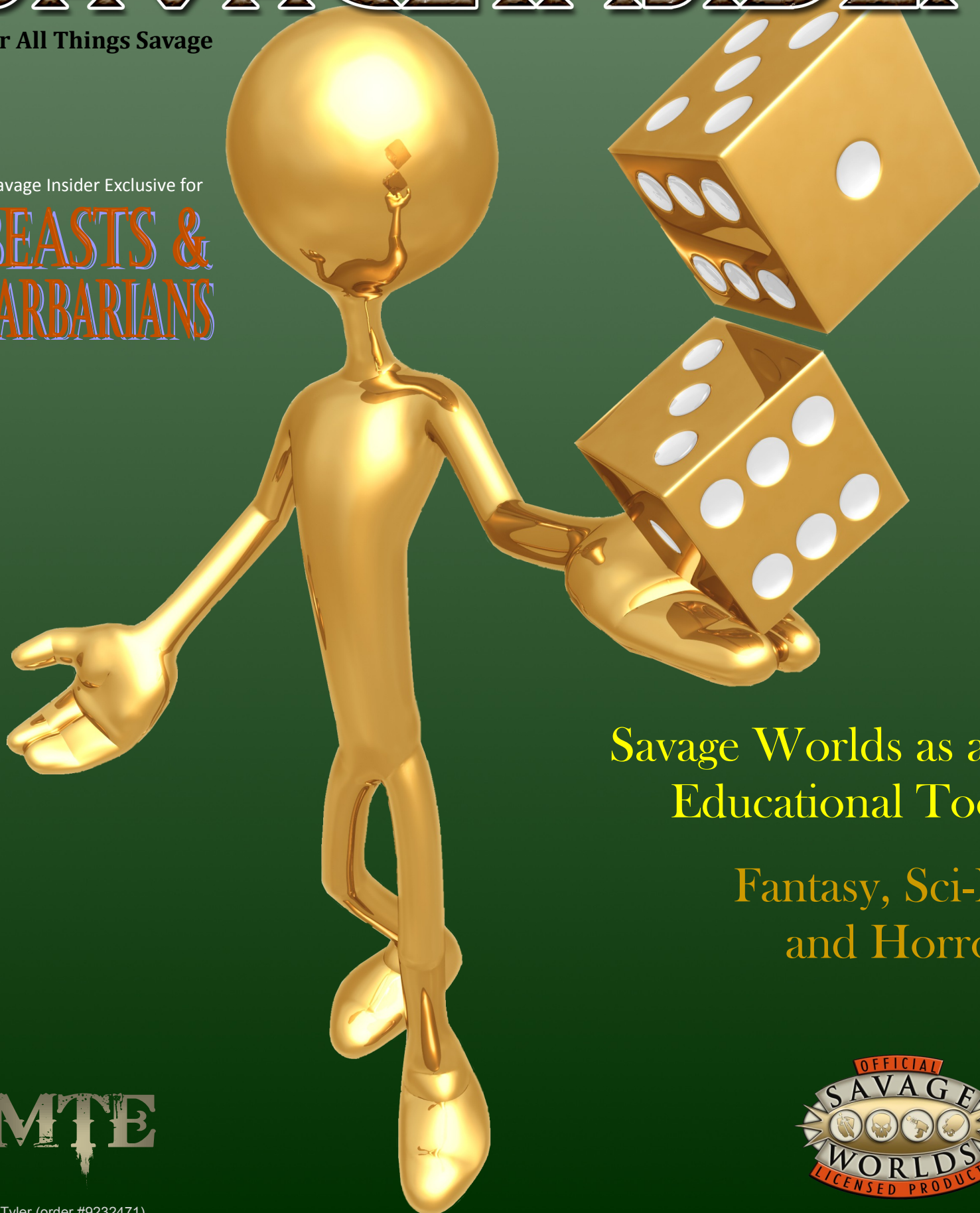How the Dice Roll

# Savage Insider

**For All Things Savage**

A Savage Insider Exclusive for

# BEASTS & BARBARIANS

Savage Worlds as an
Educational Tool

Fantasy, Sci-Fi
and Horror

MTE

OFFICIAL SAVAGE WORLDS LICENSED PRODUCT

# Selected Savage Settings

## Deadlands: Reloaded!

The year is 1876, but the history is not our own.

Pinnacle's flagship product is *Deadlands*, a horrific journey into the "Weird West." Mysterious beings called the Reckoners have given life to monsters and magic, causing history to divert from July 4th, 1863 forward. The South has won its independence, California has shattered into a labyrinth of flooded sea-canyons, and a mysterious super-fuel called "ghost rock" has spawned as much war and strife as it has "steampunk" devices.

Players are steely-eyed gunfighters, card-slinging sorcerers called hucksters, mysterious shamans, savage braves, mad scientists, and more who battle against evil and attempt to prevent the "Reckoning."

## The Savage World of Solomon Kane™

A Landless Man. A Wanderer. A Puritan. Solomon Kane is many things, but above all, he is a hero. In a time of savagery and horror, he wanders the darkest corners of the Earth and battles the evil he finds hidden within. From the savage interior of Africa to the cold forests of Europe, the frigid mountains of Cathay, and the blood-soaked jungles of South America, he battles merciless butchers, deathless queens, even winged demons in his pursuit of righteous vengeance.

Now your hero can follow the Path of Kane. Whether a Puritan wanderer, a misguided pirate, or a soldier of fortune, a time of legend has come and fate has chosen her champions. Kane began the fight against an ancient evil so great it could destroy humanity, but now others must carry the torch into the darkness.
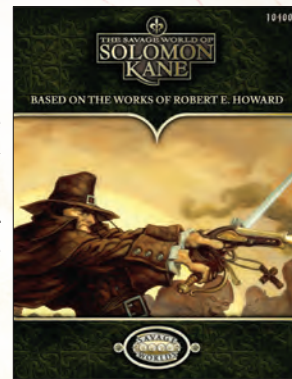
## Low Life: Rise of the Lowly

Sword & Sorcery Adventure in a shattered world inhabited by the descendants of cockroaches, worms, snack cakes, and stranded aliens. Discover the arcane secrets of hocus pokery, dementalism, smellcasting, and holy rolling. Battle hideous beasts risen from the rubble of ancient civilizations. Enjoy a light lunch at the Primordial Soup Kitchen. Mutha Oith is a world of grand adventure and deadly peril, of conflict and danger. It's a land of epic heroism and great evil, a realm of horror and violence, a bold land where even the lowliest cockroach can become a king by his own sword and the most wretched gob of filth can become a gawd.

Are you werm enough to follow your destiny? Do you have the nuggets to take your rightful place among Oith's most valiant heroes? If so, strap on your esophagator hide shield, pick up your poo flinger and your huge freakin' cleaver, mount your pygmy slog, whisper a prayer to Jelvis, kiss your larvae goodbye, and open the goosin' book. The muck-riddled road to epic adventure stands before you...

## Necessary Evil: Explorer's Edition

The fate of the world lies with the scum of the earth: when the super heroes of the world are blown to kingdom come by an unstoppable army of invading aliens, who will save the day? Evil! The only forces left to take on the alien menace are the crafty, self-serving super-villains! Necessary Evil is a supers game done Savage Worlds style. Inside the twisted Plot Point setting are complete rules on making four-color super-powered characters, over seventy super powers, a pile of adventures weaving in and out of a resistance story, new Edges and Hindrances, a bestiary of out-of-this-world critters, and more!

No simple reprint, this classic Savage Worlds setting is reformatted to the wildly popular *Savage Worlds: Exporers Edition*-size paperback, includes a new ending (110% of the story of the first edition), and has updated rules and two dozen new pieces of art.

## Weird War II

The violence and horror of war brings humanity's worst nightmares to life, and no war was as terrible or as widespread as *Weird War II*. Climb in your Sherman, crawl into the ball turret of a B17, or just grab a rifle and battle the horrors of *Weird War II*.

One of our most popular lines ever relaunches as a single massive volume covering all the war's major theatres and updating the terror to the award-winning *Savage Worlds* system. You'll find complete rules for campaigns on land, sea, and air, rules for rune magic, and a massive bestiary with haunted tanks, Nazi Wehrwolves, ghost battleships, and more!

## Space 1889: Red Sands

Science fiction roleplaying in a more Savage time! Since Thomas Edison first explored the worlds with the help of his marvelous ether propeller, the British Empire has grown to include to the red plains and stately canals of Mars, the steaming, dinosaur-infested swamps of Venus, even a remote outpost in the twilight zone of Mercury.

In 1889, the sun truly never sets on the British Empire. But deep inside the Empire a core of revolt festers and grows. Martian cults cry out for the Earthlings' expulsion. Britain teeters at the edge of war with the Oenotrian Empire. In the midst of seething turmoil, the being known only as Kronos siezes the technology of a forgotten race to threaten the very future of mankind!

This book contains everything you need to play thrilling Victorian space adventures with the *Savage Worlds* game system: new Edges, Hindrances, combat and construction rules for ether vessels and aerial flyers, a complete system for Inventions, copious information about the various locales, races, and mysteries of the Solar System, an Adventure Generator, dozens of Savage Tales, a bevy of alien creatures and nefarious foes, and a Plot Point campaign to take your heroes to the stars and back again.

All of our settings (except *The Savage World of Solomon Kane* and *Pirates of the Spanish Main*) require the *Savage Worlds* core rules.

# MTE

# SAVAGE INSIDER

Savage Insider is a collaborative effort between Savage Worlds licensees and the Savage Worlds community and is published through Mystical Throne Entertainment. It is supported by the many licensees and fans using an exchange method. Those who contribute content or artwork are offered free advertisement space. If you are interested in becoming a contributor to Savage Insider, please contact the editor-in-chief at aaron@mysticalthrone-ent.com.

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**Dear Savage Insider Readers:**

It is with many thanks to Editor-in-Chief Aaron T. Huss that I had the opportunity to lead the development for our second issue of *Savage Insider*. I was honored and thrilled when he asked me if I was interested in doing so. I know how hard we worked to put the first issue together and I had a certain amount of fear that I might not do this issue justice compared to what Aaron pulled off in our first issue. Of course, you're the judge on if justice was done.

Most of the responses from Issue 1: Building the Savage Worlds Community, were complimentary. Adventures and Shopping (http://adventuresandshopping.blogspot.com/2011/06/savage-insider-quarterly-for-savage.html) blogger Billiam Babble commented "The love for Savage Worlds glows on each page." Ron Blessing (www.thegamesthething.com) says, "This is a stylish, well put together resource for any Savage Worlds fan." And Sam Krieder commented, "Wow - I can't believe this is free…I can't imagine why a fan of SW wouldn't pick this up. Did I mention that it's free?!"

And then there were a few who weren't as happy. "Of the 48 pages, a quarter were advertisements, and over a third was a total puff-piece, round-robin Q&A. The best section, the adventure seeds and NPC, was fantasy-based. As a quarterly magazine, it a long wait to get other genres into the mix," says Patrick Riley. Brian Holder had a similar concern. "It felt like they [the ads] dominated."

But then there were those who understood why we have so many ads, like James Schrecengost who wrote, "I learned a lot about the publishers in the Savage Worlds space, which I liked. I also learned of a new product that I want to pursue. True, there's a lot of ads in there, but it's a free mag. And the ads are pretty. I am wanting to run a *TPA [Temporal Probability Agency]* game now...thanks, *Insider*!" And while it was never our intention to steer *Savage Insider* only toward fantasy, thanks to the feedback we got, we made extra sure to have other genres included this round.

Speaking of things this round, in researching game conventions covering the October to January period, and trying to find conventions outside the US, I came across the Japan International Gamers Guild (http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/JIGG/) with regular events. Two are coming up on October 1 and 9. There's not room to mention every ongoing gaming meet-up in *Convention Connection*, and that's not its purpose, but it's heartening to find the love of games, especially RPGs, world-wide.

I hope you enjoy what we've put together for you. We welcome your feedback, suggestions, and contributions.

Have a great day!

Vickey

Vickey A. Beaver,
Assistant Editor (Lead Developer issue #2)

**From the Editor-in-Chief:**

I would like to thank everyone that downloaded one of over 1,750 copies of *Savage Insider* Issue #1. In addition, during the course of the past three months, our first premium content product, *Mercenary Breed*, was released. *Mercenary Breed* is a space opera sandbox setting that I've deemed as a mini-setting due to its size and lack of complexity. To support this, I am planning a full campaign with short module releases on a somewhat regular basis (maybe monthly). This campaign, currently titled *Hastillion Expanse*, will be released through the *Savage Insider Premium Content* name and will be easily adapted to any space opera setting (homebrew, fan-created, or published).

For those starting with Issue #2, our inaugural issue of *Savage Insider*, titled "*Building the Savage Worlds Community*", featured an in-depth look at the various Savage Worlds licensees, a grouping of in-game content, part one of a *Deadlands* comic series, and more! That issue served as a platform to bring together the Savage Worlds fans and the publishers providing them with the content they love.

Planning for Issue #3 has begun and is currently titled "*What Lurks in the Shadows*". That issue will be dedicated to grit and horror across all aspects of Savage Worlds and will include a set of alternate rules to make magic more dangerous.

In addition to our published content, we encourage fans of the magazine to submit their own questions to us for publishing in an Editorial section. If you have questions about *Savage Worlds*, we'll help get those answered! You can also submit your comments about the magazine and what you'd like to see in the future. All those submissions can be sent to:

aaron@mysticalthrone-ent.com

Thanks again and we hope you enjoy issue #2, "How the Dice Roll."

Aaron T. Huss
Editor-in-Chief

*Savage Insider* has a quarterly release schedule, within the first week of the month, as follows:

- January
- April
- July
- October

Circulation is available through DriveThruRPG, RPGNow, and Paizo Publishing under **Mystical Throne Entertainment**.

Derek Tyler (order #9232471)
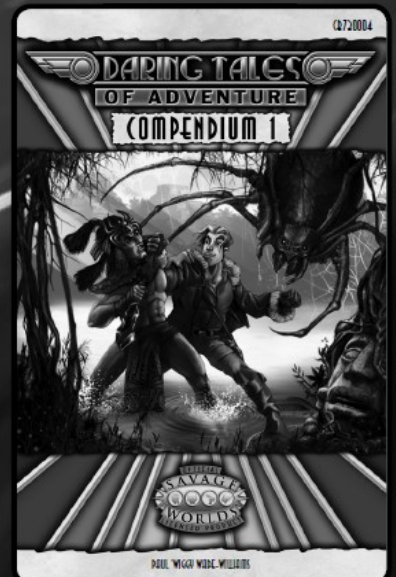
*Torno © 2011*

# What's in a Genre?

How does one define the setting being played? *Savage Worlds* has an extremely flexible nature that allows GMs to create virtually any setting imaginable with any combination of different genre elements. These could be your standard elements such as fantasy, science fiction, pulp, and horror or more finitely detailed elements such as fantasy horror and pulp science fiction. So when your players ask "What type of setting are we playing in?" you could either explain it in extremely generic terms, or you can explain it so they really know what they're getting into and can work the information into their character's back story.

But why is it important to define genre elements? There are numerous potential answers to this, but the basics are thus: so the players understand the setting better and can use this information to guide them during character creation. Without this small bit of guidance, the players may create characters that either require a lot of work to explain their involvement within the setting or ones that just don't fit at all. The first step to better explain and understand your setting is to understand the genres and sub-genres along with the bits and pieces they are made of.

## Fantasy

Fantasy is the genre filled with imagination. It is characterized by elements and aspects that don't always have to make sense and are often barely explained. For instance, why is there magic? Simply because it is inherent to the world, living and beating within everything from the trees and water to the very air you breathe.

Fantasy can be a world filled with purpose, but that purpose does not need to be logical nor does it need to be realistic. Things can simply be and that's an acceptable explanation. The most common aspects that fall into these characterizations are magic, player character races, and creatures. Much of what you see is steeped in influences from mythology, folklore, and ages-old fairytales, but it doesn't stop there as new-age fiction and cinema continue to be incorporated, and the mind is the only limit. There are many types of fantasy settings that carry a look and feel different from each other, incorporating many new elements, but the basics of these different types remain the same.

Epic fantasy is a deviation from the known world where anything is imaginable. Low fantasy is the real world, or at least a semblance of the real world, with fantastic elements (such as alternate history). Modern fantasy is today combined with fantastic elements. Pulp fantasy finds its roots within the pulp publications of the early 20th century, often drawing lines between good and evil. Dark fantasy incorporates elements of horror or despair.

Regardless of the type of fantasy, they all have similar characteristics that make them fairly recognizable (such as magic, orcs, or dragons). One characteristic that is common but is not a definition or requirement of fantasy is medieval influence. Originally, and still widely popular today, fantasy featured warriors and heroes akin to those from medieval times, a common theme within old school fantasy. Fantasy can exist within any era to create wonderfully unique settings.

If you wish to slay your character's enemies with magical swords, vicious spells, or deadly hands, fantasy can fill the imagination along with filling your desires.

## Science Fiction

If fantasy is filled with imagination, science fiction is filled with technology and the means of making it possible and making it work. This technology is defined, and sometimes illustrated, because it not only has a purpose, it has a method of creation.

Characteristics within science fiction do not simply exist "because they do"; they are present for a reason and that includes the process of creation and use. A robot does not simply exist; it is a product of engineering and manufacturing, powered by an electronic brain and controlled by a computer-core driven by software. This should not prevent one from using imagination, but it often presents the challenge of plausibility. Prove that this technology is possible, or at least write something creative enough that proves it is an achievable technology given the setting's inherent abilities.

Designing possible technology is not a new concept and science fiction is possibly as old as fantasy. While fantasy often includes creation of myths and religions, science demonstrates a creation of knowledge and engineering. You simply have to understand the science of the day. For instance, clockwork is the science fiction of the Renaissance era, similar to the inventions from the mind of Leonardo da Vinci. We may see it as fantasy due to its low technology base, but it is in fact science fiction of an older time.

In that regard, science fiction is a thinking of what's possible given the right technology. Nowadays we push that limit further and further into the future bringing in elements of faster-than-light speed travel, space exploration, and even alien interaction. But one should not confine themselves to these definitions. Science fiction is much more than the future. As noted, clockwork is the science fiction of the Renaissance era, steampunk is the science fiction of the Victorian era, and pulp science fiction is the ideas that came out of the early 20th century.

There are many other types of science fiction creating unique gaming experiences and changing the mood of game-play. Space opera is science fiction action and adventure, often containing elements of drama and social sciences. Military science fiction can be thought of as equivalent to "hack-and-slash" where there are lots of guns, lots of enemies, and lots of military-styled action. Gothic science fiction incorporates elements of chaos and despair. Space travel is often filled with large spaceships that are an integral part of the setting and overall gaming experience.

While the basics of science fiction ask that you define why and how, your imagination can still run wild as you think about what technology might be available.

## Horror

Horror is more than big scary monsters that cause fright. It is about invoking emotions, often at just the right moment. While placing a giant, tentacle-clad monster in front of you might be terrifying, it does not mean horror. With many fantasy-styled settings, these types of monsters are common and thus should not be considered as part of the horror.

Often times, horror is characterized by creatures and situations that are above and beyond the means of even your player characters. It could be characterized by supernatural creatures that shouldn't exist and cause terror throughout the world, only to be smote by extraordinary hunters. You could be playing the horrific creatures and the world fears you.

However, horror still revolves around the emotions it potentially invokes - that sense of fear for what's around the corner; that delve into the unknown, completely unsure if your character will survive at all. The creatures involved can vary wildly and are often those associated with most mythologies, folklore and fairytales. These are creatures associated with fear across the ages.

One simple example of this is gothic horror, characterized by vampires, demons, angels, zombies, ghosts, werewolves, and other similar, superstitions. Much of this is combined with dark situations and a world that is grittier than heroic settings. Coming into contact with these types of creatures should be thought of as extremely dangerous and foolhardy where only the bravest of the brave should even think of attempting to engage. But this is not the only type of horror.

Horror can also be that which you cannot see – something that invades your mind and dreams, causing you to see or experience things that are not real. Maybe the supernatural creatures are hunters, tracking you down for a filling meal. In this regard, investigation or survival may be the key to your gaming experience rather than trying to hunt down the beast and kill them first.

When horror becomes an augmenting theme, it is often characterized by creatures that are not only supernatural, but often possessed by or infused with a greater being, such as a demon or ghost. In this regard, the heroes still stand a chance of survival, but adventuring is much more dangerous and character death can be much more common.

Fear is an emotion that horror attempts to invoke. It could come in the form of horrific creatures, deadly situations, or even simply not knowing what will happen next. In essence, horror can come in physical, mental, or emotional form and shouldn't be simply characterized by big scary monsters.

## Pulp

I have heard pulp referred to as high adventure. While possibly difficult to explain, it seems easy to understand visually (think *Indiana Jones*, *The Mummy*, *Rocketeer*, *Conan*, and *Doc Savage*). Besides taking its influence from pulp magazines and other publications throughout the first half of the 1900s, pulp can be characterized as grand action and adventure stories often placed within alternate versions or pockets of Earth or taking on conflicts that occurred during parts of history (such as World War I).

