

BEST OF

FENIX



VOLUME 3

A TRIP THROUGH TIME AND SPACE

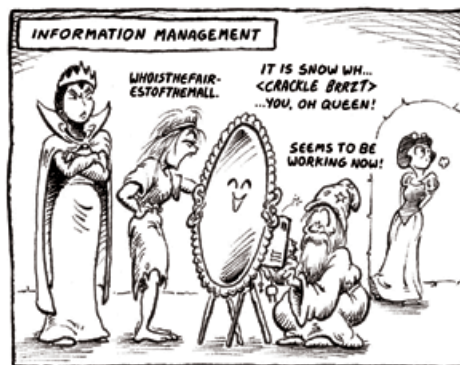
You have entered the third volume of *Best of Fenix*, and the last in the first batch we release of the series. In these volumes we aim to provide some of the very best material from the Swedish gaming magazine *Fenix*, this time all in English and hard covers. The original publication date varies, for instance you will find the article *Roma Umbrarum – Rome of Shadows* in this volume. It was written for the second issue of *Fenix* ever, back in February 2004, by the Godfather of Swedish roleplaying Anders Blixt. He was involved in most of the early Swedish gaming material back in the eighties, and has provided new interesting and inspiring material ever since then. The newest material we feature here is from May 2014, and consists of *Uchronias* by David Bergkvist and *Alternate History* by Pete Nash.

Bernard the Barbarian has been a part of *Fenix* from the beginning. This beer-loving, cunning and lazy barbarian has ravaged the pages of every *Fenix*, looking for loot, ladies and lager. The creator behind Bernard is Åke Rosenius, the best gaming nerd cartoonist we know of. In this issue you will find some of his other comics previously printed in *Fenix* (the comment on *Equality* on page 98 is a personal favourite). We are just as proud to present Evelina Rosenius as co-creator to some of her father's comic strips about the plump barbarian. She has provided sketches and ideas for new Bernard strips for quite a while, and makes regular occurrences in *Fenix* every other issue for the last couple of years. So why do we find this noteworthy? She started when she was four years old! On page 9 you can read a whole page of comics based on her ideas.

Welcome to an issue with angels and demons, steampunk and space travel, alternate history and stand alone games. *Leviathan* and *Ichneumon* are two of our most appreciated role-playing games over the years, and Christoffer Krämer's *Sodom & Gomorrah* is possibly the most played board game we ever featured in *Fenix*. *Automatic Intelligence* by Johan Englund and Johan Samuelsson quickly became the steampunk favourite so far among our readers.



A comic by Åke Rosenius, the man behind *Bernard the Barbarian*.



BEST OF FENIX WAS MADE POSSIBLE THANKS TO OUR CROWDFUNDERS

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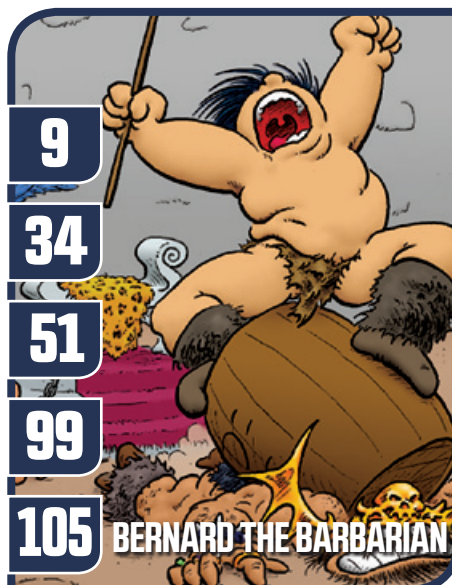
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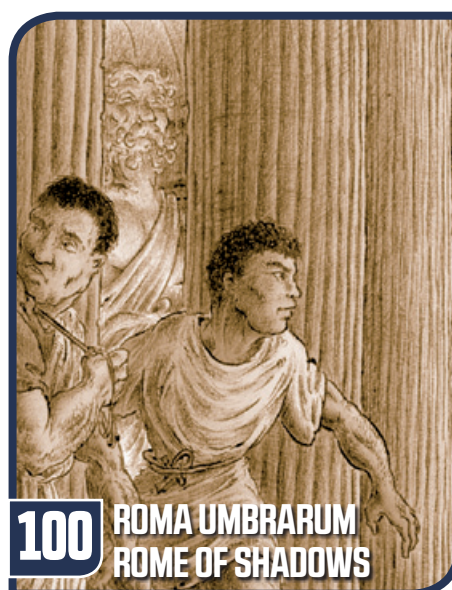
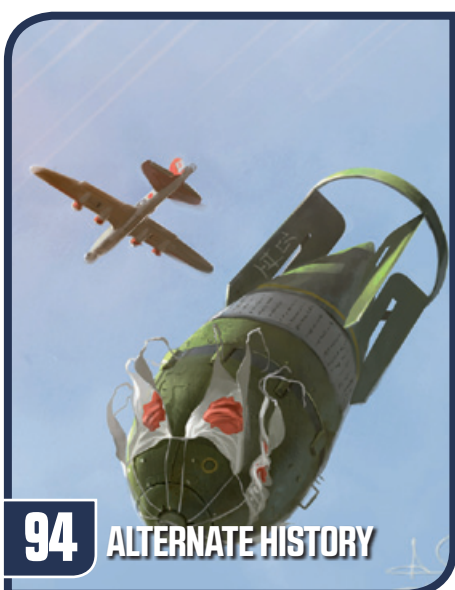
We provide new and unique artwork for various articles in every issue of *Fenix*. When you get a great artist to enhance the written text and draw inspiration from the words as they are presented it provides that extra quality that makes $1 + 1 = 3$. The result enhance each part beyond what it was. But it takes effort to get there, from talented artists such as Lukas Thelin, Åke Rosenius, Ola Larsson, Magnus Fallgren and Reine Rosenberg.

This image was developed to accompany Kenneth Hite's parasite steampunk rpg *Ichneumon*. It was chosen as the Best Cover of *Fenix* in 2013.

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BEST OF FENIX





ANGELS

AND MINISTERS OF SPACE

TEXT **KENNETH HITE**
ILLUSTRATION **LUKAS THELIN**

"Where were you when I laid
the foundations of the world?
Tell me, if you understand.
Who marked off its dimensions?
Surely you know!
Who stretched a measuring line across it?
On what were its footings set,
or who laid its cornerstone –
While the morning stars sang together
and all the angels shouted for joy?"
– Job 38:4-7

Isaac Newton spent as much time poring over the details of Scripture as he did studying gravitation, optics, or higher math. He owned more books on theology (including works on the Kabbalah) than on any other subject – almost a third of his library. Since his personal beliefs were Arian (a heresy which denies the Trinity), he never published the dozens of manuscripts he produced on topics including prophecy, sacred geometry, alchemy, Biblical chronology, and gematria (the numerical values and interpretation of Hebrew and Greek words). A fire in his laboratory in 1693 destroyed 20 years of research; more of his works vanished after his death, often suppressed both by horrified orthodox Christians and shocked secular scientists. For his entire lifetime, Newton searched tirelessly for a unified field theory joining the sacred world of the Bible with the material world of telescopes, prisms, and falling apples. But the smartest man in history couldn't do it.

Not in our history, anyway.

In another 1666, Newton's breakthrough intuition of the calculus came alongside another breakthrough intuition: that the mathematical language of the universe's operation was also the language of the universe's

Operator. Although humans could not hope to perceive the vastness of God's utterances, applying calculus could allow ever-closer approximations to the Words of Power. At certain tolerances, humans could inscribe and speak Words that angels would be bound to obey. The easiest angels to bind are the Host, the Zebaim who inhabit the Earth. (Stickler though he was, Newton was not about to point out that the zebaim fit the ancient Greek description of *daimones* even better: intelligent servitor spirits, in their most common apparitions horned like gazelles.) Depending on which aspect of the angel one binds, a zebah can think with the speed of lightning, or carry ships above the clouds, or drill tunnels, or find minerals, or hurl grapeshot faster than the sound of its passage can travel. They cannot change or influence human minds, and they cannot leave the Earth. Desirous to behold as much of Divine Creation as he could, Newton devised a ritual to bind the angelic Galgallim and visited the Moon in a wooden sphere in 1671. For the next five years, he worked ceaselessly with telescopes made from moon-silver, deriving values and true names for the fixed stars. In 1677, Newton summoned one of the Arelim and journeyed to its star Sirius in an orichalcum shell, accompanied by the young astronomer Edmond Halley. A Sirian Ambassador returned with Newton's party to Earth, and the Ultrastellar Age began.

This Enlightenment science-fantasy ("En-light-fi?") campaign setting probably works best, and certainly works fastest, with a rules set featuring improvised magic: *Ars Magica* or *Mage*, say; or with a rules set featuring improvised (angelic) gadgets and powers: *Fate* or (if you're already good at it) *Hero*. (The ideal system is probably something like *Stormbringer*, with its summoned demons bound into items, but it's not in print any more and you'd have to improvise a lot of the specifics.) The specifics of Newtonian cabala don't matter too much in the fine print; just find a good list of angel names online (or

get a copy of my source, Gustav Davidson's impressive *Dictionary of Angels, Including the Fallen Angels*) and riff on that. The key limitations are these: the would-be theurgist needs to know a lot of very hard math, speak and read Hebrew, and spend a long-ish period deriving and researching the specific calculation, angel, and inscription needed to produce an effect, and a shorter but still hours-long period summoning and binding the angel. Once bound, an angel can be used by anyone who can speak a command word, even if they don't understand it. Destroying the inscription returns the angel to one of the heavens, unless it feels like sticking around and smiting evildoers. Of which there are plenty left to smite, the plenitude of angels notwithstanding.

THE KINGDOMS OF THE EARTH

In the fifty years since Newton first applied calculus to cabala, the balance of power in Europe has shifted decisively to the north. Even leaving Newton's genius aside, the Royal Society developed scores of evocation-inscriptions (usually called cabalae) and perhaps more importantly invented ways to utilize the angels' abilities for the good of the British kingdoms. Angels pump water for canals, improve crops, and raise up not just gold or silver but coal and iron. Under the young King William IV, the Stuart dynasty continues to reign at home in tolerant Protestant fashion, while his flying frigates carry English goods across the world – and with galgallim conveyance, across the Solar system as well! England's colonies in America remain loyal, and its factories in India remain profitable.

Only the Dutch sail more places on Earth and in the lower heavens: Dutch forts and entrepôts dot Brazil and the Caribbean, the shores of Africa and the Indies, Nagasaki in Japan and Amoy in China. The Dutch carry Arabian coffee to Alpha Centauri, and fetch back phoenix feathers from under the guns ►





"And as the Planets remain in their orbs, so may any other bodies subsist at any distance from the Earth, & much more may beings who have a sufficient power of self motion, move whether they will place themselves where they will, & continue in any regions of the heavens whatever, there to enjoy the society of one another & by their own senses or Angels to rule the Earth & convers with the remotest regions. Thus may the whole heavens or any part thereof whatever be the habitation of the Blessed & at the same time the Earth be subject to their dominion."

— Isaac Newton, unpublished treatise on the Book of Revelation

of the arimaspii of Algol. Although their own great astrogoetor Christian Huygens died in 1695, his successors (led by Johann Bernoulli) continue to chart the Names and Values of the stars. The Dutch also reaped the benefit of their tolerant policy toward the Jews: with mathematics, Hebrew, and angelology strategic resources, Amsterdam's large Jewish population let it wage a series of theurgical wars at sea and in space that finally forced the English to a rough draw in 1688. Finally allied with Britain and Sirius against Louis XIV's mad plan to conquer Europe, the Dutch were in at the kill when France and Spain went down, smashed by aerial bombardment and invaded by troops of Rasalgethi mercenaries and Spican freebooters.

Two other northern powers seek to fill the vacuum. Charles XII of Sweden continues his wars against a Russia and Poland distracted by the rise of the Jewish Free State. The 700,000 suddenly very powerful Jews in those nations decided that they didn't need pogroms or ghettos anymore; under David ben Gideon, they have conquered most of the western Ukraine, Volhynia, and Galicia. Russian anti-Semitism makes it nearly impossible for Tsar Peter to resist either the Jews or the Swedes, and he continues to fall back north and east. Charles has made the Baltic a Swedish lake, and guided by his court mathematician Johan Kemper (a converted Jew) he plants colonies on Mars and in Cochin-China. In Hanover, the ruling Brunswick dynasty had welcomed Jewish refugees from the Hapsburgs even before Newton (most recently the great rabbi and kabbalist Jonathan Eybeschütz), and they have Newton's only equal as a mathematician, Gottfried Leibniz. The Elector George I has a robust cabalistic advantage over Prussia and Saxony, his main rivals for the dominance of Germany.

Or rather, for the dominance of northern Germany: southern Germany, like everywhere else in Europe south of the Danube, is a Turkish province. The Turkish invasion of Austria in 1683 came bristling with angelic weaponry, flying galleys carving through the skies over the Alps. The Ottomans, like the Dutch, more than tolerated their Jews. The

Sultan's vizier Koprulu Fazil Pasha turned the Jewish kabbalistic school at Safed in Galilee into an theurgical think tank, farming weapons design out to insane Hungarian mathematicians and mystical Sabbataians in Smyrna. Jewish schools in Thessalonica and Constantinople summoned whole hosts of zebaim to carry cannon and fodder. The Turks took Vienna and Venice; Prague burned to the ground in a mysterious azothic explosion in 1684 (blamed variously on the Jesuits, the Turks, and a rabbinic misprint in the ghetto); Bavaria and Naples fell in 1686. The Turks took Rome (which in the previous generation had expelled its Jews and banned Galileo's writing) in 1688, and the Pope fled to Avignon and the protection of a Spican admiral who has declared himself Prince of Occitania. Currently, the armies of Sultan Ahmed III are busy to the north invading Russia and the east invading Persia, but the shattered ruins of France and Spain must eventually tempt him back to the West.

With the fall of Rome and without the Pope's protection, the Jesuits went underground all over Europe. They still openly rule Paraguay, and are welcome at academic conclaves from Cambridge to Celaeno. Their scholars, some of the finest in the world, have turned their own attention to astrogoetia, to cabala, and to the calculus. They have mastered the Newtonian arts, and seek to understand more. Joachim Bouvet sifts through Chinese star records in Peking even as the raids of Dutch, Siamese, and Altairian sky-pirates looted provincial treasure-houses for gems and clocks. Bartolomeo de Gusmao designs superior sky-ships and galgal-chariots in Brazil, where Valentin Stansel computes the orbits of comets and the force needed to shift them. In a monastery on Titan, Giovanni Girolamo Sacchieri plumbs the depths of non-Euclidean mathematics, looking for a new geometry of talismans to vastly increase their power. Nobody quite knows what they plan to accomplish, or what they already have accomplished. Perhaps it is nothing less than the invocation of the Kingdom of Heaven on the Earth, or the construction of a New Jerusalem in orbit.

THE ORBS OF THE SEVEN

Each of the planets has its own governing angel, and can be reached by a galgal bearing the correct inscription. The emerald talisman bearing that cabale allows the wearer to walk, breathe, and otherwise survive on the planet, protected by its angel. Most of the planets would kill an unprotected human outright, from cold and poisonous air. Human settlements on these worlds comprise tents, huts, and shelters for supplies and equipment, with a few permanent structures in the larger colonies. Although Britain, Sweden, and Holland plant colonies, they cannot govern entire worlds. Wildcatters from all over the world – all over the galaxy – visit the various planets, mostly to prospect for minerals or take astrogoetic measurements. On only Mars and the Moon are a few Names known for phaeltrighim and yerahim, the local equivalents of zebaim: elsewhere, humans must bring their servitor tools from Earth, and cannot always rely on them.

