cool

flashy lights or a voice recognition trick they will just reply "Sod that, I've seen more convincing futuristic guns on *Captain Power*."

Futuristic guns work best when combined with one of the aforementioned uses for hi-tech stuff. A power suit with a cool flashy gun gets you more respect than a power suit with a water pistol. But for the true overkill fans out there, why not have your futuristic cannon cybernetically fitted to your body? For more in this vein see *Tetsuo II Bodyhammer*. Go forth and Neem!

MUTANTS

Mutant characters are 10% angst and 90% munchkin – a great combination for claiming to roleplay while munchkin-ing out.

"Oh woe is me, I can tear planets in half with my nostrils, how unpleasant. What a terrible responsibility to have to bear!"

Yeah, right. Okay, so a lot of rednecks want to persecute you, but then the GM can't complain about you blowing them away, can he?

However, mutant comics are a bit of a problem these days. Like the band you liked last year, they've sold out. Gone commercial. They just aren't any good nowadays. This is a problem for the fashion-conscious munchkin. On the upside, they do have a lot of large-breasted hard-bodies prancing about in skintight costumes. Hmmm, you don't think the comic target audience is "adolescent male" at all, do you?

PRACTITIONERS OF THE ANCIENT ARTS

Magicians in the superhero genre are far more powerful than in any other. They are capable of a wide range of effects and powers that a fantasy wizard would have to work long and hard to attain. If you like magic, this is the genre in which to play a munchkin magician. Practitioners of the ancient arts have creepy houses, faithful manservants, various artifacts, and a list of spells as long as your extendible arm.

They also have a large number of responsibilities. Keeping demons locked away in the netherworld, guarding against loony cults, keeping dangerous magical items safe – that sort of thing. All the best magicians have beards with streaks of white in them, outlandish clothes, and the compulsion to make all of their spells rhyme in a completely unconvincing way, which can be a problem to roleplay.

Bal'hokk: There is nothing you can do, Mystro; the orb is complete, and soon my dread master shall emerge from his eternal prison and lay waste to your entire world!

Mystro: Bal'hokk you bad and utter fiend, by the Stars of Light you shall be neemed!

Bal'hokk: Neemed?

Mystro (unconvincingly): . . . or something.

Superpowers

Once you have chosen your type of hero, you can start to make an informed guess about the type of powers you want to select; the type will pretty much determine the choice. Here is a handy list of the most common options and their advantages:

STRENGTH

Problematical due to the "stupidity effect," but there are very few other powers that can actually beat the wonderful versatility of an obscene amount of strength. You can lift sections of road to use as armor, beat people with lamp posts, use houses as improvised missile weapons, crush tanks, and generally cause mayhem. We strongly recommend that, regardless what else you choose, you take super-strength. You won't regret it.

FLIGHT

A staple of the superhero genre. Man has long sought to soar through the heavens like a bird and then to sh*t on people from a great height. Flight has many indispensable uses for munchkins, from spying and swooping attacks to bombing runs and cheap international travel. We recommend that you choose a form of flight that doesn't involve wings, as these make you a bigger target.

TOUGHNESS

Almost as indispensable as strength, a superhuman level of toughness allows you to shrug off bullets and attacks of all types. At higher levels, you should be able to resist even the effects of a small nuclear strike. Any munchkin worth his salt should take this power.

Other uses for it include using your head for panel beating, forging on your chest, and hiring yourself out as a bumper for demolition derbies.

FORCE FIELDS

Better than toughness in that they can cover areas and friends and glow nicely, worse in that nothing quite beats the machismo of bullets bouncing off you like a light shower. Force fields can be projected into all manner of shapes and used for many things from shoring up collapsing buildings to holding people prisoner or getting room to breathe in a mosh pit.

POWERS OF THE MIND

Telepathy, telekinesis, astral projection and mind control; these are the powers of the mind. They may seem a little feeble and unexciting to you, but when taken at excessive

levels they can prove far more powerful than you first thought. Use your psionic power to possess a huge super-lunk, and you effectively get double the powers you started with and can munchkin out to an unprecedented degree. Professor Peewee the Psionic master in the body of the Brown Behemoth is nothing to be sniffed at.

GM: So, your group, the Legion Of Law, finally faces off against Destructo. What's the plan?

Munchkin: First my character, Mento-Mum possesses The Lunk's body, then Witchypoo uses her power over chance to make us incredibly lucky, then Girls-Best-Friend turns our body to diamond, then we whomp him.

GM: (Sobs quietly).

INTERVIEW WITH A SUPERHERO

Should you find that you are unavoidably backed into a corner by reporters and busybodies, you should have some stock answers ready for their questions. So, in keeping with our format and because we are lovely people, we have prepared some answers for you to use should the situation arise.

Q. Did you need to be that much of a munchkin?

A. Yes.

Q. Why did you destroy the entire city block?

A. I had to make sure I got him.

Q. Do you believe in the sanctity of life?

A. Only if it's mine.

Q. Why did you stomp on his lifeless body twenty times?

A. I saw it twitch.

Q. Why are you in such a bad mood?

A. I've got a super-hangover.

Q. Are you going to pay for this mess?

A. What, it wasn't insured?

Q. Do you see yourself as the good guy?

A. Well, yes, anyone got a problem with that?

Q. Did you kill my cat?

A. Burp?

Q. Who was Destructeron?

A. My evil twin.

Q. Are you sure he was the evil one?

A. Yes.

Q. Well, only yesterday he fixed my roof.

A. It was part of an evil plot to take over your mind.

Q. I'm still not sure he was the evil one.

A. SHUT UP!

Q. But he seemed like such a nice boy.

A. QUIT IT. (Splut, pummel, grind, stomp, stomp.)

SPEED

Super-speed is quite a useful power. You can do the housework in seconds, cause whirlwinds by running in circles, run so fast you travel back in time or speed across expanses of water before you have a chance to sink. But all *you* will need to use it for is for hitting people lots of times. Very fast.

GADGETS AND TONS OF MOOLAH

While not strictly speaking a superpower, this combination has been good enough for Batman and nearly every power-suited high-tech hero in existence. Money can buy you anything, and with the right toys you can duplicate virtually every other power.

Having tons of money also has other benefits; huge mansions, members of the opposite sex hurling themselves at you in the vague hope of getting some of your cash, servants, cars, and so on. The gadgets you choose will determine the nature of your character. You will need armor, weaponry and crime-solving computers, since it is unlikely that a spoiled rich kid will have enough skill to solve crimes off his own back.

Actually, money in and of itself is often enough to defeat villainy; offer the villains a cash incentive to lay off the miscreant behaviour.

SENSORY POWERS

While X-ray vision or radar senses can seem like a lot of fun, they are little use to a superhero when you can get hold of night-sight goggles, X-ray specs or sunglasses with mirrors built into the side, or shoes with mirrors stuck on the toes, very easily.

RAYS, BEAMS AND BLASTS

The third essential power type. Beams of energy, flying hammers, missiles, fireballs and atomic blasts are tools for the discerning crime fighter who isn't too worried about collateral damage. Your blast should be a good color; red is nice. Requiring a gesture or a phrase to activate (something like an outstretched fist or "MAGMA BLAST!") is always good, and it should make a cool noise when you use it – something like "NEEM!" or "FWACKOOM!"

Your blast should also have some special shtick besides just doing damage; it should blind your opponents, or heat them up, or freeze them, or irradiate them, or something. It looks nifty, and it gets you a second power for free.

WAYS TO MAKE YOUR SUPERHERO AN OBSESSIVE PSYCHOPATH

Good

The baddy slaughtered your family.
Your parents were criminals and you always resented them.
You were experimented on by the government and it twisted your mind.
You nearly died when terrorists caught you in a crossfire.
You suffer from brain damage that has made you this way.
You were exploited by criminals as a child.
They took everything from you.

Bad

The baddy slaughtered your goldfish.
Your parents were Amish.
You experimented with LSD and it twisted your mind.
They cancelled *Star Trek*.
You've run out of smokes.
Your girlfriend left you.
They took your TV.

POWERS OF THE COSMOS

The ultimate power that any hero can possess is the power of the universe focused through your body – the power of exploding supernovas, spinning galaxies and the collapse of black holes. No power out-munchkins this, but it does have a drawback. In becoming one with the universe, you seem inescapably to become an introspective peace-loving space hippie. Unless you can figure a way around this, regretfully, we must recommend that you avoid this power.

Defeating the Four-Color Ethos

The main problem with being a munchkin on the superhero scene is the whole "hero" thing. While you would really just like to get on with the serious business of kicking arse, you are constantly prevented from doing so by super-heroic concerns such as not killing innocent civilians, avoiding tilting the earth off its axis, or refraining from bringing on another ice age. Also, it's hard for you to kill your enemies. A true hero prefers to see them in jail where they might reform. Bollocks to all that, you're a munchkin and you want to kill things, right? In order to accomplish this, you will need to have a reason that your GM will accept as to why your hero is an obsessive lunatic who will stop at nothing until all his enemies are destroyed. See – yep, our handy table.

WITH GREAT POWER . . . (COMES THE ABILITY TO DESTROY WHOLE CITIES)

Some people would say that a superhero has to be responsible and use his powers with restraint so that he doesn't accidentally destroy an entire city with his eye beams, etc., etc.. We say sod that; where's the fun in holding back? If you are in a fight with a supervillain and you have the power to destroy the entire city that he resides in while remaining completely unhurt yourself, then do it. OK, so it might kill loads of civilians, but who cares? They were probably guilty of something, even if it was a late library book. You shouldn't listen to people who ask you stupid questions, and never, ever, agree to appear on Letterman.

The questioning masses should usually soon be silenced by a swift application of super-violence to the family jewels. If they continue to hassle you, then just have a "supervillain" accidentally place his secret base under their house and beat the cud out of them when you attack it. (You couldn't see properly as your super-sight was being blocked by something and, well, you saw a gun and overreacted.) With forethought and enough superpowers, you can avoid nearly any embarrassing situation just by killing all the witnesses.

Comic Books vs. TV (Avoid the Effects)

One of the greatest challenges a superhero can face is having to make the transition from a comic to a TV series. This journey is dangerous and troublesome. Most heroes don't make it unless they are being transformed into a cartoon. Just look at all the spectacular failures: *The New Adventures of Superman*, *The Flash*, the sixties *Batman*, *The Green Hornet*, the TV movies of *Dr. Strange*, *Captain America*, and *Spiderman*. The list goes on and on, but they all share one thing. As comics they were cool. As TV movies or series, they sucked, totally. The only known way of defeating this terrible enemy is simply not to allow yourself to think TV.

When playing a superhero game, think in comic-book, not real-life, terms. If your character has a cool and groovy costume, let it rest at that. Don't try and imagine yourself in a spandex suit with your Y-Fronts on the outside.

The only real exception to this is if you can think in manga terms. Manga superheroes are cool, and have the ability to do stuff even US comic books wouldn't get away with. Just imagine the possibilities inherent in Hentai Man, or look at the established Manga heroes, Moldiver (OK, bad example), Giant Robo, A-Ko (MUNCHKIN!), and the teams from the mecha movies like *Robotech*. The manga/anime methodology is good to remember; be a munchkin at all levels, not just when it suits the scriptwriters.

Supervillains

These guys are supposed to be your enemies, but being a munchkin you will probably feel a kinship with obsessive power-crazed lunatics. In the old days, supervillains could be recognized because they were the ones who wore black, had mental disorders, and visited excessive and unneeded violence on their victims. These days, however, things are more complicated. As the comics market went from dewy-eyed kids to angry adolescents, so too the shape of heroes changed. They became moody, began wearing black, started shouting at people, and grew awkward around girls. This makes it hard to tell which are the heroes and the villains these days. You don't want to get confused and start killing your friends (much); neither do you want the rest of your group to consider you a villain and gang up on you. So pay close attention to the small but important signs, as per this chapter's last handy table.

TELLING BLACK HATS FROM WHITE HATS

Evil Villains

Kill to push forward a grand scheme.
Give long speeches and laugh maniacally.
Believe in what they are doing.
Know exactly what they're doing.
Wear black because it denotes evil.
Have no redeeming features.

Messed-Up Heroes

Just kill.
Make pithy or short comments and hit people.
Suffer from self-doubt.
Just do whatever.
Wear black because it's cool and doesn't clash with the other heroes' costumes.
Are cute in a kind of messed up, hurt, way.

8. KNOW YOUR ENEMY



Just about every RPG book in existence has, in its opening section, a paragraph or two about how roleplaying games are different to normal games. They are non-competitive, oriented toward cooperative play, and encourage teamwork. The GM is not the enemy, he merely acts as narrator, setting the scene and playing the bit parts.

Wrong.

As every munchkin knows, the GM is the enemy and the other players are there to be exploited, used, stolen from, and probably killed for their worth in experience points. They are the secondary enemy, you are on your own, and any means you can use to crush, humiliate and destroy them is cool. But let's start with the primary enemy.