Pulp often contains an element of drama along with whatever genre the writer wants to mix in (such as fantasy, sci-fi, or superhero). Figures are heroic and a line is drawn between them and the evil they are fighting. While the heroes may not be considered morally good, they are viewed as the good force while their opponents are the evil being combated. Storylines often focus upon smaller, character-oriented encounters rather than a grand nature of "Save the world!" common within fantasy.

Due to the era of their influence, pulp games often carry characteristics of beliefs from the first half of the 1900s. A good example is how science and space travel is approached, as knowledge of the truth did not exist (during that era).

The problem with all these examples and explanations is that it doesn't truly define what pulp is. Pulp is not as much a play style or technology reference as it is a look and feel or a semblance of how an adventure plays out within the pages of the magazines published many decades ago. This look and feel comes across in the appearance of the setting and characters along with their abilities.

Many heroic characters within pulp are flawed, vulnerable, or in some way realistic. Superheroes do not have super powers but rather perform actions that others find heroic in nature, above and beyond the standard human's capabilities. This can translate into investigations, taking on the occult, rescuing the kidnapped lady, or inventing a grand device that allows them to something others cannot. At the same time, they are vulnerable to weapons and disease just like everyone else. They are morally challenged by the decisions they make and are susceptible to the dramatic romance of a love interest. This is where the appearance of realism comes into play.

The evil the heroic figures fight does not need to follow these same rules. They can range wildly from simple henchmen to undead creatures hell-bent on taking over the world. What most of this boils down to is this: pulp is as much a feeling as it is a genre.

## Modern

What is modern? Modern is today, right? For some reason, modern is defined as the era occurring after the Middle Ages. That's a fairly large era that has many smaller eras inside (such as the Renaissance and Victorian eras). I define modern as anything after the Victorian era, characterized by the invention of the internal combustion engine and electricity. Much of the underlying elements that drive today came about at that time.

Modern encompasses many aspects and characteristics given the ease of locating material produced during this time. This material is composed of novels, magazines, newspapers, movies, documentaries, and all the facts of history that were properly recorded. This results in a relatively small period of time with a lot of real material to pull from.

When you think about this modern time, you find prohibition, H.P. Lovecraft (and the massive Cthulhu mythos), World Wars I and II, the Great Depression, Vietnam War, Korean War, Cold War, terrorism, espionage, and a whole lot of other material to draw from. In addition to real events and created fictional universes, you have movies to draw from to create high-levels of action, martial arts, and other cinematic effects. Wrap all of this into the blanket of modern places and people and you have a genre with never-ending possibilities.

The modern genre does not have to stand on its own, but can be a driving force of the setting or system. Modern settings that are standalone often carry military or espionage influences, while settings driven by the modern world include a number of other genre elements such as fantasy or horror. The only truly common element is that they all occur within the modern era, and often include places that one can physically travel to or people that actually lived (or are alive).

Modern cinema is becoming a popular aspect to use within role-playing games as well. Rather than using historical events, fictional universes (that still use modern locations), and actual modern locations and people, cinema takes movies and novels produced during the modern era and turns them into an actual, playable setting, imitating the storylines found within these works. This includes imitating early detective movies filled with drama (colloquially known as noir) and over-the-top action that is only available in the movies, novels, or on television (such as anime and "cinematic" action).

Considering these aspects, modern does not have to be the focus of a genre; rather it can simply be a part of its background. Many modern systems and settings contain modern places and people but are still completely fictional in nature.

## Superhero

From the world of comic books rises the superhero. But what makes a superhero different than a heroic character? Super-powers and super-villains, right? There has to be more than that. So what is it that makes superheroes so unique?

For starters, superheroes are characterized by having a specific power (or multiple powers) that is readily available at all times. As opposed to magic which has to be learned and cast with the possibility of not manifesting, super-powers are always there (generally). The hero only needs to think about that power and there it is;

sometimes they don't even need to think about it.

Second, superheroes seem above the common levels of humans in not only ability but also willpower or resistance. For some reason, superheroes do not succumb to the same fears or disasters that can strike the general populace. They either possess the ability to simply resist it or they know how to avoid it, such as preternatural senses.

Third, superheroes often live in worlds filled with super-villains or super allies. But only a chosen few actually possess this power; one cannot simply be heroic and perform heroic deeds to be called a superhero. The result is a power or ability that is inherent as opposed to learned or acquired through experience. This, of course, is in opposition to being granted super-powers by an evil scientist.

Another aspect, although one with plenty of room for debate, is the antagonists a superhero finds themselves encountering on a regular basis. There are no fantastical creatures or supernatural horrors created through occult means (the focus is on horror there, not the occult); antagonists are typically super-villains with powers of their own, powerful alien beings who always seem to try to destroy the Earth, or malicious groups who simply hate the presence of the superhero. While this is not a defining factor, it is one way of separating superhero from fantasy.

The biggest aspect of superhero is the powers. They don't need to make sense; they don't need an explanation of how they work; and they don't need to fall into any type of specific characteristic. Essentially, anything is possible for any number of reasons. This idea breaks down the walls of constraint and allows one to truly explore the imagination. This may make for some boring character backgrounds but plenty of interesting role-playing opportunities as you explore your character's origins.

## Cyberpunk & Post-Apocalyptic

Somewhere in the midst of science fiction lie cyberpunk and post-apocalyptic elements. However, with the progression of time and the constant growth of science fiction, cyberpunk and post-

apocalyptic have grown out of their roots and into their own realm.

Cyberpunk can be thought of as a gritty, high-tech version of the near future. The aspect of grit runs rampant and is often a fundamental theme of the entire setting (not just part of it). Often dystopia in nature, cyberpunk is filled with mega-corporations plying for dominance and the operatives of an underground willing to fulfill that desire.

There is a constant struggle amongst the major players of the setting and defining one as "hero" is not truly applicable. Players often take the place of less-than-lawful individuals (could you really call them anti-heroes?) that thrive by working for those that need their unlawful (or should we call them opportunistic?) services.

Characters in cyberpunk do not need to be "glowing" individuals with a great reputation as role-models for the youth of the nation; quite the opposite actually. Hackers, assassins, thieves, misfits, rogues, and even corporate thugs are the norm. In addition to this feel is the common use of cybernetics, giving the genre part of its name. Characters are often augmented by cybernetics giving them special abilities and making them more suited for living a life in the underground.

So why don't I classify this as science fiction? Because it consistently contains its own, unique elements that are constantly being meshed with other genre elements to create new cyberpunk experiences. The focus no longer needs to be science fiction but rather a feel all of its own.

Post-apocalyptic grew from the idea that some type of fall-out could plague the earth, resulting in a loss of technology and the constant struggle of mankind to survive. The science fiction part of this is the technology that drives that apocalyptic event rather than the outcome of the event, which is often a lack of technology as the world is thrown into a new dark age.

While nuclear fall-out or World War III is a common theme, by no means does it define the genre anymore. This is but one reason why post-apocalyptic has grown out of its science fiction roots.

Writers have been coming up with unique and fascinating ideas not only as to why the apocalyptic event occurred, but also what the world looks like after that event.

Typical outcomes include the sudden appearance of magic and the mutation of humans. No longer is the setting simply science fiction; it now incorporates elements of fantasy and horrific survival.

While this is a possible modern-day apocalyptic scenario, this idea can be thrown into any era or setting such that the apocalyptic event can be related to fantasy, superhero, horror and even pulp. The event can source from a massive plague, demonic invasion, radioactive body from space, or any number of possible scenarios.

Due to this growth in the characteristics of post-apocalyptic and the constant evolution of creative ideas, I place it outside of the science fiction genre, standing on its own. While this may not seem like much, it allows one to break free of the science fiction constraints and take post-apocalyptic in a new direction.

## Grit and Darkness

A very common element to augment other genres with is to make it gritty or dark. This can be characterized by an incorporation of horrific elements, extreme despair, or simply the common activities of the genre (such as spellcasting) are made a little more dangerous.

Wouldn't this make for a horror setting? No, definitely not. Horror is the far end of the chaos spectrum where beings can cause utter destruction, absolute insanity, or world-changing events at the blink of an eye (or the blink of several eyes). Amidst this chaos may be creatures that are unstoppable to those chasing them. Sanity is rarely held onto and terror runs rampant. Essentially, these creatures are more than our "heroes" can handle and may need to be dealt with through extraordinary means or sheer wit.

Grit and dark elements take that chaos spectrum and play with it throughout the entire band, avoiding the extremes. This can come in a number of forms. One example is the supernatural

beings you face. The player characters stand a chance of defeating these creatures by being equipped with the appropriate weapons. This can be caused by a number of factors from living with the chaos for a tremendous amount of time to striving to learn and understand the creatures for the purpose of combating them and driving them back. Or it could be simpler where the chaos is such a common element of the setting while the common person is terrified but our heroes stand tall.

Another example is introducing danger to the setting. Spellcasting no longer becomes a simple "part of nature". It has to be researched and harnessed but is mainly unstable. Should you succeed, your magic looks as though it came from an epic fantasy world. Fail, and the magic turns on you rather than simply "not working". Spellcasting failure results in the caster (or an ally) being attacked, the loss of a characteristic or ability, or the unleashing of a supernatural creature. The gritty flavor is how dangerous wielding magic becomes.

A third common example is that of despair. Instead of chaotic creatures or dangerous magic, the world in which the characters live in is a dark, dismal place where survival is difficult. There are several aspects of this type of setting. One aspect encompasses making moral decisions that are essential to your own survival and others around you. Another aspect is living in a world that has been the victim of a world-changing event that threw it into a state of despair; only now are heroes banding together to correct that event. A final aspect is a world that is simply filled with despair, never to be corrected. While everyone within has evolved to survive, the world is still in flux and continued learning is required for further survival. This is the world that can never be repaired or does not go back to lighter times at set time frequencies.

Regardless of what you call it (such as dark fantasy or gothic sci-fi) these settings are not filled with glitter and unicorns. They are filled with elements that test your morals, will, and sanity rather than just the edge of your blade or tip of your bullet.

## Bringing it Together

Part of the beauty of *Savage Worlds* is the ability to float between genres without having to convert the basic rules and mechanics. In addition, this allows you to combine different genres and elements of those genres to create extremely unique settings and gaming experiences. As you wander through the products available, you gain a sense of what is possible. Here are some examples:

*RunePunk* is a combination of dark fantasy and steampunk. Creating a gritty world filled with fantasy and Victorian science fiction at the same time.

*Deadlands* is a combination of fantasy, horror, and steampunk placed within the Wild West of the United States (known as the Weird West). The possible characters to be created are very unique to the setting and you may never find an equivalent elsewhere.

*Wonderland No More* is a fairytale-like fantasy walk through the lands made popular by *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*.

*Savage Suzerain* is a setting filled with a variety of smaller settings (known as realms) showcased in *Shanghai Vampocalypse* combining gothic horror and cyberpunk, *Noir Knights* merging film noir with modern fantasy, and *Dogs of Hades* meshing fantasy with space opera (and an Ancient Greek feel).

Whatever style of game-play you are looking for, *Savage Worlds* helps you to achieve it. You can even create standard epic fantasy campaigns or the basic space opera adventure. This is achieved by using generic terminology for the core mechanics along with the Edges and Hindrances that allow one to create any character desired. New Edges and Hindrances can also be created for additional character types.

This flexibility allows designers and publishers to reach for the stars when creating *Savage Worlds* settings. Genres and genre elements are blended with ease and often include some unique setting characteristics.

So, what's in your setting?
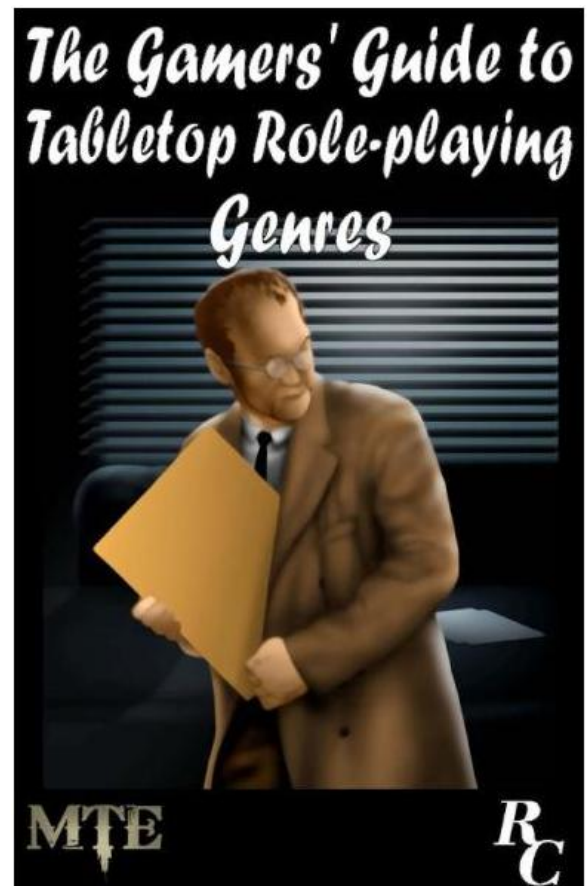
# A Storm Over Thagaros

*A science fiction adventure for Savage Worlds*

## The Setup

Half a million people live in the main settlement on the surface of Thagaros, a colony world beyond the frontier. Before the colony was established, severe storms ravaged the surface of the planet. An equatorial weather control station and its supporting satellite network have tamed the savage weather of Thagaros, allowing a human colony to prosper on this garden planet.

A few hours ago, communications with the distant weather station stopped. Shortly thereafter, power failed and the weather control satellites ceased operating. Almost immediately, the planet's prior weather patterns began to reappear, and a deadly storm of immense proportions is growing in strength and power as it moves toward the colony city. Only the station staff possessed the technical knowledge on-planet to operate the highly advanced equipment used by the weather control station. As it is now obvious that something happened to the staff, the colonial government has recruited "volunteers" (the player characters) to fly to the station and re-establish control over the weather before half a million people are killed by the impending storm.

Unbeknownst to the rest of the world, a nest of native creatures known as Thagarosian Hunters has emerged from hibernation and infested the weather control station, driven into a mad frenzy by their hunger and the infrasonic frequencies emitted by the operating equipment. The station's staff have been killed and devoured, and the hunter-mother of the hive has set up residence near the power plant of the station. Her hunter-drones patrol the rest of the station and the surrounding wilderness in search of new source of food.

## At A Glance

The core of this adventure appears simple: the party must land their vessel, fix a damaged communication array atop the station, re-establish power, and then regain control over the weather. The adventurers will quickly discover that the Thagarosian Hunters are responsible for removing the previous station staff members and damaging the equipment, causing the foul weather. The party is operating under a tight deadline: once they reach the site of the station, they have only four hours at the most to accomplish the tasks at hand before the storm has passed the point of no return and damage to the colony becomes inevitable. If the effort can be completed within an hour after that point, damage may be minimized and the number of casualties reduced. Beyond the five-hour mark, it is too late to save the colony.

## Arriving at the Station

Although the weather control station is on the periphery of the growing storm, very high winds and torrential precipitation cause problems for any adventurer having to battle the elements. Flying under such conditions is far from routine and even tasks as simple as landing without damaging the vehicle requires a successful Piloting check. All Notice checks suffer a -2 penalty due to the poor conditions, although relying on sensors will allow characters to avoid this penalty. The high winds impose a -2 penalty to all Shooting checks and a -4 penalty to all Throwing checks. At the beginning of each creature's turn, they must make a Vigor check, modified by their Size, to avoid being knocked prone by the winds. Creatures with multiple pairs of legs (such as Thagarosian Hunters) gain a +2 to resist being knocked prone. On a critical failure, creatures are both knocked prone and Shaken.

Characters that land their vehicle in the small field adjacent to the weather control station will immediately notice that the main entrance into the station is wide open. A successful Notice check (modified due to the weather) allows a character to see the communications array atop the station has been damaged, while a Raise reveals that the pattern of the damage to both the entrance and the array appears to be deliberate instead of accidental. Any reasonable plan to address the high winds is likely to succeed; otherwise, the adventurers must make Vigor rolls to avoid being knocked prone en route to the station's entrance.

Characters that choose to land far away from the station and hike in through the wilderness face all the conditions of the foul weather as stated above and likely encounter a wild hunting pack of Thagarosian hunter-drones. When they close on the station, they may be able to make the same observations as outlined earlier.

- Thagarosian Hunter-Drones (Wild Hunting Pack): Two per member of the party.

## Communication Array

In order to re-establish connection with the weather control satellites, someone will need to repair the physical damage that has been inflicted upon the communication array. Climbing to the array requires a successful Climbing skill check, with a -2 penalty due to the high winds of the storm. Failure results in a fall that deals 2d6 damage upon striking the ground. Once the character (or group of characters) is in place, an unmodified Notice roll will help diagnose the problem: a critical panel has been damaged by claws (or a claw-like tool, if the characters have not yet met a Thagarosian Hunter) and a replacement will need to be located or fabricated from other parts. Once a replacement is found or produced, the character needs to spend half an hour attempting the repair and then make a successful Repair check,

with a -2 penalty due to high winds, in order to successfully repair the array.

Spare panels might be located in the station, but each attempt to search for one requires half an hour in the machine shop found inside the building and runs the risk of hunter-drones locating the party. At the end of the half hour, those involved may attempt a Notice check to locate the panel. Using non-essential panels from the array is possible, but more difficult (these impose an additional -2 penalty on the Repair check due to inappropriate parts), while scavenging a panel from the adventurers' vehicle is a bit easier (only a -1 penalty to the Repair check due to mild part incompatibility). Any successful attempt at a reasonable effort to block the wind may eliminate the high wind penalties on the Repair check, at the GM's discretion.

- Thagarosian Hunter-Drones (Machine Shop): Two, plus one per member of the party.

## Power Plant

The power plant is offline as the Thagarosian hunter-mother has decided to make it her home. Although it was once much better lit and warmer, the infrasonic thrumming of the power core induced a frenzy in the creature that led to a damaged and non-functional power plant. The hunter-mother has laid over a dozen eggs around the base off the power core and, along with a number of hunter-drones in attendance, will staunchly defend them from intruders.

- Thagarosian Hunter-Mother (WC)
- Thagarosian Hunter-Drones (Power Plant): One per member of the party.

Once the hunter-mother has been dealt with, the adventurers must bring the power plant back online. As with the communication array, an unmodified Notice check will help diagnose the problem: critical power conduits were destroyed during the hunter-mother's attack on the power core before the characters arrived. The character must make three successes on Repair checks, with a penalty equal to the level of damage, to fix the conduits (as if the power core had suffered three wounds). Each attempt requires the character to spend half an hour rewiring the power conduits. A success recovers one level of damage, while a Raise recovers two levels of damage. A natural one on the Repair skill die, or a failure on a Repair check, imposes an additional -2 penalty on future Repair checks due to additional rerouting being required.

## Control Room

The control room doesn't reveal any information until power has been restored. Once that issue has been addressed, the panels cast an eerie red glow on the walls due to the inordinate amount of errors and warning states. With a successful Knowledge (Computers) or an appropriate scientific skill check, the characters can identify that a terrible storm of immense destructive power is en route to obliterate the colony. On a Raise, the characters will be able to identify that the communication array is offline (unless they've already fixed it, of course). In order to bring the weather control satellites online and mitigate the impact of the storm, the characters will need to spend half an hour making calculations and adjustments using the system, and then succeed at a Knowledge (Computers) check, with a -1 penalty for every hour that has passed since the characters arrived on-site. A failure on the check imposes a -2 penalty on future efforts to control the storm, while a critical failure or a result of one or less increases the level of destructive power of the storm. A success reduces the storm's destructive force by one level, while a Raise lowers it by two levels. Before the point of no return, the storm has three levels: Very Destructive (Class 5 Hurricane levels), Destructive (Class 3 Hurricane levels), Windstorm (Class 1 Hurricane levels), and ultimately no storm at all below that. Once the storm passes the point of no return (four hours after the characters arrive on the scene), the lowest level that the storm can be reduced to is Windstorm. Once the storm strikes the colony city (after five hours), the level of the storm cannot be reduced in time to save the people from damage and devastation.