The Sun (governed by Raphael) is a planet only in a ritual sense. No attempt to approach the Sun has succeeded; the angelic talisman and its passenger vaporize in the Solar fire. If the Sun is inhabited, it must be by beings no little less than angels themselves; the Turks believe a race of djinn dwells there inside the sunspots.

Mercury (governed by Tiriël) is a boiling, freezing desert constantly shifting and changing. Its rivers of azoth, the philosophical mercury, provide lush oases for those who can command the alchemical arts such as the exiled Chinese prince Yu Tong. Most siphoniers are indentured prisoners dwelling in spherical barracks, filling moonsilver or jupewter tanks with azoth for shipment back to Earth. Azoth is used not only in refineries, alchemical manufactories, and steelworks, but also as a high explosive and a medicine. Mercurians are flighty, vaporous beings that seldom remain in one thought or place long enough to communicate.

Venus (governed by Anael) is a world of sulfurous clouds, volcanoes, and boiling carbonated oceans. The animalistic, affectionate, wormlike Venereans dwell in caverns, the only cool, safe place on their hellish world. From those caverns, German and Irish laborers drive shafts to mine cuprovène, a superior copper. Cuprovène heliographs can flash messages across interplanetary space; images or words etched into cuprovène become more compelling and beautiful. When alloyed with diostannum, the tin of Jupiter, cuprovène becomes orichalcum, the material needed to construct star-going craft.

The Moon (governed by Ofaniel) is a cold world of sharp mountains and frozen quicksand

THREE CITIZENS OF THE GALAXY



Nicholas Fatio de Duillier (born 1664) is a Swiss-born mathematician and astronomer who has worked with Cassini, Huygens, Bernoulli, and (intensely from 1691 to 1693) Isaac Newton. Beginning in 1700, Nicholas Fatio de Duillier developed a method of using jewels as wheel bearings in gears, allowing far more controlled use of angelic power in a mechanism. His laboratories are located in Geneva and London. He is very susceptible to religious mania, and will fly off at a moment's notice to Java to measure temple carvings or to Deneb to interview a heretical cosmographer before his execution.



Cotton Mather (born 1663) is a Boston minister, theologian, and natural philosopher. He has assembled a record of magical anomalies throughout New-England, he experiments with growing cold-planet crops in Massachusetts, and is a robust supporter of inoculation. He is one of the foremost proponents of the anti-Newtonian theory that fallen angels are also present in the world, working in disguise through theurgic technology or concealing themselves as extraterrestrials. He agitates for greater moral controls on the creation of cabalae, trusting only those created by Jewish rabbis or by Calvinist divines of his personal acquaintance.



Maria Sibylla Merian (born 1647) is a German botanist and artist who has spent years in Surinam, Al-Rakis, and the Martian lowlands cataloging and illustrating plants and animals from all over the cosmos. She returns to Amsterdam every few years to drop off her sketchbooks and samples at the Sommelsdijk House, which has become Earth's premier botanical archive. Her health remains robust, and she has not visibly aged since 1700, when she recovered from a malaria attack using a fungus from Regulus. The volume of her journal depicting that fungus was stolen from Amsterdam in 1712.

"And placing their Æons with Angels under them in the orbs of the seven Planets & fixt stars made an Ogdoas of principal Æons or intelligences with Angels under them according to the number of the Orbs & said that they governed the world tyrannically & kept the souls of men below & made them pass into various bodies."

— Isaac Newton, unpublished notes on the history of the Church

seas. The Lunarians are humans, descended from the tribe of Enoch and cut off by the Flood in ancient times. They are tall and delicate; they have a roughly Bronze Age technology, and worship God. They allow their angels, the yerahim, to rule them; their tattooed cabalae allow them to breathe. They mine moonsilver for the Turks, who mint their new kuruş coin from it and who claim the Moon as their own. (Pirates like Henry Every and Olivier Levasseur beg to disagree, and attack Turkish galgal-spheres during eclipses.) Moonsilver also makes superb optics, inoculation needles, and other fine technics. There is a Hanoverian colony on the Moon's dark side, and a Rigellian plantation in the Mare Fecunditatis.

Mars (governed by Zamael) is an arid world cut by near-dead rivers carrying water from the polar caps to the remaining grassland sea beds. At flood time, they throw clouds of explosively evaporating vapor into the Martian sky, producing a short, intense global rain that keeps the world barely alive. The lowland Martians (Syrtii) resemble seals, and can swim in sand or water. The highland and canyon Martians (Tharsii) are tall, thin, feathered bipeds; they have angelic knowledge and refine deposits of mars-iron. This metal is strong and light, holds a blade or edge forever, and can contain azothic fire reactions. It also doesn't disrupt magic like too much earthly iron can. Tharsii trade their iron for Earthly (and extrasolar) foodstuffs and manufactures, especially weapons.

Jupiter (governed by Yahriel) is a massive globe covered by a poisonous, eternal stormcloud. The Jovians float in the upper clouds and resemble large jellyfish, inflated like bladders and trailing eyes and nostrils on thin tendrils and tentacles. Most humans in the system work or study on the four great moons of Jupiter: the Jesuits maintain a school of celestial mechanics on Callisto, and the main Dutch naval base in the outer system is on the ice-choked waters of Europa. The tin of Jupiter, diostannum, comes primarily from Io, but can be found throughout the system. In addition to orichalcum, diostannum (lightly alloyed into jupepewter) makes superior pipes for organs, tankards that promote good cheer, and deadly clockwork toy soldiers. The best and purest floats on the surface of Jupiter's ocean, impossibly far down at the bottom of the atmosphere. Dutch Admiral Philips van Almonde retrieved 100 pounds of that "oceanic diostannum" in an expedition in 1692 at the cost of his own life. Tin soldiers made from that metal can fight and deploy on their own; they still stiffen the guard of Holland's borders against the Sirians or roaming bands of French soldiery.

"Why then shall not we make use of the same Judgment that we would in that case; and conclude, that our Star has no better attendance than the others? So that what we allow'd the Planets, upon the account of our enjoying it, we must likewise grant to all those Planets that surround that prodigious number of Suns. They must have their Plants and Animals, nay and their rational ones too, and those as great Admirers, and as diligent Observers of the Heavens as our selves; and must consequently enjoy whatsoever is subservient to, and requisit for such Knowledge. What a wonderful and amazing Scheme have we here of the magnificent Vastness of the Universe! So many Suns, so many Earths, and every one of them stock'd with so many Herbs, Trees and Animals, and adorn'd with so many Seas and Mountains! And how must our wonder and admiration be encreased when we consider the prodigious distance and multitude of the Stars?"

— Christian Huygens, *Cosmotheoros*

Saturn (governed by Kaphsiel) is like Jupiter, covered in thick, poisonous vapors from the freezing, toxic swamp at its core. Its rings are composed mostly of ice and chunks of Saturnian lead, a substance so deadly that only criminals condemned to death work it. Bullets cast from it kill instantly, but leave the battlefield a desert. Conscientious users of Saturnian lead bullets call on a zebah to gather up the spent rounds and dispose of them. The Saturnians, a black-furred, toad-like race of cannibals, live on the moon Rhea; they practice dark sorceries and devour crashed travellers. When Newton visited Jupiter in 1675, he discovered at least two (and possibly as many as four) Outer Planets beyond Saturn's orbit. They are inhabited, and perhaps even governed by, hellish Titan beings. Newton rejected the notion of fallen angels, but later astrogoetors have not been so skeptical. Whatever lurks out there, no angel will take a human past the orbit of Saturn to discover.

THE MULTITUDE OF THE STARS

Astrogoetic research has determined that different types and colors of stars are ruled by different orders of angels. Each order of angel has a corresponding gemstone, from which its talisman is carved. All the stars so far reachable by theurgy have (or demonstrably once had) sentient life on at least one planet, usually similar in character to its ruling angelic order. Most of those stars have natives studying, working, visiting, or seeking their fortune on Earth; like human astronauts, angelic talismans provide life support, gravity, and pressure adjustments.

The **Ophanim** govern bright blue stars; their stone is amethyst. Their folk value peace and order, although in some cases their concept

of order involves enslaving all other species, as on the prison world of Zeta Ophiuchi. Ophanite species tend to be torus-shaped, often buoyant, with multiple sense clusters – the Jovians may be ophanites. Mintaka, the brightest star in Orion's Belt, hosts the Great Court of the Angelic Stars, where sophonts from many worlds bring their disputes. The floating, spiderlike Mintakans are devoted architects and shipwrights; they build sturdy icosahedral craft for less adaptable species to dwell in and sail through Jupiter and Saturn's atmospheres.

The **Bene-elohim** govern blue-white stars; their stone is sapphire. Their folk value family and piety, in many cases breeding sub-species and sub-orders to extend their own blood through the cosmos. Benelohite species tend to be hive species, often insectile or birdlike. Some, like the Achernari, seduce outworlders with soft perfumes and musical voices into interbreeding or adopting their young; others, like the Rigellians, purchase or conquer warm soils for their panspermian gardens. To better facilitate tracking their own bloodline, the ciliate beetle-folk of Celaeno keep complete records of all known species and worlds in their Great Library. Any sophont who brings seven new species or three new Names may study there for one orbit.

The **Arelim** govern white stars; their stone is diamond. Their folk value bravery and identity, and thus seem prideful. A great Eye of fiery ether surrounds Fomalhaut, and visitors must prove themselves or see their talisman sundered. Arelite species tend to be radially symmetrical, often aquatic or epiphytic. The winged, stalked Sirians visit the courts of Earth as if they expect homage; this was true even before they annexed Versailles as their Embassy-Garrison following the Sirian-French War of 1694-1697.

The **Favashim** govern yellow-white stars; their stone is topaz. Their folk value empathy and understanding; the Procyoni eat strangers to incorporate their wisdom. Favashite species tend to be centauroid or hexapodal in build, and warm-blooded. The scaled, long-necked natives of Al-Rakis in Draco cultivate rare herbs and resins that open the gates of perception, allowing telepathy, unnatural feats of calculation and astrogoetics, and even glimpses of the future and visions of the past.

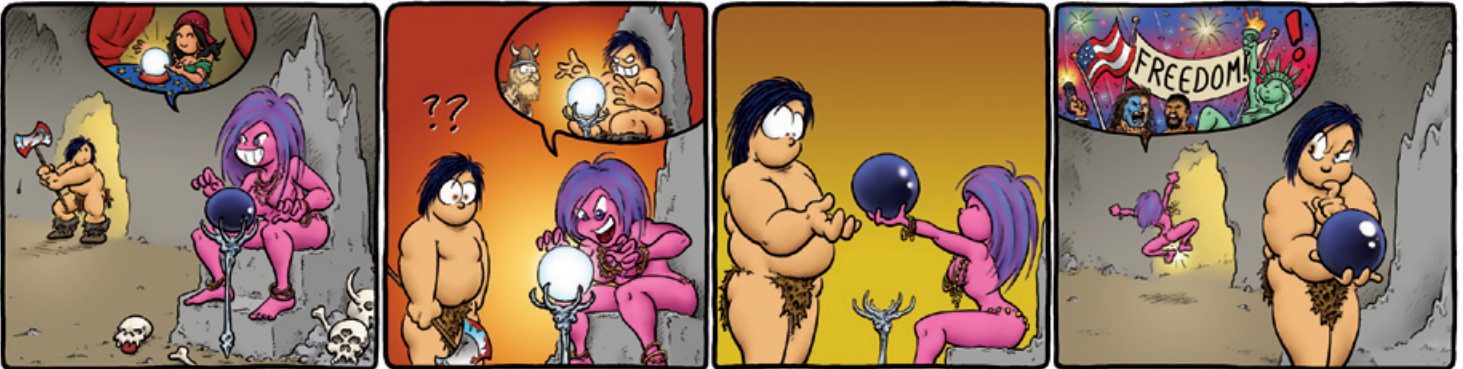
The **Grigorim** govern yellow stars like our Sun; their stone is emerald. Their folk value the arts and sciences, often at the expense of other virtues. The Neurge of Capella has banned religion on her world in favor of soulless artifice; the Capellan sacred symbol is the zero. But it must be said that Capellan navigators need no angels to find their way to other stars. Grigorite species tend to have four limbs, hands, and two eyes. The inhabitants of Sharatan in Aries resemble armadillos, but are natural geologists; Sharatan prospectors in the Solar system attract flocks of human (and other) miners looking to exploit their finds.

The **Kerubim** govern orange stars; their stone is garnet. Their folk value safety and prudence, leading some to label them cowards or selfish. As against this, the tentacled inhabitants of Arcturus wage all their wars to species genocide: the empty worlds of Alphecca, Unukalhai, and Vindematrix demonstrate their resolve. Arcturan visitors on Earth receive a wide berth, and fortunately restrict their travel to safe human lands like Britain and Holland. Kerubite species tend to be protean, vegetable, or multiply redundant, growing or losing organs and limbs and wings as needed. Inhabitants of Aldebaran can actually fly between planets using solar wind (usually working out mathematical problems or chess games the while) although they use angels when haste is an issue. Dwellers at Epsilon Eridani reshape their internal organs and brain structures while keeping an outwardly humanoid form.

The **Malakim** govern red stars; their stone is the ruby. Their folk value strategy and resolve, making them puissant warriors and dangerous conspirators. If Betelgeuse, Antares, and Gamma Crucis did not constantly war with each other, any of them might conquer a score of stars. Malakite species tend to be cold-blooded and possess unusual senses. The bat-like folk of Scheat can smell angels, for example; the eight-armed Namalwaridi can manipulate heat. The taciturn, shelled Mirans do not explain what they sense or how, but a squadron of chariots from Mira waits on Saturn's moon Tethys for something to trigger their crusade.



BERNARD THE BARBARIAN - A SMALL FORTUNE



Story: Evelina Rosenius

BERNARD THE BARBARIAN IN THE DEAD OF WINTER



Story: Evelina Rosenius

BERNARD THE BARBARIAN THERE AND BACK AGAIN



Story: Evelina Rosenius



ORIGINAL PUBLICATION **FENIX 2/2013**

TEXT **PETE NASH**

ILLUSTRATION **LUKAS THELIN**

DJINN

SPIRITS BETWEEN HEAVEN AND HELL

Mythological creatures of the Islamic world, jinn are magical entities which live in a realm beyond our own, unseen by the humans with whose lives they capriciously meddle. Placed in Islamic theology between humans and angels, the djinni, ifrits and marids were powerful spirits. Capable of good or evil, they could be arrogant, malicious yet still be capable of benevolence when it suited them.

As creatures of “smokeless, scorching fire” they are for the most part intangible, but could affect the world of mortals and perform great deeds of magic. This makes them a perfect creature to create for *RuneQuest6*. Of course the power and scope of jinn vary from Aladdin’s genie of the lamp to the desert haunting ghuls of Arabic superstition. However, for fun we’ll model the following jinn on those from the popular *Bartimaeus Trilogy* by Jonathan Stroud (which I highly recommend); treating these supernatural entities as spirits which can be summoned and bound to the magician’s will.

THE HIERARCHY OF THE JINN

The jinn in the *Bartimaeus* books are roughly in line with the mythological hierarchy of Islamic study. Jinn are categorised by their magical strength and standing within jinni society. Since *RuneQuest* already possesses a way of categorising spirits based on their magical power, it is an easy matter to use the same mechanics to describe them.