Different Types of GM

Not all GMs are created equal. Some of them even know how to handle munchkins. Some have been known to employ aversion therapy. (They place a gun and a flower in front of a problem player, and hit them with a cattle prod if they reach for the gun.) Other GMs are pushovers who you can reduce to a nervous breakdown faster than a substitute teacher. It's a wise idea to determine who is what.

MR. PREPARED (NARRATUS INSECURUS)

Description: The prepared GM carries a huge bag, full to the brim with all of his gaming materials. Books, folders, a card-index of NPCs and monsters, pens, paper, spare dice, miniatures, and a huge GM screen. In fact, the prepared GM has such a huge mound of stuff around him that we can't actually give you a worthwhile description of his physical appearance. (The high-tech version tries to stuff all of this material onto a laptop computer. Fortunately, this is a lot of work, and leaves the fool vulnerable to a well-timed power cut.)

Mannerisms: Note shuffling. Hiding die rolls behind screens. Knowing the exact location of every ruling in any book he owns.

Strengths: The prepared GM has every book under the sun. This enables you to gain access to obscure weapons, skills and devices. Prepared GMs follow the rules to the letter, and there are always loopholes that you can exploit.

Weaknesses: Without his notes and books, the Prepared GM becomes flustered and unsure, allowing you to get away with far more than you would normally. Without his tables and rulings to back him up, you can argue rules interpretations until he gives up. You can force him into this state by removing his books and notes from him. This can be achieved by the careless use of cigarette lighters, the spilling of large amounts of beverage, or the cutting of the bottom of his bag.

MR. OFF-THE-CUFF (NARRATUS IMPROVISUS)

Description: The Off-The-Cuff GM has, at most, a pen and a few dice. He has the ability to come up with a game plot in about thirty seconds, and develop it during play into a convoluted and fascinating story-line. This type of GM is therefore generally quite popular. He can run games at the drop of a hat when people feel like it, rather than on a specific night with due preparation. The Off-The-Cuff GM generally looks quite haggard yet laid-back. (Terminally relaxed would be another way of putting it.) He often has a faraway look in his eyes.

Mannerisms: Shrugging. Gazing into the middle distance. Ability to remember several game systems and run them without the books. Resigned expression after being asked to run a game the moment he steps in the door.

Strengths: The Off-The-Cuff GM tends to be rather liberal and to run the type of games that people want to play rather than imposing what he wants to run. Since you are a munchkin, you have a good chance of him making some aspects of the game munchkin-friendly.



Weaknesses: You can argue rules, and even make stuff up; without reference books, he has no way of checking and may let you get your own way. His lack of preparedness makes him vulnerable if you DO prepare. Plan your munchkinisms in advance and then spring them on him. You can run such a GM ragged by making him run several games in a row. Once he is exhausted, he becomes more pliant, even if the games start to involve fish turning into coffee mugs and other assorted weirdness.

MR. BECAUSE-I-SAID-SO (NARRATUS BASTARDUS)

Description: Napoleon meets Hitler, sprinkle in some Ross Perot and Baroness Thatcher and season liberally with KKK. This iron-fisted GM seems to have some deep unfulfilled need to order people around and make them do whatever he says. The activity of running a game fulfills this need, and he spends a large part of his time dictating terms and making new rulings for no good reason.

Mannerisms: Look of exasperation. Packing in the game in a huff. Banging fist on the table. Going red around the cheeks. Staring. Blustering. Shouting "You can't do that!"

Strengths: His NPCs are always heavily armed and armored. When you kill a couple, if you manage it, you can steal all their equipment.

Weaknesses: Easy to wind up. That's about it. This type of GM doesn't let you get away with anything. The only ways past him are possibly the dice-rolling techniques, but he'll probably start making all the rolls himself. The best thing you can do is to get all the other players on your side, eff off, and find a new GM.

THE MUNCHKIN GM (NARRATUS FWAKOOMUS)

Description: Glazed expression, fascination with fire and guns. Napalm Death T-shirt, wild unkempt hair, three days' stubble and no game supplements except the combat rules expansions and technical manuals. The munchkin GM is usually a munchkin player who has had enough and decided to run a game for himself.

Mannerisms: Evil laugh. Standing up abruptly. Pointing at you and shouting "Sucker!" Shouting "YES!" when yet another PC dies.

Strengths: You can get away with anything when you are playing in a munchkin GM's game. You know his psychology.

Weaknesses: It makes no difference; you're just as dead. The munchkin GM puts starting adventurers up against flights of dragons, hordes of vat-grown ninjas, or Imperial Battle Cruisers – in their first game. He bombs them, shoots them, stabs them, blows them up and calls them names. The whole game is one big long "Run away!" punctuated by character deaths. It's no fun being a munchkin if you get nuked in the first thirty seconds of play. You need a GM you can contrast with.



MR. LASSEZ-FAIRE (NARRATUS WHATEVERUS)

Description: Tie-die shirt, Lennon shades, slumped position on beanbag, huge spliff. Penchant for games like *Mage*, *Immortal*, and *TMNT*. ("Whoah! Talking animals, far out.")

Mannerisms: Shrugs of the shoulders, waving gestures, the repetitive use of the phrase "Yeah, whatever." Constant rolling of joints. Glazed expression.

Strengths: You can do anything. He just doesn't care. "Can I have a tank?" "Yeah, whatever."

Weaknesses: The laissez-faire GM never really pays attention. To anything. The game, the players, or indeed breathing regularly. You can exploit this totally and pretty much have your own little game without the GM's participation. On the odd occasion that he does wake up and pay attention to the game he is easily bribed with twinkies.

MR. PRETENTIOUS (NARRATUS HORTUS-TORTUS)

Description: Intense. Go to a Goth club, open your eyes. See the people who like the clothes and the music and are having a laugh over a bottle of red wine? Not them. See that other group of people, sat around looking miserable, drinking home-brewed absinthe and discussing the horror of existence? Them.



Owens every single *Kult* and *Vampire* book ever released except the combat ones. "Combat is so gauche."

Mannerisms: Touching back of hand to forehead and saying "Woe." Fainting like a nancy. Smelling of patchouli oil.

Strengths: Totally unprepared for any form of munchkin. You'll walk all over them.

Weaknesses: Crosses, garlic, stakes, sunlight. The best way to deal with this type of GM is to tell him that his make-up is running, or to make him cry. While he is in the bathroom reapplying his mascara, you can get away with whatever it is you want to do. All his characters are concerned with the tragedy of their existence and you can just walk over all of them by pointing out the fact that suicide is painless and offering them your gun.

THE LIVE-ACTION GM (NARRATUS DESPERATUS)

Description: This GM incorporates elements of one of the other types, but can be distinguished by his harassed manic look and constant desperate glances at his watch. He can also be identified by the crowd of players around him demanding rulings on things.

Mannerisms: Tearing of clothes, pulling of hair, rolling eyes skyward and occasional shouts of "Leave me alone!"

Strengths: Doesn't have time for you, and will brush you off without fully considering things. This allows you to get away with stuff.

Weaknesses: You can fix things totally by volunteering your services as a player narrator. He will jump at the chance to have some assistance, and won't care who from.

Different Types of Player

Just as there are different types of GM, there are many different types of player, aside from munchkins; in fact, most of them are usually anti-munchkin for one reason or another. In order for you to spot these people and so you can deal with them, here are a few examples.

RULES LAWYER (LUDUS ENCYLOPAEDICUS)

Description: Stack of books, probably works as an accountant somewhere. Wears suits, even to the pub.

Mannerisms: Always argues a rule interpretation, hates munchkins, will create characters that are supposed to be "interesting" but are actually really sad. Is a bit of a twonk. Sidles, doesn't walk.

Strengths: You can use his large stack of source books to beat him round the head several times while shouting "No!

You are not interesting!" Spends too much time arguing about stupid things so you can pretty much ignore him. Knows how to exploit every rule.

Weaknesses: Nearly always late, due to carrying huge stacks of books. Over-developed alien-mastermind-like head. Often so engrossed in arguing that you can swipe all the munchies.

THE QUIET ONE (LUDUS MUTUS)

Description: Meek, bespectacled, fluffy jumper, bowl haircut, looks like his mother dresses him (because she does). A large collection of weird characters, such as a gay pacifist in a *Cyberpunk* game. Owns every David Eddings and John Norman novel, and admits to it. Encyclopaedic collection of soft porn and French "art" films.

Mannerisms: Stoop, pathetic laugh, some kind of speech impediment (probably a stutter). When he talks, it's always quietly and slowly. Clammy handshake.

Strengths: Good scapegoat, can't protect himself. You can volunteer his character for anything and he won't object.

Weaknesses: A born victim; even without meaning to you will find yourself stealing his food, dice, books etc. May conceivably turn out to be a serial killer in real life, but it's not as likely as you will think.

AMATEUR DRAMATIST (LUDUS THESPIAS)

Description: Some hideous collision between an art teacher, a goth, and a beatnik. His dress can only be described as casual. Has a certain self-assurance to his demeanor, and thinks far better of himself than he actually deserves.



GURPS CHARACTER SHEET

Pr. Cost	20	ST	12	FATIGUE
80	DX	16	BASIC DAMAGE	Thrust: -
125	IQ	18	Swing: -	HITS
20	HT	12	BASIC SPEED	M
	Mvmt	7	(HT+DX)/4	PA
	ENCUMBRANCE			DI
	None (0) = 2xST	24		Arm
	Light (1) = 4xST	48		Sh
	Med (2) = 6xST	72		T
	Heavy (3) = 12xST	144		AL
	X-heavy (4) = 24xST	288		
	ACTIVE DEFENSE			
	DODGE	7	PARRY	
	= Move		Weapon/2	
	DAMAGE RESISTANCE			
	Armor			
	ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES			
Pr. Cost	15	Combat Reflex		
12	Strong Will			
30	Very Wealthy			
15	Handsome			
-15	Status 2 (1)			
-15	Lecherousness			
-10	Impulsiveness			
-15	Enemy			
-1	Likes Sushi			
-1	Only watches			
	Subtitled			

Mannerisms: Stroking hair back out of the face, insincere grins, nodding with the whole body. Invading people's personal space. Unfathomable ability to attract the opposite sex despite being a roleplayer.

Strengths: While he spends ages sorting out an intricate plan to achieve some aim in the game, you can spend that time getting more weaponry and preparing to kick arse. His characters are over-developed, with three-page backgrounds. This takes the pressure off you, allowing you to be more shallow and concentrate on hurting things.

Weaknesses: Becomes infuriated when his intricate plans are ignored and everyone jumps in guns blazing. Resents his deep background not being utilized and the way that everyone ignores it when it is. Applies all manner of acting methods to the representation of his creation, and everything he does is always exactly what his character would do regardless of other considerations. With practice you can manipulate this so that you are almost completely controlling him.

SESSION-HOG (LUDUS EPICENTRUS)

Description: If he had the talent he'd be a GM, but he's a self-centred gimp. Never stops talking, dresses more outrageously than everyone else. Stroppy.

Mannerisms: Always talks louder than everyone else, has to be noticed, gets in a huff if ignored, plays things like reporters and nosy neighbors. If you've done it, then he's done it better.

Strengths: Can be used to take the flak; you just shut up at an opportune moment and he makes the big mistake and get flamed for it. Useful as emergency body armor. Represents a focus for the GM's and other players' resentments, so you can get away with more.

Weaknesses: He talks and talks and talks and never shuts up, worse than a magic sword. This person should have his vocal cords removed (with a chainsaw). Plays wusses who can't even take a .50 cal to the head without dying. Tends to get beaten up by the other players with alarming regularity.

CANEHEAD (LUDUS REEFERUS)

Description: Lots of tie-dye clothes, big box of rolling papers, several empty gas lighters, no cash (all spent on cannabis and food), glazed expression, permanently hungry. Carries the most ridiculously huge lump of dope you have ever seen, and then some.

Mannerisms: Total lack of energy, no motivation at all (unless to do with drugs or food), constant twitchy fingers (unless rolling a spliff.)

Strengths: Gets everyone so stoned just by being present that you can get away with anything; even if the GM doesn't smoke, the heavy layer of smog will obscure your movements. Has an extensive knowledge of the application of drugs.

Weaknesses: Highly impressionable. When stoned out of his tree, the Canehead can be coerced into doing just about any-

thing in the game. By being his friend, you can cause him to help you without really thinking about what he is saying.

REAL PLAYER'S SIGNIFICANT OTHER (LUDUS DISTRACTIONUS)

Description: Clueless, all at sea, lost in the desert. Provided with a bewildered expression, and drawn into the world of gaming by their significant other. Has no idea how anything works, what they are doing, or indeed what anybody is doing.

Mannerisms: Panicked look. Death grip on boy/girlfriend's arm. Will eventually wander off to watch TV or such. Unless they get into the game, at which point they transmute into one of the other types.