## Wrapping It Up

If the adventurers successfully eliminate the storm, they will be recognized and rewarded for their efforts, possibly including parades, fame and fortune, or at least free drinks for the next week or so. (If nothing else, the characters will be able to resolve any issues that may have resulted in their "volunteer" status.) If the adventurers reduce the intensity of the storm but do not eliminate it entirely, they will be recognized for their efforts, but receive little in way of compensation, as the population will be engaged in recovering from the storm's impact. If the colony is wiped out, less than ten percent of the population will survive, and it is very likely that some will hold the characters responsible for the loss of their loved ones, their homes and the city. All future developments involving the Thagaros colony world and the aftermath of these events lie in the purview of the GM.
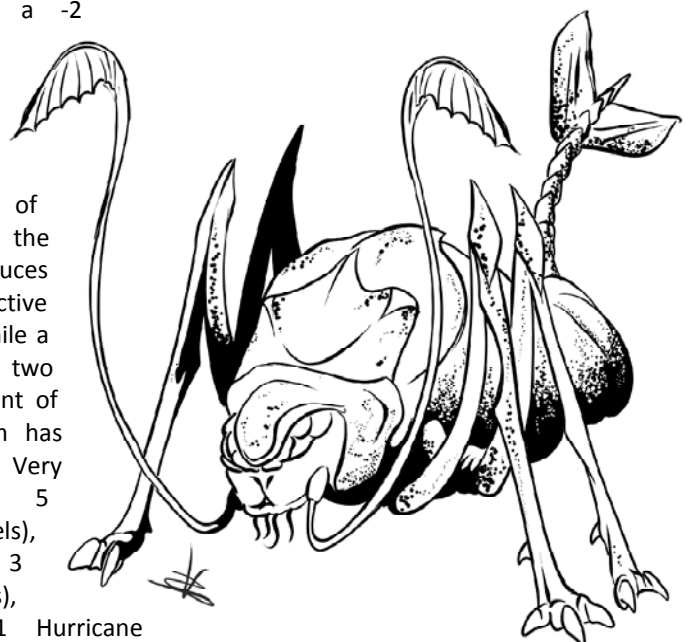
## Creatures

### Thagarosian Hunter-Drone

Agility d10, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6
**Pace**: 5 **Parry**: 5 **Toughness**: 4

### Skills

Climbing d8, Fighting d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Survival d8, Tracking d8

### Special Abilities

- **Claws**: Hunter-drones attack with their two claws (Str+d4), and may make two attack rolls without suffering a multi-action penalty.
- **Fear**: Hunter-drones communicate using low frequency sound, which can cause feelings of fear in humans and other sentient beings. Hearing creatures within the same room as hunter-drones must succeed in a Spirit (or Guts) trait roll or suffer a -1 penalty on all trait checks for the remainder of the encounter due to uneasiness and fear.
- **Size-1**
- **Weakness (Loud Sounds)**: Hunter-drones that hear sounds louder than gunfire must succeed in a Vigor trait check or be Shaken from shock.

### (WC) Thagarosian Hunter-Mother

Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+1, Vigor d10
**Pace**: 7 **Parry**: 6 **Toughness**: 12 (1)

### Skills

Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Notice d6, Stealth d4, Survival d8, Tracking d8

### Special Abilities

- **Chitinous Shell**: Armor +1
- **Claws**: The hunter-mother attacks with her two claws (Str+d8), and may make two attack rolls without suffering a multi-action penalty.
- **Fanaticism**: Any hunter-drones adjacent to the hunter-mother will defend her fanatically, and throw themselves in front of any successful attack, risking themselves by taking the damage instead of the Hunter-Mother.
- **Fear**: Hunter-mother communicates using low frequency sound, which can cause feelings of fear in humans and other sentient beings. Hearing creatures within the same room as hunter-drones must succeed in a Spirit (or Guts) trait roll or suffer a -1 penalty on all trait checks for the remainder of the encounter due to uneasiness and fear.

- **Large**: -2 to attack, attackers gain +2 on attacks
- **Size +4**
- **Weakness (Loud Sounds)**: Should the hunter-mother hear sounds louder than gunfire, she must succeed in a Vigor trait check or be Shaken from shock.

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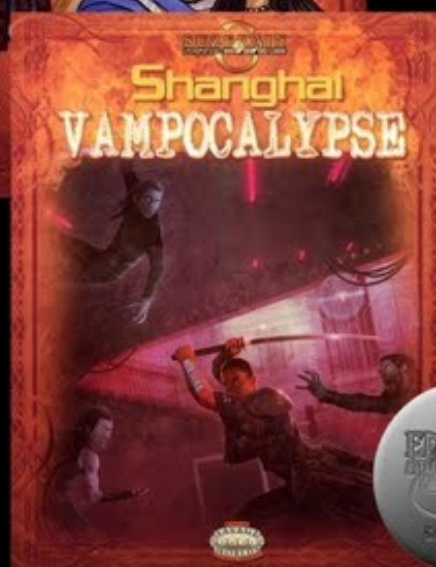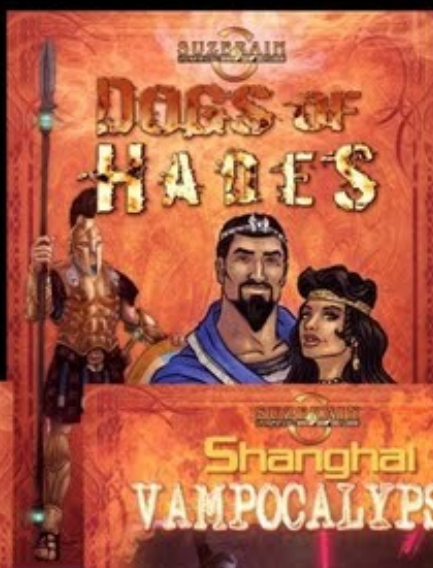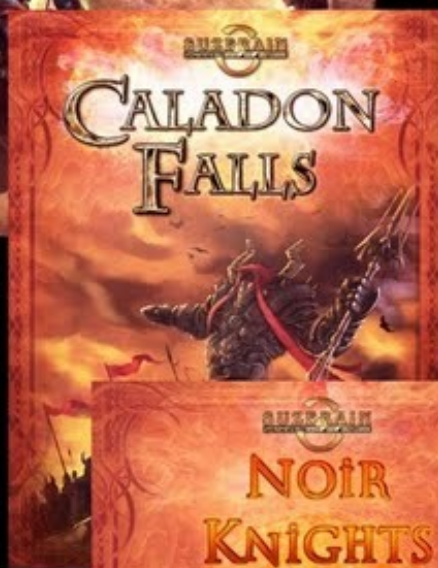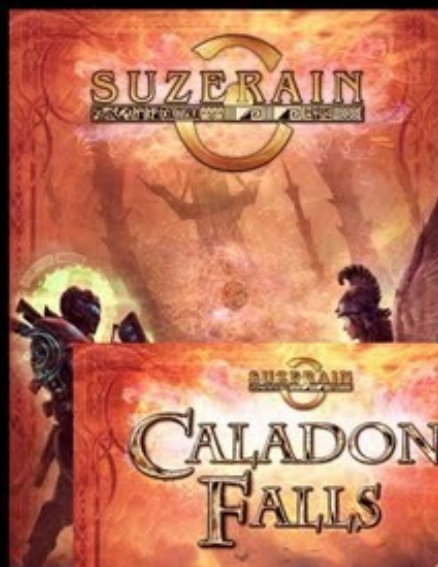
One Setting. Two Systems. Three Lines to Serve Your RPG Needs.

# Echoes of Rome

## Distraction

Pal yawned and stretched his arm into the star-filled night. A half-moon looked down upon him watching from the top of the northwest tower of Gregoron Castle, the highest of the castle's six towers. He could see the entire estate and a good portion of the surrounding town from up there. Below him two guards, dressed in shining half-plate armor and formal, red and blue stripped capes, chatted about last night's card game. From the sounds of it, neither were very skilled gamblers. Below them even more guards walked a perimeter on the castle's battlements while a host of finely dressed men and women filtered in and out of the main hall, most with wine and loud laughter.

Pal sighed and rested his head on his fist, enjoying the warm, summer night air. He had a very easy job, one of the easiest actually, and a job he considered quite under his pay grade. Simply climb the wall, wait for the signal, then flip the latch that opens the secret exit in the southern wall. A childish task, really, for one of his skill. But his team worked best when each had a part they could perform perfectly. Even now, his longtime debauching partner Ciro was inside, hobnobbing with the crust of the royal community. The alluring Mieren was using her feminine wiles to seduce the Duke's guard captain, and Pal's friends Adrian and Alam were waiting silently outside the royal vault, ready to spring into action. Each had their role to play, even if his never involved imbibing large quantities of liquor, like Ciro's always seemed to be.

He silently rolled onto his back and looked up at the blinking stars above him. The wind was warm and felt good caressing his skin. From below, the smell of warm, freshly baked bread wafted. His stomach growled, reminding him that it had been several hours since he had anything substantial in it. He turned onto his side and looked down for the source of the new aroma, sweet with a hint of

honey. His eyes caught sight of a slim, young woman, no more than seventeen and wearing a baking apron, exiting the side of the inner keep. She had short, cropped auburn hair and looked exhausted, as well as a bit sad. She went to the cold, stone wall of the building and slumped down to a sitting position, looking like if she closed her eyes, she'd fall into a terribly deep sleep.

Pal smiled and rose wraith-like into a standing position. He wasn't good at a lot of things, but when it came to cheering up women, he considered himself something of an expert. Once she was a bit happier, there was a chance he could find his way into some of that fresh smelling bread. Pal judged the distance between them. He decided he could finish the deed and be back before he was even needed by his friends. "What I'll do for women and food." He muttered to himself.

He picked up a rock from the tower roof and casually tossed it over his shoulder, down onto the battlement behind him. It skipped loudly and banged against the stone wall. As expected, the guards stopped their conversation and Pal heard them shuffle over to look at the distraction. Pal threw himself off the roof on the opposite side, catching hold of the tower edge to stop his fall. From there he hopped down onto a jutting, exposed rock and pushed himself up against the wall before scaling quickly and quietly down the remainder of the stone curtain. The construction was sloppy, with numerous hand- and footholds, an easy task for an expert wall navigator like Pal.

He dropped the last ten feet to the grass below, gracefully tumbling behind a nearby water trough. A few seconds later a group of three guards passed by, long, sharp halberds in hand. Pal waited before standing and continuing towards his prey. He had to dance between hiding places, even darting into a bush when an unexpected party-dweller came near. Finally, he took one last turn around the

keep's angled base, coming to the kitchen door and the resting girl.

Pal straightened his hair and cloths then put on his customary, charming grin. As he approached her, he purposely dragged his feet to make noise so as to not startle the girl. A lifetime of silence often backfired when you didn't want to be quiet. The girl looked up "Good evening, my lady," he said, tilting his head into a slight bow.

"Good evening, my lord." the girl said in a shrill voice. She stood and tried to look proper, performing a quick, awkward curtsy.

Pal cringed at her voice and did his best to not let his smile waiver. "What brings such a beautiful young girl out here all alone?"

The girl laughed a series of short, high staccatos. "Beautiful? Me? You must be mistaken ,my lord. I am just a cook."

Pal immediately understood why the girl hadn't yet married. Her voice was the sound of a pained cat scratching the inside of your skull. He did his best to ignore the agony and soldiered on. "Just a cook? I think not. My eyes rarely miss beauty such as yours. Pal is my name." He bowed again to her.

"They call me Jem, my lord."

"Jem," he said while approaching. "A fitting name for a face that sparkles like diamonds." He took her hand and kissed it gently. The girl giggled again. Pal gritted his teeth at the sound. "What brings you out here this evening, Jem? Are you a lord's mistress? Or perhaps a duchess in waiting, cooking on the side?"

The girl laughed loudly at this, causing Pal to cringe and promise himself to cut back on the levity. "Nay, my lord. I am just a baker."

Pal took her arm in his, escorting her formally down the way.

"Are you responsible for that delicious smelling bread, Jem?"

"Aye, my lord. I've been baking all day for the Duke's feast."

"I bet it tastes divine, Jem." Thankfully, Pal thought, the girl took her

compliment without response. The two walked a bit before turning back. "You know, they say the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. If this is true, you must have men hounding you, day and night."

Jem smiled and looked up at him. He wasn't much taller than her, but exuded confidence, born from a hundred flourishing lifetimes. They stopped near the kitchen door and Pal took her hand, kissing it again. "It has been my great pleasure to have met you this evening, Jem. Although it pains me to leave you, my stomach is empty and I must return to the celebration." Pal held her hand and her gaze, waiting for her to take the bait.

She looked at him, a thought slowly building in her mind. "You could… you could have some of the bread before it is served, my lord. If you wanted?"

Pal put on his best surprised face, looking as the planted idea was taking root. He always considered it the highest victory having people suggest to him that which he desired from the start. "You'd allow me that?" he asked with a slight smile.

Jem looked at the kitchen door. "No one would find out. It is just me and Martha in there, and she is catching a nap before we have to start on the pastries."

"Do you think we should?" he asked her. Jem dashed over to the door and opened it slowly. She peeked inside and then motioned for him to follow.

Inside the baking area was a maze of obstacles. Sacks of flour, casks of water and other ingredients were stacked into haphazard piles, creating walls everywhere one looked. "Most of the food is in the other room, waiting for delivery. This room is just for Martha and me." She pulled him by the hand through the maze and to a rack of freshly baked bread. "These are the extra loaves, in case we run out." She grabbed him a loaf and pulled him to the back of the room, grabbing a half full wineskin on the way.

Once in the back she brought him to a pile of grain sacks, set up like a couch. The two sat and ripped into the loaf of bread. Pal grinned as the fresh, honey flavoring washed over his taste buds. Jem took small bites from hers and the two passed the wineskin between them. The girl tried twice to start conversation, much to Pal's frustration. He managed to quiet her by offering her large bites of the bread, or downing draughts from the wineskin. It was an odd dichotomy, the sweet taste of warm, freshly baked honey bread and the girl's ear-screeching voice.

He finished and sat back on the grain sacks, sufficiently full. "You know Jem, they should change your name to Honey because you make the sweetest tasting bread I've ever had."

The girl started laughing then. Quietly at first, but with a crescendo that threatened to split open his head. "Quietly, dear." he told her. Jem looked at him between laughs, lost in the humor. "Please, quietly, Jem." This seemed to feed her laughter, which began echoing through the room. Pal grabbed his head, a terrible pain building around his temples. Finally, just to stop the terrible noise, he grabbed her head and kissed her. She settled down then, her laughter stopping in surprise. She didn't fight him, instead seemingly enjoying the embrace. Pal kissed her deeper and deeper, anything to stop that hideous noise. She was a cute girl, but that voice cut like a knife, her laughter a sword.

The girl dropped her bread and the wineskin and wrapped her arms around him. Pal gently pushed her onto her back and leaned over her, his mouth and tongue working hard to keep her voice in check.

Thirty minutes later the two hadn't moved from their grain sack bed. Pieces of clothing had been discarded and sweat matted both of their bodies. Jem seemed beckoned for more and Pal was quite willing to oblige. His hands began to move down her body when suddenly a violent explosion blasted from outside. They both sat up in wonder. "What was that?" Jem asked.

"I don't kn-" Pal began. "The signal!" he yelled to her. He bolted up and refastened his belt.

"Signal, what signal?"

Pal tried to ignore her grating voice. "Umm, nothing. I have to go. I'll come back." That last part was a lie, he thought. No matter how willing this girl was to enjoy his company, he wasn't coming back until she had been proclaimed a mute.

"Go, where?"

He grabbed the wineskin and her half-eaten bread and bolted through the maze and out the kitchen door.

Outside, the courtyard was in chaos. The royal smithy had blown up and fire was spreading to the nearest building. Guards and patrons ran back and forth in confusion. Pal raced amongst them toward the wall. He leapt up and began climbing as fast as he could. A few guards yelled at him to stop, but they mostly ignored him, having bigger problems at the moment.

Once he reached the top he tossed himself over the rail and into the tower. The two guards that had been on duty had grown into four in the chaos. One guard, a small fellow with a massive nose, saw him and gave a questioning look. "Hey, you can't be in here!" he started. His statement ended with Pal rushing over and knocking him with his shoulder over the side of the tower. The fellow cursed and fell some twenty feet to the catwalks below.

The rest of the guards turned and drew their swords on him. "Who's this little runt, then?" the first asked.

"You threw Jacob down!" another cursed in anger.

"You throw Jacob down, we throw you down, in pieces." the last guard stated.

They rushed at him, swinging and chopping with the grace of children. Pal dodged, twisted and turned between their blades. The center of the tower had a long rope, attached to a bell up in the rafters. Pal grabbed the rope and weaved it amongst his attackers as they swung wildly. Nine seconds later, two of the guards were so entangled in the rope they had little hope of finding their way out.

The last guard, a big fellow with a bald head rushed at him, abandoning his sword and hoping to crush the little man to death. Pal dodged to the left and rushed into his right flank, placing a foot on the man's knee and racing up his side onto his back. He grabbed the big man from behind, wrapping his arms tightly around his neck. "Easy, big fellow." Pal

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told him. The man swung his arms around, but could not reach Pal's nimble form. He flailed and bucked while Pal hung on wildly. Pal waited for the man's staggering to bring them near the side of the tower. In-place, he leapt, pushing off the man with his legs. The change in momentum and weight propelled the guard off the side.

Pal raced over to a lever sticking out of the tower wall and threw it to the side, unlocking the secret door in the keep's wall. He looked out at the scene below. Two of the buildings were ablaze. In the chaos, he saw four cloaked figures heading toward the secret door. Pal smiled, his work done. "See, way under my pay grade." Pal said to himself with a smile.

A tingling sensation erupted in his mind, warning something was wrong. He turned just in time to avoid the worst of a chop to his head. He pushed himself to the side, ignoring the cut that had nearly taken off his right ear. Turning, he saw another guard, this one wearing two silver eagles on his collar indicating he was an officer of some rank, standing a few feet from him and wielding a large bastard sword. In the loudness he hadn't noticed the tower's trap door open and the man emerge from behind him.

Pal shook his head, his ear ringing from the sting of the attack. He went to his belt and drew two, wicked-looking daggers to combat the larger man.

"Ha! You mean to fight me with those?" the overbearing officer yelled at him. Pal heard his voice as a distant thunder, sound distorted by the nasty cut to his ear.

"Too much of an advantage?" he asked. "Fine." He put one of the daggers back and squared off with just the one tiny blade. "Better?"

The officer's laughter turned into anger as he swung his broadsword down. The attack, sophisticated and with purpose, took Pal by surprise. He backpedaled and ducked under another blow before somersaulting under the officer's legs to the other side of the tower.

"Come back here, runt!" the officer yelled.

Pal sprang to his feet and scurried behind the entangled duo of guards, using them as cover. The officer tried to get to the side, but Pal countered his movements perfectly, keeping the cursing men between him and his assailant. Enraged, the officer finally reached up and cut the rope holding the men in place. The pair tumbled backwards, causing Pal to skip to the side. The officer maintained the initiative and sent a vicious backhand into Pal's left ear. Again he rolled with the blow, absorbing much of the damage, but still his head spun and all sound was now drowned out by ringing in his ears.

The man came at him again, attacking while Pal did everything he could to stay out of his path. Pal was experienced, more so than almost anyone else in the world, but this officer was well-trained and knew when to exploit his advantage. After several rounds around the tower, Pal made the best decision he thought possible and leapt off the tower after a vicious thrust from the officer. He fell the twenty feet to the battlement below, sliding down the wall as much as possible to slow his fall.

He landed hard, square on top of the man he had thrown off to begin his little altercation. The man left out a "uff!" as Pal picked himself up.

"Get that bastard!" the officer above yelled down.

Pal stood and brushed some dirt off his shirt. Two guards on either side turned and ran toward him. Pal gave them a slight nod then rushed toward one pair. A halberd came crashing down from one and Pal scampered up the blade. The next man sliced out with his own polearm. Pal leapt from the blade, twisting in the air to avoid it. He came down behind the first man and slipped his dagger into the man's belt, slicing it down the middle. The guard's pants fell down around his ankles and Pal kicked him over, sending him to the ground. The second guard reversed his thrust, but Pal stepped into the long handle, putting himself side to side with the man. The guard looked at him in bewilderment as Pal delivered a brutal elbow to the bridge of his nose. The guard dropped his

weapon and staggered back, holding his broken beak.

Just then, the door to the tower burst open and the officer from above emerged with a wide grin. The two other guards slowed their approach as their superior squared off. "Let's finish this," the officer bellowed.

Pal gave him a small bow. "Perhaps another time." With an acrobats grace he took two quick steps to the side of the battlement and leapt over. On the way down he quickly removed his belt. Adrenaline had always made him see things clearly in the past and Pal trusted it would not fail him now. He plummeted down the forty foot fall as his eyesight grew crisper. Half way down he found what he was looking for, a large rock, jutting out from the side of the wall. Pal lashed out with his belt causing it to wrap around like a whip. He swung to the side with the momentum and let go at the lowest point.

He hit the ground hard but mostly undamaged from the fall. Above him, the officer continued to scream and point, but his words were lost amongst the fires and yells of patrons. Pal gave the officer a salute and jogged off toward the exit, holding his pants up with his free hand.

A few minutes later, Pal stood near the entrance to the kitchen. He told himself to keep going, to get to his friends at the dock and disappear. His ears were still ringing and his favorite belt was decorating the lower bailey walls. But, he was cursed and had always known it. Cursed by Aphrodite and Venus, a fact he would reveal to his friends many years from now. He stopped at the kitchen and opened the door. Inside Jem was still sitting on the grain bags with a bewildering look on her face. She stood up when she saw him, a look of concern coming over her face.

She said something to him, but the ringing in his ears drowned out any sound. A smile came to his face as he looked at the young girl. She was quite a catch when she couldn't be heard. "It's nothing." he said gently to her when she looked at the wound on his ear. She tried to talk again. "I'm sorry, I can't hear you."