Imps – INT 2d6+6, POW 1d6+6, CHA 1d6. The weakest of the jinn, their magical abilities are relatively feeble but make good messengers of spies. They are often spiteful and rude. Intensity 1 spirits, imps know 1d3 Sorcery spells and have skills starting at 50%.

Foliots – INT 2d6+6, POW 1d6+12, CHA 2d6. Jinn of more capable strength, they make good servants and labourers, but show little imagination; nor even a likable personality, most being fawning lackeys. Intensity 2 spirits, foliots know 1d3+3 Sorcery spells and have skills from 70%.

Djinn – INT 2d6+6, POW 1d6+18, CHA 3d6. Potent spirits able to perform greater deeds of magical creativity, djinn often strain the skills of a magician to summon and bind to their will – not least because of their propensity to use their abilities in cunning, resourceful ways. Their personalities range from polite servility to intimidating rebelliousness. Intensity 3 spirits, djinn know 1d3+6 Sorcery spells and have skills of at least 90%.

Ifrits – INT 2d6+6, POW 1d6+24, CHA 4d6. Spirits of great ability and generally greater maliciousness, ifrit show a particular affinity to fire. Whilst thought of as less intelligent

than the lower ranking djinn, this is not strictly true. Rather the ifrit rely more on flexing their tremendous magical strength in brute-force approaches, than insightful or clever application. Intensity 4 spirits, ifrit know 1d3+9 Sorcery spells and have mastered many skills to a minimum of 120%.

Marids – INT 2d6+6, POW 1d6+30, CHA 5d6. The most powerful of these spirits, they are rarely summoned due to their immense magical strength and dangerous inclinations. It often takes the coordinated efforts of several magicians to attempt such a feat, or a great deal of flattery. Most marids are overbearingly arrogant and conceited. Intensity 5 spirits, marids know 1d3+12 Sorcery spells and their skills start at 150%.

Typical skills for jinn are: Brawn, Conceal, Customs, Deceit, Evade, Influence, Insight, Invocation, Locale, Perception, Sing, Stealth, Unarmed, Willpower, and one extra professional skill per Intensity of the jinn as a personal interest.

POWERS AND ABILITIES

All jinn possess a number of inherent abilities as the result of their spiritual form. These powers cost no Magic Points, but still require the spirit to spend an Action to perform. Jinn abilities are as follows:

Invisibility: Jinn are naturally invisible, but can make themselves visible with conscious effort. Since jinn can see others of their kind, invisible or not, they require the use of the Stealth skill to sneak past one another.

Intangibility: Jinn pass through solid objects unhindered. This includes trying to lift or move objects, unless they use their Telekinesis ability (read more about it later in this article). Likewise, they are immune to non-magical damage, although they can injure each other using ‘physical’ attacks.

Shape-Shifting: Since they lack a corporeal body, jinn may change their appearance at will. This can be the form of a human, animal, or a monstrous hybrid of the two. Imaginative jinn can even take the shape of inanimate objects or abstract visual phenomena. Most jinn have 1d3 favourite shapes with which they feel the most comfortable. A jinn can identify another jinn individual if they win an opposed test of Perception versus Deceit.

Size-Shifting: When manifested jinn have similar proportions to a human of a SIZ equivalent to the jinn’s POW. If the jinn desires they may further enlarge themselves by a multiple up to their CHA, or similarly shrink by applying the same number as a divisor. Of course as spirits they possess no true SIZ characteristic so they can be bound into any object such as a ring or lamp, but some jinn like to overawe viewers by swelling up to gigantic proportions.

Flight: Jinn usually travel by flying from place to place – although they are happy to mimic walking if fitted to their adopted form. At top speed they can move at INTx5 metres per round.

Telekinesis: To interact with the physical world jinn instinctively move objects via telekinesis, providing part of their intangible body is touching it. They have a pseudo STR equal to their POW, though for the expenditure of a Magic Point they can multiply this limit by a factor of five, solely for the purpose of shifting exceptionally heavy objects.

The Action Points, Strike Rank, and Magic Points of the jinn are calculated as described on page 203 of *RuneQuest*. Spirit Damage is based upon the Jinn’s Willpower skill, whilst its Damage Modifier (used for hand to hand combat) is calculated using POWx2 instead of STR+SIZ.

SUMMONING AND BINDING

In the Bartimaeus stories the summoning of jinn is a dangerous activity, with weak willed magicians often tricked to their deaths by the irritated spirit. Such attempts require extremely careful preparation, the use of various paraphernalia to aid concentration and drawing of pentacle or other magical wards to trap the jinn whilst it is being coerced to the summoner’s will.

The most important aspect of jinn summoning is knowing the *true name* of the entity called. Each jinn holds this name as their most prized secret, for without this, a magician cannot summon them to perform years of enslaved servitude. As any jinn called to the material world is prevented from being summoned again, until they are released back to the realm from which they originated; most magicians hoard such snippets of information, being the basis of their personal power.

Conjuring a jinn is similar to the Animism rules concerning summoning spirits. The magician uses their Trance skill to perform the ritual, which calls the named jinn (if available) to the prepared pentacle. This initial stage costs the conjurer a number of Magic Points equal to the Intensity of the Spirit. Once manifested, the real struggle occurs. This comprises of a battle of wits and will between the magician and the jinn, represented by the equivalent of a Spirit Combat using the Binding skill of the conjurer and the Willpower of the jinn.

If the jinn is reduced to zero Magic Points before their summoner, then they are chained to the magician’s will and can be forced to personally serve until released from service (or the premature death of the magician); or they can be eternally bound into an object from which there is no escape (The Indefinite

Confinement). Although some jinn might willingly serve a master at first, extended enslavement twists their attitude so that the magician must force them to perform each and every task – requiring a successful Binding test and the expenditure of a Magic Point.

Conversely, if the jinn wins the battle they break free from the conjurer’s control, allowing free use of their magic or immediate escape to their home realm. Whilst an unleashed imp may be an aggravating annoyance, losing control of a Djinn might result in the conjurer being consumed, leaving a pile of picked-clean bones.

WEAKENING OF BOUND JINN

Jinn in the physical world, whether bound to attending the will of a magician or trapped within an object, are prevented from rejuvenating themselves. They can neither heal any damage suffered, nor recover Magic Points. Unlike normal *RuneQuest* spirits, jinn actually take damage to their POW characteristic which can only be recovered if allowed to return to their home realm. Running out of POW leaves a jinn helpless, open to utter and final destruction.

Using magic drains jinn of their strength. A jinn can replenish its Magic Points if permitted to feast upon the life-force of a living creature, effectively recovering a number equal to the victim’s POW characteristic. If a jinn performs the dubious act of consuming another jinn, then they absorb whatever Magic Points were left to the entity before its death.

JINN MAGIC

Jinn use sorcery to perform their miraculous acts of magic. Whilst imps are barely capable of harming small animals, the largest marids can create vast palaces in a single night. Jinn do not use the Shaping skill per se, each spell costing a single Magic Point to cast with a Range of POW in metres, Duration of POW minutes, a single Target, and a Magnitude of twice the jinn’s spirit Intensity.

The following spells are suitable for jinn with, where known, the associated names utilised in the Bartimaeus books placed in parenthesis – most of which are rather destructively orientated!

Abjure, Animate, Banish (*Void*), Castback, Damage Resistance (*Shield*), Diminish SIZ (*Compression*), Enhance SIZ, Enlarge, Hide Life, Hinder, Holdfast, Imprison (*Nexus*), Mystic Vision (*Pulse*), Neutralise Magic (*Flux*), Palsy (*Spasm*), Phantom, Protective Ward, Repulse, Revivify, Sculpt, Sense, Shapechange, Shrink, Smother (*Convulsion*), Spell Resistance (*Shield*), Wrack (*Detonation*, *Plasm*, *Inferno*, *Pestilence*, *Essence Lance*)



LEVIATHAN

BAROQUE ESCAPADES IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

TEXT **DANIEL KRAUKLIS**
 THANKS TO & INTRODUCTORY TEXT
KARIN TIDBECK
 ILLUSTRATION **OLA LARSSON**

ODE TO THIS VALE OF PEERS

I push my head through the single porthole of my accommodations, to take in the whole of the Flagellation Pit – the great shaft in which all our lives germinate. It is an unusually clear day. The depths below are covered in only light smog, and it is not hard to imagine a delicate, oily luster to the black waters of the Abyss. Beneath the level I reside on, true collar workers toil ceaselessly in grimy vaults. Considering the accomplishments of those lively underproles moves me. To my inner eye, I can see their sinewy arms swing sledgehammers in productive unity. They inspire an intonation: “Clangg, ff-PAH! Clangggg, ffff-PAH!”

My gaze now leaps upwards, as if driven by a will of its own, caressing the web of conduction pipes and cables running from my side of the massive chasm to the other – that barely distinguishable, inscrutable face of verdigris. It rises from out of the foggy fathomage below like a bulwark, always at attention, unceasingly erect all the way from the polluted waters to the opulent fungus-terraces above, where plump Grittizens till the soil. Their pastoral hymns must sound something like: “Rih-reeee,” some glottal chant of that order meant to rouse the mushrooms from their slumber in the mud, so that they can unfold their caps with a triumphant “fraFOMPI!” The spontaneous snippets of onomatopoeetry now issue from my mouth in a continuous stream, as if by autocodictation. I seem to have found my inspiration again! Such whimsical insights must, however, be neatly edited and fit into a whole. Perhaps they could become the foundation, a serialized proletaromantic suite? I now hasten to my pulpit, but alas – am snapped out of my excitement by the sight of the rough sheets I was struggling with earlier:

“Thuh, dunh, ta-pa-ta-taaah;
 Whock! Whock! Woosh of the chop!
 Tapata WHOCK over WRONGdoer’s smock.
 Thuh, dunh, ta-pa-ta-taaah.”

The lines strike me as stale, naïve, the misbegotten spewings of a cheap peddler of words. And sluggish angst once more drapes itself around my wit. How could such vile scribbles be performed in front of His Refined Exquisiteness, the subtle and refined Dulcian Slaymes Sebastocrate, Bringer of Deliverance? Could anyone in attendance to him actually discern the sound of trumpets in my onomatoverse? Is this dull ditty even capturing his briskness while snuffing out dissidents, with such diligence that the sound of decapitated heads bouncing down throne room simply had to be included in the piece? His birthday celebrations are only three days away. I simply have to entertain, dazzle and excite all of the Middle Strata with my voice if I hope to avoid the wrath of the überons, who will otherwise most surely take offence at my lack of eloquence. A failure would undoubtedly lead to being thrown most unceremoniously into the Abyss, under gargantuan bellows of indignation.

– Sartorius Grubbe, onomatopoet ►

ORIGINAL PUBLICATION
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FENIX 4/2012

AND EXTENDED ON THE WEB
 NEW VERSION FOR THIS ANTHOLOGY
 & PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED
 ARTWORK INCLUDED



ABOUT THIS GAME

This is a condensed version of a hobby project from 1999, written under the motto: “*A grave farce.*” Inspiration was drawn from all over: *Paranoia*, *Judge Dredd*, *Warhammer 40K*, *Nemesis the Warlock*, Orwell’s *1984*, the *Fall-out* series of video games, Moebius (the artist, but to some degree also the mathematician), HP Lovecraft, *Dune*, the Swedish welfare state, the Stalin terror, medieval scholasticism, retrofuturism, the generation ship novel, and other random sources. *Leviathan* can be pretty Pythonesque in atmosphere, but like humor in general, its many absurdities are probably best delivered with a straight face. And if laughter at times catches in the players’ throats, all the better. That said, it’s your game, play it as you like.

A SUMMARY OF EVERYTHING

“We are travelers in a world
of stone, rushing through the
emptiness from star to star.
It is a hollow world, and in its
midst lies the valley...”

– *Captive Universe*, Harry Harrison

Leviathan is an interstellar ark starship floating through cosmos without anybody at the helm, populated by a race who no longer remembers its past. The inhabitants lead short lives under the yoke of harsh and incomprehensible laws, rules which were once laid down so that the journey would continue even in the face of impossible odds. Today, those rules have degenerated into meaningless superstitions, but they are still followed draconically. The downward spiral has brought technological awareness, and even language, down with it. What were once everyday appliances now seem like magical artifacts. Words have been taken out of context, merged, and assumed new and sometimes supernatural meaning. The archaic lives side by side with the futuristic, in dysfunctional marriage. The inhabitants themselves have also lost the essence of what they once were, and been transformed into something different.

The majority of passengers belong to the struggling, hard-working masses. Labor is seen as a virtuous pursuit, and factories rumble and vibrate to the drumbeats of progression. The average person lives in a drafty shed, built out of scrap removed from the inner hull of the ship. They subside on simple fare consisting of various strains of cultivated

fungus, smoke stinking stogies, while jostling and scuffling along doing their daily business. The tough laws which frame their existence are enforced by grim Endocutioners. A small part of the population whiles their days away in luxury and abundance; listening to poetry, drinking arrack and pursuing cruel sports. Their main responsibility was once to care for the lower classes, but this tedious duty has long since fallen out of fashion. Notable among them, the Prettizens, are engaged in a complicated power struggle with their peers, a game in which a mere moment of inattentiveness or hesitation can lead to banishment and loss of privilege. In effect, returned to the toiling masses.

In this roleplaying game, characters should have little to no grasp of any underlying truths, such as realizing what their bowl-like world might actually be. In their minds (if they even consider such things), the wondrous, vertical cave they call home and Titanpit, is situated in a gently curving valley, strewn with the mystical ruins of the past, on some desolate and possibly war-torn planet. After many ignorant and habitually superstitious generations, nobody seeks interest in things conflicting with already established “facts.” Life is hard as it is, and everybody benefits from the status quo. Lies have been made into truth, and uncovering the real truth is... superfluous.

THE WORLDVALE

The Anatomy of Leviathan

“Canst thou draw out Leviathan
with an hooke? or his tongue
with a corde which thou lettest
downe?”

– *Job 41:1*

In the absolute center of the ark, where gravity is at its lowest, the inner sun hangs suspended in mid air: it is Helios, but that name must not be uttered. Worshipped by forbidden cults, and feared by the ordinary citizen, this power-plant grants two gifts: Illumination and Conflagration. Mentioning, or even thinking about their single source of light and heat, is believed to strain and eventually extinguish it. Sometimes the sun is hidden behind clouds of black, poisonous fumes. The expanse of air in between this deadly fog and the inner hull is called the Daedalosphere.

The ground itself consists of a variety of synthetic substances layered on a framework of so-called Endurium – a futuristic alloy sha-

ring some superficial properties with bronze. The metal is veritably indestructible, unless worked at with another piece of Endurium. In some areas, vast plains of rusting metal plates stretch from horizon to horizon in iron heaths, while other zones are covered by steaming marshes formed by leaking conduit fluids. Close to the swamps, patches of wild fungus spring up. Here and there in the distance, massive structures can be seen rising towards the oily heavens. Some of them grind, pulse and vomit smoke, while others stand enigmatically silent.

The wide, curving floor of the Worldvale is the hunting ground for tribes of Subanthropes – cannibalistic, spidery humanoids. Continuous radiation from Helios has caused severe mental disorders and physical deformations among them. There are also a few settlers eking out a meager existence up above – all of them pariahs, dissidents and criminals banished from the Pit communities. You have to be insane or tough as nails, preferably both, to survive for long on the Surface.