Strengths: Distracts one of the other players, or even the GM, giving many opportunities for cheating and getting things past them. Makes other players insecure about the hobby, as it has such a profound effect on "normal" people. This allows you to be even more over-the-top and to get away with it a bit easier.

Weaknesses: Has no idea what they are doing, so you can exploit and control the character that they have been given, getting them into all sorts of terrible situations and traps. What the hell, they're expendable and will probably soon dump, and never again see, their loved one anyway.

LITTLE-BROTHER/SISTER (LUDUS MINIMUS)

Description: A younger sibling, between the ages of 8 and 14, who feels left out when you game and hasn't decided to be hostile to you, your friends, and the whole thing yet. A demon in human form capable of transforming from an evil tormentor to a bawling victim in two seconds flat, getting you in trouble with your parents.

Mannerisms: Running to mum if you kill their character. Swinging their feet. Getting twitchy after ten minutes of sitting down. Rushing off in the middle of an important scene to watch the Power Rangers.

Strengths: The only reason they are there is because of parental pressure to let them join in. They don't understand that you want to blow things apart graphically and discuss adult issues and themes. It's a game, therefore little Joey can play. However, mummy dearest will constantly be checking on the little tyke and making sure there are plenty of munchies and soda to go around.

Weaknesses: The Little One may be vicious and conniving, but this is your world, and they are new here; exploit that. Say "Well done!" and encourage them every time they do something stupid, like forgetting to check for booby-traps. Odds are the GM will get in trouble if they kill the kiddy's character, and will feel a right old meanie, so always put the brat's character on point.

9. COPING WITH MUNCHKINISM

What do you mean, you're not a munchkin? Oh, right – you sit on the other side of the GM's screen. Okay, well, we've taken your money – perhaps it's time to give you a few pages. Let's face it, you need all the help you can get.



INSANITY - GOOD OR BAD?

Sooner or later, munchkin characters may go mad, or your munchkins may insist on taking insanity disadvantages in a points-based system. At these times, some mental problems are more acceptable to the GM than others.

Psychosis	Good or Bad Idea?
Homicidal Mania	Bad Idea.
Pyromania	Bad Idea.
Sociopathic Behavior	Bad Idea. (<i>Taxi Driver</i> , anyone?)
Schizophrenia	Might be good, might be bad - depends who they listen to.
Psychopathic Behavior	NO, STUPID!
Phobia	Depends; a phobia regarding living things is bad (they'll just kill them), while a phobia regarding weapons or killing is better.
Obsessive Behavior	Again, it depends on the obsession.
Catatonia	Good Idea.

Note to Munchkins: Unlike you, we play fair. And so, having given you a book full of material to work with, it seems only proper that we equip the GM to cope with your worst excesses. After all, if you reduce *all* your GM's wonderful games to smoldering piles of ash, he won't run games any more, and you won't have any more chances to be a munchkin.

Are Your Players Munchkins?

Find out with another really a-may-zing quiz.

- The city blows up. How do the players regard this event?
 - A disaster.
 - An inconvenience.
 - A worthwhile investment of explosives.
- Who do the characters resemble?
 - Woody Allen.
 - Woody Harrelson.
 - God.

- What is the players' preferred backup weapon?
 - Something small and concealable.
 - Something that will drop an enraged rhino at 30 paces.
 - Planets. Don't ask what their primary weapons are.
- The enemy is a *Species*-style genetically-engineered alien hybrid killing-machine. How do the players think of her?
 - Unstoppable hellspawn.
 - A challenge.
 - A cute babe.
- The heroes are tortured by a master criminal. What do they do?
 - Sob and spill the beans.
 - Act unimpressed and plan to escape.
 - Laugh heroically, tear free, eat the guards, and feed the master criminal into his own paper-shredder.
- The characters are locked in a room with a demon who wants them to sign away their souls by contract. What do they do?
 - Quiver and pray for salvation.
 - Sell their soul in exchange for massive amounts of power (with a view to a double-cross).
 - Sign, trying to hide their laughter at the demon who is too stupid to realize that they have already signed with his boss.
- How would your players define a munchkin?
 - An immature power-gamer.
 - A good laugh now and then.
 - A pathetic amateur no-hoper.
- You put heavy restrictions on character generation. How do your players react?
 - Just accept your decision.
 - Moan and create "interesting" characters.
 - Come up with a convincing excuse to resurrect a dead munchkin by some star ray or radiation exposure at the cost of a rapidly deteriorating sense of empathy, to promote "good character interaction."
- The players' sense of humor most closely relates to which sitcom?
 - Friends*.
 - Married With Children*.
 - Home Improvement*.
- The city is targeted by orbital strategic defense platforms. How do the players react?
 - Die screaming.
 - Attempt to hack the orbital stations and avert disaster.
 - Go out, buy a pair of \$50,000 shades and a deck chair and prepare to "catch some rays."
- How much forward planning do you put in to your games?
 - At least a month.
 - The week between regular games sessions.
 - None. What's the point? They'll just ruin it all anyway.

12. How does your group decide what game to play?
 - a. You decide – you're the GM, after all.
 - b. You make a democratic group decision.
 - c. They show you the book with the biggest gun on the front and say "Ook!"
13. How does your gaming group make you feel?
 - a. Proud.
 - b. Relaxed.
 - c. Like committing murder. "It's justifiable homicide, officer, he spent all his character's money on one gun!"
14. What kind of plot engages your group's interest?
 - a. An intricate and convoluted one that makes them examine their beliefs and preconceptions.
 - b. A heroic tale of triumph over adversity.
 - c. A string of unbelievable fights.
15. Who buys the most books in your group?
 - a. Me. I'm the GM.
 - b. We all buy books and share them.
 - c. One of the players seems to have all the supplements, knows them better than me and *still* won't GM.

13. All entrances to this room are actually thin wood (or plaster) coverings over 4" thick steel. All of which will irrevocably close and lock one minute after the room is entered. There is no way out.

— An actual room description from "The Arduin Adventure," by David Hargrave, a dungeon published in 1980

16. If the bomb really did go off, or if a comet hit the Earth, how would your gaming group fare?
 - a. They'd die in the blast or soon afterward.
 - b. They'd survive and join an enclave to rebuild civilization.
 - c. They'd soon rule the world with an iron fist.
17. When your sessions are interrupted, it's because of what?
 - a. There's an interview with Clive Barker/Alan Moore/Anne Rice on the TV.
 - b. The Simpsons are on.
 - c. *Night of the Living Dead* is showing on cable, again.
18. Your players bore you to tears by quoting . . .
 - a. Edgar Allen Poe.
 - b. Bill Hicks.
 - c. Arnold Schwarzenegger.
19. Where do you play?
 - a. In a specially-designated room dedicated entirely to roleplaying.
 - b. In a living-room or kitchen.
 - c. Wherever they manage to corner you.

20. What is your players' favorite game genre?
 - a. Modern
 - b. Fantasy.
 - c. Giant Robots!
21. How long has it been since you played?
 - a. A week – "We take it in turns to GM."
 - b. A few months – "I'm the most capable GM of the group."
 - c. "I've never played, they keep me chained up in the basement and just use me when they fancy a game."
22. When the game is over, what happens?
 - a. Everyone tidies up and goes home.
 - b. You sit around chat, and watch videos for a while.
 - c. They bombard you with questions about the game and don't let up. Ever.
23. If you went to a large live-action meet, what would your players name their unit?
 - a. Puffiel's Magic Pixies.
 - b. Clan McKewan.
 - c. Chaos-War-Death-Mangle-Maim-Hurters.
(They'd also build a cannon.)
24. When your players finally grow up, what do you see them becoming?
 - a. Artists, writers and dancers.
 - b. A bit of everything.
 - c. Grow up?
25. What's the worst thing that has ever happened to your gaming group?
 - a. Running out of milk and cookies.
 - b. Running out of nachos.
 - c. Getting arrested for playing live-action with real guns at 4 a.m..

Score 1 point for each a, 2 points for each b, 3 points for each c.

25. Don't worry. You're going to be fine. Your players have no munchkin tendencies whatsoever. They are happy fluffy little bunnies. You can lead them around like sheep. This is what it feels like to be a popular president.
- 26-40. Your players can get a little out of hand. If you stamp on it hard enough, you should be able to stop things getting too outrageous.
- 41-60. They're munchkins all right, but something is holding them back a little. You need to discover what it is and increase its power, otherwise you may lose control.
- 61-74. You're in trouble. You really need help. Sort things out, quickly.
75. You have no chance of recovering from this bad a position. Take yourself off somewhere quiet and shoot yourself in the head.



Dealing with Munchkins - by Genre

One of the most difficult things a GM can come across is a bunch of total munchkins. They can ruin multiple weeks of careful build-up with one twitch of their testosterone-saturated biceps. This section covers how to deal with munchkins - how to fight fire with fire, if you like - genre by genre. If you are a player, then please stop reading right now, as reading this section could seriously inhibit your enjoyment and ruin the "spirit of the game." But more importantly, you could piss off your GM, who, using the techniques listed here, could splat you like a bug.

FANTASY

The fantasy genre allows GMs a lot of leeway when dealing with munchkins. You can get away with just about anything in a dungeon. Just how does the dragon get into the underground room? The hordes of orcs and goblins that infest these places seem just about possible, but where do they live and how do they get around without alerting everyone to their presence? Here are some ideas on how to implement anti-munchkin GM tactics in fantasy:

Monsters

Always a big favorite of fantasy GMs everywhere. As mentioned before, good munchkin fantasy games have several unreasonably-priced ring-binders full of monsters, bad guys, and evil spirits. (These will rapidly fall apart as the rings in the folder chew their way through the pages, but that's beside the point.) When used properly, these monstrous filofaxes can greatly aid your player-control techniques. If you don't want them to go in a certain direction, then put two dragons, a hydra, and a horde of zombies in the way.

(Of course, if the players have read this book then they will probably fight through the dragons, hydra and zombies like they were cheese - so you will have to try another idea. Either that or beef up the monsters.)

But anyway, let's talk about the zombies - hordes and hordes of killer zombies.

You might wonder "How can I justify a massive number of slaving undead?" Well, point one, you are the GM and you don't need to justify anything at all. But the players might get the arse on about that, so, point two, maybe they're walking through an old graveyard left behind by a previous civilization, or a plague pit or two. Anything on these lines is a good idea. The method of zombie creation is up to you; we suggest a necromantic mage or planetary conjunction of some sort.

The players may have no problem bashing a few zombies, but you're not using just a few, are you? No, you're using millions of the things. You can force the PCs to go in a certain direction, attack them when they sleep, kill the most munchkin players and turn them into zombies to attack the rest of the party . . . What the hell, turn their horses, cats, dogs or guinea-pigs into zombies and attack the players with their own mounts, pets and food supply.

Swarms of hostile critters were used extensively in exactly this way in the *AD&D* "Dragonlance" series, and it didn't seem to do those modules much harm, sales-wise. Killing zombies and the like gets dull rather quickly, though. It's too much like cleaning your room, and not enough like combat.

NPCs

Fantasy NPCs can include things that would be considered monsters in other genres. You just make them a little more intelligent and give them some decent equipment, and away they go. Antagonists in fantasy games can also include other adventurers who are after the same loot and treasure as the PCs. These are often the best type of people to use as enemies, since they must have access to all the same powers and abilities as the players.

"LOADED DICE"

The words "Loaded Dice" can refer to either you as the GM cheating to cause the munchkin player the most inconvenience, or a genuine fluctuation in the players' luck. The trick is to make the former look like the latter. However, munchkins may sometimes penetrate your deception. You should, at the very least, make events appear like bad luck in the game world, even if the *players* can see that they are being hosed.

How do various effects appear?

Effect	Cheating or Luck?
Every bad guy shoots at the munchkin.	Just sensible bad guys.
Every bad guy hits the munchkin, even if he's hidden behind a building.	Cheating, you fool.
A skyscraper beam falls onto the munchkin in mid-battle.	Luck (probably).
The munchkin's family all die in a fire.	Luck. (But will the munchkin care?)
All his ammo turns out to be blanks.	Cheating

THE TRAP TABLE

Trap	Placement	Munchkin Factor
Boiling Lard	Covering People	Average; see the notes on lard on p. 44. Boiling lard will cause huge sections of skin to just peel off, which is horrible, and provides a cheap source of barbecue-flavored chips.
Falling Mountains	Sky	High; if you can throw/fire a mountain at people as a trap then you've got it made.
Falling Rocks	Ceilings	Not bad; higher if the rocks are molten lava, or explode when they hit people.
Greek Fire	Tube Launcher	Good. Fires burn and kill people. Leather armor burns and metal armor heats up to scalding temperatures.
Halflings	Floors, Ceilings, etc.	Sort of; you can feed them to people, or if you fire enough of them you can pin the target under their huge wobbling guts.
Pit Trap	Floors	Hardly any. Booorriinnnggg, unless you fill it with snakes, scorpions, starving cannibal halflings, or alligators.
Poison Dart	Dungeon Walls	Low; any armor worth its salt will stop it. However, you might be able to have fun with all manner of noxious and comedic poisons – like one that gives them terminal wind, or a deadly sneezing fit.