She spoke slowly and he managed to read her lips. "What's going on?" she mouthed.

Pal took her hand. "Just an accident I think, nothing to worry about." He told her. "It doesn't matter. It could be the end of the world and I would want to spend it here, with you." The girl blushed a deep crimson. He lifted her chin with his hand and kissed her lightly. They made their way to the makeshift bed and found pleasure in each other's company. Pal looked down on her while they were intertwined. He saw her cries of joy and was thrilled his hearing had abandoned him for the time being. He stayed with the girl for several hours while things calmed down outside.

Later, Pal joined his friends on the eastern docks. He had cut out of Jem's makeshift bed when sound began to return to his uninjured ear. He stocked up on bread and promised he'd return the next day. A lie if he had ever told one. "How'd we do?" he asked those assembled near the side of a stout, sailing cog.

"How'd it go? How'd it go?" Ciro yelled at him.

"Easy friend." Adrian told him. "I'm sure something must have gone awry." In the background, Alam and Mieren sat on a few crates, observing the scene. "What happened, Pal?" Adrian asked him. Pal looked at his friends confused.

"What was her name?" Mieren asked. The four looked at him in silence, waiting for an answer.

Pal thought about lying, but his friends knew him too well. A slow smile spread over his face. "Jem."

Ciro erupted into angered sputtering and Adrian had to restrain him. "What's the big deal?" Pal asked. "I opened the door for you when I got the signal."

"That explosion was our third signal!" Ciro yelled. "Third! Do you know what we had to do to get out of there?"

"I'm sure it was a real nuisance for you. What, did you not get your fifth helping of roast duck?" Pal darted in and patted Ciro's portly belly.

"Why I ought to-!" Ciro yelled. Adrian continued to restrain him.

"OK, I'm sorry." Pal told him throwing up his hands. "Here." He opened up his pouch and took out a piece of the stolen bread, tossing it to his enraged friend.

Ciro caught it and gave it a sniff before taking a nibble off the side. "This doesn't change anything!" he told Pal.

"Come on friend." Adrian said, putting his arm around the portly man. The two boarded the ship as Ciro devoured his piece.

Alam and Mieren stood up, laughing. "Always have to make it exciting, don't you, Pal?" Alam asked. The two clasped arms.

"Did we get it?" he asked. Alam tossed the large bag he was holding to Pal and boarded the ship with Mieren. Pal opened it up and looked inside, grinning happily. "We got it." He said to himself. "We got it." Pal joined his friends on the ship, snacking on his own piece of delicious bread on the way up.

*Chris Banks is a historian and author of "Echoes of Rome". Want to continue the adventure with Pal, Adrian, Alam, Ciro, and Mieren? Their first book can be found at www.echoesofrome.com.*

# Great Sea Serpent

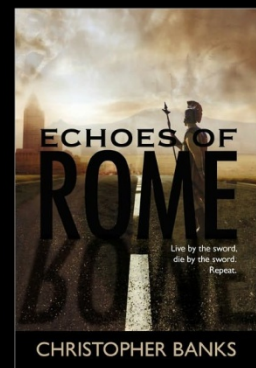The seas of Rassilon are dangerous places, riddled with massive serpents capable of crushing even the mightiest of vessels in their formidable coils. It is said, however, that there is another, more fearsome terror of the deep – the Great Sea Serpent, father of the wyrms of the seas. Said to dwell in the distant reaches of the Narfel Sea, beyond the farthest shores, the Great Sea Serpent is feared and whispered of in tavern tales the length and breadth of Rassilon.

Powerful, sinuous, scarred, and covered with many hard, translucent scales that shimmer shades of green as it twists and turns in the briny sea, the Great Sea Serpent is 300 feet long and weighs many tons. Its head is covered with large horns and a great red frill erupts from its crown, travelling down its ridged back. The rest of its form is covered in scales and appears much as a snake's. Its underbelly is a pale green hue and slightly softer than the rest of the body.

The serpent has the capacity to survive for long stretches of time, sitting on the ocean floor at great depths. It "hibernates" until it needs to feed, once every 400 years, during the summer. When it wakes, the beast attacks and devours whales, other large sea creatures, and sometimes ships, which, from below, it confuses for prey. Occasionally after feeding, it will rise and bask in the sun in loose coils just below the calm surface of the water. The serpent is neutral in temperament, and it possesses just above animal intelligence.

When it hunts, the serpent waits for large whales to surface. It quietly swims beneath its prey and then strikes, biting with massive jaws, wrapping its immense coils around the victim, constricting until the creature expires, and swallowing it whole.

The intrusion of the Hellfrost has caused the Great Sea Serpent to rise early. Where it would normally return to the depths after one or two years of feeding, the gradually freezing waters have caused the warm-blooded beast to remain. Because of this, it has become agitated and driven to attack frequently.

The Great Sea Serpent dwells deep in the underwater trenches of the Narfel Sea in a black cave when it hibernates. At feeding time, it ranges the deep sea, preferring the open waters to the coasts. However, since the Hellfrost has spread, the Great Sea Serpent has grown restless. It still haunts the deeps of the Narfel Sea, but within the last ten years it has travelled closer to shore. Where sailors would have been less likely to see the beast, tales are spreading about vessels suffering great casualties from the coils and maw of a massive serpent.

When the serpent is active, the beast uses great reserves of energy, requiring it to consume huge quantities of food per day. When it is at rest, it can survive on very little. It is angry its normal routine has been disrupted. The serpent wishes to sleep, for it grows weary, but it cannot return to its northern cave due to the Hellfrost.

Wherever the Great Sea Serpent hunts, very little life is present. Its appetite is devastating. Most sea life flees before the beast's presence. If the creature isn't stopped, it could seriously affect the fishing and whaling communities of the east coasts.
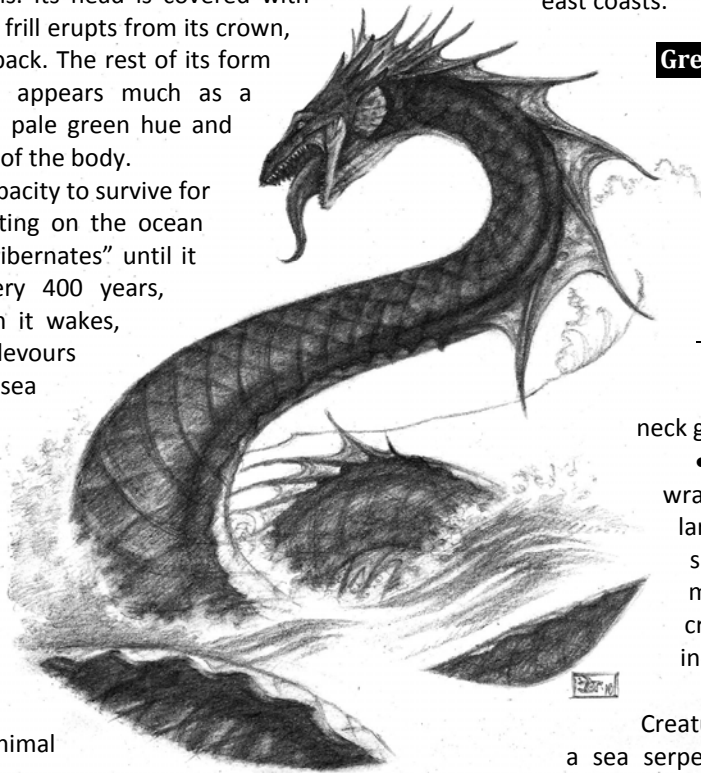
## Great Sea Serpent

Agility d10, Smarts d12, Spirit d12, Strength d12+10, Vigor d10

**Pace**: -   **Parry**: 6  **Toughness**: 19

### Skills

Fighting d10, Guts d10, Intimidation d12, Notice d6, Swimming d8

### Special Abilities

- **Aquatic:** Pace 15.
- **Bite:** Str+d12. A sea serpent's long neck gives it a Reach of 4.
- **Crush:** The Great Sea Serpent may wrap its serpentine body around a ship (or large sea creature) as a grapple. Victims suffer damage each round the grapple is maintained. The Great Sea Serpent may crush and bite in the same round without incurring a multi-action penalty.
- **Gargantuan:** Heavy Armor. Creatures add +4 when attacking the body of a sea serpent due to its great size. Add Size to damage when crushing but subtract Size of victim. Ships have a Size equal to their base Toughness (ignoring Armor).
- **Quick:** The Great Sea Serpent possesses fast reflexes, able to turn in an instant and whip their long necks to attack passing prey. They redraw action cards of 5 or lower.
- **Size +12:** The Great Sea Serpent measures over 300 feet long.

# Questing Beast

An odd creature, to say the least, the Questing Beast is renowned for its elusive nature and timely appearance during great change. The beast possesses the head of a snake, the body of a leopard, cloven hind feet, a lizard's forearms, and a scaled tail. A squirrel's tufted ears sprout from the head just behind the jaw.

The Questing Beast is very large, about 10 feet from chest to hindquarters. Its long neck adds another 7 feet to its length, as does the tail. From forepaw to shoulder it stands about 6 feet, 13 feet if its head is held aloft. Its reptilian features are brownish black with pale undersides. It has a cobra's winged neck, which retracts when the beast is at ease, but flares wide when alerted or excited. Two large, yellow fangs protrude past the bottom jaw. Its forearms are scaled, the color of the neck and head, and end in large, deadly claws. Dark, shaggy hair grows from the elbows of the forearm.

Along the beast's spine is a coarse mane of bristles that ends just past the hindquarters. Hair similar to that found on the elbows can be found just above the jet-black cloven hooves, much like a horse.

Of particular interest is the sound the Questing Beast makes. It does not produce a roar or other noise from its throat and mouth. It produces a noise from its belly like 30 hounds baying at the hunt. The baying only ceases when the creature drinks.

In the rare instance when The Questing Beast enters combat, it attacks fiercely, biting and clawing with its front talons. It will pounce on its prey and slash with great razor nails on its lizard-like front arms. A swift, potentially deadly bite from the serpentine head can do considerable damage.

More often than not, the beast will flee from human presence. The creature lives only in a certain, large forest, and moves silently through the undergrowth. Its sensitive ears and keen eyesight make the creature extremely difficult to surprise. It wanders the forest and can usually only be seen when it stops to drink.

Many who encounter the creature only do so when there is a great change about to take place, such as war, transfers of power, civil unrest, etc. Thus, the appearance of the Questing Beast (despite its unusual and frightening qualities) is often feared or greatly respected. Usually, those who see it are not afforded more than a momentary glance. When the beast's senses alert it to the presence of men, it vanishes into the forest with surprising grace and speed.

None are quite sure where the Questing Beast came from. The most popular account is that, long ago, a woman desired her brother so much that she made a pact with an incubus in order to sleep with her sibling. The demon told her that he would grant her one night with her brother. The woman accepted the offer. Unbeknownst to the woman, the demon disguised himself as the brother and slept with her. The result of the union is said to be the Questing Beast. The beast is cursed to wander until it finds the water that will finally quench its thirst, hence the moniker, Questing Beast.

Only one man may kill the beast, a king who is cursed to hunt the Questing Beast until he either kills the thing or dies trying, in which case his son must take up the duty of slaying the creature. After the Questing Beast is seen, the king or any one of his descendents will shortly follow in its tracks. The king, though honorable, will justify thievery in order to continue his pursuit of the beast. In some instances, the king has been known to steal a horse, water, or food that he may continue his long journey without stopping.
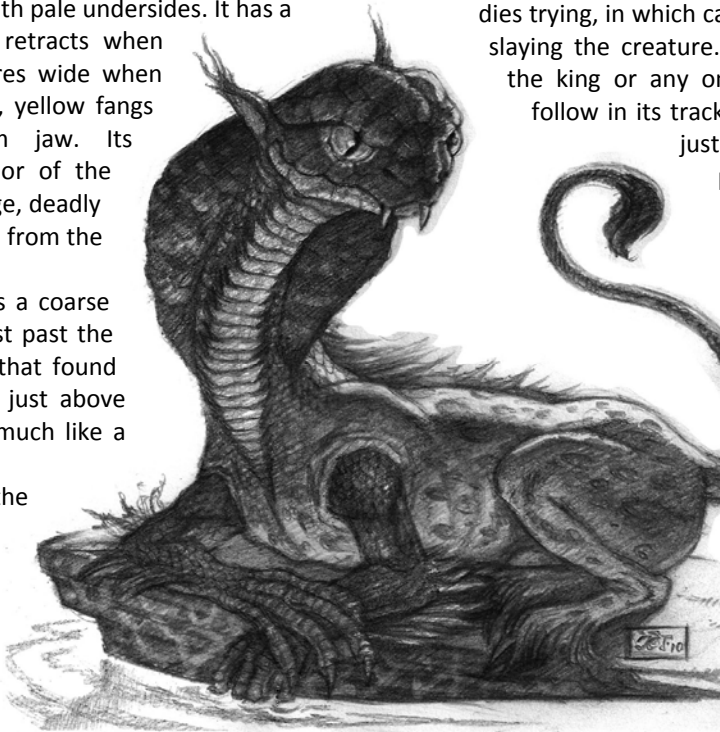
## Questing Beast

Agility d10, Smarts d12, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8
**Pace**: 10  **Parry**: 6  **Toughness**: 8

### Skills

Fighting d8, Guts d10, Notice d12, Stealth d10

### Special Abilities

- **Bite or Claw**: Str+d6.
- **Camouflage**: +4 to Stealth rolls in forests.
- **Improved Frenzy**: The Questing Beast may make two Fighting attacks each action at no penalty.
- **Pounce**: The Questing beast often pounces on its prey to best bring its mass and claws to bear. It can leap 1d6" to gain +4 to its attack and damage. Its Parry is reduced by −2 until its next action when performing the maneuver.
- **Size +2**: The Questing Beast weighs over 500 pounds.
- **Two Fisted**: The Questing Beast may attack with its claws and bite in the same round with no multi-action penalty.

# TOMORROWLAND

"Aaron's art is like a shotgun blast in the middle of the night. Something wakes you up and makes you wonder where the hell it came from."
~John Wick, Author of *Legend of the Five Rings*, *Houses of the Blooded*, and *Shotgun Diaries*.

## THE ART OF
## AARON ACEVEDO

Available in print and PDF via www.sigil.info, drivethrurpg.com, and rpgnow.com

# The Vrrll

## A Legend of Shaintar

"I confuse you. That's okay. I confuse everyone, and I always have. Imagine how confused those first companions of mine must have been, when they originally encountered me as I fought off a band of Tor Mastak determined to return me to my Kalinesh masters?

"A creature, looking much like a brinchie, but with the bulk and strength of an ogre. The colors of my fur are unnatural – purples, oranges, and deep shades of blues – and my eyes glow with a great inner fire. My fangs and my claws are impossibly long – sharper and stronger than dwarven steel.

"There has been no such creature like me. Ever. I am one of a kind. Alone.

"And yet, I have rarely been truly alone. I escaped the Blood Pits of the north, the arenas I was crafted from alchemy and thaumaturgy to fight in. I rejected all that I was bred to, and instead chose to serve Life. I was an ignorant savage in my earliest days, with no sense of manners or culture, but my heart sang to me of greater things. Those first friends I met in the Southern Kingdoms heard that song, and welcomed me to join them in saving a nation.

"The long life my creators granted me means most of those friends are gone now. I've made new ones along the way, and I have come to serve the Silver Unicorn directly in whatever way she requires. It is a good life. It is my life, as I have chosen to live it."

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*Chosen of the Horn*:

- **Novice**: +1 Benny per session.
- **Seasoned**: +2 on any Opposed Trait rolls to resist Flame or Darkness effects.
- **Veteran**: The Champion edge. If the Hero is a Paladin or a Soulguard, the effects stack!
- **Heroic**: +2 on all Spirit and Vigor checks to recover from being Shaken, soak Wounds, resist poisons, disease, and Fatigue.
- **Legendary**: *Call the Unicorn's Power* – The Hero can spend a Benny to activate this ability. Doing so allows the Hero to ask for any Power; non-spellcasters use their Spirit, while spellcasters use their arcane skill. In either case, there is no expenditure of Essence. If the power is granted (at the GM's discretion), it is cast and used as normal. Any power with a duration lasts only its base duration and cannot be maintained.

## The Vrrll (Legendary)

Agility d12, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12+1
**Pace**: 9 (d10)  **Parry**: 9  **Toughness**: 8  **Charisma**: -4

### Skills

Climbing d8, Fighting d12+2 (d10 Wild), Healing d4, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Cosmology) d6, Knowledge (History) d4, Notice d6+2, Stealth d10, Survival d8, Swimming d6, Throwing d10, Tracking d6

### Gear

Enchanted White Silver Great Axe [STR+d10; +3 to Damage, +1 Parry, AP 3; Heavy Weapon, *Mighty Blow*]; Enchanted Partial Dwarven Plate [+7 Armor, -3 Coverage]; Enchanted Throwing Spear [STR+d8; +2 to Hit, +2 Damage, 5/10/20]; The Unicorn's Favor – Bracelet [*Demon Slayer*, *Undead Slayer*]

### Edges

Acrobat/Greater Acrobat, Ambidexterity, Battle Hardened, Behemoth, Brawny, Catlike/Improved Catlike Grace, Charge/Improved Charge, Combat Reflexes, Content, Counterattack/Improved Counterattack, Dodge/Improved Dodge, Elan, Heroic Charge, Heroic Leap, Heroic/Legendary Sweep, Level Headed, Nerves/Improved Nerves of Steel, One Against Many, Quick, Sweep/Improved Sweep, Two-Fisted, Master (Fighting), Weapon Master

### Hindrances

Bad Eyes, Big Target (+1 to be hit), Monstrous Size & Appearance, Weakness (+2 Damage from Black Iron/Blood Steel), Enemies (Darkness and Flame), Vow (Servant of the Unicorn), Heroic, Loyal, Outsider

### Special Abilities

- Chosen of the Horn (see sidebar)
- Claws (STR+d6, AP 2)
- Fast (Pace 8, d10 Running)
- Great Strides
- Keen Sense of Smell (+2)
- Low Light Vision
- Reach +1
- Regeneration (Fast)
- Silverclaw (Claws are White Silver)
- Size +3

**Note** – This was originally presented in *Shark Bytes* a while back, but I've updated the character to reflect the new material in *Shaintar: Legends Arise* and *Shaintar: Legends Unleashed* (as well as the new *Savage Worlds Deluxe*). The Vrrll was created and played originally by Charles Jones, one of the true Original players of *Shaintar* and a dear friend. This was for you, Old Buddy! – Sean P. Fannon

# Savage Worlds as an Educational Tool

Role-playing games (RPGs) have undergone some serious growth over the last few decades. Once looked at by some as a hobby for "nerdy boys" and by others as something unholy, attitudes have largely matured. We see some forms of role-playing used in corporate team-building events, feature-length films being brought to the big screen ala Dungeons & Dragons, and celebrities like Wil Wheaton and Vin Diesel espousing RPG virtues and telling their own gaming stories.

Today we look at another use: *Savage Worlds* as an educational tool. Many people in North America choose to homeschool their children. Bruce Anderson of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan (Canada) is one such person. We became acquainted with him via a Savage Worlds Yahoo Group when the stay-at-home-dad who homeschools full-time posted a bit about how he was using *Savage Words* to teach kids.

The Anderson family chose to share their story, but use only the children's characters' names publicly. Daughter Chrystal, 9, and son Varte, 11, are just two of the more than one million children who "go" to school at home each year. When asked why they embarked on this real-life adventure – homeschooling or home education – the answer wasn't the quality of education. "We pulled our son out of school at the end of grade three. He had been the subject of bullying for a few years, and the school seemed unable to deal with it to our satisfaction," Anderson explains. Varte had been diagnosed with ADHD. At the recommendation of the school, they worked with a doctor to put Varte on a Ritalin prescription. It worked to some degree, but between the dislike of having their son drugged and the resultant explosion of frustration he had despite the medication, they opted for another solution, one which they felt wouldn't leave their son hating school, or themselves feeling unhappy over their choice.

Three homeschooled years later, Varte doesn't take medication and is a "completely different kid". He has thrived so much in this special environment that his little sister asked at the end of the last school year if she could try it. Anderson suspects it was because Chrystal saw how much fun Varte was having. Part of that fun was the transition between entertaining his son with RPGs and Anderson's use of them to teach a variety of concepts. This year the family will have both children at home, creating a curriculum to handle grades four and six.

Anderson has been gaming off and on for about 30 years. In the mid-80s, *Basic D & D*, *Star Frontiers*, and *Gamma World* caught his attention. As with many people, real life interfered, prompting a few hiatuses. For the first few years he and his wife were raising their children, gaming became impractical. After six years, they were able to resume gaming.