The Titanpits themselves are cylindrical shafts with a diameter of about ten kilometers, and a depth of close to five times that number. Each Pit once had up to a million inhabitants in its heyday. They are now spread across balconies running from the Vertex down to the Middle Strata, with the lower half usually sparsely populated. The topmost dozen levels or so are full of bulwarks, protecting against invaders from other Pits and the Subanthropic hordes. A corps of sunburned Gunhoplites guards this perimeter, supported on the near Surface by a small fleet of patchwork hoverbarges. In the turbulent air above the very mouth of every Pit, the Sebastocrate – the traditional overlord of the shaft – usually resides, on board a zeppelin huddling together with a small flight of airships. These dirigibles are equipped with foam guns, for firefighting purposes as firestorms regularly sweep the upper levels of the Pit.

Below the bulwark levels lies Chanty Town. This segment never sleeps. It is always murmuring with the bustle of confined living, interspersed with the rhythmic hymns of fungal workers, urging the shrooms to shoot from their cultivation platforms. Narrow shacks lean on one another, and up to ten thousand citizens can live crammed together on these balconies. Their width is only a few hundred meters. Every dozen or two residential blocks are administrated together, as small communes, bequeathed with uplifting names such as: “The Horn of Twenty”, or “Goody-Goody Manyfold.” Everything is built out of recycled materials. Everything that is not bolted down to the floor is irregularly swept away by massive floods. The most common building

element is called Carbelite, a dark and furrowed synthetic substance vaguely resembling wood. It may once have served as some sort of packing material in the generation ship. The most common light source is the wheezing, gaspowered glowblob.

Before reaching the halfway point, the open terraced wall of the main shaft turns into a smooth Endurium face. A chaotic web of cables and pipes crisscrosses the empty space of the Pit. Behind the walls lies the Middle Strata. It is the seat of a higher class, the Überons – also called the Prettizens – to separate them from the Grittizens of the general populace. Family and name means everything, here. As long as the members of a bloodline can retain the good graces of the Sebastocrate, they have many sumptuous chambers at their disposal. Inside the opulent corridors, a monorail system suspended from the ceiling carries pale and swollen family representatives in gondolas, gliding from one bombastic dinner reception to the next. The walls of their halls have portholes, but there is little to see outside, due to the eternal mists of the Thanatosmog. This foggy miasma originates from the chimneys of the Manufactory Clusters, below. Down there, foundries and workshops put together all sorts of convenient trinkets from spare parts.

The segment furthest down is the Base. Here, where gravity is at its highest, the Pit continues down into the murky waters of the Abyss. Inside the walls, the areas are, once again, bulwarked. Defenses are manned by Gulfhoplites in heavy protective suits. They are, in essence, a penal legion made up out of outcasts from the Gunhoplites above. Their job is to stand guard against dangers from the submerged depths, where unthinkable horrors live. Among the worst of those are the Verminids – grotesquely wormlike atrocities adorned with beards of hypnotically swaying tendrils and appendages; excreting a caustic slime that can eat through anything except Endurium. With terrifying regularity, these abominations surge up from the unknown, flooding the Base in a feeding frenzy some believe to be the first stage of their breeding process. Consequently, fractured and semi-dissolved bones from earlier generations of Gulfhoplites litter every passageway.

In the sewage waters at the center of the Pit, enveloped by a perpetual darkness of deadly fumes, floats the armored Justitory Barge of the Correctional Authority. This vessel is the seat of the Magistrateship, a body of elders and lawmakers. The law – or the Survival Rule, as it is called – is enforced by Endocutioners. Their position in society is upheld through a monopoly on firearms and the Worldvale news, brought in by wire from their colleagues in other Titanpits. Seeing

as only the Correctional Authority and the Sebastocrate have access to guns, their power is rarely challenged. Endocutioners patrol solo or in pairs, from Base to Vertex, and back again – to mete out vengeance against transgressors of the law. On their long routes, they find shelter in hidden refuges, bored into the hull on every other level or so. Sealed vaults in the Justitory Barge carry equipment and provisions for rebuilding and repopulating a Pit after the Eschatose, or doomsday flood.

What lies in the waters below the Justitory is unknown. This is the Abyss. Every stroke crushes and pulls at the unwary diver, and it only grows worse the deeper you get. Particularly daring souls willingly venture into the depths, equipped with homemade submergence gear. Sometimes, their bloated, distorted remains rise to the surface again, carrying shocking teeth marks. Most disappear forever. Many vile creatures apparently hide between the great beast Leviathan's mauling fingers, as it carries the Worldvale in its cupped hands.

Life in Chanty Town

The teeming upper balconies, with their abundance of Mycofarms, are ruled by publicly elected chiefs. They carry thrashers and clubs handed down by their predecessors, as insignias of their office. Chiefs, and their advisors in the Collaborate, a council of hand-picked supporters (usually the ruffians that helped them win the election), make all the important decisions in a commune. They are also responsible for putting up inspirational posters with pictures aimed at the largely alphabetic populace. Other duties include the redistribution of property and goods, appointing the recipients of collective punishment, and phrasing the goal of the community – the so-called “fine hop onwards”. Usually, they stick with whatever the last chief was doing, to avoid undue attention from individuals higher up in society. In time, neighbors start referring to the commune by that goal, giving them names like: “Progression”, “Compliance and Bliss”, or something longer like “Work is life's hill, death its final thrill”, “At attention, into the grinder”, and “We, the fungal mountaineers!”

At a random interval, spanning many generations, the Pit will be catastrophically flooded. Huge masses of water rage down into the massive shaft, killing most of its population. The cause for this doom is unknown, but it is generally believed to be a result of overpopulation. Leviathans decry rivers as the sins of its children. Fear of overpopulation has led to the forced use of so-called chastity plugs, mechanical contraptions inserted into, screwed tight, and tautened on citizens to

regulate their procreation. The plugs can be temporarily unlocked in certain milt crypts. Queues are long. A valid ticket, issued by the chief, is required for entrance. Chiefs issue new tickets supplanting all old prints without advance warning, to remind everybody that they are the boss. In the steaming crypt, no physical contact is allowed. The visitor hooks the plug into a machine driven by muscle power, which the Gritizen then struggles to set in motion through manipulating rusting levers and handles, until a satisfactory end is achieved. Female fungiproles are barred from the milt crypts and instead utilize chafing posts in the middle of the commune square. Plebeians are, however, at their cleverest when it comes to exploiting weaknesses in the plugging system. As a result, small bundles of braying, chubby progeny are hidden away in almost every corner of Chanty Town. And so, eventually, the dreaded Eschatose returns.

Every morning, plebeians shuffle up the ladders to their Mycofarms, some established on rickety platforms clinging to the ceiling, surrounding their shacks, or even hanging from the outside edge of the balcony level. Part of the labor force is drafted to trudge inside large cisterns, in order to produce a nourishing gruel, which in turn runs down pipes to their betters in the Middle Strata. Stumbling around like that, all day, can be very painful for the inconsiderately plugged citizen.

At least a handful of times in every generation, the workers are invited to a communal feast. They finger comb their hair, dress in their best, gather around the radio receiver in the common hall to listen to motivational speeches, have a bite of salted something from the Abyssal waters, and enjoy a cup of fermented milk – drawn from sources nobody wants to dwell much on. Some citizens volunteer to form cleaning brigades, and venture up to the Vertex to clear out trash, and neatly sort and pile boulders from ruins around the outskirts. Due to the dangers of the Surface, where the Subanthropes run free, this is seen as a sort of pilgrimage. Particularly zealous brigades that remain outside longer than absolutely necessary, are not always let in again. Gunhoplites are a suspicious lot.

There is no currency in the Worldvale. Bartering is the norm, and many authorities keep an eye on trade. The commune itself is seen as the default owner of all local goods and gizmos, and individual citizens are only the keepers. Chiefs are empowered to take what they want and give it to someone else, for the good of the community. They employ upstanding citizens in public flogging crews that snoop around, and repossess unregulated items.

Life in the Middle Strata

It is in the power of the Sebastocrate, the absolute ruler of each Titanpit, to raise anybody they like to the rank of peer, loftyburgher, prettizen, and überon. The privileged are rich in all ways, including titles. Their chastity plugs are unlocked with a Caege, an archaic dagger-like key which also serves as a sign of the all-ruler's might. The newly unplugged are then allowed access to the Middle Strata, where they find and occupy some empty chamber, and start to build a family. From there on, they no longer need to work, and can enjoy the abundance being delivered to these levels from all over the Pit. The überon's natural inclination is not only to remain in the Middle Strata, but to advance even further in its complex social environment. This means constant struggle, with their life at stake. The individual needs to form a retinue of chroniclers, praetorians, onomatopoeists, fancy aides in lace and frills, and other equerries lauding their name – usually recruited from the ranks of the unwashed plebeians.

The etiquette of the loftyburghers is expressed through the six maxims of their code of honor:

The Loftyburghers Code of Honor

1. The honorable one does not strike first, but the hardest.
2. It is preferable to break a leg, than break your word. Even better is to break the legs of others.
3. Those who watch their tongues cannot be accused of humbuggery.
4. That which is ornery, sullies more than the eye.
5. More is never enough.
6. Shame on kin, is shame on you.

Due to their way of life, the überons tend to extreme obesity. Their class may once have been instituted to shepherd the plebeians, but today, their existence has only one meaning: To consume and dominate. Their mood tends to swing from an apathetic hunger for sensual delights, to brutal pragmatism. Bestial drives compete with an instinctual protectiveness over what they regard as their own.

The Endocutioners only rarely need to enter the Middle Strata. The überons eliminate one another anyway. All are supposed to be equal under the Survival Rule, but some loftyburghers have access to the service of personal Gunhoplites, through the favor of the Sebastocrate, and are likely to resist justice from a lawman. Some crimes committed in Chanty Town can trace their roots to the Middle Strata, though – due to the cocktail of contempt and fascination the Prettizens show for their class of origin. Manipulating the plebeians to unwittingly do one's biddings is seen as an entertaining pastime, and many spend their time blocking an opposing loftyburghers' moves, with little or no care for the pawns. Still, some among the peers stay in touch with old chiefs in the capacity of patrons.

A Sebastocrate's power stems from absolute authority over a centrally located chamber in the Middle Strata, called the Nave. The original purpose of this room is unknown. In most cases, it contains little of worth other than a throne-like Caege-copying machine. Some Naves, however, have a smattering of valve controls and monitoring equipment, in varying degrees of disrepair. Sebastocrates with access to functioning Naves tend to occupy them, while the rest mine the place heavily and leave a guard of Gunhoplites behind. There is usually more immediate and destructive power available from the flight of zeppelins, hovering above the Narthex. There, the all-ruler can reside in the company of cupbearers and tasters, flutists, probability arithmeticists and other courtiers – a court called the Sarcornates. Still, the Caege machine is the route to ultimate power. Each Eschatose is followed by a frantic race for it. This can also happen if a Sebastocrate dies, and in the rare cases in which an überon manages to take hold of the Nave through treachery or violence.

The Middle Strata is separated from other levels by heavy defenses, where Gunhoplites with gatling projectile weapons keep the rabble at bay. Grittizen insurgencies are not uncommon, evidenced by the scarred and pock-marked Endurium walls. Safe behind their fortifications, the loftyburgher can while their days away as they like – by intriguing against enemies, nurturing petrified seeds back to life in hydroponic tanks and enjoying the literal fruits of their labor, holding lavish banquets, dallying in charity for the plebeians (perhaps by organizing a fight club to occupy them), or aggrandizing themselves and their kin through art – the louder the better. Influence can be approximated by the size of an entourage, so a loftyburgher always strives to employ more hands to ruffle their frills, spurt perfume in his or her wake, and club any unpleasant entity that happens to approach in the wrong way.

Life and Times in the Manufactory Clusters

"Out of his mouth goe burning lampes,
and sparkes of fire leape out.
Out of his nostrils goeth smoke,
as out of a seething pot or caldron.
His breath kindleth coales, and a
flame goeth out of his mouth."

– Job 41:19-21

The Manufactory Clusters are the dark underbelly of the Middle Strata. They are a necessary evil to maintain the opulence of the loftyburghers, but also produce goods for the whole Titanpit. The inhabitants are weighed down by debilitating workloads, in an environment choked by stinging vapors that even dulls colors. Every surface is covered by dust laid down by the eternal smog, and the coughing symphony of pneumonia can be heard throughout the industrious din. Walls slowly crumble from vibrations generated by gigantic turbines, and even the Endurium support beams disintegrate with time. Plebeian lips and nostrils turn verdigris from the particles.

Some of the more sought after products made here include euphoric tobies or chero-ots twined out of tufts of spun glass rescued from ruins on the surface, mixed together with dehydrated poisonous mushrooms and a tar-like substance scraped out of old pipes. Another prize item is a beverage of fermented milk, made out of a fungal mash and recycled conductive fluids. Gas for the glowblobs is produced in big molding bells. Those few plebeians who have the good sense to die in an orderly fashion are mummified down here, in baking ovens, then shred to pieces and used as manure in the Mycofarms. The labor is both bitter and hard, but a big benefit is that the citizen gets to keep every hundredth item or so produced for herself. From out of this salary is drawn the bribes, tributes, protection fees and other charges owed. And the chiefs, naturally, get to redistribute what is left. But manufactory workers have a greater chance to be drafted for service in the Middle Strata to, as they are seen as more hardy and cunning than other Grittizens.

There is too much noise and mist down here for the authorities. It is very difficult to oversee it all properly, which allows for a variety of immoral establishments that could not have sprung up anywhere else. You might pass through a curtain of leather rags strung around a grove of hissing steam pipes, and find a cabaret hidden behind them. Gambling is rampant, politics feverish, liquor abundant, and unproductive activities like singing and ▶



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dancing completely rampant. In this environment, covens of Helios cultists flourish. They freely perform their throat singing harmonies of joy and goodness, culminating in orgies of hugs and kisses, only ending when every attendant has seen the light.

The Cycling of Time

"The soft parts shall wither away the hard parts will yet remain but with the passing of time and before long even the hard will eventually decay."

- *Aniara*, Harry Martinson

Any great cycle of life in Leviathan terminates, and shifts into the next, by the coming of an Eschatose. These apocalyptic upheavals arrive when they please, triggered by unfathomable stimuli, and no one experiences more than one such armageddon in their life.

One day, the sound of hidden doomhorns can be heard throughout the Titanpit. All activity stops. Clever citizens that realize what is happening hurry down towards the Justitory Barge to seek a refuge in their primitive ice chests, and before long there is a general, panicked stampede that kills tens of thousands. The wind picks up and flings even more into the Abyss, while a tremendous rumbling builds in the hull. If one was to look up towards the Narthex at this instance, one might witness how a mighty wave hit the Narthex from all sides. The flight of blimps, already straining at their anchors in the air currents above, are torn loose and blown away. The flood then thunders down into the Pit, sweeping buildings and citizens alike with it.

Before long, the whole surface of the Worldvale is covered by a singular sea. Justitory Barges, with their load of deep frozen survivors, drift lazily about. In time, many generations later, the interior ocean starts to drain away. The Justitory Barges anchor themselves above a Titanpit, and slowly descend towards the bottom with the sinking water. From the Barges, the Pit can be repopulated, and a new cycle begins.

It is not known how the Subanthropes survive these cycle shifts; only that their numbers, as far as anybody can tell, seem to stay constant over time. It is as if they are forewarned by vibrations in the ground. Theoretically, they could stay afloat by clinging to islands of bloated corpses, until they find a Justitory Barge and overtake it, feasting in peace and quiet on its refrigerated contents until the flood passes. This would explain the wrecked Barges sometimes found lying empty in the middle of the iron steppes. There are Magistrates who believe that the Subanthropes may actually be the hidden masters

of Leviathan, somehow bringing about the Eschatose to fill their larders.