Magic items are a PC mainstay, so why shouldn't the NPCs have them as well? If there are swords of Orc or Dragon Slaying lying around, then it follows that there must also be swords of Elf or Dwarf Slaying. Imagine the impact a Kobold tribe leader with a sword of Human Slaying could have. Even a pixie can be a worry, if it's got a fireball wand. In fact, it could be a *lot* of trouble; small and fast, hard to hit, yet fully capable of taking out a low-level adventurer party with one neem.

Similarly, if characters can have magical armor, then why not the monsters? If the monsters are halfway intelligent, they are not going to hide away their magical items in a box when they could use them to protect themselves from rampaging adventurers. Orc chieftains in +3 plate armor are not to be laughed at. Come to think of it, you could fit three goblins in a standard-size chainmail shirt and they could still attack outward from the sleeves and neck.

Magic: Player characters do not have a monopoly on spells any more than they have a monopoly on magical items. Intelligent monsters should have their own magic to hurl back at the players – and not just the obvious fireball stuff, either. Even stupid trolls can have clerical magic. They're about clever enough to worship something, even if it's only a piece of rock that looks a bit like a face. Even low-level spells can be effective if used correctly. Study the way your players misuse and abuse spells, and then allow the bad guys to use them the same way.

Traps

Your traps can range from the basic poison dart shooting from the wall, to a poisoned mountain falling from the heavens. Different traps are appropriate in different places; would you believe we've given you a table of possibilities?

Misleading Maps

Yet another way to stop your players is to use subtlety. Yes, we know this is hard to grasp, but it works. Subtle tactics often start out with misinformation; if there is a munchkin magic-user in the group, then let him find out about some hidden scrolls on a dried-up ocean bed. However, with this piece of misinformation planted, you will be able to let the rest of the plotline get more munchkin; have hordes of fanatics guarding the scrolls, and make them fight like hell to get them. When the players finally get the scrolls, they will inevitably read them; you should have the scrolls represent a summoning ritual for an immensely powerful and evil genie who, when awakened, binds the players into his service and sends them out to recruit an army for him.

This misleading "verbal map" is just one type; there are many others. For example, a map might lead to the lost treasure of King Joladar, and of course his lost treasure might be the address of a good curry house, or his pet dragon, Spike, now 125 years old and narked off with being stuck in a dungeon. The possibilities are limitless; you can send players to the center of the earth if they think it will get them a bit of treasure, a cool story and maybe a suntan. You need to remember one thing, however; the lie is only as good as the teller. If you want your PCs to follow the map, have a stunningly beautiful girl hire them, or a mysterious old man give it to them in exchange for some food, or best of all, have everyone they meet tell them not to do something – they are then guaranteed to do it out of bloody-mindedness.

As we've said before, modern genres are becoming more popular by the week – and they're ripe for exploitation. To cope with this increased popularity and greater munchkin potential, the modern GM has to have more than a few tricks up his sleeve. As we are such helpful chaps, we have prepared a few ideas for you to mull over, starting with another application of the munchkin NPC approach.

Armed Response

One of the most popular methods of modern munchkin control is the armed response unit. These guys are armed, armored, and equipped to a high level, and trained to deal with munchkins and their excessive weaponry. They accomplish munchkin control through several methods:

1. *Teams:* Armed response units never ever attack alone; they always work in teams – preferably with air support or an APC, if they know what they are up against in munchkin PCs. They are trained in cover tactics and heavy weapons, and if they are (say) American SWAT teams, they have access to some really cool guns (such as the new .44 & .357 magnum submachine guns). Even the toughest munchkin is going to have trouble with 6-12 people all firing thirty .44 magnum rounds at him.

2. *Resources:* Armed response is a vital part of the modern police force, and is funded as such. They can get weapons on short notice, and can afford to stockpile everything from .38 service revolvers to 75mm recoilless howitzers. They can get armor and vehicles just by saying "Well, the last one got scratched when we stormed the Mafia HQ."

3. *Back-Up:* As stated before, armed response teams can call on a ridiculous amount of back-up; air strikes, the National Guard, and much else, not to mention the local police officers who will be waiting for you with shotguns.

The correct use of an armed response unit can cause some serious problem for even the best-prepared munchkin.

Survival Nuts

As we (again) said earlier in this book, these guys live in virtual fortresses complete with minefields and guard towers, and they are very territorial.

"How does this help me?"

Well, you could have the players wander into the compound of a particularly fanatical isolationist, or they might meet a conspiracy nut who mistakes them for government agents and opens fire.

Survival nuts have a lot of guns and aren't afraid to use them, be it for defending their home, for hunting deer, or for a skeet shoot. One important thing about this form of munchkin control, though; use them sparingly, or the players will get bored with them and they will lose their effectiveness.

Government Groups

Perhaps one of the most powerful things in the modern genre is the secret government organization of Men In Black. Government groups have funding, almost unlimited access to military hardware, and in some cases satellite weapons. All this can be used to your advantage when dealing with munchkins. If they are investigating a series of UFO abductions and are getting too close to the truth before you want them to, sic a bunch of MIBs on them; they're part of a government cover-up, so give them advanced weapons (stolen tech from crashed UFOs), cool suits, and more stolen tech for body armor. If the munchkins refuse to listen to the MIBs, use the MIBs' access to satellite weapons to lay waste to their houses, cars, family and pets.

Another way to use government groups to screw over player ambitions is to have the munchkins kidnapped by a secret organization and implanted with control chips. (X-Files, anyone?) If you do manage to implant them with a chip, use it to take control of their personalities and mess them up for good, then commit them to a hospital for the mentally deficient.

PREPARING FOR THE EVENTS IN THIS BOOK

In order to cope with munchkin players, you'll need to make special preparations. These can range from huge bad-guy NPCs to just letting them get on with it and then having everyone and their pets pick on them at the end.

Of course, these are basic preparations which will only work against your average everyday munchkin. If they have read this book then, oh boy, are you in trouble. However, there are a few counter-measures that may work.

Munchkin Activity	Suggested Response
Blatantly carrying huge guns.	Send in the SWAT teams.
Getting military hardware.	Have the military hunt them down to get it back.
Using military hardware.	Call in the marines.
Being lippy to everyone they meet.	Have an entire bar of rednecks pick on them.
Surviving the bar full of rednecks.	Have them wander into the families of the rednecks.
Refusing to die even when shot with LAW rockets.	Drive a tank through their homes.

MUNCHKIN NPCs

Feng Shui puts it very well when it splits enemies into "mooks" and "named bad guys." Every game has its cannon-fodder and its bosses. (This is about the only thing that roleplaying has in common with computer games.) One way to keep a modicum of control and challenge in a game is to make NPCs at least as powerful as the players themselves, and in numbers at least as great as the players' team.

Cells

Conspiracy or lunatic fringe cells can be great fun for the GM to play with. You've all seen the way Fox Mulder relies on his group of conspiracy theorists for information; well, you can warp this and use them for misleading plot hooks or false information, and even have them working for the aliens/airforce to further their domination of the universe.

If you can cultivate player reliance on one group of experts, the fools are wide open to your schemes. You could have the experts subverted or killed and replaced with clones; this allows you not only to give the players stupid information that they will believe, but to get assassins close enough to the players to be effective. If the players mess around too much, then you could introduce another type of cell, which will use all available methods to either indoctrinate or kill the players for being too nosy about things which don't concern them.

Net Junkies

These people are the kind who live on their computers, eating through a straw and being drip-fed caffeine through an IV line, just so they can stay hooked up to the Internet for as long as possible. They can make for great sources of information or misinformation, depending on how evil you are feeling.

If you want the players to find out about something, drop them an anonymous e-mail telling them just enough to get them interested. If they are getting too close, then virus their system so they lose everything. If one of the players is playing a Net Junkie, then you can have some real fun. You can use stroboscopic screen commands or color fluctuations to induce a fit or a brain hemorrhage. The World Wide Web allows some of the more interesting things in modern games to become even more interesting. How many websites are dedicated to things you shouldn't know? Quite a few, we think. You can attack the players' information flow, bank accounts, lives, and identity; if you use Net Junkies correctly you can win without having to kill anyone (though it's more fun to hurt munchkins). You can prove to the players that to win over seemingly obscene odds, all they need to do is to think about it, not shoot everything that moves, blinks, breathes or indeed exists in the same universe as them.

Techno-Occultism

In modern games, even the conspiracy-based ones, magic and occultism are not usually the main focus. It can be a real shock to your players to bring something like that in on what at first appeared to be a normal and rational game. But you can only really use this tactic once, ever, so make sure that you use it correctly.

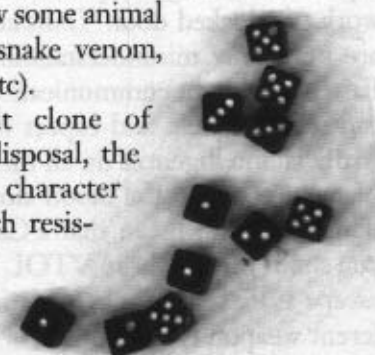
Using magic on technologically-oriented PCs is quite a good way to befuddle them. For it to really work, they should have no inkling that it is magic to start with; the realization should slowly dawn on them that there was no other way the feat could have been achieved. Eventually, when they realize that magic is being used on them, they will dig out their "Big Book of Spells" from the library and stomp all over the bad guy straight away. You can delay this by mixing technology with the magic. In some cases, this will make it indistinguishable from normal technology. Using magic and then casting it through some bullshit device is a good way to get around people's skepticism. Most of the relaxation cyber-glasses, chakra readers and other new-age technological devices work on exactly the same principle. (Only without actually having any effect, obviously.)

You can find ideas on technomagic all over the place, from White Wolf's "Technocracy" in *Mage* to Mys-Tech in the Marvel universe. Visiting New Age shops will give you ideas for devices which you can then warp to your own perverted ends with a liberal dose of imagination.

Ultimate Clone Warriors

This is perhaps one of the most deadly weapons the modern GM can have in his anti-munchkin arsenal. Have one of the secret organizations develop cloning technology and make a clone crossbreed of Jackie Chan (for the martial arts stuff and resistance to damage), James Woods (for the sheer evilness), Alan Rickman (for the intelligence), John Woo (for the intimate understanding of firearms and the workings of overkill), and the WotC board of directors (for sheer ruthlessness). Not Jean-Paul Gaultier for style, anyone else will do. Okay, add Quentin Tarantino (for verbal flexibility) and John Wayne (just to make sure). For added munchkinism you can throw some animal powers into the mixture (snake venom, kangaroo legs, bear claws, etc).

With this super-gestalt clone of munchkin doom at your disposal, the players' most munchkin character should offer about as much resistance as tissue paper. You will, however, have to use this approach sparingly.



If the players complain about you using this "unbalanced, invulnerable" killing munchkin of doom who is also smarter than them, just remember the reply that GMs have been using since the beginning of time: "Tough cookies, I'm in charge!"

However, the ultra-munchkin clone approach does have its downsides. If the players find out about its existence and manage to survive the attack then what will their first reaction be? You know this one, I'm sure. They'll tool up, steal a tank, and storm the clone base, kill everyone, and steal the technology. They will then use this technology to either turn themselves into even more invincible killing machines by splicing Tasmanian devil DNA into their own, or to grow strawberries. Or both, you never know with munchkins.

Insanity

Last off in relation to the modern-day genre, if the NPCs let you down, think about this. The munchkin walks a fine line between overkill expert and insane killing machine. But modern-day settings imply a pretty clear and detailed view of insanity. If they are getting too far out of hand, have them committed as loonies, or give their adventurer a psychosis or three. But remember - if you give them homicidal mania, they'll just enjoy it.

SCI-FI OR CYBERPUNK

Science fiction and Cyberpunk show up the differences between groups and the individual very sharply. You can rapidly lose count of the numbers of stormtroopers, security guards, and other faceless enemies. But on the other hand, the games also celebrate the individuals, the pioneers, the style gurus and the people who are excessively good at their jobs. Use this contrast; hit munchkins with hordes of people wearing tinted helmets, and then hit them with the charismatic, skillful bad guys. The faceless hordes serve to make the characters use up their ammunition and get a bit tired before the main performance.

Hi-Tech Troubles

The main problem with science-fiction games is that there always seems to be a device, weapon or technique capable of solving any problem. Disintegrators make short work of a locked door. Translator devices mean that there are never any misunderstandings between separate races. Faster-than-light communication and travel mean that they can send for help and expect it to arrive almost instantly. Artificial intelligences do all the computer hacking needed. Nanosurgeons in the blood along with reinforced muscle, bones and skin mean that PCs never die, however much you shoot them. Cheap VTOL craft mean that they always escape NPCs and sticky situations. They have all the different weapon types, but NPC armor is only good against one type. And so on.