"I first started gaming with my own kids about four years ago. They had seen us gaming with our adult friends and wanted to play too. I ran a very simplified game of *D&D (3.5e)* with them. Varte was hooked immediately; Chrystal didn't seem quite as interested at the time. She was more interested in having tea parties with the minis after they were killed – it was pretty cute!" he elaborates. It was only a short time before Varte was constantly asking questions and wanting his father to game with him. Once Anderson finally decided to give it a try, he invited some of Varte's friends to play, giving him an easy way to limit the RPG sessions to when the other kids were there too.

Quickly, inspiration hit him. "The first year of our homeschooling we were studying the Ancient Near East and I had seen the book *Testament*, by Green Ronin. I was really impressed with how closely it represented Bronze Age history and culture, so I invited a couple of other homeschooled kids to join us and I ran it as part of my homeschool plan. It was quite fun as we learned about using barter instead of money; we used ancient

measurements like cubits, etc. whenever we could; and I would draw maps on shards of broken pottery for them."

After that trial run, Anderson was enthusiastic about starting a homeschool RPG club, and had figured he'd try it after he had a year or two more of experience with teaching at home. Tragedy struck, accelerating his plan. "In the fall of 2010, Varte lost his best friend in a car accident and I realized I needed to help him expand his social circle to help him deal with it. I decided to start it up for the winter term of 2011, and was amazed by the response I received. In no time I had three different groups running every two weeks!"

After considering other systems, Anderson decided on *Savage Worlds*, which his adult gamers had recently switched to. He needed to be sure that rules complexity and book costs weren't going to inhibit using an RPG the way he wanted to with the students. Wanting a system that was easy to learn and play, one that would allow them to focus on the adventure, not the rules, he "found that *Savage Worlds* really did live up to its 'Fast, Fun, and Furious' slogan."

With a game plan in place, it was time to pitch the concept to other homeschooling parents. "I had initially been nervous about what kind of response I would receive from the homeschool community due to the bad reputation RPGs have in some circles. I have never received any negative feedback because of this, however. Instead, I've discovered that homeschooling parents are very creative and adventurous when it comes to education. I try to be transparent about what and how we play, and make a point of letting the parents know that they are welcome to come and watch if they want to."

System chosen? Check. Parental buy-in? Check. Kids ready to sit down and play? Not quite. Not every student knew what role-playing was much less what to do at an RPG table. Even now, some come from families where a parent is or

was a gamer, while others are completely new to the hobby.

Anderson relates that his biggest change between that first session of the kids' game and today is his expectations from the kids. It didn't take him long to realize that the kids simply weren't going to behave as he expected adult gamers would. He wasted a lot of time calling for order and trying to get them to pay attention. Now having run RPGs for kids for three years (two as part of the official Homeschool RPG Club), he's learned a few tricks like the letting the gaming table be "a little more chaotic" and just speaking louder when he needs to. He appeals to their sense of wanting everyone to have fun by telling them that "an RPG is a co-operative storytelling game" and explaining how not letting everyone be involved will ruin that. Usually that brings about the respect and attentiveness needed. And if it doesn't? He does what GMs at tables worldwide do with their full-grown gamers: "I just throw in a squad of orcs or something as a surprise attack and it quickly draws them back to the game."

Aside from teaching the kids to listen, work cooperatively, and be respectful, Anderson uses his *Savage Worlds* campaigns to inspire creative writing. While Varte has agonized over just a few sentences when asked to write, after a gaming session "he will easily sit down and write a three-page short story." Anderson decided before last year's sessions that he'd give an extra Bennie to players who turned in a short story or comic of their character's adventures from their character's perspectives. On a more basic level, he refrains from adding up their dice rolls, even if it is sometimes hard to wait while they work out the math.

He says 3-5 kids make a good gaming group, although he's tried a group of six. That was "a little too crazy." He ended up splitting that group in two. Current games are limited to students aged 9-12 years, covering both of his children. He's hoping that by the time his son leaves that range that some of the older, experienced kids will run their own games, even if he also GMs for them.

It seems a likely outcome given that some are already trying their hands at GMing or asking to GM for the group. "I'm amazed not only at how many games have started up among my kids, but also the variety of games too! *Savage Worlds*, *D&D 4e*, *Warrior Cats*, *Risus*, *Shadows*." He has clearly groomed not only a new generation of players, but possibly even game designers. "I've even heard that some kids are already making up their own rules for their games! The other day I saw some of the kids from one of last year's groups and they mobbed me with stories of their RPG adventures over the summer – it was very rewarding!"

Anderson is hoping that the aspiring GMs don't lose that thought. He's had to turn kids down for the club since he can't GM all who wants to join. More GMs mean more skills to teach and the ability to include more kids on the club. With the exception of one girl, the games have all been with boys. He has some girls expressing interest in a *Sherwood* game this year.

Traditionally the kids have wanted to play fantasy. "I used Tarth, the world from *Evernight*, as a background for two of the groups. We didn't have time to run the plot-point adventure, so it was more just the maps and setting material that I used. For the other group I used The Highwater War. When we finished with it, the kids were very excited about *Treasure Planet* so I mashed together some of the *Pirates of the Spanish Main* and *Slipstream* rules to run a short *Treasure Planet* campaign for them." It was so much fun, he's thinking of doing it again another time.

This year he's changing up genres. The plan is to run the *Slipstream* plot point campaign for the full year, and run a half-year Sherwood campaign starting in January. That gets him running only one gaming session per week. He's had interest in *Slipstream*, and says he chose Sherwood so he could throw in a bit of real world history. If the kids show interest, he's planning on a post-apocalyptic game "in honor of the whole 2012-End-of-the-World thing."

In five different homeschool campaigns, they've covered *Testament* as a trial run, *Tarth – The Wilderness Adventures* where the characters wandered around and found things to fight, *Tarth – The Underdark War* where the kids discovered a drow plot to invade the surface and had to stop it, *The Highwater War* – played mostly as it was written – where they discovered and really liked the mass battles, and *Treasure Planet* where they were to infiltrate a pirate organization and bring it home (Anderson included some of the characters from the movie as background NPCs).

Anderson has made adjustments as the club has grown. To ensure all of this runs smoothly, he started charging last year. The fee serves two purposes. It ensures the club doesn't get pushed aside due to a busy schedule. That in turn keeps the whole group from being affected by unexpected absences. It also offsets the costs of having a well-stocked game group.

The $25 per student allowed him to buy several copies of *Savage Worlds Explorer's Edition (SW:EX)* in preparation for their expected scarcity due to the more expensive *Savage Worlds Deluxe* release. It also covered miniatures, maps, PDF printing, and player's guides. He calculated the fee based on 10 sessions per term. It turned out to be closer to 15. Experience is the best teacher. This year the term fee has gone to $55.00 per student for a planned 11 sessions. He believes the $5.00 per session per kid model will prove to be the appropriate balance.

There have been surprises along the way, most of them good. See some of them in this candid, at-a-glance Q & A:

**SI: What has been your greatest joy?**

**BA**: Seeing my son develop so many good friendships through the RPG club after the death of his friend. But in general, I am overjoyed to be able to pass on a hobby I love to a younger generation. It's exciting to hear that many of them have already started gaming on their own at home.

**SI: What has been the most surprising?**

**BA**: The level of response, support, and interest from the gaming community has really caught me by surprise. We meet

and play at Dragon's Den (www.dragonsdengames.com), our local game store, and I have really appreciated their willingness to let us play there and use their gaming tables and terrain, etc. I was a little nervous at first about gaming with kids in a public place, but was told that the kids are generally better behaved than some of the older gamers that use the space. That made me very proud of my kids! I've also appreciated that many of the other adult gamers that use the space at the same time as we do are so friendly with the kids. There is a group that comes to play *Warmachine* from time to time and they will often interrupt their games to let the kids examine their minis or stop and talk to them.

The wider gaming community has also been very supportive. There has been considerable interest and support from the Savage Worlds Yahoo group. Jonathon Thompson of Battlefield Press was gracious enough to give me access to some unpublished material for my upcoming Sherwood campaign. Pinnacle gave me permission to distribute the Test Drive and Wizards and Warriors rules last year to all the kids in the group. Even being asked to do this interview was a complete surprise.

**SI: How much gaming do you get in outside of the youth games? How has this experience affected your own games when playing with adults?**

**BA**: I generally meet with my adult gaming group about every other Friday for a 4 or 5 hour session. Currently another member is running a *BRP* [Basic Roleplaying] Fantasy campaign and I'm really enjoying the opportunity to not run things or worry about rules etc. It's fun to just sit and kill things… er play. I'm currently developing a post-apocalyptic steampunk setting using the FATE system for when my turn comes up again. I'm also working on trying to convert Skyrealms of Jorune to *Savage Worlds* (perhaps when I get it done I'll test it on the kids if I can sell them on the idea). I've run a few *Savage Worlds* one-shots with my adult group from time to time, and I've found that my ability to improvise has improved drastically as a

result of gaming with kids. I've developed a lot more confidence to play fast and loose with the rules and focus more on the adventure and just having a good time.

**SI: What advice would you offer other homeschooling parents if they want to incorporate RPGs into their program?**

**BA**: If the parents had no prior experience with RPGs, I would suggest starting very simply. Just start telling your kids stories, and occasionally give them a choice as to what they want to happen. From there, I'd suggest a simple game like *Shadows* or *Risus*. Both are free and very easy to use.

Kids are very tactile; make sure you use lots of minis and props. I would often pass a new mini around the table for the kids to examine and hold before putting it on the table in an encounter. When I started my groups last year I statted up some miniatures, and then passed them around and told the kids to choose who they wanted to be. When they chose, I would give them the related character sheet. It worked really well as a way to introduce the game to them. This year the kids are pretty pumped about making their own characters.

Kids generally have a very short attention span; don't expect to get a lot done in one session – especially at first. When I ran The Highwater War, it took us about three months to get through.

Don't let yourself get bogged down in rules – if you don't know it, make it up. You'll lose the kids if you have to stop and look up things in the book all the time. (Of course, you'll lose a lot of adults the same way!) Use a game with a simple set of rules (such as *Savage Worlds*!) that don't get in the way of the adventure.

Most importantly, parents should be involved in what the kids are doing. If you're running a group, make sure the parents are on board with what you're doing and what your expectations are. If you have another person running the game, try to stay involved, let your kids talk about, write about or draw about their adventures in the game. It's a great way to encourage all kinds of creative expression. Look for teaching moments from the game. If a kid comes home

talking about castle sieges, then help them learn about what they were really like.

For gamers, if you want to improve your improvisational skills and your GMing in general, find a group of kids who want to play. You will be stretched!

**SI: Is there anything else you'd like to share with our audience (funny experiences, resources, etc.)?**

**BA**: I had one boy who liked to be rude to the NPCs, so I threw in an encounter with some fairies who were celebrating the Fairy Queen's birthday. The fairies asked the characters if they would like to give a gift to the queen. Most of the boys gave a gift, and were quite polite, but this one boy kept insulting the fairies. After they left, I revealed to the kids at their next encounter that they had each received a gift from the fairies based on their behavior towards them. Most of the kids received combat bonuses of one kind or another, but the rude character was cursed and received a penalty. After the fight, he asked the other players if they could go back so that he could apologize to the fairies. A few sessions down the road, they met a noble who offered them a job. A different boy started being rude to the noble, and the first boy said, "No, you don't want to do that! You better apologize right now."

Another time, I had a boy whose character had taken a cursed item. I pulled him aside and told him that the item was cursed, and it was affecting his behavior. He played it up really well even when the effects were detrimental to his character. When the kids figured things out (I think I let something slip out of character), I told them that even though they knew it, their characters didn't and they should try to play as if they didn't know. I was amazed with their role-playing abilities after that. They handled the situation better than some adults I've seen in similar situations. It really added a lot of suspense for the players because they knew they were getting deeper and deeper into trouble, but didn't know when the hammer would fall.

**Resources:**

As far as resources go, if you're running a game with kids, one of the best resources is the Kids RPG Yahoo group, http://games.groups.yahoo.com/group/kids-rpg/ There are a lot of educators, both home-based and traditional, that participate on the group as well as parents who have introduced their kids to RPGs.

The Escapist http://www.theescapist.com/ is a great resource to use, dispel many of the myths about RPGs, and to provide good information about the hobby for any other parents who may not know much about the hobby.

The Young Person's Adventure League http://www.theescapist.com/ypal/ gives a lot of good advice about gaming with kids and provides a list of kid friendly RPGs (many of them are free).

Shadows, which I've mentioned before, can be found here http://www.harlekin-maus.com/games/shadows/shadows.pdf, and Risus can be found here http://www222.pair.com/sjohn/risus.htm. They are both simple to play and free to download.

If anyone has any questions they can reach me through the HS RPG blog (http://hsrpgclub.wordpress.com), which will include the kids' write-ups, or feel free to email me at bruce.germund@gmail.com.

# GRAMEL

## Heroic Creature #1: Zalanga, Ghost of the Assassin

A new creature for the *Beasts & Barbarians Savage Worlds* setting.

A *Savage Insider* exclusive add-on for the upcoming *Beasts & Barbarians* role-playing game from GRAmel.

### A Creature of Crime and Punishment

Very few sorcerers dare to mention the name of the Zalanga, even fewer try to summon him!

The legends say that Zalanga was one of the most feared assassins of Jalizor. Born in the Ivory Savannah, he reached the City of Thieves in chains, as a slave. He was sold to an old assassin, a man now weak and frail, but with knowledge he wanted to pass down. Zalanga was a great student, and he became one of the best killers of all Jalizor. No man, king or beggar could avoid assassination if Zalanga was hired to dispatch him.

It all ended when an envious noble, Lord Jimagos, hired him to murder the favorite concubine of Lord Serajos, an act of punishment for the refusal of selling the girl.

That same night, Zalanga, silent as a panther, sneaked inside Serajos palace, found the concubine sleeping in the harem and thrust the dagger in her chest, killing her on the spot. In that moment a moonbeam enlightened the girl's breast revealing a strange white tattoo, identical to the one the assassin had on his chest. It was the mark of the Caldeian slaver who owned both of them. Then Zalanga realised what he had done - the girl he killed was his own sister, Malara, sold on the docks of Jalizar the same day.

The young assassin shut Malara's eyes, left the palace, and killed Lord Jimagos. Then he thrust his own dagger in his heart and died.

Unfortunately, Zalanga's spirit never found peace and became a terrible demon, bound to killing and murdering. In the end, some of the evil sorcerers learned the way to summon and force him to use his skills and supernatural powers for their bidding.

Zalanga appears as an Ivory Tribesman, only his summoner and his victim see his true form: a hideous, ebony skinned humanoid with a reptilian head and a white tattoo on the chest.

Zalanga is a killer at heart, and loves murdering his chosen victims, but even more than that, he likes to kill his own summoner.

### (WC) Zalanga

Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8
**Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 11 (3)

### Skills

Climbing d10, Fighting d10, Lockpicking d10, Persuasion d10, Stealth d10, Streetwise d8.

### Gear

**Armor**: Demonic skin (All 3)
**Weapons**: Claws (Str+d6)

### Special Abilities

- **Demon:** +2 to recovering from being Shaken; Immune to poison and disease;
- **Fear:** Seeing Zalanga in his true form requires a Fear check. Only his victims suffer from this ability.
- **Kill the Master:** Every time Zalanga is summoned to murder a victim, the Game Master secretly draws a card from the action deck. If it is a Joker, Zalanga executes his task, then, if successful, is considered free from control and comes back to kill his own summoner. Then he disappears.
- **Silent as a Panther, Deadly as the Night:** Zalanga was a very skilled killer in life and retained his abilities in the afterlife. He has the Assassin, Acrobat and Thief Edges.
- **Weakness (Skull Pommeled Daggers):** He suffers +4 damage from Skull Pommeled Daggers (described separately).
- **Weakness (White Tattoo):** The tattoo on Zalanga's chest is his most vulnerable part. A called shot (-4) is required to hit it and, if successful, bypasses armor. Wounds inflicted in this way cannot be soaked.

### Summoning Zalanga

To summon Zalanga a sorcerer must know the *summon ally* power, learn the secret invocation (a trapping - contained in some tome of sorcery of Zandorian origin) and find a skull tipped dagger. A normal dagger made of bone, with a pommel sculpted to resemble a skull is enough to summon him (30 moons), but owning the Zalanga Dagger (see sidebar) is far better.

Zalanga is considered a Veteran Rank creature for the *summon ally* power purposes. He can be summoned only to perform one task: kill a named victim. Fighting the victim doesn't turn the *summon ally* power to standard maintenance mode, unless the demon is forced to fight other opponents to reach his assigned target.

**Note:** When summoned by a player character, Zalanga is an Extra or Henchman as per the *summon ally* rules.

### Adventure Seeds

**Blind Vengeance:** The heroes are hired by Sulman the Blind, a rich grain merchant from Jalizor. The old man wants the party to bring to him an ancient heirloom – a stone amulet, which is said to be in the possession of Right Handed Bakazar, the chief of the infamous bandit band called the Blood Crows. The heroes track the Blood Crows camp in the wild lands of Zandor, sneak inside and locate the tent of the chief. At this point they discover that Bakazar isn't the leader anymore; a younger man, Rikklo, took charge because Bakazar, during a failed assault to the fortified town of Ghemra, fell down and was captured.

After leaving the camp, the party now travels to Ghemra, a typical Zandorian town, surrounded by tall walls, protected by a strong militia and governed by draconian laws. Gathering information, they discover that, after the assault, Bakazar and the other prisoners suffered the common punishment inflicted to criminals – he was thrown down the Chasm of Dead Ones, a big pit in the ground, protecting the northern border of the city. The problem is that nobody knows how deep the chasm is. No man has ever emerged from it.

The heroes climb down the chasm and find a sort of ossuary at the bottom of it with skeletons, broken and chewed, hundreds of years old. The chasm is the den of a monster from the forgotten eons – a massive carnivorous lizard. In the end the group finds Bakazar, barely alive with a broken back and reduced to a raving madman, with the old amulet still on his neck.
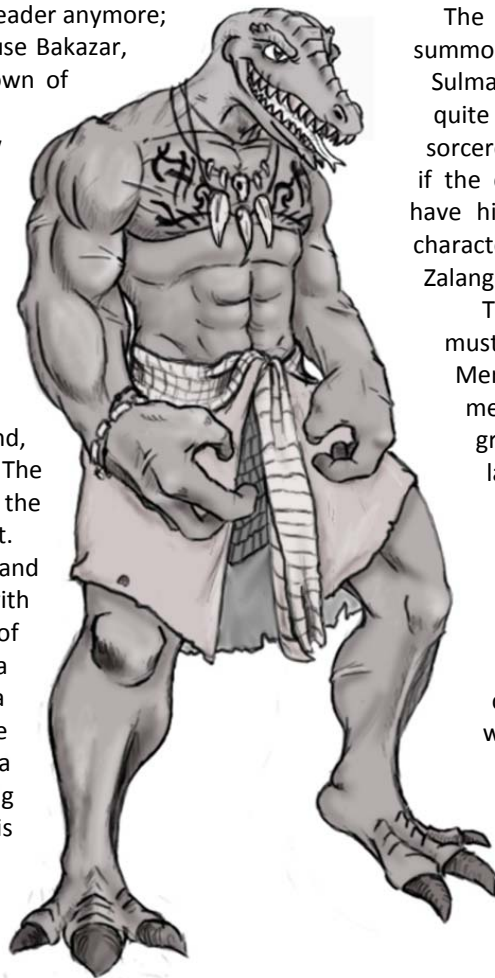
### Relic Idea – Zalanga Dagger

The legend says that Zalanga, on the slave ship, was given a long bone with only some rotten meat on it to eat. The young boy concealed the bone and, during the long and sleepless nights, carved a bone dagger with a pommel sculpted to resemble a skull from that bone. He used it to silently kill one of the overseers of the ship. Later, when he became a famous assassin, it became his weapon of choice. The blade somehow survived through the years, and is a valuable relic tainted with great evil.

It deals +2 damage, AP 2 and grants the owner the *summon ally* power, limited to the ghost of Zalanga, with 10 Power Points, using Spirit as arcane skill.

In the hands of a sorcerer who knows the ritual to summon the demon, it grants +4 to the arcane skill roll (and 10 Power Points, limited for evoking Zalanga). On the bad side it is said that nobody can hold the dagger more than a year before being killed in some gruesome way.

Once back at Jalizor, Sulman avidly puts his hands on the old relic. He is blind, but his fingers can read the inscriptions engraved on the amulet. Sulman then offers the party a place to sleep, a feast and some beautiful girls and tells them that they will receive payment in the morning.

The amulet contains the secret invocation to summon Zalanga, Ghost of the Assassin, and Sulman evokes it. The demon appears, but he is quite amused, because the old man isn't a sorcerer and cannot control him. Sulman bargains: if the demon obeys to his task, the demon will have his own soul plus the ones of the player characters as reward. With a bone chilling laughter, Zalanga agrees.

Then Sulman makes his request: Zalanga must sneak inside the palace of the Master Merchant Graado, one of the most powerful men of Jalizor, and kill his six-year old grandson, protected by a legion of guards so large and so skilled that no human assassin can reach him. Many years ago, Graado blinded Sulman, and the old man wants the most terrible revenge. The demon bows and departs for Graado's palace.