The period of time just after an Eschatose is commonly called the Golden Phase. There is plenty of living space for thawed survivors. Population is now at an optimal level. A positive spirit of resettlement is prevailing. There is an abundance of meaningful jobs, and social mobility is at its greatest. Endocutioners can allow themselves to show mercy, without disregarding their duties. The Sebastes – individuals who happen to carry a Caeye for some reason or the other, but have yet to establish their rule over a Pit – maneuver against and fight each other for dominance. Everybody else is left to their own business.

When a Sebaste succeeds in taking a Nave, the Iron Phase starts. A loftyburgher caste is created to support the new Sebastocrate, population continues to swell (which in turn calls for a stricter enforcement of the Survival Rule), work and accommodations grow scarce and competition turns more intense; pressure from the privileged increases as they tighten their control over society, hothead ideologies start to flare up, and progress grinds to a halt. Some are still content, but most try to climb the social ladder. Might is right.

Finally, the Blight Phase arrives, and to those who know how to interpret the signs, it is clear that the next Eschatose is drawing closer. Insanity and physical maladies grow more common, the individual loses her intrinsic worth, Endocutioners punish first and ask questions later, decadence is widespread, and bonds of loyalty and camaraderie disintegrate as the only cause really worth fighting for is making it to the next Golden Phase.

The Law

“In signs of light on the displays he offered laws to ease our last remaining days. He made samaritans out of the cruel and bade them soothe what doom had ruled.”

– *Aniara*, Harry Martinson

The Survival Rule binds the Titanpits of the Worldvale together. Across cycle shifts, this set of emergency laws has started to branch away from its original purpose – to preserve and strengthen the population during its journey into the future. A majority among the Magistrates adhere to a doctrine of essences, which stipulates that the core of all crime is a desecration of one or more of the four fundamental foundation stones of reality: air, water, blood and Endurium. There is lively debate on this subject: Can a perversion of the nature of Endurium (such as modifying or destroying vital hull structures) really be counterbalanced by atonement in blood (the death penalty)?

Primary Decrees

- Shouldst the essences be defyled – taketh a lyffe.
- Shouldst Caeyeless breeding befalle – taketh a lyffe.
- Shouldst Worldvale & duelling & goodes splinnter – taketh a lyffe.

Secondary Decrees

- Shouldst femayle lyffe be extinguished – taketh the manhoode.
- Shouldst Sebaste be smitten by ridiculle & defyance – taketh the manhoode.
- Shouldst obstruction of Laueman transpyre – taketh the manhoode.

Supplemental Decrees

- Shouldst theyr be busyness of concerne & perylle about – casteth the offender out.
- Shoudst forbidden knouledge be unearthed – cutteth the brayne & lobothomize.
- Shouldst order be dysturbed – floggeth.
- Shouldst vengeance be meted out – maimeth the offending lymbe.
- Shouldst there merely be unlaueful intente – doleth out halffe the chastysement.
- Shouldst the villevyn on elopement be keene – doleth out double the chastysement.

A verdict should always be based on one or more of the Primary Decrees. These regulate crimes that threaten the survival of Leviathan. Should a Primary Decree not be valid, the base can be a Secondary Decree instead. Those are aimed at crimes that endanger the population – such as overthrowing society, which in the long run could be catastrophic. As many Supplemental Decrees as applicable are added to the base verdict. Magistrates see themselves akin to gardeners, sowing law seeds and pruning the plants that grow from them. Continuing the metaphor, Endocutioners are chefs, arranging the harvested law paragraphs into dishes and serving them for the benefit of all. They are judge, jury and executioner. The Magistrateship only rarely intervenes in their work.

A criminal must hear and understand the verdict before correction, or the punishment can not be meted out. The criminal’s realization of the error of her ways is called the Epiphany of Castigation. It is seen as the actual moment in which the four essences are put back in order. Should the guilty party be unable to receive the full measure of the punishment (such as if they are sentenced to a double death penalty), what is left over progresses to their kin, who are seen as an extension of the guilty person. Likewise, when kin cannot receive any more punishment, the overflow passes to the commune. No crime can ever go unpunished.

Endocutioners are seldom lenient. There is little fairness under the law. Safeguarding the whole of Leviathan is paramount, in times of extreme danger like these. If the essences have been disturbed, the status quo must be

re-established, or all the many small lapses will pile up and destroy the Worldvale. Even though the actual criminal is the only one who can truly experience Epiphany, proxies are often needed to put things in order. Every particularity of the offence must be corrected, so sentencing can sometimes take quite a while. Each Eschatose, however, washes away all sin. It is believed it was created to do just that, and so every Golden Phase starts with a general amnesty.

The Survival Rule was originally written as a practical guide for the Endocutioner – to answer the ancient question: “Whatte doth the Laueman?” The Lawmen (or -women) have to use their own judgment in deciphering and applying the intent of the law. Since its inception, the Rule has been copied by hand uncountable times, and has become a bit garbled as a result. Its streak of misandry is said to be based on the fact that while childbearing is necessary to survival, the unchecked ability to fertilize a female constitutes a potential threat. Overpopulation is always looming.

An example of assigning a verdict is as follows: If a Grittizen, perhaps by mistake, burns down a neighbor’s house while the matron is inside, and then runs away from the Endocutioner, a sentence along these lines would be valid: Two death penalties (defiling the essences, damaging a residence), two castrations (killing a woman, obstruction of the law), supplemented by banishment and caning (sabotage, e.g. business of concern, and disturbance of the order), and finally the doubling each penalty (trying to run). Result: Four death penalties, four

castrations, and two canings followed by banishment. Some Endocutioners are not as ardent as to carry out all of this, but in general, they start with the less severe penalties and escalate from there. When the guilty party has been killed, the rest of the sentence carries over to their family until there is nobody left. After that, the commune will appoint somebody to take it. Collective guilt is regarded as a shared responsibility, something that strengthens the community and ensures the survival of the majority. Thus it is everybody's responsibility to keep a watch on their neighbors. Even though the law does not state so, criminals usually get to speak up before a sentence is carried out.

Veteran Endocutioners modify their verdicts with street praxis. Sometimes, the circumstances warrant a certain measure of unorthodoxy. The lawmen might be forced to commit lesser crimes themselves, in the pursuit of justice. When on the hunt, praxis also urges the Endocutioner to strike at the core of a problem, and sometimes overlook – or at least postpone the follow-up of – peripheral crimes.

Acolytes-in-training wear leather hoods, while full-fledged Endocutioners wear characteristic masks. Law masks have apertures for the eyes and mouth, the latter usually ringed by a ridge so as to make it work like a megaphone. The idea is that the Endocutioner is not an individual anymore, but carries the grim face of the law with her, wherever he or she goes. Their uniform covers the whole body and often includes gloves and great coats, but details vary from Pit to Pit. During the graduation ceremony, the acolyte leaves their past behind, and assumes a new name according to how long they have served in the Pit. The oldest Endocutioner on duty is simply called Alpha, the next oldest Beta, then Gamma, and so on. After Omega, the procedure starts over, so that the next Endocutioners will be called Alphalpha, Alphagamma, etc.

The lawman's primary tool is the arquebus, for quick and deadly mass-sentencing. They have little to fear on the balconies of the Pit, since the only other corps armed with guns are the Hoplites. They also carries gelding instruments, and various well-worn scrolls with the text of the law, commentaries and notations on them, recent orders, and a tally of suspects and verdicts. Like the majority of the population, few Endocutioners are actually literate. Scrolls are pictogrammatic, which sometimes complicates their interpretation. Endocutioners are always on duty and sleep only when they have to, reposing in cocoons in the Justitory Barge or in their hidden refuges. They follow the motto: "Punishment is mercy".

The Depths and Heights of Learning

"For the lazy brain its just dessert as wise bright spirits of the shelves turned their backs on laggard selves who never would to thoughts revert."

– *Aniara*, Harry Martinson

In the law, there is a decree on forbidden knowledge. Some things are kept secret, for the greater good. To avoid Worldvale-wide chaos and destruction, dangerous learning is restricted to the guild of Technosophers. Their duty is to maintain and extend the collected lore of Leviathan across cycle shifts. Some of them wander the Surface to double check old records, while many remain in their Great Archive – a unique structure that survives the Eschatose more or less intact. Here, apprentices are educated in techniques of remembrance, patience, and endurance – their three core vows. When faced with danger, their best tactic is often to run away. A Technosopher's mind is full of vital information, memorized to later be recorded in the Archive. It is coded onto waxed punching cards and stored in the massive difference engine that is the pride of the guild.

When an apprentice has succeeded at qualifying as a master, their vocal cords are removed so as to be unable to reveal any of their terrible secrets. Otherwise, a Technosopher might be forced to tell of what dwells in the proximity of Helios, driven by strange hungers. They might be tricked into reciting the fragmented stanzas of now forgotten wars, in times and places far beyond the limits of known existence. Information about vile deeds and the origin of bloodlines could be spilled, every known Caede and its last recorded possessor listed, massive conflicts between blocks of Titanpits revealed, and very dangerous insights on the real purpose and nature of Leviathan itself might spread. Some of Technosophers have even journeyed into the Abyss and seen what lies beyond it. And so, they silence themselves.

The Cult of Helios

"Day in and day out from grey contrite mystics to my loathing comes an awful song. Who could ever long to join their self-hating ranks of sadistics."

– *Aniara*, Harry Martinson

From the outside, the Cult of Helios is not clearly understood. Its members seem to want to put a stop to virtuous diligence, advocate sloth and shameful manners, and lure innocents to damn themselves. It is presumed that their ultimate purpose is to summon an Eschatose of such terrible proportions that the Worldvale will never recover from it.

From the cultist's viewpoint, matters are different. They are invited to join by a relative or close friend, who first gives them the sunkiss that ignites their interest in the joyous revelations of Helios. The cultist believes that there is a purpose in life: To question the rigid truths and structures of society and like the sun, spread warmth among the citizens – to which they swear a solemn oath to choose love before hatred, and to live as they preach.

Helios is not always gentle. He burns with a love so hot that a citizen might be turned to ashes if exposed to His full power. It is said that the God is served by a number of so-called Malachites, which arrived to Leviathan from some unknown outside place. It was they who created the citizens to help worship Helios, and shield them from the full force of His benevolence. The Malachites seeded the Worldvale with nourishing fungus and beseeched the God to mold citizens into the fine and pudgy shapes they have now. From the Surface, Malachites help citizens ascend by flying them across the Daedalosphere into their Father's embrace, a process the cultist likes to think of as being "gobbled up by love."

All would have been well, if not a group of shadowy regressors had started to work against their grand design. The cultists call them Geronts. These degenerate primals resist divine transformation by hiding deep in the furthest recesses of the Abyss. From there, the Geronts fight a secret war against the winged servants of God. It is said that their rasping, static voices can sometimes be heard through hidden speaking tubes, their flickering images be seen projected in the chambers of the loftyburghers, their vile symbols blinking on walls and machinery. They wield a subtly corrupting influence that is seldom understood, few are even capable of interpreting the signs. Many serve their purposes unwittingly. Every Geront upholds an archetypal visage carved out of the base untransformed shape they still keep. Even the Geronts themselves hate and fear their true faces, untouched by the Malachite blessing. Each of them has their own emblem, a uniquely pernicious power, and tempts the evolved citizen with empty promises in order to seduce and enslave her.



GAME RULES

You can play *Leviathan* in several ways – the game can easily be run freeform, for instance, without any rules system. Balance is not necessarily important. Main characters are supposed to be expendable, to some degree. So, without further ado, here is a simple system putting an emphasis on description and narrative.

Dice and Tests

Use turns only when there is some kind of resistance to what a character wants to achieve, and define that attempt as an action. The action encompasses a single limited goal, such as hitting a person in the head with a bottle. Test the success of the attempt with a six-sided die, a d6. Whomever rolls the highest number wins and gets to perform their action. How well it goes can be decided by the difference between the roll and the resistance – the higher a margin, the better.

A passive resistance, such as trying to bash a door in, is usually given a fixed value of 5. You have to beat that number with your die roll to succeed. If we assume that an ordinary citizen is skilled just enough to have the equivalent of one die at tests, they would hardly ever succeed at any challenges, unless they cooperate and lend each other dice (see below). That about sums up how things stand in *Leviathan*, but if you think it's too harsh, feel free to lower static difficulties. Keep in mind, though, that PCs will have it easier by using better suited abilities, life path quirks and gear.

All actions happen simultaneously, even those that might counteract each other. Keep it fast and simple, and use common sense. Players are allowed to lend each other dice when their characters help each other. Continuing the previous example, Character A wants to kick a stubborn door in, with the only one die available to the player. Player B lends the first player one of their two available dice, saving the remaining for something else, such as keeping a lookout. Player A happens to get a 3 on both rolls, so the door “wins” with its fixed passive resistance of 5. The character would likely be hurt by the failed attempt, but character B should also get a little bruised from the attempt to help.

Conflicts, Health and Attention

A character's competence is influenced by their physical well-being, as well as by the amount of attention they have attracted from colleagues and superiors. Nobody likes an upstart! Every time someone is subjected to something that might possibly hurt them, the character is “hit”. Accumulated hits push them towards more severe damage, and eventual death, on the HEALTH SCALE shown below. Every step on that scale also modifies all other actions he or she tries to do. Likewise, every time the character stands out from the crowd or attempts to do something irregular (“Hey, what's that fungiprole doing in the Middle Strata?”) they take a hit on the ATTENTION SCALE, below. These two ratings are referred to as ‘Fitness’ and ‘Fame’.

The Health Scale

Healthy | Bruised | Weak | Numb | Dead
n/a | -1d6 | -2d6 | -3d6 | goners

The Attention Scale

Incognito | Outstanding | Supervised | Restricted | Public enemy
+3d6 | +2d6 | +1d6 | 0 | -1d6

A healthy, completely unknown character would get +3d6 to every action they perform. Whereas someone who had taken a few punches and was notably suffering from it, whilst also having made something of a name for themselves (in either a good or bad way), would have their modifications cancel each other out and roll a clean die.

The group decides what being at a certain step actually entails. A broken leg? Ball and chain? Its up to you, the results are purely cosmetic. Non-player characters can only take a single hit, on either scale. One good slap in the face, or a whispered word in the right ear, immobilizes them. If you like, you can allow tougher or more important NPCs up to three hits, or give a recurrent nemesis the same scales as the PCs. Keep in mind that those higher up in the hierarchy of *Leviathan* than Gritizens should start as *Outstanding*. They would be careful to avoid drawing further attention to themselves.

Abilities

Apart from *Fitness* and *Fame*, there are a few scales of personality opposites, to further define the character. They are intended more as a source of inspiration, giving the player a reason to act out various quirky behaviors, than anything else. CAPITALIZED abilities are dominant, while lowercase are recessive. Dominant abilities at opposite ends of the scale are always in conflict with each other, while recessive abilities always bend to nearby dominants. The center ability is a sort of true neutral – it is dominant, but can choose which of the extremes it supports and which it fights.

Temper

PUSHING | impulsive | PASSIVE | creature of habit | SUPPORTIVE

Method

PRAGMATICISM | theory | NORM | evidence | IDEAL

Conflict

FIGHT | flight | CONCESSION | compromise | NEGOTIATION

Social Drive

EGOISM | dependence | GROUP | law | SELF-SACRIFICE

Morality

DARKNESS | despair | SHADES OF GREY | hope | LIGHT

This means that in *Leviathan*, *pushers*, for example, actively resist those who generally behave as *supporters*, and vice versa. *Passive* individuals fluctuate between the two extremities. None of these personality types care much for the *impulsive*, or *creatures of habit*. The *impulsive* tend to adapt to both *pushers* and *passive* folk, but have little to say about others. *Creatures of habit* usually follow *supportive* individuals, and sometimes join ranks with the *passive*.