PUNISHMENT FOR THE MUNCHKIN

Ever wonder what to do with your munchkin when you've caught him? As usual, we've anticipated your every need and will provide you with our own "We're right and you're not" style of help.

Capturing a munchkin is difficult enough to accomplish, and keeping them is even harder, but should you succeed in capturing and restraining one, here is what you should do to him.

1. Hurt but don't permanently kill. This is important. You could flay his skin and strip off 50% of his muscle mass, thereby turning him into a wuss, rip out most of his bones so he can't walk, or take his brain out and put it in a jar and only give it senses for 25% percent of the day, thereby slowly sending him insane. (Err, insaner?)

2. We said don't *permanently* kill. You *can* kill him and then use necromantic magics to bring him back as a slave to the bad guys; you then program him to hunt and kill the other players, and let him loose. He's already a munchkin and now he can't feel pain, so he should have no trouble dealing with the rest of the group.

3. Laugh at him.

4. Return him to earth as the carrier of a deadly virus that wipes out all life except him.

5. Make him immortal, then place him in the center of a collapsing star.

6. Rip his soul from his body and return it to Earth as a flatworm, or if you're feeling really nasty, a politician.

7. Remove his arms and legs and use him as a cushion.

8. Sit him in a room filled with guns, but every gun is disarmed and electrified to 100,000,000,000 volts at 100,000,000,000 amps.

9. Lock him in a room where the only sound is the Spice Girls' "Wannabe" played over and over.

10. Okay, just kill him. But don't give him a chance to escape, because he will if you try anything cocky. Just make sure you kill him, a lot. Check to see he's very, very, very dead.

It's a really tough problem which usually leads to a kind of technological arms race between players and NPCs, to see who can reach the absolute limits of credibility first. It will start out with the players getting a handgun that can easily punch through ceramic plate. So you add a force-field. So they add a force-field dampener. So you add a layer of Kevlar ... and so on. This is not the way to defeat this problem.

Lo-Tech Solutions

The best answer to the problem of high technology is to have it turn on the people who are trying to use it. As anyone with a computer will tell you, they always choose a time to pack up when you need them the most – when you have a deadline, or an essay needs to be in. If the boss absolutely has to have those figures by lunch time, the computer is *guaranteed* to go terminally belly-up. We're speaking from personal experience here; we suffered simultaneous computer crashes while writing this book.

Most munchkins simply *use* technology. They have little or no understanding of how it works. In the patois of the computer profession they are a "Computer Users, Non-Technical." Typical munchkins tend to have low technical skills, and would probably have problems reading the manual. It's all very well getting a cybernetic arm with a built-in minigun, but are they going to remember to recharge the batteries, oil the action, clean the barrels and run a self-diagnostic every month? No they are not. And is their team of space pirates going to remember to go in for a hyper-drive re-tuning once a year? No way.

So you are fully entitled to have their high-tech equipment backfire, display error messages, pack in, and even explode, all at the worst possible times. You're a GM, you're allowed.

After a certain amount of time, they will cotton on to what you are doing and start to gain tech skills, and they'll also bother to perform routine maintenance, so you will no longer be able to use this technique to such great effect. But even the best technicians get flustered sometimes, so you can still use it in dire emergencies.

One problem, of course, is the danger that the munchkins will recruit a non-munchkin player to act as a techie and maintenance expert. You can hope that this person will get bored and tired of this limited role, and perhaps even re-tune the munchkins' kit (say, making their minigun with built-in stereo fire hypodermic rounds loaded with berserker drug while playing "The Dance of the Sugar-Plum Fairy" instead of "The Ride of the Valkyries"), but this isn't guaranteed; he may be finding it funny watching them shred all your subtle plots. Oh well, you can always have a few villains target him with heavy weapons, obliging the munchkins to act as bodyguards.

Guns

The trouble with trying to harm players with guns is that they have always piled on layer after layer of armor. In order to actually hit flesh you are likely to have to go through two force-fields, a suit of power armor, a Kevlar jumpsuit, armored skin and sub-dermal weave. Use your imagination; come up with special ammo, particles or waves that can penetrate all that and still do damage. Pull a *Star Trek* and "modulate your phaser frequency." Have multi-

utter joy, the goddess of healing. He promptly spreads the news that Putrexia has so honored him all over the City. This brings new life to the Temple as various people take up the faith or merely come to be healed. Naturally, with all these people running all over the place, Cerrasan's fence activities are severely disrupted. The leader of local thieves warns the High Priest that the young Shandar must be dealt with or all deals are

stage bullets that take on different effects for each type of armor. There is always something that a certain type of armor doesn't protect against.

If this isn't to your liking, you can always just hit them with many, many bullets. There is nothing like fully-automatic fire for whittling down armor, especially if it's combined with acid, high explosive, or depleted uranium rounds. Plus, if you keep destroying their armor, they will eventually run out of money for repairs.


Bigger F***in' Guns

This section concerns a common problem, most prominent in cyberpunk and similar Sci-Fi games; the player-GM arms race.

This arises when the players get huge munchkin cannons, so you as the GM have to give your NPCs slightly bigger munchkin cannons for them to stand a chance. We all know what happens next; the players use their munchkin cannons to kill the NPCs, steal the NPCs' slightly better munchkin cannons, and leave. This forces you to give later NPCs yet bigger guns which the players will steal from them after killing them. So the pattern repeats itself until your NPCs are in power armor and wielding railguns and the players are also in power armor and wielding slightly smaller railguns. You see the problem? Good, let's try and fix it.

You should take some simple precautions:

1. Booby traps. Make sure all your NPCs' weapons are booby trapped and rigged to explode on the death of the user.
2. Nonstandard ammo. It's simple but effective; if the NPC guns are a unique caliber or get their cool effects from really weird high-tech shells, with rounds manufactured in one heavily-guarded, government-controlled factory, then there's a limit to how much use the players will get out of captured toys.
3. Sealed armor. If you are going to give NPCs munchkin power armor, make sure it's sealed and locked so that even after their death it can't be taken off. Or code-lock it; make sure it only works for someone with a certain brain pattern. If you want to be really mean, then you could let them into the suit and then have it lock down and cut off the air supply.



4. Trick ammo. Set up an NPC with a really cool gun – but load it with blanks. Sounds stupid? Read on. The players will kill him (not being surprised when none of his bullets hit them), steal his cool gun, and use it on the next bunch of bad guys . . .

5. Optionally, set the game in a totally oppressive state where even looking at a gun will get the players shot several times by the local military police.

6. Restrict the number of guns available on the market, and make ammo and body armor hard to get hold of. If they try to get guns on the black market, have them ripped off; make them pay five times normal price for a gun only half as reliable. Also, make sure any gun the players acquire illegally has a huge string of murders and drive-by-shootings to answer for.

Cyberware

The players are going to have chosen all the best cybernetics, and will have worked out all the special little cheats and mini-maxes that are going. Before you make up your NPCs, take a look at the players' character sheets and make a note of all the best ideas that they have used. And use them yourself.

Also, being the GM, you can give your antagonists access to experimental, more powerful cybernetics that make theirs look outdated. Most importantly, use cybernetics to make your NPCs extremely fast. There is absolutely no substitute for going first in a battle; it sets the tone for the rest of the confrontation. You should also make your villain fast enough to get away if things start to go pear-shaped, so that you can use him at a later date (not forgetting to give him experience points).

Anyway, let's now move on to the question of categories of opponent.

Robots

Robots make good enemies. Tough metallic exteriors, no conscience or qualms about killing people, remorseless, almost unstoppable, and they look scary enough to give even a gun-bunny pause for thought. When designing a robot to send against munchkins, you have to bear several things in mind.

1. Munchkins have HUGE guns that can punch through almost everything.

2. They will try to flank it, roll grenades under it and shoot it in the back.

3. They will inevitably try to EMP-blast it or electrocute it.

4. When they do kill it, they will either try to loot it, or reprogram and reconstruct it.

5. They have all watched *The Terminator*.

With this in mind, design your robot along the following lines:

1. Make it *incredibly* tough, with a force shield and a self-repair function as well as triple back-ups for everything.

2. Give it 360-degree vision, several arms, and plenty of close-range as well as long-range weapons.

3. Give it *VAST* EMP shielding, EMP sponges, and several back-up processor centers and memory cores.

4. Booby-trap it with a tactical nuclear device. (If they've seen *Predator*, you simply edit out the countdown and cut straight to the explosion.)

5. Don't base it on the Terminator. Or make it look like the Terminator, but with none of the same weaknesses.

Excessive Police

Call them what you will; Tank Police, C-SWAT, Max-Tac, Special Patrol Group, SO-13, AD Police, whatever you like. Most near-future games, and some far-future ones, have some manner of elite police force that puts you more in mind of the SAS than the plump, donut-pigging, coffee-swilling cops that you may be used to seeing in real life.

If the players are typical munchkins, they will have bought the biggest, best and most impressive-looking armor, weapons and cybernetics. They will then use these items to engage in random acts of senseless violence. This is where these special police groups come in.

When equipping your elite police unit, just remember one simple thing; they are supposed to be trained and equipped to be capable of taking on the worst that can be thrown at them. This means, in effect, players. Their other main strength is that they work as a team, while players often get into fights amongst themselves as to who gets to kill the next enemy.

Yes, you have to take the modern-genre solution of Armed Response, as described above, and upscale it to match the ridiculous firepower available to SF munchkins. It's gross. It's sick. It may even get a bit boring after a while. But this is munchkins you're dealing with; there's no space for half-measures.

Use heavy body armor, power-suits, fully automatic weapons with explosive rounds, assault helicopters, tanks, even tactical nuclear weapons damn it. Eventually, the players will realize that if they are going to play such complete twinks, they will need to keep a lower profile and not slaughter thirty people every time someone spills their beer.

Of course, players being players, they will decide instead to try and storm the police headquarters to get hold of all the cool weapons and equipment that the police have. Should this happen, send in the army. Or think what orbital energy beam platforms can do for you.

Gangs

Most Sci-Fi or Cyberpunk games have some sort of gang culture prominent in the background. The players will exploit this. They will attempt to raid, storm, kill or torture these gangs so they can find a stash of guns, armor or drugs.

But if the players are going to exploit this, then why shouldn't you? It's easy when you know how. Simply make sure that the gangs are armed to the teeth with the best illegal arms, armor and cybernetics you can dig up. Why would they stash it when they could use it themselves?

There's a couple of things to remember about gangs. First, when the players are attacking them, it will be on the gang's home turf; they will know all the back routes, short cuts and places to hide. In fact, remember that gangs almost never deal outside their turf, not because they are respecting any boundaries, but simply because if they can get people to come to them they can kill them and rip them off easier. Gangs have no interest in doing business in a proper manner and will backstab you at the earliest opportunity.

Second, if they are a drug-dealing gang, the chances are that they take drugs themselves, so make the drugs the hi-tech equivalent of PCP. This will make the gang members nuts, but it will also mean that they can take more bullets than other people and still get up again.

One final thing about gangs; numbers. A gang which lives and operates in the combat zone or some kind of hi-tech slum will usually have hundreds of members who will all attack at once if they are ordered to. (It's crazy, but hey, it's the genre.) You as the GM can use this; two hundred people firing full-auto is quite impressive – even if they each only hit with one round, that's still two hundred rounds, is it not? Don't be afraid to sic huge numbers of fanatical, drug-addicted, cybered, armed and armored loonies on your players.

Oh, and gangs take everything personally. "I like your colors," if delivered in the wrong tone, can get the response "Boyz, kill!"

Aliens

Alien races and creatures are the perfect tools for dealing with out-of-hand science-fiction players. Aliens can have basic statistics and abilities far in excess of those the players are allowed, thanks to strange mental powers and physical prowess.

In roleplaying terms, an alien race should have a good rationale behind it. It should have a culture all of its own and a unique psychology. There should be good evolutionary reasons for everything that it does. However, when dealing with power-gamers these are all secondary considerations. You want something that is capable of beating them, or at the very least providing them with a challenge.

Most of the time, players will simply wade through hordes of aliens like a harvester through corn. You need to prevent this. Design your aliens purely with combat in mind. Take the best parts from Giger's Alien, the Klingons, the Snouts, the Jem'Hadar, H.G. Wells' Martians, the Kafers, the Chigs, the Thing, the Daleks, the Sontarrans, and any other aliens you can think of, and throw them all together. Armored carapace, triple-redundant organs (including the brain),

acidic blood, a warrior psyche, ruthlessness, xenophobic dedication to the destruction of every other living thing – and top it all off by making them huge, muscular and more technologically advanced than the players. An alien race built along these lines should have little difficulty in making your most munchkin players whimper and hide.

(As an extra bonus, have every member of the race infected with large numbers of parasites – and when the carrier is killed, have the parasites abandon ship and attack the players.)