At this point the heroes are awoken by one of the girls who overheard the conversation. If they overwhelm Sulman, he will tell them the truth – and even if they kill him, the blind merchant dies happy: Zalanga will fulfill his vengeance and come to request the souls of the heroes.

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The only manner the party has to stop this thing is to rush to Graado palace and prevent the demon from killing the boy, so that he cannot ask their souls. But the palace of the Master Merchant is full of guards and it won't be easy to persuade them that a demon is going to kill the grandson of their master…

**The Brotherhood of the Dagger:** During a night at the tavern (which can be part of an "after the adventure" sequence), one of the heroes has a stroke of luck at the gambling table, winning a substantial pile of gold and a strange bone dagger from a foreign sailor.

The morning after, that sailor is found in a back alley, tortured and murdered. From that moment, the life of the heroes becomes a nightmare: a mysterious sect of assassins, called the Brotherhood of the Dagger, is on their track, and will do anything in their power to recover the dagger, Zalanga's Dagger. They are a large sect, with many members beyond suspicion in all parts of the society, and worship the Zalanga as their god.

If some of the heroes have a romantic interest, the cultists, in addition to stealing the relic, kidnap and bring the girl to their secret temple among the mountains where she will be sacrificed to appease the Ghost of the Assassin. The party must first understand what is happening, then locate the temple, and finally save the beloved one of their comrades just before she is killed.

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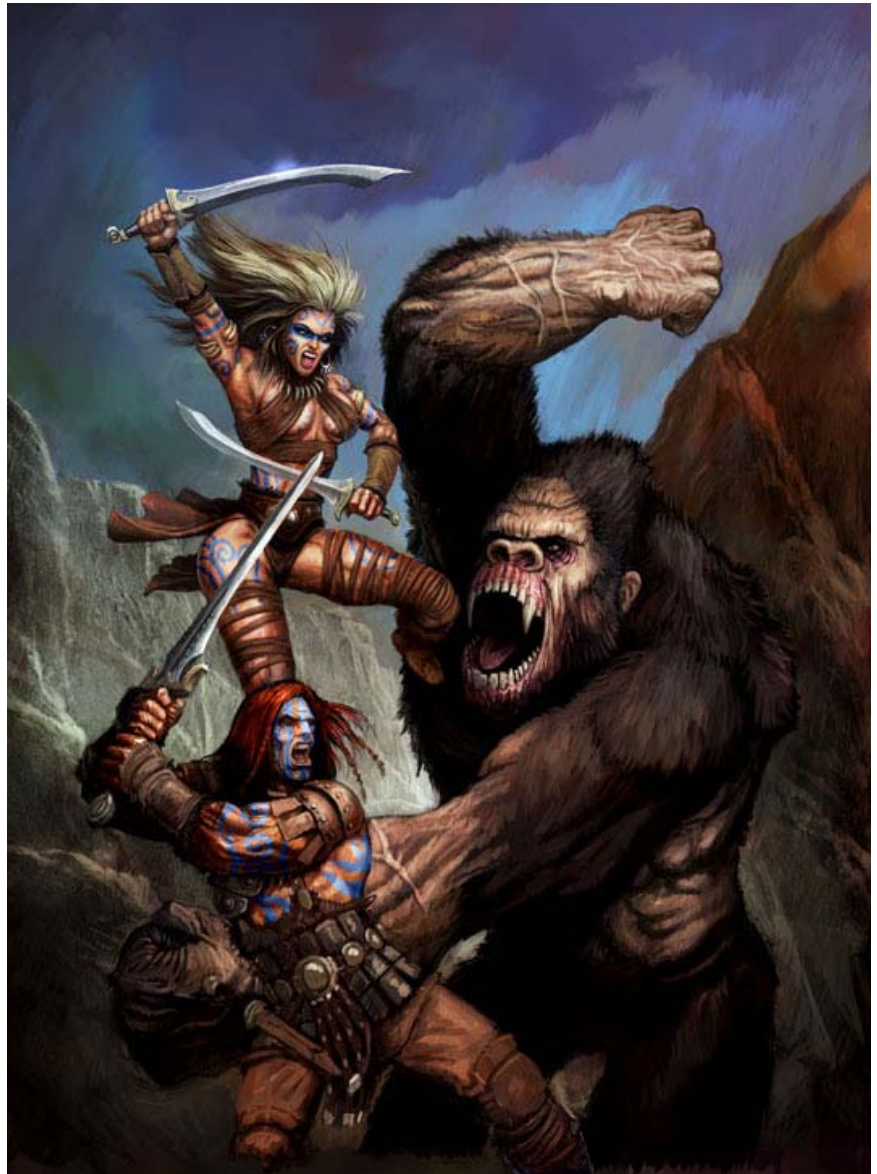
# WAR OF THE DEAD

## LEE F. SZCZEPANIK, JR.

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# Daring Tales of the Sprawl

## Morrigu Arms Catalog Addendum

## Monofilament Whip

A monofilament whip consists of a monomolecular carbon filament attached to a hand grip at one end and a weight at the other. When swung, the whip can slice through flesh and fabric with ease and if sufficient force is applied to the swing, it can cut through heavier materials such as armor. The monofilament whip is a difficult weapon to master and unskilled users can inflict horrific injuries on themselves.

**Game Notes:** If the wielder rolls a natural one on his Fighting die he loses control of the whip and inflicts its normal damage on himself!

## Electroshock, Hand-Held

A hand-held electroshock is similar in basic design to an electric cattle prod with two thin projecting metal electrodes at an end of a shaft containing the batteries and mechanism. A handle and a switch are at the other end of the shaft.

The electroshock delivers a 50,000 volt electric shock, at very low amperage, to the target which is painful and can momentarily paralyze. A hand held electroshock's batteries carry sufficient power for 6 uses before recharging is required.

Electroshocks deliver sufficient voltage to pass through clothing and light armor, but their effectiveness is slightly reduced against heavier armors.

**Game Notes**: Users of an electroshock roll to hit their target as normal. Instead of damage, the victim must succeed in a Vigor roll or become Shaken. If a raise is achieved on the Fighting or Shooting roll, the Vigor roll is made at a -2 penalty.

If the target is wearing armor with a protection value of 3 or more the victim gains a +1 bonus to their Vigor roll.

## Electroshock Gun

Electroshock guns fire two needles with trailing wires leading back to the gun. Once the needles make contact with a target the weapon delivers the same shock as a hand-held electroshock (see Electroshock, Hand-Held). Once the needles are attached the firer may hold down the trigger to deliver a second shock.

Pushing the guns trigger forward rewinds the wire and needles ready for a new shot. The battery that powers both the firing of the needles and the electric charge is good for six shots before it needs recharging.

**Game Notes**: See notes for Electroshock, Hand-Held.

Once the needles are attached the firer can hold down the trigger delivering a new shock every round (draining one charge), preventing the victim from recovering from being Shaken. The victim may spend a Benny to recover from being Shaken but as the current is still flowing they will have to make another Vigor roll on their next action.

A victim can remove the needles as a free action if they are not Shaken.

## Sliver Guns

Sliver guns use magnetic fields to propel projectiles composed of many needle-like objects (slivers or flechettes). These slivers are highly efficient at penetrating light armor but tend to be flattened by heavy armor. Due to the nature of the propellant, sliver guns are almost silent in operation, making only a low hiss when fired.



Soon after release, street parlance twisted the sliver into slither. Coupled with the trademark hiss when being fired, the guns are known as "snake guns". Bowing to popular demand, Morrigu Arms rebranded their range with serpentine names.

**Game Notes**: The armor piercing of slivers is applied as normal to targets with 1 or 2 points of armor. Against armor with a rating of 3 or more, the armor piercing is ignored. Hearing a sliver gun firing requires a Raise on a Notice roll.

## Dragon

The Dragon is a hand flame thrower. It appears similar to a small fire extinguisher with a pistol type nozzle.

**Game Notes**: The Dragon follows all the regular rules for flamethrowers.

## Goliath

More a cannon than a pistol, the Goliath is a large bore weapon that fires an equally large shell. The recoil from the Goliath is fierce and anyone with Strength of less than d8 suffers a -2 penalty to Shooting.

| Weapon | Range | Dmg | RoF | Wgt | Shots | Min. Str | Cost | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Monofilament Whip | Melee | Str+d8 | — | — | — | d4 | 400 | AP 2 |
| Electroshock, Hand-Held | Touch | Special | 1 | 1 | 6 | — | 250 | See weapon description |
| Electroshock Gun | 1/2/4 | Special | 1 | 2 | 1 | — | 350 | See weapon description |
| Electroshock Battery | — | — | — | .5 | — | — | 10 | |
| Morrigu Viper | 9/18/36 | 2d6 | 1 | 2 | 16 | — | 250 | Sliver Pistol, AP 2; Semi–auto |
| Morrigu Cobra | 18/36/72 | 2d8+1 | 3 | 8 | 60 | — | 300 | Sliver Rifle, AP 2; Auto; 3 round burst |
| Morrigu King Cobra | 9/18/36 | 2d6+1 | 3 | 4 | 60 | — | 350 | Sliver SMG, AP 2; Auto |
| Morrigu Dragon | Cone | 2d10 | 1 | 4 | 2 | d6 | 400 | Hand-held flamethrower |
| Morrigu Goliath | 12/24/48 | 2d10 | 1 | 5 | 6 | d6 / d8 | 400 | |

# Crypt of the Crystal Lich Part 2

## The Wind Tunnel

The stairwell down into the temple of spires descended far deeper into the earth than Abigail had first reckoned. The carvings on the wall were intricate, depicting dark rites and toothy creatures, but what bothered Abigail wasn't the walls themselves so much as the state they were in. The further down they went, the newer everything got. It was like walking back into time.

"Ms. Morrison?" George whispered.

"Yes, Mr. Talbot?"

"May I ask what's down here that you're willing to risk all of our necks to find?"

Abigail motioned for both George and Longfeather to come closer. "There is said to be a skull made of crystal set with gems in the bowels of this crypt. Whoever possesses it can ask any question of it: past, present, or future."

"Oh, is that all?" George mocked. "Could it have told us about those birds?"

"There are a number of people who would pay handsomely for such an artifact, and even more who could use it to discover the cures for diseases or the secret to eternal life."

George frowned. "I think I bid this job too low."

Abigail smiled. "That's why I hired you, Mr. Talbot. You were a bargain."

The three continued their way deeper below until the stairwell opened into a long passage. Something caused Abigail to suspect the passage was more than what it seemed at first glance, prompting her to move her torch from side to side. The walkway ahead of them seemed solid enough, but the sides of the passage were black, reflecting no light at all. Worse yet, a light breeze kept the torches flickering, and Abigail noticed that the wind kept changing direction, something it hadn't done on the way down the stairs. It was as if the mouth to the temple was breathing.

"Mr. Talbot, I need something both flammable and expendable."

George suddenly looked worried.

Abagail smiled. "If you'd rather it wasn't you, I'd prefer you to look through our supplies."

Handing his torch off to Longfeather, George sifted through his pack. He handed an extra torch to Abigail. She lit it and tossed it toward one of the walls. She wasn't entirely surprised when it fell through and plummeted into blackness below. Unfortunately, she couldn't tell from the limited light of their remaining torches how far across the walkway the next passage was, let alone if there even was one.

"Rope, Mr. Talbot. We'll go across tied together in case something happens."

"Great idea, ma'am. If one falls over the edge, we can all die together."

Abigail checked the knot around her waist and let out enough rope to reach just to the edge of the torchlight. The two men did likewise with Longfeather in the middle and George in the back. Abigail nodded to them and started across the walkway.

Feeling the rope pulling taught behind her, Abigail worried when she still could only see more walkway ahead of her. How long could the tunnel be? If it had been built over a bottomless pit, what ancient engineer could have suspended it? She smiled at that idea; she could always ask the crystal skull when she found it.

George was still at the edge of the walkway at the bottom of the stairs when the rope ahead of him pulled taught, indicating Longfeather was literally at the end of his rope. Thinking better than to make the snide remark, George had just begun walking forward when a blast of wind rushed past him, nearly taking his legs out from under him.

"Ms. Morrison!" George yelled. "The wind...!"

It was already too late. By the time she heard George's warning, her coat had caught the air current and swept her light frame off the walkway and into the darkness. Ahead of him, George saw something he never would have believed if he hadn't seen it
with his own eyes: Longfeather slipped.

As the big man disappeared over the edge after his employer, George had only a split second to make a decision. Not really knowing why or how it might help, George dashed down the walkway (practically carried by the tailwind behind him) and slid across the edge off the opposite side.

Swinging below the walk, George could see Abigail had managed to hold onto her torch as the wind finally died down. His gamble had paid off; by countering his own weight against Longfeather, the rope held well enough over the bridge to keep them from all falling over into oblivion.

Abigail caught her breath. "Well done, Mr. Talbot. Consider your asking rate doubled. Longfeather, can you swing me back up?"

Longfeather grunted. "Better to climb over me unless you want to add a head injury to your battle scars on this adventure."

Three managed to get back onto the walkway and make their way towards the end without further incident. With only a single torch between them, Abigail took stock of their situation.

"Gentlemen, it took a lot longer to find the cemetery than I had anticipated. The hour has grown late, and I fear what may happen to us if we are still within the temple when the moon sets. If we go much further and still haven't reached our goal, we may not have time to escape before the temple and ourselves may be lost. Thoughts?"
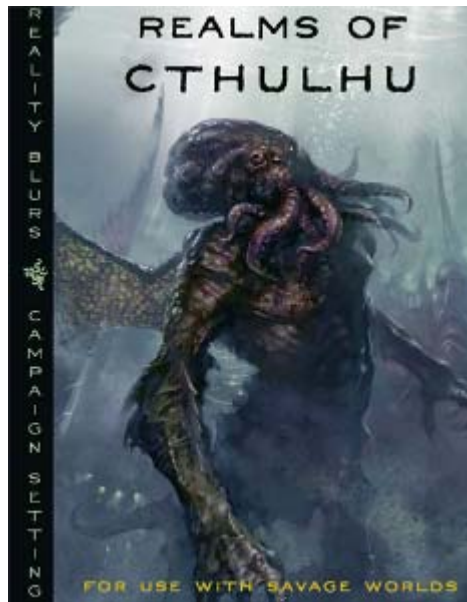
George and Longfeather looked at each other, then back at Abigail.

"We've come this far," Longfeather said.

George nodded. "Birds and dragon breath be damned. Let's find this thing."

Abagail smiled. "Agreed."

# Realms of Cthulhu



## Stats

**Publisher**: Reality Blurs
**Author**: Sean Preston
**Additional Design**: Shane Hensley, Simon Lucas, Ed Wetterman, and Stacy Young
**Cover Artist**: Daniel Rudnicki
**Internal Artists**: Aaron Acevedo, Raul Gonzalez, Andy Hopp, Igor Kieryluk, Diego Gisbert Llorens, Chris Malidore, Luis Nunez De Castro, Aaron Panagos, Daniel Rudnicki, Charlene Sun, Christophe Swal, Trisha Williams, Cheyenne Wright, and Darek Zabrocki
**Page Count**: 160
**Retail Price**: $39.99

"Whether you seek action and adventure battling cultists in sun-drenched jungle temples, a shadow milieu of dark words and impossible deed, or a twisted mixture dredged up from the darkest recesses of imagination and nightmare, you will find the rule you need and the inspiration you desire within these pages."

*Realms of Cthulhu* is the *Savage Worlds* entry into the world of the Cthulhu Mythos. It takes a slightly different approach while still retaining the integrity of modern investigative horror and the Cthulhu Mythos. There are two major components that *Realms of Cthulhu* focuses on: *Savage Worlds* and Cthulhu Mythos. Let's explore each of these in further detail.

## Savage Worlds

As expected, *Realms of Cthulhu* utilizes the core mechanics of *Savage Worlds* with a listed variety of character types. The advantage to using *Savage Worlds* is the player's ability to create character types outside of this list, fit them into the

setting properly and be conscious of the applicable era. This is in opposition to defining each character type and the list of associated bonuses and penalties. There's no stopping the imagination and the given list includes author, criminal, engineer, missionary, professor, soldier, and a whole lot more. Of course, these types wouldn't be possible without a usable list of Edges and Hindrances, but this is just standard mechanics.

*Realms of Cthulhu* presents the players with a number of vehicles across the three eras (1890s, 1920s, and modern) along with a comprehensive list of weapons. Again, standard mechanics, but this isn't how the game takes its different approach.

The new approach to playing Cthulhu comes in the form of campaign style rules. Due to *Savage World's* rules for using Bennies and other heroic elements, modern horror can appear less dangerous than usual. The result is a game-play style that appears more pulp-like than horror-like. *Realms of Cthulhu* embraces and resolves that.

A detailed system for mental anguish is introduced to deal with the often-found sanity (or rather insanity) mechanics within Cthulhu game-play. This Sanity System creates a new type of "injury" system called Madness. In addition to Wounds and Fatigue, you can now fall into the pits of Madness, leading to perilous results.

As the characters slide down the Madness track, they get closer to Insanity and subsequent mental disorders. This is one point where *Realms of Cthulhu* brings together regular Cthulhu Mythos game-play and *Savage Worlds* mechanics. Of course, sliding to Insanity is not the only mechanic; recovery (such as therapy) and Corruption (due to the Mythos) are included. Just because your character goes insane or acquires a mental disease does not mean you're out of the game. Insanity can be treated. But remember, as your character delves deeper into the world of the Mythos, he gains Corruption which has an additional adverse side effect on your sanity. The Madness is everywhere!

Now, this is still only a partial look at the new approach. The next group of mechanics sits along a slide between pulp-like game-play and gritty game-play. By removing some of the *Savage Worlds* core mechanics, such as Bennies, you slide that game-play scale from pulp to grit. The more "heroic efforts" you remove from the players, the more dangerous the game becomes. Especially when you consider how strong Mythos creatures are. Another change to the mechanics is how Madness is acquired. In a pulp-styled game, Madness is not cumulative. In a gritty-styled game, Madness is cumulative and pushes the character closer and closer to insanity.

By mixing and matching the different changes to the mechanics, further game styles can be created. You can create a full horror-styled where the characters stand very little chance to recover from a slide into Insanity. Or you can create a game of corrupting stories where Insanity is easily acquired but the characters still have their Bennies to spend should they be excessively damaged during combat. Or you

can create a game of dangerous action where Madness does not carry as much focus but the characters lack the ability to stand against powerful denizens because their Bennies have been taken away. With further tweaking here and there, many game-play styles are possible.

## Cthulhu Mythos

As with all other Cthulhu Mythos role-playing games, the adventures being had are directly influenced by the works of H.P. Lovecraft and the mounds of Mythos literature found. 'Adventure' is probably a poor word to choose as your characters aren't really going on an adventure. This is an investigation or what **Reality Blurs** calls a Mythos Tale. These tales are filled with all the things you would find in a regular investigation horror story. There are plenty of opportunities to chase the clues, read the right books, search the right outlets, and eventually stroll across the wrong denizen of the night.

But a Cthulhu tale would never be complete without mechanics that allow characters to delve into the pages of Mythos books (in-game books, not real ones). *Realms of Cthulhu* contains a large listing of Mythos books to increase one's Mythos or Arcane Lore. That's right, Arcane Lore. *Realms of Cthulhu* embraces the dangerous magic that is often found within Cthulhu game-play. Because it's powered by *Savage Worlds*, Game Masters (referred to as Keepers herein) have the ability to give players access to standard combat magic, but what's the fun in that? To keep with the Cthulhu theme, 13 Mythos-inspired spells and rituals are introduced. This ranges from a simple contacting of one Mythos deity to calling down one of those deities. But this type of magic is not simple; in fact it's not really magic at all.

This type of magic should be thought of as occult rituals or something equivalent. As *Realms of Cthulhu* is not a fantasy setting, casting Mythos spells is much more difficult. Each spell carries a modifier (sometimes rather large) to your character's spellcasting roll forcing him to utilize the aid of other (possibly many other) characters and henchmen to succeed with the ritual. While reading through these mechanics, you can almost picture a séance in the depths of a dark forest where dozens of cultists have gathered together to call upon the might of Yog-Sothoth.

Once a Mythos creature appears, can the characters stand tall against it? No, probably not. Due to the mechanics for Mental Anguish, these creatures are not to be confronted directly, and that is what the Cthulhu Mythos is about. Mythos creatures do not simply cause Fear, they cause Terror. Looking back through the *Savage Worlds* core mechanics, you'll see how deadly Terror is. In fact, most of them carry Terror at (-2). That means you make a Guts check at (-2) and failure is imminent. In addition, these creatures cause Mental Anguish should you fail those Guts checks. This is an attack against your mind with the average dice being d8+d6! Considering the average starting Sanity is probably 5 or 6, the law of averages does not favor your character's survival. *Realms of Cthulhu* makes coming face-to-face with a Mythos creature extremely dangerous!

Players are not going to create the standard character designed to fight hard or use magic with ease. You will create characters with nerves of steel (if you can) and sharp minds. Who cares about Strength when Spirit and Smarts are going to be the only things that keep you alive? What is the better plan: Fight the Byakhee invasion or close the portal that continues to allow them into our world? This is Cthulhu and your character will never win in a straight-up fist fight! Unless he's simply combating human cultists or other human antagonists.