How do you play this out in the game? Let's say that your character is a *creature of habit*. All you need to do is to keep track of others who behave in a *passive* or *supportive* way, and side with them. Agree with what they are saying, move in the same direction, come up with other suggestions in the line of what they are already thinking, try to help them achieve their goals. If it's unclear whether the circumstances move in a passive, supportive, or any discernible direction at all – fall back on your own ability. A *creature of habit* acts as she always would. The fungiprole behaves as a farmer, a hoplite militaristically, a technosopher seeks out new knowledge or follows memorized protocols,

and so on. If, instead, you have a *pushing* character, you only need to keep track of *supportive* individuals and counteract them. In case of doubt, keep pushing!

The abilities set the basic dice pool used for tests in the game, modified by current health and how much attention a character has gathered, as stated previously. Pick the single, most suitable ability relevant for what you're trying to do, add or subtract dice according to *Fitness* and *Fame*, and roll. Naturally, the abilities should be played out. Act impulsively if you want to use that die.

Using the Temper Scale as an Example:

PUSHING | impulsive | PASSIVE | creature of habit | SUPPORTIVE
2d6 | 1d6 | no die at all | 1d6 | 2d6

Creating a Character

You don't get to choose dice pools as you like, from all over the scales. Your character conforms to a single behavior on each scale, determined when she is created, so the trick is rather to play out the desired ability to get access to its pool.

Decide whether you'd like to assign *Traits*, or determine them randomly. Whichever method you use, stick with it throughout all stages of character creation.

If you prefer the random method, roll 1d6 on each ABILITY SCALE. A roll of 1 means that the character gets the first trait, a 2 the second, and so on (on the TEMPER SCALE, a 1 means PUSHING, a 2 impulsive). If you roll a 6, you can choose your ability freely, without having to adjust a trait on another scale (more on that later).

When you've set all scales, you then

- Roll 1d6 for Origin.
- Roll 1d6, possibly modified by Origin, for Life Path.
- Determine Gear (no rolls required).
- Optional: Roll 2d6 to determine Destiny.
- Optional: Roll 1d6 to determine Lodge.

If you prefer to assign traits, assume that your character possesses the center abilities on every scale (PASSIVE, NORM, CONCESSION, GROUP, SHADES OF GREY). You can now shift a trait one or two steps in either direction on one scale, providing that you compensate by shifting another trait as many steps away in the opposite direction. Let's say that player A wants to shift her character's TEMPER one step left, to *impulsive*. She can do that, by compensating with shifting, for instance, MORALITY one step right, to *hope*. No trait can be shifted more than once.

Origin

If you are determining traits randomly, simply roll on the table below. Note any modifier to your coming roll for LIFE PATH. If you're assigning traits, pick any ORIGIN you like.

1. The Surface
2. Drifter Mob (+1 to Life Path)
3. Mycofarm (+2 to Life Path)
4. Manufactory Cluster (+3 to Life Path)
5. The Middle Strata (+4 to Life Path)
6. Unique (+1d6 to Life Path)

The **Surface** is the convex inside of *Leviathan*, the wide Worldvale above the Titanpits, where Subanthropes surge and great Helios shines. A Surface dweller has leathery, sunburned skin – sometimes covered by bleeding scabs. The only law up here is that 'might makes right'.

Drifter Mobs are nomadic herds of unemployed, homeless Grittizens. They work if, when and where they find an opportunity, but are often forced to plunder for survival. Drifting can be seen as illegal, but a mob of hundreds of citizens will not be punished easily.

The **Mycofarm** is the backbone of the Pit. Here, Grittizens produce fungi for the benefit of their commune. One of the perks of that environment is an unlimited supply of simple but nourishing fare. To the downsides count the many parasites that eat their way up from the soles of one's feet.

In the **Manufactory Clusters**, beefy worker plebeians live side by side with lusty milkdrinking decadents. A salary of a hundreth makes for some wealth, despite being under a constant siege from the unemployed hordes. But there is always a hope of being chosen for service in the Middle Strata.

The halls of the **Middle Strata** echo to the sound of growling überon stomachs, and tremble to their mighty strides. Nimble servants scurry about the skirts of the loftyburghers, while they busy themselves with intricate schemes to take the mined throne of the Sebastocrate as their own.

A **Unique** origin is unique. The character might, like Romulus and Remus, have been raised by Verminids; be one of many children of the Sebastocrate; a golem created by a Geront; or even a thawed member of the original crew of the generation ship. You decide.

Life Path

If you're doing things randomly, roll 'dem bones and add any modifier from your character's origin. If you're assigning traits, you're restricted to choose from results 4-9, only.

1. Pioneer
2. Hobo
3. Pugilist
4. Toiler
5. Misologist
6. Gleeman
7. Chief
8. Gunhoplite
9. Dealer
10. Endocutioner
11. Überon
12. Technosopher

The **Pioneer** is an individual who, voluntarily or not, has embarked on a journey to settle the Surface. It is an austere life. In time, pioneers learn to withstand all kinds of pain and suffering. They get a bonus to all tests concerning sickness, hunger, etc. ENDURANCE +1d6.

The **Hobo** is a person who simply cannot settle down. Sometimes, lack of a home and an occupation drives them; at other times, vagrancy is simply in their blood. Theft is merely a tool of survival and they get a bonus on any kind of fraud and sleight of hand. HUSTLING +1d6.

Pugilists take pride in slogging others. Their trade is not a career, it is a calling. Taking a swing, head butting, and generally chopping away at their fellows is a form of ballet they dance to the limit. They get a bonus to any test involving unarmed fist-fighting. PACK A WALLOP +1d6.

The **Toiler** may be employed in the fungal business, working a forge down in the Clusters, or serving up jokes to the loftyburghers. He or

she has learned to go the extra mile when it comes to tiresome long term labor – particularly group efforts. **PITCH IN** +1d6.

The **Misologist** is an orator of woe, an agitator for remorse. Some of their travestocrates want to stir revolts, while their dystologists try to convince others to be content and suffer. A crowning achievement would be to make a whole level fling themselves into the Abyss. **DESTRUCTIVE DEMAGOGUERY** +1d6.

The trade of the **Gleeman** is escapism. Pretty strong efforts are needed to dispel the gloom of *Leviathan*. Hypnohandlers, mood architects, chained libidopaths, and hooing and chattering onomatopoeists entertain all classes. They are, however, completely useless for any practical purposes (such as at survival) and are easy to persecute. **HIDING** +1d6.

The **Chief** is a publically elected official who redistributes property, organizes parties, inspires the workers, assigns collective punishments, and licks the boots of the commune's patron loftyburgher. Those who obey the chief (but not the actual chief themselves) get the bonus. **MANAGEMENT SAY SO** +1d6.

The **Gunhoplite** is, above all, drilled in marching and guarding things near the Vertex. Some of them are demoted to Gulfhoplites, who excel at sitting around and listening to darkness. Sometimes, the Sebastocrate orders them to storm an enemy, or another Pit. **SHOOT** +1d6.

The **Dealer** barter with services and items, acquired in various shady ways. They are often only middle men, skimming their profits off of the trafficking they do for others. Dealers hoard stogies, milk, and other stimulants. They get some technical know-how through exposure. **GIZMOS** +1d6.

Endocutioners pass judgment according to the decrees of the **SURVIVAL RULE**, and swing the butcher's axe too. Some of them are driven by zeal, while others just grind on. Regardless of motivation, the *Endocutioners* are all skilled at fighting chaos and anarchy. **IMPOSING ORDER** +1d6.

Überons are sometimes born with an Endurium spoon in mouth, but are more often self-made citizens who pulled themselves and their families up from the dregs. Unrestricted access to food, pleasure and politics make them grow absurdly bloated in time. They are skilled in flattery, and quick to strike at their inferiors. **ARSEKISSING PEERS AND PEONS** +1d6.

Technosophers dedicate their lives to preserve and penetrate the deeper mysteries of *Leviathan*. Some of them have memorized enough blueprints to do repairs, while others can guess at underlying truths about the generation ship. Any test concerning something with a history stretching beyond the last Eschatose will, after some mind-straining techniques, get a bonus. **REMINISCE** +1d6.

Gear

There are many patched-up pieces of equipment put to unintended use in *Leviathan*. The most advanced gear has been taken apart and put together again multiple times, "improved" at each instance. A few, simple items can be produced in the Manufactory Clusters – usually by combining old parts.

Instead of listing them here, with detailed stats, use your own imagination in coming up with various bizarre contraptions. Most goods, like stogies, are single use only. Even those which aren't are seldom good for more than barely being able to do a specific job. But there are a few treasures floating around. A particularly well-made (or preserved) item gives a point bonus to rolls in which it is used. Add 1 to 5 points to a die roll, depending on the quality of the piece of equipment, and its suitability for the task. You can use these approximations: **WORN BUT A GOOD FIT** (+1), **REGULARLY USED FOR THE JOB** (+2), **HIGH QUALITY** (+3), **AN IMPROVEMENT ON THE ORIGINAL** (+4), or a **UNIQUE AND PRISTINE ITEM** (+5).

Firearms should be extremely rare, and have sometimes been jury-rigged beyond recognition. Don't give any bonuses to their use, but feel free to allow them more than one "hit" of damage per shot. There's a reason why *Gunhoplites* and *Endocutioners* are feared. To counterbalance their deadlines, many firearms are bothersome to reload. Reloading takes one action per extra hit caused.

How much equipment does the newly created character start with? Let them have as many bonus points to assign to their gear as their result on the **LIFE PATH ROLL**. A *chief*, for instance, could put a +3 on her club, a +2 on her megaphone, and two +1s on her sturdy leather coat and bowler hat, respectively. Players are free to come up with any equipment they like, as long as it seems reasonable that they could have acquired it, considering their **ORIGIN** and **LIFE PATH**. Restrict firearms to *Gunhoplites* and *Endocutioners* only (who should have one each, at max).

Destiny (optional)

A mix of the character's personal ambitions and karma. They don't necessarily have much control over their own **DESTINY**, especially since it is connected to the destiny of others. Players should try to guide their characters towards their fated end, so decide together if you want to put them to mutual use. A player might write-up an arch enemy and some obstacles connected to her character's fate, while the Game Master could come up with a few interesting twists, and perhaps a finale.

It's a matter of taste whether to be open with your character's **DESTINY** or not. Other

players who are aware of it can contribute to its development, but your group might prefer being surprised. You could take this one step further and have the GM roll up character destinies in secret, letting the player discover what's intended for her character as she plays on. The typical inhabitant of *Leviathan* lives a short life, fraught with danger, so don't drag out the resolution for too long. Destinies don't have to interconnect between player characters only. Someone's nemesis might as well be an NPC, if you prefer to run your game with less friction in the group.

If you're assigning traits, feel free come up with your own **DESTINY**, without ties. If not, roll 2d6:

2. Progenitor
3. Heir
4. Conqueror
5. Destroyer
6. Founder
7. Ruler
8. Martyr
9. Nemesis
10. Pariah
11. Prophet
12. Thrall

The **Progenitor** is destined to start a big and powerful bloodline, clan or tribe – thereby making their mark on history, as preserved in the Great Archive. *Possible twists*: Being elevated to loftyburgher; slipping free of the chastity plug; captured for breeding by a Geront. The direct *opposite* **DESTINY** to this one is the **NEMESIS** of the bloodline.

The **Heir** will lawfully inherit property, grounds or an office of some importance. *Twists*: "Everything you can see, from here to the horizon, will one day be yours, my clone"; inheriting a powerful artifact from ancient times; being the only one who can enter the Nave without triggering mines. *Opposite*: The **CONQUEROR**.

The **Conqueror** will, forcibly acquire someone else's property or title. *Twists*: "To crush your enemies, to see them driven before you, and to hear the lamentations of the Helios cultists"; being a reluctant agent for somebody else; becoming a master thief. *Opposite*: The **HEIR**.

The **Destroyer** will, eventually, tear down society and tradition, in some capacity. *Twists*: Leading the Grittizens in revolt; becoming a collaborator and agent for the Subanthropes; being the lucky bugger who finds a sealed vault full of artifacts and thereby ruining the bartering system. *Opposite*: The **FOUNDER**.

The **Founder** is destined to create something that will last throughout time. *Twists*: Instituting a new guild or union; having the Cult of Helios established as the state religion in the Pit; establishing a slave caste consisting of everybody who happens to be left-handed. *Opposite*: The DESTROYER.

The **Ruler** will come into power over an influential organization or movement, lead it, and put their own spin on it. *Twists*: Immortalizing oneself as the greatest art critic in the Worldvale; becoming Prime Magistrator in the Pit; being put on the throne by a mob of plebeians. *Opposite*: The THRALL.

The **Martyr** will eventually be forced to make a tough sacrifice. *Twists*: "I'd rather give my right arm, than see Nicola Grima as chief in this commune"; emerging as the Helios cultist being gobbled up by love; living the tragically plugged romance of Proleo and Juliplebs. *Opposite*: The PROPHET.

A **Nemesis** is someone who – through hatred, dedication or pure luck – will come to pursue and exterminate a family or tribe. *Twists*: The samaritan who unwittingly injects her patients with poison; the bitter changeling; the scorned lover. *Opposite*: The PROGENITOR.

The **Pariah** is destined to become an outcast. *Twists*: Dancing with verminids; suddenly regain the personality you had before the brainwash you were unaware of being subjected to; the plebeian-loving loftyburgher who drags her family with her into destitution. *Opposite*: ANY (your choice).

The **Prophet** is someone who, by inspiration, forces through a costly sacrifice for the greater good, to appease their superiors and higher powers. *Twists*: A surface dweller who leaves her newborn to the Subanthropes; the Endocutioner who punishes crimes that haven't been committed yet; the fungiprole who worships the hypha in her fields as a slumbering god. *Opposite*: The MARTYR.

The **Thrall** is destined to fall into someone else's clutches, and serve them for evermore. *Twists*: A rabid fan who models herself on the gleeman she admires; being revealed to have glands that excrete the juices of immortality; the puppet of true love. *Opposite*: The RULER.

The Lodges (optional)

The LODGES are secret clubs that persist regardless of other barriers in life. If the Cult of Helios had had any internal organization, it might have fit the label. The lodges give their associates caps embroidered with the badge of the order, keep meticulous records of membership and their position in the hierarchy, and have a highly ritualized meeting structure. The lodges strive towards ambitious, long-term goals, and can be excellent employers for PCs. Membership in a lodge is

They bring him in at around the turning of the third glass. My chambers are lit by a single glowblobe. I have abstained from gruel for days now, to tune my impulses, and at the sight of him I can feel my flower throb. The insignias of our family glimmer on the walls. My accessories have been lined on crushed velvet before me: A 'kerchief drenched in ether, a well-oiled nine-tailed cat, a pair of ciseled handcuffs. He gallantly rests his hands on his hips, while taking in the premises. Seems unused to being unplugged, to the ease of his liberated condition. I draw his scent in – a whiff of innocence, like perfume in between these stained and potent old walls. Now, he realizes that the doors have been locked behind him. There is no escape. I follow his every move eagerly, as he takes a springing step into the hall and asks what kind of absurdity this might be, and where is his betrothed, Madame Gilderbrood? Such an exquisite naïvité! As if he was in any kind of position to make demands. I smile to myself and shuffle a few feet closer in the dark, to better scent this new bouquet of nervousness puffing from him. While I am entranced by snuffling, he tries to gather courage by talking about his plebeian-born father, how this first of his line supposedly gained a measure of recognition in his day by putting down various Subanthropes, and that the uplifted warrior blood in his children's veins deserves respect. Such past concerns are, however, unfit palaver for my suites. Unfit, altogether! Annoyed, I turn up the light. More glowglobes come to life, illuminating my majestic GREATNESS! He gasps in shock. The doors are still sealed. The time has come to initiate my fourth husband in his familial duties. My hundreds of pounds of blessed, blue-blooded überon might press him against the wall, while I tear at his coquettish frills and take what I want.