When it comes to designing alien animals rather than intelligent beings, you have to think along different lines. You have more room to be creative. Think of the weaknesses that munchkins have – too much testosterone, an obsession with blasting things and a wholesale disregard for their own, or anybody else's safety – and exploit them.

For example, you could have a swamp-dwelling creature that creates illusions of beautiful women to tempt players into its jaws. This is a bit clichéd and rather obvious, but you'd be surprised how many people fall for it. If you don't think your particular players are quite stupid enough, then have the illusion be something else: money, a crashed starfighter, a fast car, or even a huge gun – whatever you think will work.

If all your players do is shoot everything, then have their ship attacked by a fungus that just spreads more and more spores every time you attack it. Make it a really horrible color, give it a terrible smell, and be sure that it makes irritating noises so that they have a hard time *not* attacking it.

If techniques that exploit their idiotic tendencies don't work, hit them with things that they can't attack with their normal skills. Alien viruses, intelligent gases or liquids, psionic entities, or holdovers of ancient technology far beyond their own. There's always a way to curb a munchkin using something alien.

AI's

Artificial intelligences make excellent villains and NPCs. You can't kill them easily since they are spread out across several computers. They are vastly intelligent. They can control every aspect of a technological society and they have nothing to fear from even the best computer hackers, being faster and smarter. Artificial Intelligences can make life very difficult, and fatal, for characters. Dropping elevators is a favorite trick, as is changing traffic lights. Try to think a little more creatively, though. Any device can be interfered with as long as it's electrical; blenders, TVs, microwaves – even light fittings can be turned into deadly weapons. Jam the blender, then switch it into high gear when they check to see if there is a blockage. Drive them to suicide by only allowing the TV to show abysmal reruns. Light fittings can be overloaded to burst the bulb, then when they go to change it you can overload the power again. Not that any real AI would be so petty and base, but this is a game after all.

Politicians

One thing that munchkins will never be able to grasp is the concept of politics. If you can't solve a problem by shooting/beating/needling it, they aren't in the least bit interested. You can use this against them by making your villain intensely political. This is no use if they simply stroll up and blow him away, so keep him in the background, working through middlemen. Increase their taxes. Bring in laws banning armor and firearms. Increase sentences for the crimes the characters commit the most and increase funding to the police force. Condemn their homes, tow their cars, ban motorbikes with an engine size as large as theirs. If you want to know exactly how political power can be used to slam people, just look at any analysis of a government budget, and then exaggerate it. Life mirrors art, as they say.

Backing

Lastly for these genres; one thing that players rarely, if ever, have in games is backing. Your NPCs, however, can have backing coming out of their ears. Corporations make good backers; They have plenty of money and always seem to be perfectly willing to spend it equipping hordes of armed security for the players to mow down in firefights that have more in common with Iwo Jima than downtown Detroit. Using corporate funds, your antagonists can get absolutely the best equipment on the market. They can bribe police forces, buy out buildings and small companies, and influence government. Money talks pretty loud.

If you are playing in a space game, the odds are that your villain will be working for some manner of vast imperial space empire. The official forces of Vast Imperial Space Empires tend to have a slightly higher level of technology than their common citizens; exploit this. Especially if it means more powerful blasters, faster ships, or matter transportation. An empire can spend exactly what it wishes in money or resources. If it overspends it simply makes up the losses by taxing its territories more. (It will also do this if it has some special project in mind; where do you think the money for the Death Star came from? Extra tariffs on cigarettes and beer, that's where!)

HORROR

The horror genre is generally not so prone to getting out of control. In games such as *Call Of Cthulhu* and *Kult*, the main antagonists are so powerful as to be far beyond the reach of the most powerful characters. Even if you nuke Cthulhu, he comes back in ten minutes, only radioactive. It wouldn't be horror if the investigators really stood much of a chance in any sort of simple fight.

So curbing munchkinism in horror games may seem pretty easy. But grossly powerful monsters, in and of themselves, are never enough. Luck protects the terminally stu-

pid, and munchkins. Things *can* get as far out of hand in horror games as in any other genre. You lose your resolve for a second, and suddenly the group becomes a team of highly skilled occultists able to summon beings of the outer stars to perform household chores for them.

Doin' the Monster Mash

Merely outclassing the players by a factor of two or three, or even ten, is not enough. The ultimate evil at the root of your plot should be so powerful that it is in no way possible to defeat. It should have no statistics (because one big rule of RPGs is that, if something has statistics, they can and will be neeced down to zero by munchkins), and the only way to beat it should be in the manner you decide at the start – a ritual, an artifact, or some other MacGuffin. Great Cthulhu is by far one of the best antagonists to use in this manner, as are all of Lovecraft's diseased fantasies. If you don't like any that already exist, then make up your own; we've given you a bunch of tables to use if you really can't think for yourself.

World Shifts

We're sure you've all seen *Army of Darkness*. This provides us with a good way of using horror to completely screw up the players. Ash was hurled back to the medieval age where his complete lack of knowledge regarding chivalry, dark ages morality and the pronunciation of mystic words rapidly got him into trouble. Shifting worlds and getting players out of their depth is a good way to divert their attention from working out ways to destroy your ultimate terror. If you hurl them into the past, you get the added bonus of severely restricting their access to powerful weapons. You try explaining the principles of nuclear fission to a caveman and see how far you get.

Besides time shifts, there are many other places you can send people to. Clive Barker is a good source of inspiration here, with the other planes of *Hellraiser*, *Imagica* and *Midian* for a start. *Kult*'s "Metropolis" is a damn good place to confuse and confound players. Time and space have no meaning there and the world can be changed in an instant. There is no such thing as a paradox in *Kult*.

You have a completely free rein in horror to make as many heavens, hells, illusions and strange lands as you want, and you can make them as bizarre and horrific as you like. The home of the dark Angels of Sissip-K'theng could be an Escher-on-acid nightmare of gravity-defying steps and blood, it could be an endless cold plain of gray sand, or it could be an eternity trapped on a bus next to a flatulent old man. It's entirely up to you.

Turning to Splatterpunk

Even if you are not running a splatterpunk horror game, it has many tools and methods that can be brought into other games in order to provide a measure of control over

MONSTER GENERATION

The first and biggest thing that a real munchkin-eating Elder God needs is a name. In fact, it should be quite literally unspeakable. Choose a number of syllables (roll 2d6 if you like), then start pulling letters out of the alphabet at random, with the odd apostrophe for luck. Hey, it worked for H.P. Lovecraft.

Then, you'll need to give it some suitably horrific features. Roll 1d10 once on each table below to create a truly horrific being:

Legs

1. None.
2. One huge one.
3. 1d100 tentacles with suckers.
4. 1d1000 thread-like tentacles.
5. Two, with huge clumping great feet.
6. Eight spider-like ones.
7. Ten crab-like ones.
8. A series of metallic retractable stilts.
9. Four.
10. Chubby cellulite-covered ones which end in ridiculous platform shoes.

Arms

1. None.
2. Two huge arms rippling with green muscle and ending in huge claws.
3. 1d100 tentacles with mouths instead of suckers.
4. 1d1000 thread-like tentacles with hooked barbs on the end.
5. 1d10x1d10 jellyfish stingers.
6. Two metal jaws like a mechanical digger.
7. Four, each one holding a weapon.
8. 1d20 assorted power tools.
9. Furry cats' paws.
10. Chubby pink arms that resemble sausages.

Head

1. None.
2. A huge suppurating mass of rotting flesh.
3. A twisted gestalt of its previous victims.
4. A bank of TV screens showing close-ups of Roseanne Barr's arse.
5. One huge eye.
6. A beak.
7. Someone's nads.
8. The result of a crash between a truckload of cows and a toxic waste transporter.
9. 1d1000 eyes in the centre of a mass of tentacles.
10. A great big wobbly mass of lardy red flesh with a shock of blonde hair.

Body

1. None.
2. A load of people. Doing it.
3. A ton of used toilet paper.
4. A blubbery mass of cephalopod flesh.
5. A torso made entirely of airline food.
6. Clegs of damp hair tugged free of plug-holes.
7. An area of darkness around a glowing centre.
8. A scething mass of maggots.
9. Rusty scaffolding with strange machinery amongst it.
10. A tub of lard wrapped in white lycra.

All being well, you should now have either nothing, a passable multi-dimensional entity, or the cutest member of a cheesy girl group. Any of which are equally terrifying to find behind a series of occult murders.



players' gun-bunny methods. Splatterpunk monsters attack in hordes, use rusty power tools, and can appear from nowhere at the most inconvenient times. Apply this to your other games, and when the players are expecting a dark brooding anticipation-laden game they will be at a loss as to how to react to a zombie bursting through their mattress wielding a rotary sander. If one betentacled creature rising from the sea is horrifying, it doesn't necessarily follow that six of them are going to be any more terrifying, but it does mean that they stand a better chance of dealing with the players.

The other good point about splatterpunk is the way that the main antagonist can keep coming back. No matter how

many times you stab, shoot, burn, blow up or decapitate the slasher, they always return. If you grant this power to your baddies in any game, you can wipe the floor with the players.

Dreams

Dreams represent the subconscious mind; if you want to really mess up the players, you should play with this. You can use dreams to implant post-hypnotic suggestions, cause paranoia, and even send the PCs insane. If you reinforce your baddies with a couple of suitably powerful dream images, nothing is beyond your reach.

...instructions to conform to most of the 30-30. Carrying a 12mm round, the penetration of a good sniper rifle, it can, unlike the 30-30, be shot to a semi-automatic rate. A box is also another advantage over the



If one player is really pissing you off, use his dreams to convince his character that all the rest of the party are in fact evil demons hell-bent on destroying the planet. You could turn him into a serial killer, a drooling vegetable, a doom-sayer, or even a world leader (and then you make him start a nuclear war, of course).

However, once the players find out about the power of dream magic, the group magical munchkin will undoubtedly try to learn this power so he can use it for himself and kill the baddies in their sleep. You need to be prepared for this. You can deal with it in several ways, the easiest of which is to make the baddies evil creatures from beyond the

world who don't need to sleep. Other methods involve equipping them with talismans of power which render them immune to dream attacks, or if you are feeling really sneaky, let the players enter the baddies' dreams, and then seal them in there.

Crash & Burn

Another favored horror tactic is the crash and burn approach. This is simple; you just ruin their lives. There are several versions of this, but when it comes to dealing with munchkins there is really only one which will work.

This requires the horror baddy to have some sort of cult or group of followers. He sends this loyal army of fanatics out to burn the character's house, kill his family and friends, steal his car, cancel his credit cards, and eventually burn everything he owns or cares about (yes, even his guns).

That was the burn section; now, here's the crash. You cause reality to become too real for him to deal with, make him perceive all possible realities at the same time, and kill any of his friends who are still alive and replace them with evil

demonic duplicates and *let him know*. The character will soon become very insane, and either join the dark hordes out of desperation or kill himself.

(Oh, do make it clear from the start that PCs who become insane evil cultists automatically turn into NPCs. Munchkins may find this disappointing, but you're entitled to *some* solid rules sometimes. You may also have to tell them that PCs who kill themselves do *not* come back as supernatural agents of vengeance.)

By using the crash and burn tactic, you can cause the most munchkin characters to become totally useless within a month; if you want to speed up the process, combine it with dream magic.

Take Control

As the heading suggests, this section deals with taking control of reality within your game. We know it sounds stupid, but you're playing a horror game with a group of munchkins. They will alter, twist and distort your game reality so much that you won't be able to recognize it after the second session.

Typical problems include munchkins turning things from a investigative angst-ridden game where you are forced to question your very existence into a series of gunfights. If you give them enough time without correcting their methods, your army of demons who are poised to attack the human realm could find themselves facing a full nuclear strike and a UN "peacekeeping" force lead by John Wayne. (They found a way to cure him and defrost him, and then told him that these demonic scum called him a nancy.)

To avoid this situation, you should keep a firm grip on reality; never ever let them alter even the most minuscule thing. The most powerful way to do this is to create some kind of out-worldly "reality police." It's heavy-handed, but sometimes, you've got to get tough.

Occultists

A group of occultists can be a truly devastating thing to pull out of your GM hat. They are always fanatical loonies who worship some stupid god or his earthly servant. If you feel that the players are getting a little out of hand or if you just feel like it, you could sic an entire cult on them; the reason could be anything from "they don't like someone's hair color" to "the PCs killed and ate the cult leader's dog."

One good thing about occultists is that you can never, ever finish them off completely. They're fanatics; shoot a few of them and they just bounce back, crazier than before. Furthermore, most occult groups have members in all levels of government and law enforcement. God knows how they do it, but they always manage to recruit at least ten percent of an area's industrialists, police chiefs, judges, and so on. (It just shows you can't trust the middle classes.) So the munchkins can be out-manuevered socially and legally at the same time as they are being overwhelmed physically. The



cultists have lots of options; they can manipulate things from afar, or they can get some LAW rockets and get personal with the PCs.