## Bringing it Together

Tying everything together is a collection of actual Mythos Tales giving you the complete sense of how games of *Realms of Cthulhu* can be played and how they can be. Going back to the *Savage Worlds* aspects you have the different styles of play that can be intermixed with the different eras and further intermixed with different flavor. This flavor is derived from cultist involvement (which can also involve Mythos tomes), what Mythos denizens can be found, and what degree of fear is being presented to the team of investigators. Is the tale more an investigation of the weird or a full delve into the supernatural? The possibilities are endless and when you factor in the different types of game-play, you create even more possibilities.

So why choose *Realms of Cthulhu* over other Cthulhu role-playing games? While I will not draw a line in the sand and state how it's better than the others, I will iterate its potential draw for players who are on the fence.

1. Using the *Savage Worlds* core mechanics allows players to create a multitude of characters without having to define their in-game bonuses and penalties.
2. The different styles of game-play mean the setting can be adapted for those who like a lot of horror, those who like more pulp-style adventures, and many styles in-between.
3. Role-playing opportunities are everywhere and combat can lead to some extremely dramatic endings.
4. There is a conversion guide to go from *Call of Cthulhu* to *Realms of Cthulhu*.
5. The art is beautiful!

Okay, so that last one is purely subjective. However you decide, *Realms of Cthulhu* is an excellent translation of the Cthulhu Mythos into the world of *Savage Worlds*.

# Balancing the Scales

*Savage Worlds* players are encouraged to use miniatures, and they are a must with *Showdown*. *SW/Showdown* uses a scale where an inch equals two yards (72 inches). Ranges are given in inches. A weapon that has a short range of 12 inches means its real-world range is 24 yards, about ¼ of a football field. However, in some games, particularly modern day and science fiction settings, ranged weapons are capable of reaching much farther, making it difficult to use them in a table-top setting.

For example, the WWII-era M1 Garand rifle has a range of 24/48/96, putting the short-range limit two feet from the firing mini, the medium-range limit four feet away, and the long-range limit a whole eight feet away. If you're playing on a long dining room table, you may be able to engage in a long-range encounter, but, what if you're playable area is anything smaller? And, that's just a personal weapon — vehicle-scale weapons like tank cannons have short ranges reaching out to 100 inches and medium ranges at 200 inches (more than 16 feet)! Want to recreate the Battle of Kursk or the Golan Heights? Better clear your basement.

However, there is an easy solution that lets you use Savage Worlds and Showdown to fight out big battles: Change the scale. Instead of one inch equaling two yards, make it three, four, or more yards. This changes a long-range firefight requiring up to six feet to a more manageable four even two feet. You've also expanded the battlefield and opened up room to more figures on each side.

## Picking a Scale

The most common minis in our hobby are 25mm or 28mm pieces. That's what the *SW/Showdown* rules have been written to use, but there are a lot of other scales to choose from. The most common smaller scales are 1:72 (supposedly 28mm), 1:76 (25mm), 15mm (1:100), and 12mm (1:144).

The actual size of miniatures varies a lot and there tends to be a kind of "inflation" that throws these comparisons out of whack. For example, some 25mm to 28mm miniatures actually range in height from 25mm to 30mm, depending on the brand and the miniature. 1:72 scale miniatures range anywhere from 20mm to 25mm. Moreover, when 25mm or 28mm fantasy miniatures are placed next to a 1:72-scale vehicle, they appear much larger and out of proportion. In fact, most 25mm to 28mm miniatures look more proportionate when next to 1:43 or 1:48 scale vehicles.

When a friend and I decided to engage in a series of squad- and platoon-level WWII-era battles using the *Showdown* rules on my 3x5' table, we looked around at different scales. You get a lot of bang for your buck with the 12mm (1:144), but individual soldiers are microscopic and we didn't want to use tweezers to play the game. The 15mm (1:100) scale was more manageable, and there is a lot of material from *Flames of War* and other miniatures games out there, but putting the vehicles together and painting them required an investment of time neither of us wanted to make. Finally, we settled on using 1:72 scale miniatures because they are inexpensive, assembled and painted vehicles are available, and the scale allowed us to play squad- and platoon-level games that still have a personal, one-on-one feel to combat.

## Modifying SW/Showdown for 1:72

When using 1:72 miniatures, *SW/Showdown* really looked and felt more right with a three yards per inch scale. That meant adjusting the ranges in the book, which had me worried until I found out how easy it was.

Take the short-range number and multiply it by 0.67. Round up or down as normal to a whole number. This is the new short range. To get the medium range, multiply the short range by two. To get the long range, multiply the short range by four (or double the medium range). For example, the M1 Garand now has a more manageable range of 16/32/64.

Other distances must be adjusted as well. A character's Pace, normally 6, usually becomes 4. For running characters, roll a 1d4 instead of a 1d6. For vehicles' top speed and acceleration, apply the same multiplier.

Lastly, resize the templates. Take the normal templates found in the SW and Showdown books and photocopy them at 67%, and *viola*, new templates easily sized. For reference, the Large Burst Template should measure about 10.3cm in diameter (about 4 1/16 inches), the Medium Burst Template should measure about 6.9cm in diameter (about 2 11/16 inches), and the Small Burst Template should measure about 3.5cm in diameter (about 1 3/8 inches). The Cone should be 15.5cm (about 6 1/16 inches) at its maximum length and 5.2cm (about 2 1/16 inches) at its maximum width. The turning template doesn't need to be adjusted.

For some things, the multiplier gave results that didn't feel right in play, so we didn't change the rules in the book. Examples of this are the 2" unit cohesion rule (Showdown, page 4) and the 2" rule for solid shot blowing through targets (Showdown, page 16).

## Building Forces

There are lots of 1:72 scale models and miniatures out there for modern and sci-fi gaming, as well as historical games, such as Biblical, Medieval, and Napoleonic eras. Plastic Soldier Review (*plasticsoldierreview.com*) lists miniatures by period and manufacturer, and posts images so you can see what they look like before buying. For vehicles, players have a choice between pre-assembled and pre-painted miniatures or unassembled models. *Themotorpool.net* and *badcattoys.com are* good sources for pre-assembled pieces. Kits come in an even greater variety, found at *amazon.com* and *megahobby.com*. Of course, a hobby store or your Friendly Local Game Store

may have options on the shelves or available for order.

I chose to go with a platoon of British soldiers backed up by a tank for one of our battles. I purchased Caesar Miniatures' (*miniknight.com*) British Soldiers (40 to a box) for $12 and a Forces of Valor (*forcesofvalor.com*) Churchill tank (assembled and painted) for about $19 from my FLGS. My opponent fielded his German soldiers for about $10, a steal because it was a package deal with 30 American airborne soldiers, and shelled out $29 for the Forces of Valor Sd.Kfz. 251/1 Ausf. D halftrack and a Pak40 75mm anti-tank gun (also assembled & painted).

## Conclusion

For many settings, using a smaller scale can really be to your advantage, but I don't recommend it for every genre. Although there are many medieval sets that could be adapted to a fantasy world, the variety of monsters in the smaller scales is limited. Also, due to the prevalence of melee combat, I'm not sure that I'd see a need for switching scales unless you plan on engaging in a large castle or fortress siege.

Going with a smaller scale for *Savage Worlds* and *Showdown* can literally broaden your horizons and add to your gaming pleasure. It lets you see and play in large battles and helps keep your financial investment, time, and required space to a minimum, while still getting the most out of *SW/Showdown's* Fast! Furious! Fun! style of play. When you want to play big, think small.

## Miniature Scaling Chart

This article refers to several scales. There are still others available listed by their height in millimeters along with the scale of one inch of the miniature equaling the equivalent number of inches in real-life.

| Height | Scale (Approximate) |
|--------|---------------------|
| 2mm | 1:915 |
| 6mm | 1:285 |
| 10mm | 1:182 |
| 12mm | 1:152 |
| 15mm | 1:100 - 1:122 |
| 20mm | 1:91 |
| 25mm | 1:76 |
| 28mm | 1:64 |
| 30mm | 1:61 |
| 32mm | 1:57 |
| 35mm | 1:52 |
| 54mm | 1:34 |



## Description

Welcome to Showdown!™, the official miniatures rules for the award-winning Savage Worlds rules system!

The rules found in this book allow you to play any kind of tactical battle—from a shootout in the Weird West of Deadlands® to a melee in the moors of Rippers™ or a firefight in the far-flung alien worlds of Slipstream!™

All the rules you need to play are right here. Troop lists, scenarios, and Unit Cards can be found in individual Showdown scenarios, available from our (Pinnacle Entertainment Group) online store, and rules for making your own units are found in Appendix B: Troop Builder.

Note for Veteran Savages: If it isn't in here, it doesn't exist when playing Showdown. Though this game is about 99% the same as Savage Worlds, there are a few differences. Don't go adding in three-round bursts and double-taps, for instance, because those aren't allowed in this version of the game. Those might be found as setting rules for a particular scenario, but aren't part of the standard rules.

# Savage Space - Characters



*Savage Space* is a fan product written and produced by Marcus "Chaosmeister" Burggraf of Chaotic-GM.com. We've decided to showcase an excerpt featuring Edges to give you a little taste of what he offers in his free product. Burggraf explains what prompted the project, "This PDF started out as a simple weapons and equipment list for a sci-f one-shot. During research for the game I got inspired to write more and had many new ideas. The one that really kicked it off was the 'Space ships as characters' idea. It stuck, and *Savage Space* grew around it to a fully featured space opera or sci-fi fan supplement for *Savage Worlds*."

If you have a *Savage Worlds Fan!* product you'd like featured, send us your pitch at aaron@mysticalthrone-ent.com.

## Background Edges

### Captain

**Requirements**: Novice, Knowledge (Administration) d6+

After a long time in an organization you are finally the captain of a starship. The ship does not belong to you but to your organization. The good thing is you have command of a spaceship and do not need to care about repairs, maintenance or fuel as the organization takes care of everything. The bad side is you automatically gain the Organization Dependent (Major) hindrance. This does not count against your hindrance limit.

### Freelancer

**Requirements**: Novice, Piloting d6+

You were always an independent kind of person. Strict organization was not for you and because of your restlessness you began to travel space at a young age. That was many years ago and now you own your own ship. This freedom comes at a price as you must take care of the ship and crew out of your own pocket. You also gain the Debt (Minor) hindrance without the bonus to starting cash. This does not count against your hindrance limit. You should read the Maintenance and Trade Credits sections.

### Neural Wiring

**Requirements**: Novice

This Edge represents the basic processor that has to be implanted to get any form of advanced cybertech installed, linked, and working. This is not available to everyone and cannot be simply bought as the methods required to implant the central processor are well-guarded secrets. After taking the Edge you gain a new secondary trait: Cyber Limit. This is equal to half your Spirit die and represents the limit of installable cyberware.

### Spaceborn

**Requirements**: Novice, Agility d6+

You were born in space and spent your childhood on spaceships. Firm ground under your feet was a rare occurrence. You are adapted to living in space and do not receive the -2 modifier to physical actions when in Zero-G as described in the rules chapter.

## Weird Edges

### Cyber Tolerance

**Requirements**: Novice, Spirit d6+

For some reason you are much more resilient to Cyberware than the average person. You gain 2 Cyber Limit.



A Generic Sci Fi Supplement For Savage Worlds

**Savage Space**
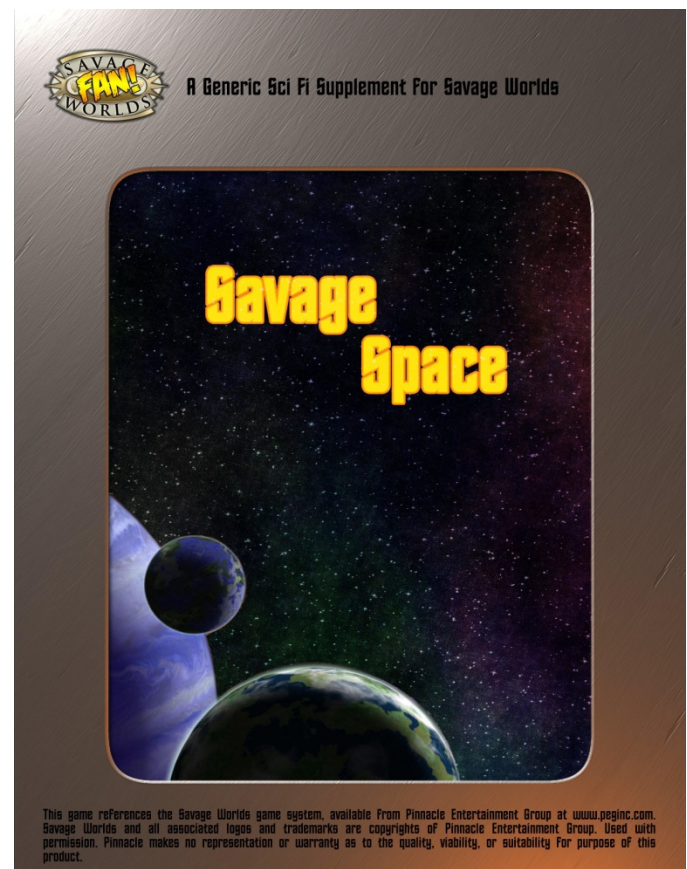
# Becoming an RPG Publisher: The Triple Ace Games Story

Many people turn their part-time passions into full-time careers. Amateur photographers hone their skills and go pro. Direct sales side-lines become "day" jobs. People who love to play games start getting paid to write them. And sometimes, they decide working for someone else isn't enough. What follows is the story of Triple Ace Games.

With well over 150 e-books and 20 print books released since the summer of 2008, Triple Ace Games is a flourishing role-playing games company based in the UK. This exciting, creative collective has grown from strength to strength, flying the British flag and carving a path through an American-dominated industry.

The plans for the new venture were discussed by many of the creative team, headed up by Robin Elliott and Paul "Wiggy" Wade-Williams, at UK Games Expo. The pair had previously been working with US-publisher Pinnacle Entertainment Group (PEG). Although they'd been involved in the creation of some great products, like *The Savage World of Solomon Kane*, *Rippers*, and *Slipstream*, the budding entrepreneurs wanted to focus on ideas beyond PEG's scope.

Taking a gamble, they set-up Triple Ace Games (TAG) with very little money and lots of ideas. Robin Elliott, Production Director at Triple Ace Games explains, "We took advantage of the blossoming online market and focused on making electronic products we could quickly release and without a huge financial investment. The gamble paid off, but I do remember how feverishly we worked in that first couple of years—it boiled down to a new product every week!"

Three years down the road the team is still working hard. TAG's Creative Director Paul Wade-Williams—or Wiggy as he prefers to be called, , describes the situation: "We like to keep moving forward – trying new ideas. Some are more successful than others, but the way we work allows us to test new ideas very easily—I guess it's all down to the internet. We can reach our fans so easily

and they let us know if we are doing something wrong."

Triple Ace Games cannot be described as slackers. Looking at their lively website, shows all the evidence of a prolific rate of releases. In such a short period, they have created many fantastic settings along with adventures and GM source material.

The majority of the products have been designed to use the *Savage Worlds* rules set from Pinnacle Entertainment. It's not surprising they opted to use this system, as it's a major part of their gaming background. Many of TAG's settings have been written by Wiggy including the futuristic horror of *Necropolis 2350*, the very popular 1930's pulp adventure series *Daring Tales of Adventure*, and *Hellfrost*, a lavishly detailed, Nordic-inspired fantasy world undergoing a magical ice age.

Alongside these core brands is Dave Blewer's *Sundered Skies*, a dark fantasy setting located in a world of floating islands, and Kevin Anderson's *Wonderland No More*, a dark twist on the famous *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carrol.

Much of the material is now seeing print after its initial outing as digital content, but there is still much to be discovered by the avid fan who is after more background and more adventure ideas in the form of downloads offered by Triple Ace Games.

In 2010, Triple Ace Games ventured away from the *Savage Worlds* system to bring out a brand new swashbuckling RPG, *All For One: Régime Diabolique*. The game uses the Ubiquity system developed by American publisher Exile Games Studio.

Wiggy describes *All For One* as, "In two words, swashbuckling horror. There's a lot of leeway in that genre mix, though. With a simple tweak of the game mechanics you can run something really dark and gritty with few supernatural elements, or camp it up to the level of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*."

Triple Ace Games released a second RPG using the Ubiquity rule set in August of this year. Entitled *Leagues of Adventure,* it is a rip-roaring setting of exploration and derring-do in the late Victorian Age!

Wiggy, the setting's author, comments: "*Leagues of Adventure* is not intended to be a historically accurate Victorian role-playing [setting]. It freely blends fact with fiction to create an exciting world. In this semi-fictitious world, Sherlock Holmes and Professor Lidenbrock are not works of fiction, but living, breathing members of society. Dastardly villains like Professor James Moriarty and Fu Manchu plague civilized societies. Beyond the realms of civilization lie places once thought mere fables."
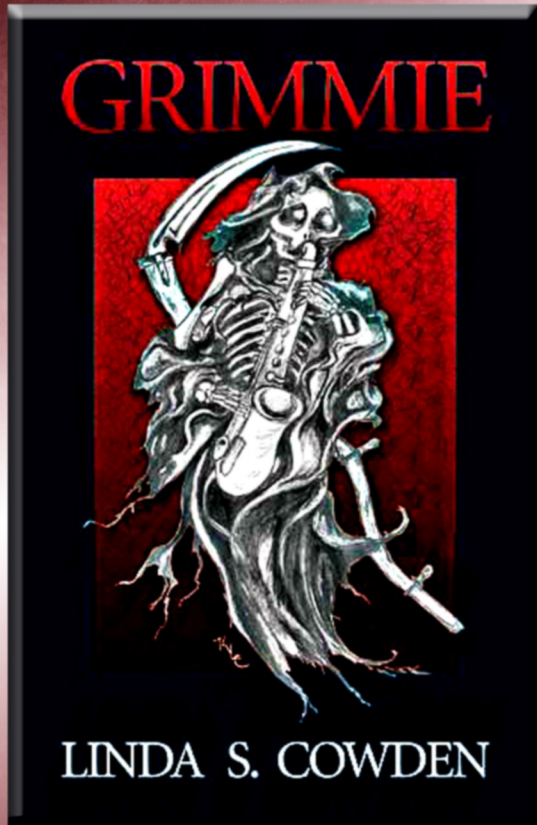
Triple Ace Games plans to continue writing for *Savage Worlds* rules and other RPG systems, and has ambitions to expand into card games and board games.

For more information about Triple Ace Games and their products, please visit their website:
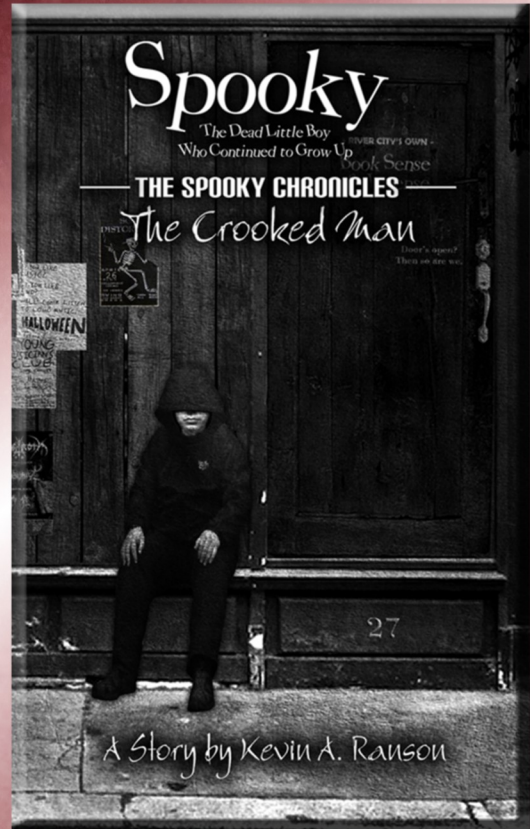
www.tripleacegames.com.

# DEADLANDS COMICS

PINNACLE ENTERTAINMENT, IMAGE COMICS, VISIONARY COMICS AND STRIDER-NOLAN ENTERTAINMENT BRING DEADLANDS TO COMICS... WITH A VENGEANCE! STARTING IN JUNE OF 2011, THE SERIES LAUNCHES WITH FOUR ONE-SHOTS BY TOP TALENT IN THE INDUSTRY. ENTER THE DEADLANDS... IF YOU DARE.

PINNACLE ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

image

VISIONARY COMICS

Strider Nolan MEDIA

The **Kid** in
## "HUNTED"
Story & Colors: C. Edward Sellner
Art: Alejandro Aragón
Letters: Jacob Bascle    Edits: Ron Marz

I *DID* IT, MARSHAL HASTINGS. I KILLED THAT MAN IN COLD BLOOD.

BELLE IS PRETTY INSISTENT THERE'S *MORE* TO IT THAN THAT, AND SHE'S CERTAINLY A FORCE TO RECKON WITH.