– Imploria Gilderbrood, Progenitrix

open to anyone who can actually find them, and join. Some end up in altogether the wrong company.

If you want your character to be a member of a lodge, you should roll 1d6 for it, regardless of whether you have assigned traits during character generation, or not:

1. **Odium**
2. **The Clique**
3. **The Directorate**
4. **Salt of the Endurium -
The Union of Merry Chums**
5. **The Esoteric Order of Autocthonianism**
6. **Pseudo-lodge**

This secret organization is put up as a front for some other purpose than regular club activities. It might have been created as a support group for a loftyburgher family, as cover for the Sebastocrate's secret police, or as a sham instituted by the Magistrateship to facilitate the registering and punishing of wannabe club members.

Odium

Motto

The profane throngs are like sweet grapes, when trampled!

Beliefs

The plebeians are vile scum, unworthy of even licking the boots of their superiors. Ideally, their weak blood should be drained into the Abyss, but since the Sebastocrate is unwilling to depopulate the Pit, the members of Odium have to content themselves by humiliating and repressing the lower castes at every opportunity. The Grittizen has many common traits with the verminids. Like them, they crawl in the mud, under the spell of bestial urges, unable to even express themselves in a cultivated manner. Out of the mighty frame of the überon, however, a new race shall one day burst! This will be the Hyperanthrope, a dominant entity, the penultimate branch on a lofty, swollen tree. The purpose of Odium is to further this development.



Undertakings

Members hand out pamphlets and organize parades in Chanty Town to recruit more supporters for their cause. Grittizens are encouraged to wear brightly colored hats and cones, to make it easier to identify them (and to improve a sniper's aim). The zeppelins hovering above the Pit carry fire extinguishing foam in big tanks, but Odium strives to replace their load with flammable liquids. A typical member of the lodge would be a newly risen loftyburgher, embarrassed of their past, or some tufthunter chief with aspirations to get ahead. However, anyone with big enough delusions of grandeur will be accepted into their ranks.

Resources

Plentiful.

There are sympathizers among the court Sarcomates who manage to divert a lot of supplies to the coffers of the lodge. They also accept donations, both freely gifted contributions and those extracted through violence. Other assets are gained by flattery or fraud.

Organization

Members gather in club houses, arbitrarily run by a chairman called the Grand Baton. The "baton" in question is actually a tattoo needle, used for marking members with the badge of the club. The motif varies from Pit to Pit, but is usually something along the lines of a crushed grape, a boot mark, a burning house, or two crossed-over Verminids engaged in a disgusting embrace. At club meetings members feast, smoke and gossip, while exchanging secret handshakes with one another.

Perks

Access to rare foods, rare company, rare contacts. The lodge holds ranting evenings, to encourage fiery speeches and let the proverbial meanie out of the bottle of fermented milk. Members take oaths on their überon blood (even if the last loftyburgher in their family vanished during the last Eschatose), and verifying that everybody has an impressive lineage is a favorite pastime. Wandering

Technosophers are highly valued for this reason, and may be persuaded to attend. Being a member entails being more churlish than the rest, bragging loudly, and coming up with new and varied ways of exposing plebeians as the parasites they are. The least hesitation to do so could bring suspicions of impurity.

Allies

Odiat Fellows see members of The Clique as potential tools. Even though Odium in comparison seems to talk more and do less, both organizations utilize violence as a means to achieve their goals. The Directorate is a simultaneously envied and feared organization. Odiat Fellows would like to stay on a good footing with them, but are also weary of being infiltrated and manipulated. Apart from other lodges, Odium cultivates positive relations with sympathizers among the Sarcomates and Gunhoplite officers.

Enemies

Thanks to its web of influence, Odium is barely tolerated by the Magistrates as long as they keep up appearances and claim to follow the letter of the law. Individual Endocutioners, however, cannot be so trusted. Odiat Fellows sometimes clash with Cliques, when the latter strike against the Middle Strata, or its servants. The UMC Salters are seen as the worst kind of curs. It would be a happy day if they could all be rooted out.

The Clique

Motto

All the Pit's Hoplites and all the Pit's friends, shan't put the Worldvale together again.

Beliefs

Society is wrong. All things joyful have been turned dull, what was considered to be beautiful has grown ugly, positive change now equals keeping the status quo. Nothing stirs the senses anymore, and life has turned into artless hardship. To free the citizens from the tedious stagnation in between Eschatoses, they must be pushed back to a more simple and pure level. Consider the Verminids, harmoniously wriggling down in the Abyss, like bloated livestock. Are they not happy? Could they wish for more in life? No! And so, the state of the Verminid is an ideal to strive for. To reach that state, all who stand in the way must be stabbed with sharpened poles, smashed to pieces with heavy clubs, or blown to smithereens by bombs made out of compressed yeast and dung. Only the Verminid is perfect, and those whose sensibilities are keen enough to fully appreciate its qualities call themselves The Clique.

Undertakings

Routine is death, custom a plague and even membership in this lodge might turn into a boring duty. For this reason, war between lodge houses is not unheard of. Cliques only meet when absolutely necessary, to plan sabotage. Not showing up, though, means to risk being pointed out as a traitor to the cause. The trick is to participate just enough to make an impression, dazzling the others with your snarky comments, and then avoid being called upon to actually take part in the action. The more cronies you have in the club, the easier it is to make one of them take on the job instead. Apart from plotting acts of vandalism, lodge members discuss the finer points of their ideology. Some claim that the drifter mob as a whole can be seen as a higher entity than the Verminid – the mob never produces anything, just loots whatever it finds, which is seen as a noble and primal enterprise. Others claim that the Cult of Helios, or even the barbaric Subanthropes, have set the mark. Augmenting with other Cliques on matters of preference is seen as a goal in itself.

Resources

Scarce. Sometimes, the lodge accepts gifts from sympathizers, but only things of point-less beauty. They are not interested in owning property. Consider the animals, do they have possessions? No!

Organization

Everybody wants to drag The Clique down, so exclusiveness is necessary. Individual Cliques only fraternize with each other in the General Assembly, held up on the Surface once in a while. There, members will hold elaborate speeches, posture, yell and quarrel for days. The din is so loud that you can hardly make yourself heard, so many paint their argument as pictograms on a placard. Naturally, their opponents try to tear these down, spurred on by howling misologists, so the best way to make your point come across is often to physically bang the opposition in the head with it. At the end of the day, the few placards still remaining settle the agenda.

Perks

Once an argument has been won, there is a certain bliss in acquiescing to it – even when that would entail marching in good order to the Vertex and jumping into the Abyss, to feed the magnificent Verminids. The assemblies can be so rousing that Cliques start speaking in tongues. This is seen as the first stage of a process called verminization, which often leads to winding themselves around the legs of another and biting them

furiously in the ankles. Smart members can manipulate their entourage to do their bidding, and cynical individuals have ample opportunities for plunder during the lodge's militant actions.

Allies

Sometimes, Odium backs the enterprises of The Clique. Odiat Fellows have no objections against returning to a more primal state – as long as the plebeians are hit first. Some Cliques show goodwill towards vagrants and Helios cultists, at least theoretically (many of them are too unrefined and uncouth to endure in real life), and the sentiment may at times be returned.

Enemies

At other times, the bootlicking ways of the Odiat Fellows anger the Cliques. The two lodges love to hate each other. UMC Salters are a natural enemy and must be obliterated. Endocutioners, and even the Sebastocrate, are always on the hunt for Cliques. They are too disruptive to be tolerated. So, even though taking a dive into the Abyss would be the most obvious way forwards for the masses, some obstruct this neat and tidy solution.

The Directorate

Motto

(secret)

Beliefs

(secret)

Those who are even aware of the existence of this lodge assume that its purpose is to rule from the shadows, be the power behind the throne. It would only be logical if there was a higher power pulling the strings, somewhere, since Titanpit society is organized in more or less the same way all over the Worldvale. The Directorate are the invisible puppeteer. It is possible that they work for the Geronts, but such matters can never be discussed, since there could be ancient listening devices hidden just about anywhere.

Undertakings

(unknown).

But they probably try to infiltrate various centers of power. Lower ranked members are likely never told the reasoning behind their orders, and might not even be aware that they are doing the bidding of The Directorate. They are probably instructed to befriend as many movers and shakers as possible, identify their weaknesses, and extract binding promises from them. Spinning a wide web of influence could be a goal in itself. The lodge might be involved in placing as many sleeper agents as it can, across the Worldvale,

in preparation for some unknown climax. Nobody knows.

Resources

(unknown).

Probably unlimited. The Directorate may be restricted in the use of assets by the need to keep their control over them secret. Gear would be of less importance than means of power. A Directorate Sarcomate with one finger on the self-destruct button of the Sebastocrate's personal zeppelin would be way more valuable to the organization than any amount of guns secreted away down in the Manufactory Clusters.

Organization

(unknown)

The base of the lodge could be structured into cells of three or four members. If so, one of those would also be a member of a higher cell, and so on up to whomever is ultimately in command. Some think that Directors aren't organized in any particular way – that they are communicating by telepathy, a power supposedly awoken by some kind of mind-altering mushroom. If this is true, then maybe those who can tolerate heavier doses are automatically assigned the higher ranks, by virtue of brain power. It is also possible that all Directors are clones of one and the same Geront, acting in unison. Yet another, although less popular, theory is that the whole damn conspiracy is just a figment of imagination – that mentally unstable citizens are simply following their inner voices, and recruit members for some insane cause they think they can fathom by interpreting random signs and omens in their surroundings, without any coherence or cooperation at all.

Perks

(your guess is as good as ours)

At the very least, confidence from belonging to a shadowy network with ties all over the Worldvale. Following a higher cause, priding oneself in one's silence and absolute obedience. The possibility of infiltrating and affecting levels of society that would otherwise be unreachable. The excitement of being a secret agent, and belonging to a select few.

Allies

None.

Enemies

Everybody.

The Worldvale fears this organization like no other. Nobody really knows anything real about this organization. It might even be imaginary, which would be ironic for those who think they are working for it.

Salt of the Endurium - The Union of Merry Chums

Motto

All hail the great machine, we are the cogs!

Beliefs

The doctrine of essences in the Survival Rule is one element short - sweat. This forgotten essence glorifies the plebeian. Everyone should pitch in for the greater good! Something in the very nature of toiling makes the worker into a better person. Life is tough, and should be so. If it doesn't kill you, it makes you stronger. Grittizens should teach each other to endure hardships. A good, solid cuffing may prove to be the best present you have ever gave, or indeed, received.

Undertakings

To compete in taking on the longest and most difficult shifts. This lodge is probably the least secretive of them all. News of chores spread like wildfire from member to member. When someone spots cracks in a wall, or if Chanty Town goes up in flames again, or should acid liquids spew out of the piping, crowds of UMC workers band together to fix things at a frenetic pace. Leisure labor activities are even organized between shifts. Volunteers scrub the floors, carry debris from the Vertex to the Base and back again, and spill needles on the ground so they can pick them up and sort them. No dawdling! Pleb up, and do what you gotta do.

Resources

Good, if they ever used them. Salters collect half of what their members earn in the Clusters and dismantle it. This to delay an overabundance that might otherwise stop the wheels of production from turning. Labor creates a community spirit, as well as strengthening the body and mind. Work is its own reward!

Organization

The UMC is strongest down in the Clusters. Members gather in Chummeries to distribute tasks among themselves. Those who are not in the Union are pushed from their jobs, when possible. Toiling is for toiling's sake, salaries beget idleness, and idleness is death. Really dogged quarter-shifters become mout-hpieces of the organization. They lead efforts to take over areas not already dominated by the UMC, and hold uplifting eulogies to increase the working pace.

Perks

A sense of righteous diligence and prestige, especially compared with those who are

afraid to dirty their hands. The more grit you have, the more respect you get. The face of a particularly outstanding hero of drudgery can be carved into a wall to inspire others. Their names are mentioned with awe during radio programs. Communes with a strong UMC presence elect the toughest old gritwolf to be their chief. No member needs to fear a beating for failing to meet the production targets, all they need to do is return the next day and shift into higher gear. Some clubs announce their own "lacksadaisy of the cycle", as a warning to slackers, and dress the idler in some sewn-together garish finery especially made for the purpose, lock them into a chif-fonier, and force feed until they burst.

Allies

A toiler knows her place. For this reason, many Salters are in awe of the Odiat Fellows. Chiefs generally like and support the UMC, particularly if they can manage to sneak a few chosen goodies off for themselves from the disassembly heaps.

Enemies

As far as the UMC are concerned, there is no need for hostility between themselves and The Clique. Their acts of sabotage create more work opportunities, so why complain? The Esoterics, on the other hand, are reviled because their ventures reduce the number of available labourers.

The Esoteric Order of Autocthonianism

Motto

Death is the best teacher!

Beliefs

Existence is pointless. Knowing this fundamental truth, only the most extreme stimulus can stir the spirit - seeking out that ecstasy which can only be found at the brink of death, an experience that makes even the most futile job seem like a precious alternative. Both the charity-milking plebeian and the punch-drunk loftyburgher eventually tire of their repetitive provisions, but one who has tasted the grail of death will never grow weary of sipping that brew. She will likely meet with an accident first. The Esoteric Order seeks death, in new and marvelous ways, and does their best to not quite croak just yet. If they fail, at least they've helped to delay the Eschatose.

Undertakings

The lodge as such doesn't do much, other than seeing that its members fulfill their commitments. Members challenge death in various

spectacular ways - for the adrenaline kick. Only the most surprisingly exotic risk can eventually arouse them from apathy.

Organization

Esoterics gather in circles of thirteen to present any sensational plans they have come up with since last. The criteria for a good deed is that the challenge should be potentially lethal, never have been done before, and give both the one attempting it, and onlookers, the maximum rush. When they have agreed on what to do, members put their marks on chips and throw them in a pot. Whoever wins the draw gets to perform the deed! The others will watch to ensure that it is performed with verve and style. The only way to leave the Esoteric Order is to have a fatal accident. Quitters are pursued and made an example of. They are fully aware of this, so the wetjob usually turns into a worthy deed in itself.

Perks

Experiencing the rush of rushes after a successful attempt, going where no prole has gone before, hearing your name being mentioned by just about everyone who is anybody in the Pit, getting attention from the high-and-mighty, having your hand shaken and your back slapped as you pass by the queue to the milt vault in your very own VIP lane. But you also risk being chopped into meatballs by the propellers of a zeppelin, end up as a mummified husk hanging from the cables that crisscross the Pit, or slam down on the roof of the Justitory Barge at close to supersonic speeds. Some members join because they are firm believers in the survival of the fittest, others harbor a dark deathwish they are unable to realize on their own. A few are drafted unwittingly, so the circle can sit thirteen around the table.