(If you choose the "get personal" approach, then remember, wait until they're asleep. A sleeping munchkin is a slightly easier target than a wakeful munchkin. Also, when we say "personal," we mean personal from the point of view of a .50 sniper rifle scope – approximately 1 kilometer. Remember, you're dealing with munchkins here; any close-range attacks will be met with more autofire than the entire U.S. army reserves could muster. Mind you, if the munchkins are all *purely* gun nuts, some knife-wielding loonies who get in real close by stealth, and then start grappling, could worry them).

Occultists usually have access to several bizarre rituals, from a mild Hex, through a stronger Hex (the type we use on people who diss our work), up to "Summon, Bind And Sic Huge Munchkin Death Spirit From The End Of Time." All these can be used to mess up any plans the munchkins make (on the off-chance they actually plan anything rather than just charging in and just shooting everyone). Wards – protective spells – are another good idea for occultists; in theory, they should be around in any game with magic, but they are subtle and ceremonial, and hence fit best in horror games – and cultists need all the defenses they can get against munchkin firepower. If you have an important door, then Ward it against everything you can; people, guns, munchkins, ammo, explosives, sharp pointy things – anything that could possibly harm one of your NPCs. This approach can save the lives of important NPC baddies; if it fails to do so, then feel free to have the occultists use some huge ritual to revive their deceased boss and bring his spirit back. He's bound to be a bit annoyed, so you have another reason to fwackoom the munchkin players.

One final thing about occult groups; numbers. You should never allow the players to get hold of a list of members, because if they do, they will run around killing them all in their sleep. This would wipe out a good part of the plot and most of the baddies. So just let them find out about a few at a time, and when they think they've got 'em all, just spring another, previously undiscovered coven on them.

(Or give them a fake list, and when they start killing innocent little old ladies in their sleep, send the police after them.)

Outer Limits-Type Weird Stuff

This is one of the more evil ways of dealing with munchkins; pulling something so weird and obscure that they can't solve it with guns and death. We know it will annoy them, but that's the idea, isn't it?

In order to use this type of weirdness on your munchkin players, you will need to remember several things:



1. **Plausible Deniability.** This is very important; anyone involved should have no idea who else is involved or what they are doing. This makes it possible for NPCs to lie convincingly to the investigators with no chance of being found out.

2. **Explanations.** You don't need to bother with these. Remember, you're in charge and you don't have to explain that the ghost was in fact a hi-tech plasmatic manifestation created using a Mk VI animator matrix.

3. **Flexibility.** As the GM, you will need to be able to deal with your PCs' tendencies to guess things too early. For example, if you have a limb fairy stealing people's limbs while they sleep, and the players guess this, turn it into some sort of virus that infects their limbs and makes them run away.

4. **Be Really Weird.** Think of something really loopy that will mess with the players' heads so much that it hurts, and use it. If you can confuse, disorient and cause them pain in their brains, you've won already. No munchkin will admit to being out of his depth.

5. **Be Original.** However tempting it is, never use something directly out of a book or from TV. Always change it. The odds are that someone in your gaming group has read or seen whatever it is you are using and will spoil the whole thing for everyone. You could get around this by combining two different sources; for example, you could mix the plot from a *Scooby-Doo* cartoon with a Sean Hutson novel and end up with a fair haunted by killer snails which are in fact remote control robots used by a developer who wants to buy up the land. "And I would have got away with it too, if it wasn't for those pesky munchkins."



MUNCHKIN AND ANTI-MUNCHKIN NEW-AGE TECHNICAL DEVICES

Cyberpet Voodoo Dolls

Brightly colored key-fobs that come with little electronic people living inside of them. Press the different buttons marked "burn," "needle," "cut," and "behead." Hours of fun. Teaches irresponsibility and can be used on up to one hundred people per battery. Drawer for hair and nails included.

Ultra-Relaxation Glasses

When donned, these glasses project a pretty array of specially selected colors onto the wearer's retina and via that into the brain. These instill a sense of calm and peace in the wearer and also happen to place him in a permanent coma.

Jukebox Radio

Use a special technological spell to make people part with their money for what amounts to a \$10 transistor radio in a pony box. A well-kept secret, this spell is also used on sports cars, children's toys, boy band albums, Spice Girls CDs and soft pornography.

Infrared Massager

This *should* merely make you feel warm, giving an illusory relaxed sensation. Cursed IR massagers, however, have a more powerful battery and a special enchantment. This opens a portal from the emitter to the planes of hell, causing a sudden and thorough toasting.

Whale-Song Tapes

Specially recorded to summons all whales within hearing distance, this causes the player of the tape to be crushed under several hundred tons of sea-going blubber.

Air Ionizers

They do exactly what they say. Only better. They ionize a path from the victim to the nearest plug socket, causing the target to be horrendously electrocuted.

Universal Munchkin Problems and Responses

TOO MUCH MONEY

It happens to the best of us. We lose our concentration, resolve, or common sense for a second and **POW**, the players have far too much cash. Here are the top ten signs that your players have way too much moolah:

1. You set up an intricate plot hook. An old drunk tells them rumors of an ancient and powerful set of armor which resides in the nearby monster-infested ruins. You deliver his speech convincingly, only for one of the players to say, "I've already got some; bought it down at the market last week - only cost me 10,000 gold pieces."

2. It's not a problem to them when you blow up their \$750,000 car every game.

3. They offer great Cthulhu a huge bribe not to rise for at least another century, and have enough money to succeed.

4. They own a country, and instead of doing things themselves, they use the national military for everything. Including nipping down the road to get some donuts.

5. They have a different battlemech for every day of the week. (Two for Sundays.)

6. They can afford to buy orbital-grown crystal bullets, each with an etched micro-copy of the Sistine Chapel ceiling on it.

7. Their sunglasses cost more than an Oil Sheik's yearly income.

8. Their toilet paper is gold-flecked silk studded with diamonds. (Yeah, it's uncomfortable, but they just like to flaunt their wealth.)

9. You hit them with the full power of an evil and ambitious corporation, and they buy it out.

10. Each player has an entire arcology as their personal apartment.

You do not want the players' finances getting this far out of control, so you need to hit their pockets with a series of devastating financial attacks. Reduce them to poverty and give them some impetus to get out there and do some work again.

The top ten ways of reducing a player's stash of cash:

1. A stock market crash. This is damn effective unless your players are such paranoid munchkins as to keep all their money in cash, in a box, under their bed. Ah, well, maybe not.



2. Okay, in that case, use hyper-inflation on them; last week, the money in that box would have bought Europe; this week, it will barely pay for a BLT sandwich.

3. Put up the tax on alcohol, cigarettes and bullets in your game world. This will cripple even the most resolute munchkin. However paranoid they are about their cash, they'll suffer from losing their favorite things.

4. Rob them blind. Forget combat, just max out the NPCs on stealth and security skills. Sneak into their supposedly impregnable bank vault and swipe all their cash (or pinch the boxes under their beds).

5. Have their bank (or bed) collapse, taking all their money with it.

6. Increase government taxes in your game to obscene levels for the wealthy. Take at least half of anything they earn and tax everything that they do.

7. Get them addicted to a rare and extremely expensive narcotic that can only be produced in orbit or something similar. Make it need to be taken very often, say once an hour, and watch those funds tumble to the floor.

8. Don't allow them to play Bill Gates in the first place.

9. Have someone find out that all the money they have ever been paid is forged and therefore worthless!

10. Hit the game world with a comet, making money worthless and barter the only form of currency.

DEALING WITH ROLL CHEATS

No methods for dealing with munchkinism will work unless you can also stop your players lying their arses off about what numbers they've rolled. You can hit them with as many multi-dimensional entities as you like, but if they keep rolling criticals then you don't have a chance.

As we showed way, way back in the early chapters of this book, it's relatively easy for a munchkin to fake his die rolls. He can hide them with his hand, roll them out of the room or roll when no-one is looking.

A GM's life is a busy one; obviously you can't keep tabs on all your players to make sure that they are not cheating. It's enough work just running the games, let alone having to nursemaid every single roll. There follow a few ways that you can stop players fixing their rolls...

Roll Everything Yourself

This is quite a good method. You know the exact result of every roll, and by making it yourself you can ensure that there is no cheating whatsoever. Everything will be fair (unless you want to cheat) and will work exactly as it is supposed to. On the face of it this is perfect. But no. Here are the problems:

1. Munchkins always want to roll their own dice. "It's part of the fun." Plus they'll probably cry if you take their special dice away from them.

2. It means extra work for you.

You have to do all the rolls and keep track of everything. While you are busy, the little munchkins will get restless and get up to mischief with their character sheets.

3. They'll accuse you of cheating. Whenever an NPC gets a lucky break it will be because "You fixed the die roll." Quite why NPCs aren't allowed to be as lucky as characters is never adequately explained.

Hire Yourself a Snitch

Pay off one of the players, one with good eyesight and slightly less munchkin tendencies than the others; offer him game concessions and/or food in exchange for him watching the other players' die rolls. This lets everyone make their own rolls and ensures, hopefully, that it's all fair and equitable. This too has problems:

1. The other players will shun your snitch. Either that or burn him at the stake as a traitor to the cause.

2. Your snitch may be more of a munchkin than you think, and accept bribes from the other players as well as you.

3. You come across as a petty conniving little bastard turning people against each other.

Buy or Make Huge Fluffy Comedy Dice

You can only get them for six-sided-die based systems, unless you make your own, but a die as big as your head cannot easily be tampered with or hidden. It's then plain for everyone to see exactly what number the player rolled, and therefore cheating of most kinds is impossible. It also builds up muscle tissue and makes you all that little bit healthier. Drum roll please, here comes the downside:

1. You can't fiddle your die rolls either. It's bloody obvious to everyone exactly what you roll, so you can't enable important NPCs to miraculously escape death.

2. After a combat scene, everyone is too tired to continue playing. Rolling initiative, to-hit and then damage is the equivalent of a half-hour work-out in the gym.

3. Muscle-bound roleplayers are as scarce as honest politicians. You will be regarded as freaks by the rest of the RPG community.

4. If you are playing in a small space, injury can result.

NOTE: Whenever damage is not indicated, consider the trap fatal. Also note that those traps that impale, strike, or otherwise, hit their victims have a 50% chance of doing a "Critical Hit" as well.

*— Advice to the DM from
"The Arduin Adventure"*

Wire All Your Players Up to Lie Detectors

This one won't make you any friends, and isn't that reliable. It will however make your players mindful of exactly how much you hate cheating and how far you are willing to go in order to prevent it. It does suffer from quite a few major drawbacks:

1. Expense. Hiring six qualified lie detector operators and all their equipment doesn't come cheap.
2. It's distracting having electrodes attached to you. The players will find it hard to concentrate.
3. An extra six people and half a ton of equipment takes up a lot of room.
4. It's not admissible in court.*

PSYCHOLOGY

Munchkins are, generally speaking, none too smart, and this makes them susceptible to a few psychological tricks. These take a while to work and will need to be employed over several sessions, but be patient. The rewards are well worth the wait.

Reverse Psychology

The classic example of using reverse psychology on munchkins is a trap that is found in some humorous dungeon-bash games: a block

ENOUGH ROPE TO HANG THEMSELVES

A GM strategy:

Give the munchkins everything that they think they want. All of it. We know it sounds like a bad idea, and yes, it may even backfire. But if it works, it will give them an appreciation for the finer qualities of roleplaying, i.e. not just smashing your way through hordes of enemies. Let them have even the most ridiculous weapons and equipment that they ask for. Let them have money coming out of their ears. Give them tanks and nuclear weapons if they want them. Anything. Then design every game so that it is merely a string of fights with no discernible plot whatsoever, not even a cheesy one. After a few weeks of this, even the most die-hard and mentally-challenged twink will start to get bored. Hopefully. Then they should start to value the plots and thought that you used to put into the games, and you can all play happily ever after.

Or you will know the worst, and you can give up.

of stone with nothing on it but a red button and the legend "Do not press this button." They always do. Naturally, it activates some incredibly powerful death-dealing trap that neems them into oblivion.

You can utilize a similar method in almost any genre. By way of examples...

"Oh no, you don't want to read that book - it's evil, I tell you, evil!"

"I wouldn't go into that area of town at this time of night if I were you."

"You're not going anywhere near Artremaris are you? Good, the navy says there's a black hole around there. You wouldn't catch me flying anywhere near the place."

Conditioned Response

You know the experiment; ring the bell and the dog salivates. Well, in this case you are trying to condition against munchkin behavior and for good roleplaying.

Whenever they do something munchkin - draw a gun unprovoked, slaughter hundreds of people, spend all their cash on a handgun - simply beat them with a huge stick and shout "NO!", electrocute them, or shoot them in the nads with a BB gun. Whenever they do something that you consider to be good roleplaying and worthy of encouragement, give them a sweet and praise them. Over time, they'll get it through their thick skulls that "Multiple homicide bad, deep meaningful soul-searching good." You'll be happy, and they'll be on a permanent sugar rush.