YOU JUST WAIT IN THERE, BILLY, UNTIL I *CAN* FIGURE THIS ALL OUT.

YOU GOTTA BE *KIDDING* ME.

LEAVE THE KID ALONE IF YOU WANT TO *EAT* TOMORROW.

HOW'D *YOU* KILL SOMEBODY, KID?

IF YOU WANT TO UNDERSTAND *THAT*, YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND HOW IT ALL BEGAN...

"My mother decided she was going to move me and my brother across country, to be with a man by the name of Henry Antrim."

"We'd stopped for the night, just like we'd done for two weeks."

BILLY! JOSEPH! YOU BOYS GO HELP GATHER WOOD. GO ON NOW.

JOSEPH, YOU KEEP AN EYE ON YOUR BROTHER.

DON'T I ALWAYS, MA?

I TELL YOU SURE AND TRUE, IT IS NOT WISE TO CAMP OUT IN THIS TERRITORY ON A NIGHT LIKE THIS.

THERE ARE MONSTERS IN THESE PARTS... MONSTERS.

DON'T WORRY, BILLY, THERE AIN'T NO SUCH THINGS AS MONSTERS.

AROOO AR-AR AROOOO

"That was when the Indians arrived."

WEREWOLVES? INDIANS?

I'M JUST GETTING STARTED...

TO BE CONTINUED

# War of the Dead



## Stats

**Publisher**: Daring Entertainment
**Author**: Lee F. Szczepanik, Jr.
**Artists**: Butch Mapa

I was fortunate enough to be approached by the publishers of *Savage Insider* to write a Developer's Diary concerning *War of the Dead*. It's a behind the scenes peak into what went into the creation and development of the product line, and how we go about putting it all together. A lot of what I do has become a kind of reflex — meaning I've done it enough times by this point that I just climb into the driver's seat of a new project and start steering. Sitting here and consciously thinking about the whole process should prove an interesting exercise.

I've always been fascinated with the zombie-apocalypse genre, dating back to being a kid watching George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* all summer long on my uncle's farm. Naturally, back then survivors were shooting and fighting the hordes of Living Dead that were assaulting the shopping mall. As I grew older, though, and started venturing into other post-apocalypse fiction (such as Jack Adrian's *Deathlands*), my interest shifted into the idea of how far a survivor

in such a setting would go to protect food, shelter, and loved ones. Could an otherwise non-violent individual change and adapt to become a fighter for the things that were necessary for survival, when those things became scarce?

So, when I designed the *War of the Dead* campaign, I decided that while it was important to provide the players with plenty of action (which is a core tenant of any role-playing adventure), I also wanted the campaign to focus on how far people would go to protect their own survival. Who could be trusted? How would the main characters know if someone could be trusted? Would trusting them prove to be an asset, or would it set them up for betrayal?

The other thing I wanted to do was go beyond the movies and most fiction. While the campaign would start in the first days of the apocalypse, it would also go beyond that and show the struggle for survival in a world completely consumed by the Living Dead. Again, I wanted the focus to be on the human aspect, as opposed to reducing the adventures to the characters scrounging for basic necessities. If a particular adventure called for them to be starving, near dehydration, or without weapons — fine. Otherwise, I felt such things should be left as off-camera considerations most of the time.

Of course, all of that could be labeled under "inspiration", but doesn't cover the technical aspects of what went into *War of the Dead*. After all, if the story were being written as a novel series, where the author controlled the actions of the main characters, it wouldn't have to bother with the unpredictable nature of a player group. Running a single, published adventure can sometimes be an exercise in frustration for a GM. How, then, could one be expected to handle a 52-part campaign?

For that, I had to employ some tricks from general fiction writing.

Any published adventure is a bit of a railroad, whether it is a fully mapped-out adventure, or something like a plot point campaign. It's a necessary evil, if a writer intends the adventure to tell an overall story, that a certain progression of events must take place. As already said, that

becomes even more of a concern in something the length of *War of the Dead*. A writer, never mind a GM, never knows what to expect from a player group. To help alleviate some of that, I employed a lot of NPCs within the campaign. Not only did they serve to show that the player characters were not the last people left on Earth, and help populate what is otherwise a dark storyline, but they also served as a tool for the GM. If a scene called for a specific event to take place to move the storyline along, the NPCs were there to make it happen if the PCs didn't. In that sense, just like secondary characters in any novel or television show, they were there to help as much as hinder the main characters. They were a tool for the GM to not only show a living world around the characters (despite the nature of the setting), but to also move the story along when it needed a nudge.

Now, a lot of ideas and concepts went into *War of the Dead*. I knew from the start that I wanted to pay homage to various books and films that had come before, as opposed to trying to reinvent the wheel with something new. To prepare, I watched all of the George Romero *Living Dead* films, plus both the Tom Savini and Zack Snyder remakes, repeatedly. I read *World War Z* several times, as well as the *Zombie Survival Guide*, and *The Walking Dead* comic book series. I also read something like 18 more

zombie novels and short story collections. I'd wanted to know what was out there, and figure out what I felt worked and failed as far as telling a good zombie apocalypse story.

I also delved into other types of films, such as *The Mist*, *Deep Rising*, *Resident Evil*, *Doomsday*, *I Am Legend*, *28 Days/Weeks Later*, and the 1970 series of *It's Alive* films. I won't even go into the number of Internet sites and forums I'd visited that were dedicated to the subject matter.

So, a metric ton of research went into the zombie apocalypse genre before I'd even started writing the campaign. Probably more than any one person should subject themselves to experiencing, but "thems the breaks" of the writing game.

I had the inspiration, answered a few technical questions that came up as to how best to keep the story moving, and all my research and notes done. Now came the time to start putting it all together.

There are a number of ways the adventures could be written. Scenes could be divided by location or key event, or they could be written as a single piece and then divided into sub-chapters. Given the nature of the source material, however, I decided to go with the same three-act structure of the typical play or screenplay. This way, not only was it easier to control each adventure's introduction, central action, and ending, but it would also give GMs a clear indication of the flow of each adventure.

First thing I would do is outline each adventure, noting key points of characterization for the NPCs and key action or plot scenes. Normally, I'd outline six or seven adventures at a time, so I knew ahead of time if I had to drop in a piece of information or a plot point along the way.

Next, I wrote each adventure. Usually I would try to write at least four of them before sending off to editing, but based on what was happening with family and the kids at the time, sometimes I would be forced to do it on a one for one basis.

As the scripts were being edited, I'd send the roughs off to Butch Mapa to read through. Butch's job is to create a visual piece to place within the adventure that represented something within the story. Butch would typically send back three layouts per adventure with his notes and preferences, and I would choose one. In almost every case, I would choose his preference, as I am not an artist and he is good at what he does. I trust his judgment.

After editing was done, and Butch sent the final version of the art piece, I'd send it off to Dave Jarvis over at Gun Metal Games for layout. From there, naturally, it goes live at RPGNow.com on the scheduled date.

Generally, it takes anywhere from 2-4 days for me to write an adventure (again, depending upon what else was going on at the time), roughly two days for editing, about four days per art piece, and Dave could lay it out in one day. So, each adventure takes on average around 7-11 days to put together.

All of that sounds easy, of course, and it usually is. Unfortunately, with something as long as *War of the Dead*, there inevitably comes a point in the story where I look at the original play test versions of adventures and feel, after all that time has passed, that it can be made stronger. That usually happens between chapters (it happened with Chapter 2, and again more recently with Chapter 4), as I prepare to put the next installment together. Fortunately, I've been lucky with *War of the Dead* in that the original play test groups are more than willing to put aside their normal gaming to test a new version of certain points in the story. This also makes the campaign very organic, always able to change based on my own continued growth as a writer, and player feedback from all you folks out there.

By this point, Chapter 3 is wrapping up its release, and Chapter 4 is getting some new play testing done. *War of the Dead* is the first stage in a two-tier product line, with this tier showing the outbreak and the aftermath, and the second tier picking up several years later. By the end of Chapter 3, the players have several unanswered questions and mysteries.

How deep was the relationship between the Federal Government and UniMed? How far did the genetic experiments really go? What is Project: Geppetto? How far back does the Armageddon Virus date? What's really going on at Area 51?

While some of those questions will be clearly answered in Chapter 4, some will only receive cursory revelations as a few more questions arise, leading into the *World of the Dead* campaign setting.

By the end of *War of the Dead*, characters will have survived the early months of the zombie apocalypse, discovered a larger picture that brings into question a lot of the beliefs they once took for granted, and been introduced to a host of monsters and enemies.

As far as the players, they will also be introduced to two new types of characters that they can assume in *World of the Dead*, one of which is a unique form of Living Dead. Yes, players will be able to assume the role of a unique form of Living Dead. The world, most definitely, will never be the same again.

# Savage Mojo – Quantum Sliders

In answer to questions around the web about what's coming up for Savage Worlds, Savage Mojo's Miles M. Kantir responded to Savages' questions about an upcoming product they'd heard of, *Quantum Sliders*. A release date for the first *Quantum Slider* has not yet been announced.

*Quantum Sliders* is a new way to enjoy high-rank content in Savage Worlds. It's a series of adventures for Heroic and Demigod characters, each designed to give at least one full session of play. They all take place in a part of the Suzerain universe that struck us as being the most Fast! Furious! Fun! we could imagine – some in alternate realities, others in immortal god realms, and then those set in historical periods. Your characters could have come from any Savage Worlds' campaign that got them to the start of Heroic rank. After

that, they can be in a sci-fi shoot-out one session, a fantasy fireball fest the next, and later slogging through Yog-Sothoth's intestinal tract (we haven't written that one - but we *might*!).

The aim of these adventures is to offer a broad range of genres and play styles, often with quirky humor, but also with poignant moments and plenty of action. You can drop one of these into your regular game as a distraction, a change of pace, a kick-off point to a new campaign, or as a 'non-campaign' in its own right. String together a series of *Quantum Sliders* and watch as your characters go through time and space, racking up the experience, Advances, and cool new Edges as they get into Suzerain's Demigod rank. And if they're lucky, they'll become gods themselves.

*Quantum Sliders* are designed to be your flexible friend, with a bazillion uses, all of them fun.

# Convention Calendar October – January

Welcome to Convention Connection! In order to ensure that readers have a chance to plan their convention trips, each quarter's issue will show conventions occurring in each of the three months of that quarter, plus the first month in the next quarter. It wouldn't do much good for you to get January's issue and only then find out that you have 10 days or so to get to a convention in January. That does mean there will be some overlap, but we felt the benefit was worth some small duplication.

**Covering October, November, December, and January At-A-Glance**

| Convention | Website | Dates | Location |
|---|---|---|---|
| Berliner Spieletage | www.uniplay.de/spieletage | 10/1-3/11 | Germany |
| Just A Game Con | http://home.centurytel.net/GOMC/JAGC.htm | 10/1-2/11 | OR |
| Council of Five Nations* | www.swa-gaming.org/council | 10/7-9/11 | NY |
| Realms Con | http://realmscon.com/joomla/ | 10/7-9/11 | TX |
| Furnace | http://rpgfurnace.com/ | 10/8-9/11 | UK |
| GirlGeekCon | www.geekgirlcon.com | 10/8-9/11 | WA |
| Con on the Cob* | www.cononthecob.com | 10/13-16/11 | OH |
| New York Comic Con | www.newyorkcomiccon.com | 10/13-16/11 | NY |
| Birghamton Game Days | www.bhamgamedays.com | 10/14-16/11 | AL |
| Icon | www.iconfestival.org.il/2011 | 10/16-18/11 | Israel |
| Albacon | www.albacon.org | 10/21-23/11 | NY |
| FlatCon | www.flatcon.com/default.shtml | 10/21-23/11 | IL |
| Necronomicon | www.stonehill.org/necmain.htm | 10/21-23/11 | FL |
| RoundCon | www.roundcon.com | 10/21-23/11 | SC |
| GaelCon | www.gaelcon.com/gaelcon | 10/28-31/11 | Ireland |
| AmberConNW | www.amberconnw.org | 11/3-6/11 | OR |
| IndieCon | www.indiecon.net | 11/3-6/11 | UK |
| NeonCon | www.neoncon.com | 11/3-6/11 | NV |
| Youmacon | www.youmacon.com | 11/3-6/11 | MI |
| Carnage | www.carnagecon.com | 11/4-6/11 | VT |
| HammerCon | www.hammercon.ca | 11/4-5/11 | Canada |
| NanoCon | www.nanocon.us | 11/4-6/11 | SD |
| PentaCon | www.pentacongames.com | 11/4-6/11 | IN |
| Rock-Con | www.rock-con.com | 11/4-6/11 | IL |
| ShaunCon | www.rpgkc.org/Con | 11/10-13/11 | MO |
| JimCon | http://jimcon.ca | 11/11-13/11 | Canada |
| MACE | www.justusproductions.com/index.php/justus/mace/2/2/2 | 11/11-13/11 | NC |
| MEPACON Fall | www.mepacon.com | 11/11-13/11 | PA |
| U-Con | www.ucon-gaming.org | 11/11-13/11 | MI |
| WindyCon | www.windycon.org | 11/11-13/11 | IL |
| ConFlagration | www.catfink.ismyforum.co.uk/conflag | 11/12-13/11 | UK |
| ERPGA | www.rpgararaquara.blogspot.com | 11/12-13/11 | Brazil |
| Hal-Con | http://hal-con.com | 11/12-13/11 | Canada |
| Extraordinary Consequences | www.ishtari.co.uk/consequences | 11/17-20/11 | UK |
| Daisho Con | www.daishocon.com | 11/18-20/11 | WI |
| Philcon | http://2011.philcon.org | 11/18-20/11 | NJ |
| Pure Speculation | www.purespec.org | 11/18-20/11 | Canada |
| JaxCon | www.jaxcon.org | 11/19/2011 | NC |
| ChambanaCon | www.chambanacon.org | 11/25-27/11 | IL |

| Convention | Website | Dates | Location |
|---|---|---|---|
| Wolfcon | www.wolfcon.org | 11/25-27/11 | IL |
| AnonyCon | http://anonycon.com/ | 12/2-4/11 | CT |
| WinterCon | http://metrodetroitgamers.wordpress.com/gaming-conventions/wintercon | 12/2-3/11 | MI |
| Raiders of the Game Cupboard | www.raidersofthegamecupboard.co.uk | 12/29/11 | UK |
| IkkiCon | www.ikkicon.com | 12/30/11-1/1/12 | TX |
| Anime Los Angeles | www.animelosangeles.org/wp | 1/6-8/12 | CA |
| Arisia | http://2012.arisia.org | 1/13-16/12 | MA |
| SCARAB* | www.s-c-a-r-a-b.com | 1/13-16/12 | SC |
| Conception | www.conceptionuk.org | 1/25-29/12 | UK |
| ChattaCon | www.chattacon.org | 1/20-22/12 | TN |
| Confusion | http://confusion.stilyagi.org/ | 1/20-22/12 | MI |

*Known to have Savage Worlds games or personalities.*

Although we did our best to compile an extensive list, this list is not exhaustive. All dates and websites were accurate as of this printing. If you know of conventions occurring between October and January that are not listed here, please let us know. We will add them to our list.

A special thanks to the many people and companies who pitched in with their own lists (directly and indirectly) including Sean McConkey, Silver Gryphon Games, Dave McAlister, Ian Hayward, Scott Alan Woodard, Dave Mattingly, Pinnacle Entertainment Group, DriveThruRPG, Steve Jackson Games, and *RPG Examiner*. Through direct responses and lists on various websites, we got a lot of good information.

**Savage Presence at Gen Con**

There were several *Savage Worlds* publishers and games at Gen Con. *Savage Worlds Deluxe* was, as expected, well-received. Savage Saturday Night was packed full and presented participants with some nifty badge ribbons and coupons for *Savage Worlds* products. Savages also took some ENnies. Congratulations to Pinnacle Entertainment Group who was awarded the Best Supplement Silver ENnie for *Space 1889: Red Sands* and to Savage Mojo who was awarded the Best Electronic Book Silver ENnie for *Shanghai Vampocalypse*.

**Pictured below**: Clint Black of Pinnacle Entertainment Group running a game of *Space 1889: Red Sands* at Savage Saturday Night. *©Roleplayers Chronicle 2011*

Here's a comprehensive look at Savage Worlds products that have been released during the previous three months.

| Title | Publisher | Setting | Type | Format |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Player's Guide | GRAmel | Beasts & Barbarians | Core Rules | PDF |
| Last Gambit of the Mind Masters | RPG Objects | Darwin's World | Supplement | PDF |
| Player's Guide (Explorer's Edition) | Pinnacle Entertainment Group | Deadlands | Core Rules | PDF, Print |
| Region Guide #43: Angarion | Triple Ace Games | Hellfrost | Supplement | PDF |
| Region Guide #44: The Borderlands | Triple Ace Games | Hellfrost | Supplement | PDF |
| Region Guide #45: The Abyss | Triple Ace Games | Hellfrost | Supplement | PDF |
| Region Guide #46: Godsheim | Triple Ace Games | Hellfrost | Supplement | PDF |
| Zeeks Expanded | Gun Metal Games | Interface Zero | Supplement | PDF |
| Guidebook #5: Tetsu Sangaku | Reality Blurs | Iron Dynasty | Supplement | PDF |
| Guidebook #6: Hinote Shima | Reality Blurs | Iron Dynasty | Supplement | PDF |
| Guidebook #7: Ato | Reality Blurs | Iron Dynasty | Supplement | PDF |
| Kesshi Tales #5: A Polite Inquiry | Reality Blurs | Iron Dynasty | Adventure | PDF |
| Kesshi Tales #6: Fire & Ice | Reality Blurs | Iron Dynasty | Adventure | PDF |
| Seal the Rift! | White Haired Man | Kith'takharos | Adventure | PDF |
| Mercenary Breed | Mystical Throne Entertainment | Mercenary Breed | Core Rules | PDF |
| Light & Dark | Reality Blurs | Old School Fantasy | Adventure | PDF |
| Rot & Ruin | Reality Blurs | Old School Fantasy | Adventure | PDF |
| Mythos Tales #2: Unstill Waters | Reality Blurs | Realms of Cthulhu | Adventure | PDF |
| Guidebook #3: WormWood | Reality Blurs | RunePunk | Supplement | PDF |
| Guidebook #4: The Gearlost Vale | Reality Blurs | RunePunk | Supplement | PDF |
| Guidebook #5: ChalkChain | Reality Blurs | RunePunk | Supplement | PDF |
| Jobbers Tales #3: The Secret of Trees | Reality Blurs | RunePunk | Adventure | PDF |
| Jobbers Tales #4: Acts of Contrition | Reality Blurs | RunePunk | Adventure | PDF |
| Caladon Falls | Savage Mojo | Savage Suzerain | Core Rules | Print |
| Player's Guide | Gun Metal Games | Totems of the Dead | Core Rules | PDF |
| Totems of the Dead | Gun Metal Games | Totems of the Dead | Core Rules | PDF, Print |
| Chapter Three (W10) | Daring Entertainment | War of the Dead | Campaign | PDF |
| Chapter Three (W11) | Daring Entertainment | War of the Dead | Campaign | PDF |
| Chapter Three (W12) | Daring Entertainment | War of the Dead | Campaign | PDF |
| Chapter Three (W13) | Daring Entertainment | War of the Dead | Campaign | PDF |
| Chapter Three (W4) | Daring Entertainment | War of the Dead | Campaign | PDF |
| Chapter Three (W5) | Daring Entertainment | War of the Dead | Campaign | PDF |
| Chapter Three (W6) | Daring Entertainment | War of the Dead | Campaign | PDF |
| Chapter Three (W7) | Daring Entertainment | War of the Dead | Campaign | PDF |
| Chapter Three (W8) | Daring Entertainment | War of the Dead | Campaign | PDF |
| Chapter Three (W9) | Daring Entertainment | War of the Dead | Campaign | PDF |
| Encounter Deck | Silver Gryphon Games | Wellstone City | Playing Cards | PDF |
| Schroedinger's Box | Silver Gryphon Games | Wellstone City | Supplement | PDF |

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SAVAGE WORLDS
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*Savage Insider Issue 2: How the Dice Roll* is all about what the community does with their gaming. The pillar article, *Savage Worlds as an Educational Tool*, takes a look how to turn role-playing games into a tool for homeschooling.

*How the Dice Roll* is a cross-genre issue with content covering fantasy, sci-fi, and horror along with supporting general interest articles.

Issue 2 includes the following:
- 3 fleshed out adversaries
- 9 new weapons
- A *Savage Insider* exclusive add-on for *Beasts & Barbarians*
- Part 2 of the *Crypt of the Crystal Lich* fiction series
- The first in the *Echoes of Rome* fiction series
- Part 2 of the *Deadlands* comics series *The Kid*
- A sci-fi adventure
- And much more!

Don't forget to pick-up *Issue 1: Building the Savage Worlds Community* featuring a round-robin Q&A with the *Savage Worlds* licensees, new game content, and the first parts of *The Kid* and *Crypt of the Crystal Lich*.