*Munchkinism is yet to be made a crime in most parts of the world, but we live in hope.

APPENDIX 1: EXAMPLES

Here are some quick examples of both munchkin and non-munchkin responses to typical gaming situations. These should go a long way toward helping you define your particular brand and degree of munchkinism.

SITUATION ONE

The players are setting out on their adventure and have arrived at a small town that is being terrorized by the creatures from a nearby ruined castle. They stop off at the town's trading store to stock up on equipment. While browsing, they realize that they do not have enough money to pay for everything that they want.

Non-Munchkin Response

The party thief pockets a couple of the items that they consider essential, but leaves a note promising to pay the shopkeeper back with treasure from the dungeon. The players then make their way toward the dungeon, hoping that they will be able to pick up the extra things that they need in its dank depths.

Munchkin Response

The fighter closes the door to the shop, hanging up the "Closed" sign. He then slaughters the shopkeeper, taking the XP for himself, stocks up on everything he wants, and empties the till of money. He slaughters any other witnesses to get more XP, and takes jewelry and any gold teeth from the corpses.

SITUATION TWO

The players have been hired as bodyguards for an NPC, but he has proved to be really hot property, with every criminal and law-enforcement organization in the city out to get him. The players set up a meeting with a maximum-threat-response unit to hand him over to the police. They decide to double-cross the cops. How do they go about it?

Non-Munchkin Response

Pay for the target guy and some hobo to have reconstructive surgery. The hobo is changed to look like the target and the target to look like someone else. Hand over the hobo, pocket the cash, and make their escape before the cops spot the swap.

Munchkin Response

Annihilate the maximum security police team. Steal their vehicles. Assault the police compound, wading through innumerable police as they do so. Smash in the side of the building, find the central computer core and destroy it, wiping all records not only of themselves but the target. Fight their way clear again and spend the rest of their lives (or at least until the next game) on an island in the Bahamas, living on the money made by selling stolen police equipment.

SITUATION THREE

It's a dark and stormy night, and the players' car has broken down after they took the wrong exit on the highway. Trying to find a way to get help, the players enter an old house in search of a telephone; as they walk in, the door slams shut and they hear maniacal laughter and the words "Go my zombie minions, go and find me some fresh meat!"

What do they do?

Non-Munchkin Response

Scream and run like hell, showing a realistic roleplaying response to the presence of flesh-eating zombies. Die horribly in a selection of interesting ways until they find a way to escape. Stagger back to the road, tell their story and end up in a mental institution.

Munchkin Response

Look stoic, saying "Zombies, huh?" Break furniture to make clubs and stakes, improvise weaponry from items in the kitchen and bathroom, and inevitably find an old shotgun somewhere. Take all the zombies to pieces and then find the evil mastermind behind them and blow him to pieces. Probably lose a limb in the process, but replace it with a power tool. Be the only survivor and go in search of other zombies.

SITUATION FOUR

The players are a group of star pirates running Thola weed to the Beta-Hydra system. The deal goes bad. Fleeing the starships of the Galactic Customs Patrol, the players fly into a system which contains a smugglers' outpost, a large purple gas giant, and a dangerous asteroid belt. How do they escape?

Non-Munchkin Response

Fly to the smugglers' outpost; the other pirates and no-goods should deal with the Customs Patrol, allowing them to completely avoid risking their ship and its precious cargo. They can then leave without actually entering the outpost and answering a lot of questions about leading the patrol there.

Munchkin Response

Turn around and assault the lead ship with their concealed rail-cannon and nuclear missiles. Then, amidst the confusion, dive into the asteroid field, deftly avoiding the swirling debris and causing another two GCP ships to be destroyed. Fly back out, and cripple the last ship by ramming it. Board it, kill the crew, make some repairs, transfer the cargo and the weapons and fly off in a brand spanking new GCP patrol vessel.

SITUATION FIVE

Princess Zenda, heir to the throne and religious leader of the adventurers' home country, has been kidnapped by Zorn, her evil brother from the next country along and the high priest of the infamous Sect of the Bloody Goat.

Non-Munchkin Response

Attempt to set up a trade for the life of Zenda, offering all their nation's mineral wealth for her safe return. Get double-crossed by Zorn and die.

Munchkin Response

Arm up, layer on armor, and charge into the country controlled by Zorn. Slaughter all the peasants, guardsmen and knights who get in the way, storm the high temple of the Bloody Goat and call the assembled fanatics "a bunch of pantywaists." Kill them all, rescue the princess and return home.

SITUATION SIX

The heroes' car tires (two sets of limited edition Ford-Nissan Thunderbolt smart radials) have been boosted by malnourished street-kids while the players were indoors interrogating a suspect. How do they go about getting their tires back?

Non-Munchkin Response

Ask the kids for the return of the tyres, and then take them out for a meal. If the kids refuse, phone the police and wait.

Munchkin Response

Ask for the return of the tyres; if they don't reappear in one minute, open fire on the kids with an Uzi or other SMG loaded with hollow-point rounds, then use the kids' bodies as tires as an example to others.

SITUATION SEVEN

The vampire prince is encroaching on the characters' businesses and interests in the mortal world, using his political power to prevent any comeback. He has an army of bodyguards and is ancient and powerful. How on earth can they protect their interests?

Non-Munchkin Response

Send the prince a strongly worded letter of complaint, asking him to kindly desist from his activities and leave off their stuff. Then, behind the scenes, call in all their favors and contacts to get their influences back. If this fails, a leaflet campaign is the way to go.

Munchkin Response

Stake 'em & bake 'em.

SITUATION EIGHT

Dr. Diablo, the black-clad genius from the Evil Eight, has his destructo-ray pointed at the city, and threatens to set it off unless paid 20 million dollars by lunchtime. This ray obliterates everything but the fillings in teeth, and lays waste to entire tectonic plates. How do they stop him?

Non-Munchkin Response

Use their powers of flight to air-drop a crack team of psychiatrists onto his HQ to help him work out his problems with poor impulse control and attention-seeking.

Munchkin Response

Shout "Come on then!" and block the ray with their bodies, using their immense powers of invulnerability to make sure only minimal damage is done to the world. Track the gizmo back to his secret base, tune the ray down into a fine needle beam and use it on his nads.

SITUATION NINE

The most munchkin member of the party has been infected with the virus that turns people into flesh-eating zombies. How do the players deal with this terrible occurrence?

Non-Munchkin Response

Try and talk to him about it while leading him into a sealed room; lock the door and call for a doctor to use an experimental serum to reverse the effect.

Munchkin Response

Shoot him, stamp on his head, hit him with a video recorder and a cash register, steal his weapons, use them to finish him off, then walk off into the sunset remarking how careless he was.

SITUATION TEN

Wuffles the magic pixie has lost his golden star beans and the whole of Wibbley Dell is in uproar trying to find them. How on earth can the players hope to prevent tears before bedtime?

Non-Munchkin Response

The players pitch in and help search, and in the end, with everyone working together, the star beans are found!

Munchkin Response

Load two buckshot rounds into a sawn-off, kill all the pixies in one. Tear up the whole country, load the beans and everything else of value into a truck, take it back to civilization and trade it for beer and ammo.

Well, my character is Drop Dead Gorgeous, which gives me a +12 to my Seduction Skill.

Sarah, you're in the middle of combat! The demon wants to KILL you, NOT sleep w/you.

But my char. sheet says "+12 to ANY seduction roll!"

OK, the demon is enamored w/you and grows so testicles, all of which are slithering toward you. Now what?

APPENDIX 2:

NEW WORDS IN THIS BOOK

A Guide to the English Language for Ignorant Colonials

Apples and Pears: No-one says this, not even real cockneys. Don't.

Arse: Not ass. An ass is a donkey. Arse has a far more satisfying sound to it. Arse, roll your tongue, ar-r-r-se. See?

Beer: American beer is fizzy, weak, cold, and contains salt. That is not beer. Real beer is *ale*. Ale is served at room temperature, has a stupid name like "Old Gruntfuttock," and usually comes in at six-point-five to seven percent by volume. It tastes of yeast and hops, not recycled water.

Bloody: Yes, British people do say it. It's a mild expletive, marginally stronger than "Damn."

Bollocks: The testicles. Used as an exclamation to show that someone is lying in much the same way as the word "bull," e.g. "Wow, another critical!" "Bollocks."

Bunter: A fat person. Derived from "Billy Bunter," a fictional lard-arse. Fat people can also be said to "Come from Wigan" or to be "Hanging out the bunting." "Who ate all the pies?" is a common question.

By Jove: A sort of Sherlock Holmes, Jeeves & Wooster expression that no self-respecting British person would utter anymore.

Cud: Something not very good. Something rubbish.

DIY: Do-It-Yourself, as in the kind of home repairs performed by people who are too mean to pay for a professional and/or too boring to have proper hobbies.

Gimp: Specifically an S&M perv that likes to wear leather/rubber full body suits. Also a useless prat of any description. To gimp is to give someone the thousand-yard-stare while smiling.

Gyp: A problem with something; e.g. "This to-hit roll system is giving me gyp."

Headcase: A nutter, a violent and depraved psychopath.



Irony: A humorous concept that Americans often find hard to grasp. For example, a car driver goes on at length about how unsafe motorcycles are for hours on end, then when he leaves, crashes and dies. (That bloody woman's song almost had the idea, but she's too wet to really get it right. A Free Ride When You've Already Paid is annoying, but only ironic if you've just been getting smug about paying cheap-rate fares.)

Lard/Dripping: Northerners' delicacies. Dripping is the fat and juices left after a roast meal, which are left to stand and set and then spread on bread. Lard is fat, which *everything* is cooked in.

Naff: Rubbish, not very good, Cheap, tacky, tawdry.

Nancy: A wuss, a panty-waist, a weakling. Implies an effeminate nature and reluctance to do anything "manly." Good old-fashioned homophobia.

Narked: Annoyed, disgruntled.

Northerner: The north of England is assumed to be inhabited by gruff speaking, flat-cap-wearing DIY enthusiasts. Think of various Monty Python sketches.

Pants: Undergarments, not trousers. "Pants" can also be used as a mild expletive or exclamation, i.e. "Oh pants!"

Pie Eater: A fat person. The type of chunky blubber-guts who can't last five minutes without a snack, preferably a pie.

Pissed: Drunk. ("Going on the piss" is going out for a drinking session, but referring to a particular drink as piss is as insulting to the drink as it sounds.)

Pop-tart: A young girl, usually 12-16, who has an IQ in single digits, dresses like a whore, and thinks alcoholic lemonade, silk cut cigarettes, and hanging around outside the 7-11 all hours of the night is the nads.

Pull: To attract a member of the opposite sex. Phrases utilizing this word include "I'm going out on the pull," "I've pulled," and "This after-shave will increase my pulling power."

Sarcasm: To say something with a certain turn of phrase and tone of voice so as not to mean it; e.g. "Oh, what a great idea *that* is."

Sod: General-purpose mild insult. Still considered slightly crude, but nothing to do with homosexual activity these days.

Southern Pouf/Nancy: Those who live in the cold, grim north of England regard those who live in the relatively warm and affluent south as lacking in fortitude and being molly-coddled. Hence, they show utter contempt for them. In return, those who live in the south regard those who live in the north as "northern bastards" – intellectually deficient proles.

Spanner: Nerd, dork. Large black-rimmed glasses, acne, and no social skills. The type that always wins at science fairs.

Stroppy: Angry, difficult; irritatingly irritated.

Swede: The head.

Taking the Piss: Making fun of someone or something. Also "Extracting the urine." And "Taking the Mickey."

Twink: Alternative term for a munchkin, usually of the younger sort. (Bizarrely, derives from the gay term for the male equivalent of a bimbo. Go figure.)

Wet: Feeble, silly; having an insipid personality.

Whisky/Whiskey: None of this sour-mash rubbish. Irish or Scots single malt is the only way. No soda, no ice. Thanks.

Munchkins!

We ain't talking the yellow brick road here, bub.

There are those who want to play, and those who want to WIN. The whiners who don't understand "power gaming" call these people "munchkins." But what do we care?

In this outrageous satire, an experience munchkin gleefully reveals the tricks of the trade: everything from re-rolling an unfavorable result to bribing the GM. Learn how to get the most out of character design, and why it doesn't really matter what your character's personality is as long as you get to FWACKOOM! the NPCs and grab their stuff. Munchkin GMs get their own chapter, of course: how to control the players, bend the rules, and up that body count!

Remember: If it's only a game, why do we keep score?

Written by James "Grim" Desborough and Steve Mortimer

Edited by Phil Masters

Cover Art by Kent Burles • *Cover Design by* Philip Reed

Illustrated by Kent Burles and John Kovalic

!!WARNING!!

Contains childish humor,
blasphemy, and references to
naughty body parts.



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