Allies

None. Among the Odiat Fellows, there are those who see the practicality of plebeians removing themselves from the Worldvale. The problem is only that Esoterics actually hail from all over the Pit. The terminally bored court Sarcomate is just as likely a prospect as the fungiprole who are too arthritic to continue trudging in the cisterns.

Enemies

None in particular. The Salters, of course - killjoys as they are - try to put a stop to any lodge activities. It is not unheard of that Endocutioners interrupt circle gatherings, if nothing else then to close down the planning of deeds that might damage the Pit. Or to arrest female members before they break the law by committing suicide.

THE TRUTH

“EROS, one of many asteroids in the belt between Mars and Jupiter. Eros follows an orbit which almost reaches Earth. Eros is a two mile long cigar-shaped rock. It was used in the greatest plan in the history of mankind, staged by the man who was originally called The Great Ruler, and now The Grand Designer. Who else could have come up with a project that would take sixty years to prepare, and five hundred years to finish.”

– *Captive Universe*, Harry Harrison

What follows are some of the underlying causes for the state of affairs in *Leviathan*. Use them or lose them, as you prefer. They are good for a few twists and turns about the true nature of things, if you let characters stumble upon them. Feel free to modify anything you don't like. And if you intend to play a regular character in this game, it might be advisable not to read any further, including the following adventure seeds.

On Origin and History

Many millennia ago, mankind built a series of generation ships that were sent out towards the closest star systems, to colonize strange worlds and spread the species across space. This was a time of progress, but also a time of looming danger and extinguishing natural resources. The first of the arks weren't particularly big, pushed by solar pressure on enormous photon sails. They carried various experimental life support and security systems on board, but nevertheless vanished in space, one after another. With time, asteroids started being hollowed out and made into habitats for surplus population from Earth – usually undesirables singled out by the ruling elite. As they grew in number, the asteroids were fitted as crude ships and sent on their way to distant stars. ►



Eventually this activity stopped. The arks that were still coursing through space lost contact with their homeworld, and before long – with each other.

At one point in its journey – when knowledge had started to dim and skills were rusting over – one of the arks, the fifty-seventh of its kind; LVI-Atom, passed through a vast cloud of dark matter. It wasn't particularly dense. The cloud consisted of molecules spread meters apart, but it was big enough to have developed, over the aeons, a kind of slow, alien self-awareness. It fed on photons. The cyclopean thoughts of this entity quickened as it drifted closer to a star system, and slowed into a state hibernation afterwards. LVI-Atom had, not unlike a bullet passing through a brain, set its course straight through this being. Waste energy from the ship's engines was enough to make it stir.

By pure mind effort, the entity coagulated parts of itself into antibodies, to remove the disturbance. Their shapes were influenced by impressions that the cosmic dreamer caught from minds on board the foreign object, and became black Malachites – with bodies elongated from a zero-G environment, and equipped with remarkable limbs to aid them in their purge. In their own mode of communication, an instinctual system of electric surges and photorays, these outcroppings referred to themselves as The Hungering, and entered the generation ship to fight the infection of their parent cloud.

These Unmen swept through the ship and consumed everything in their way. Digestion of foreign matter had negative effects on them. Their diet started a corrosion from within, and as the Malachites tried to remake themselves to resist this process, their secretions twisted the humans around them too. Mankind reproduced faster than the Unmen could devour them. Their poisonous discharges grew more concentrated, but nothing seemed to be sufficient. Possessing only rudimentary intelligence, the offshoots needed to communicate with the mother cloud, and withdrew to the inner power-plant to feed on photons and raise the volume of their voices, as they called out to the void. By this time, however, the generation ship had long since left the cosmic dreamer behind. Receiving no answer, in their simplistic way The Hungering started debating what to do – should they continue trying to fight the inevitable or perhaps assimilate the humans into their own flesh, to at least neutralize them? Should they suck the ship dry of energy in order to send a cry of deafening intensity? All possible variables had to be calculated in minute detail, to reach the optimal solution of their dilemma. While they were engaged in this, the power-plant started coming apart

due to the effects that their energy theft had on the system. They still circle there, hidden behind oily exhausts, and haven't reached a conclusion yet.

After the long years of invasion, living platforms that were once paradisiacal now lay ruined. Substantial parts of ship machinery had been broken or was running on emergency power. Important equipment had been hidden away in bunkers and sealed vaults, but could no longer be reached under the debris. Life support staggered, vital systems went static, maintenance was long overdue and repairs impossible. The crew had desperately tried to make themselves less edible to escape the aliens, manipulating their own hormones and genes, but ultimately lost control over developments. The least corrupt were put to sleep in cryogenic berths in the hull, where many still lie. The most deformed belonged to the passengers, and most of them slunk away and hid in the big cesspools of the interior.

Among the awake, some crew members still kept ritualized memories of what the generation ship was, and how to run it. These ancients, or Geronts, had managed to escape the genocide by grafting parts of the Unmen onto themselves, to seem less like snacks and more like damaged alien specimens. They no longer registered as food. The surgery had unforeseen consequences, as the ship itself could not read their feromones, compound eyes, or fingerprints from slithering malachite-like limbs. But they did inherit some degree of the Unmen's resistance to the ageing process, and spent the coming centuries trying to repair the ship and save at least a portion of its inhabitants.

On Flora and Fauna

It may be noted that there are a lot of fungi and mushrooms in the Worldvale. Fungus is probably the most prevalent living organism on the generation ship, today. When things started going awry on board, spores from an experimental bioengineered species spread from a lab and started mutating at a tremendous pace. Now, it's used for everything from foodstuffs to building materials. There are still petrified remains of vegetables and plants around, once stored until arrival in hermetically sealed depots. Some of them can still be brought back to life, and those are extremely valuable. Animal species are restricted to various pests that entered the ship with the crew – lice, cockroaches, flies. Where humanity goes, the rat will follow, and this holds true for *Leviathan* too. Their mutated descendants live deep below the Abyss, in the very hull of the ship.

On Cycle Shifts

"None of your gods exist, but there is one divinity, The One God, The Grand Designer. He made all of this, planned it and built it and breathed life into it so that it came to begin. The sun rose out of its tunnel for the first time, flared and started its orbit in the sky. Water sprung forth in the water-fall and continued through the awaiting riverbed."

– *Captive Universe*, Harry Harrison

Time is measured in "cycles" in *Leviathan*. A cycle can be any perceptible interval, like a working shift or a life span. The most defining interval of time is that which passes in between the great floods. An Eschatose is triggered when trash and sewage raises the water to a critical level across a median of all Titanpits, at a point which has been calculated as the optimal time to wash the insides of the ship clean, for hygiene purposes. The passengers were never intended to live down these gigantic drains they call Pits, but when the main power-plant and internal biosphere regulator ("Helios") broke down, other habitats were no longer fit for human life.

The plan was to shelter passengers on garden terraces and platforms, raised above the inner deck. Today, their only remains are naked pillars surrounded by massive rubble. Enormous time spans of evolution, mutation, and other forced changes have eventually made the modern inhabitant resilient against many of the perils that would have killed an original passenger. You may have noticed that they're never called "people" in the game. That's because they're not really human anymore, and are consequently registered as garbage by the ship's automatic sensors.

More twisted life-forms also hail from the original passenger stock, most notably the chattering Subanthropes and the grotesque Verminids. They live in radiated and heavily polluted areas, and have changed faster and for the worse. All former humans show marks of weird, alien tampering. Verminids are amphibian, and take advantage of the Eschatose to breed and spread. Subanthropes generally lie dormant in great ziggurats on the Surface – structures which once functioned as irrigation systems and water cisterns. They are naturally empty of water during the Eschatose, and perfect for Subanthrope packs.

On the Future

"The planets were unsuitable. We could have experienced The Arrival, but we were not strong enough to resist temptation."

– *Captive Universe*, Harry Harrison

In the ship's interior, what were once people started forming a new culture based on fragmental knowledge of their past, growing myths, and fears. A terrible civil war, preserved in the Great Archive under the heading "The Cataclysm", swept away the last glimmerings of insight. Still operable machinery was destroyed. The Magistrates are what is left of the strongest faction today, the Endocutioners being what remain of their elite troops, and the judicature system with its Survival Rule the vestigial remnants of the dictates their society tried to impose on the ship. The Technosophers, on the other hand, are that faction's intelligence corps.

While the Cataclysm was raging most intensely, the generation ship quietly arrived at its end destination. Many course changes – some automatic, others made in panic when the crew tried to escape the invaders – led to a different terminus than originally intended. LVI-Atom has been orbiting a fully habitable planet for more than a millennium. Blinking consoles stand unattended, while cryptic readings tick on panels in dust covered control rooms near the hull. There are still a few original members of the crew lying in cryogenic sleep who would be able to fly the ark, but as more and more systems shut down, berths thaw and lives are extinguished. Every orbit is a wasted opportunity. *Leviathan* silently watches down on its Behemoth, but nobody is aware of it.

NARRATIVES

Here are a two adventure seeds, each good for about an evening of play, if you take the peculiarities of citizen behavior into account.

The Old Man and the Fleapit Setting

The Chanty Town, anywhere in the Worldvale.

Backdrop

As long as anyone can remember, the commune Serendipity has been overseen by Maximilian the chief. He is starting to grow a bit feeble, however, and now that election time is drawing closer, two competitors have suddenly cropped up. One is the former loftyburgher Madame Callosine, who shamed her family and was cast out from the Middle Strata. The other is the audacious hypnohandler Lythegobs. Both are campaigning hard against the present chief. Madame Callosine has hired a misologist to spread bitterness among the plebeians. She is also cultivating rumors that the Sebastocrate is planning to evacuate the commune to make

Day 1.

My name is Purthe Castlock. I am a Technosopher hailing from the commune of Shinefastnesse, in the Titanpit they call Morelgrave. This will be a diary of my journeys, as I venture out onto the Surface for the first time, accompanied by my apprentice Blyghta. In youth, I swore never to abandon my post before full stock had been taken of file cabinet 367B and its lore been put to memory. My colleagues, bless their minds, have never overtly criticized me for remaining in the Archive, but as I have reached the autumn of my years, I think it is time to do so. The plan is to follow a map of the area outside Rumblecleft, a pit surrounded by vast fields of cataclysm, where there is a curious building no one has examined in a great while.

Day 3.

We are outside! I find it hard to describe the terror we felt when the assuring walls of the Archive gave way to a humongous, gaping nothingness above. We clung to the ground. It seemed as if we could fall right into the Daedalosphere at any instance. Helios looked like an smoldering glowblobe to me, almost close enough to touch. But I better not think of Him at all! How is it even possible to live out here without going insane?

Day 28.

The heat makes things hazy, but we can see the Archive again, in the distance. Have been walking in circles. Blyghta has gone to try and barter for some supplies. Cursed map! The forest of pillars has been drawn in the wrong place (it is where it should be, says Blyghta, but I amended her with my walking stick). We will join a small caravan, here, travelling in the same direction as us. The Scuttlewog family, apparently.

Day 29.

Traffickers are intolerable. You simply cannot converse with them in any meaningful way. They have no grasp of sign language. No, I have no use for any more stogies! Or anything else, for that matter.

Day 47.

Left the caravan at last (for goodness' sake) at the outskirts of the first cataclysm field. There were only empty ruins there, no important find to make. Have sampled a kind of spiky toadstool I have never seen before. My apprentice tasted it, but it didn't agree with her.

Day 64.

Have not written much, lately. We have managed to flee, just barely, from a pack of Subanthropes who caught our scent. We squeezed into a narrow topshaft, hidden in the terrain, but the place was full of all sorts of criminal elements.

Day 66.

Blyghta is feeling worse. We will be forced to strike camp here. The "here" is a point, somewhere, in the barren wasteland. Seems unsafe, but Blyghta is unable to continue in her present condition.

Day 68.

A marvelous sight! Dark clouds on the horizon turned out to be some kind of fliers, if I am not mistaken. Huge, chitinous creatures swarming around – oh thought, who art in cranium! We must have found very Ikaryon itself! The Geront citadel mentioned in line 16 on card 94:82, third drawer from the top on the left hand side of the cabinet. All the signs are there, it has been constructed as a floating rock, slowly gliding through the air in our direction – so large that it actually obscures Helios. We are in its shadow, now, and it is growing dark, much like how I imagine things to be down in the Abyss. Despite the gloom, I think I can see dangling cables and strange crystals hanging from its belly. It seems as if they are lowering something now?

Neks tay

Tis Blyghta ryetin. Mastur be gone. Eye dnoe wha dems did o him. Airnyweir ah yamme up onna flyerin eysle noue. Thur wassum laddar an we clymbe. Eye gotter carry them stuff lyke eye all ways do but eye hadd a peyn inside an so eye gotter ta switch loads fer this buuk. We gotter supperatered ore lost o summat airnyweir eye wuss lone allasudden an theyr came summun in funny clothers an tooker me wheyr eyem be sit at now. Is beirn awhyle noue. Is lyke summat be pokin outar me lyke sum ekstra arm onna tummy. Eye kin wave at them flyerbugs wiff it. Them be wavin back.

room for fire preventive foamworks, and that she is the only one who could possibly stop that, through her old contacts. Simultaneously, the confident and strangely appealing stare of master Lythegobs is beaming from posters, crammed with felicitous pictograms, all over the area. The exposure makes it hard not to mumble his name over and over, like a mantra. And now it seems as if someone has decided to step up the pace. Today, on the morning of Election Day, the milk taproom caught on fire, almost killing the venerable Maximilian. At the very least, one of the arsonous candidates seems to be guilty of “splinntering a duelling”, and to causing “dysturbance of order”, as the Survival Rule puts it. This would not only disqualify them from the race, but give the commune a bad name - and likely attract dangerous attention from the Endocutioners.

The Hidden Truth

All three candidates are corrupt. Maximilian is only a bit more adept at deception. He started the fire himself in an attempt to win the sympathy of the crowd. Rather successfully too, since many are visiting his sickbed to swear allegiance to their singed chief. Madame Callosine, on her hand, is lying about the evacuation. She is an Odiat Fellow and despises crude plebeians and their ways, but has to try and appear as an important and beneficial person in order to get elected and have a slim chance of regaining her lost position in society. As a former überon, she is not only majestic in stature, but also unused to being gainsaid or having to explain herself - something which easily surfaces when she's under pressure. Lythegobs, lastly, has coated his propaganda posters with hallucinogenics extracted from amanitas. If his gaze draws a person close enough, the individual will fall in a fume-induced trance, and their mind can easily be imprinted by the pictograms with a subconscious desire to vote for him.

Carrot and Stick

Characters who live in Serendipity can easily be involved in the drama. If none hails from there, one of their faces could be strikingly similar to a second type of poster, glued on top of Lythegobs' glaring mug. The portrait is supposed to look like just about anybody, an everyman of the Pit, to make the citizens vote for themselves - sharing power. The dissenter responsible might be members of one of the lodges, or just some idealistic citizen. All other candidates send their campaign workers (pugilists) to “have a chat” with the PCs. This will likely convince them to find out what the Pit is going on.

Further Investigations

In the burned down husk of the drinking hall, someone has crammed a small, badly scribbled note between two of the floorboards: “maks threattun tu kylle me if me dunnet lit tha thing uppe but no o myne fault sweet endoqueueshunerr as me be tellynge no lye wiff them letturs here yerrs trooly feodor”. If no character can read, they have to find someone who does. As far as any of the residents know, that would be Madame Callosine. The author, Feodor, is one of Maximilian's pugilists. If the PCs ask about individuals with odd backgrounds, they hear a few tall tales but can also unearth that Feodor once served in the Middle Strata. At a guess, he learned his letters there. Looking into Callosine's affairs would entail getting some answers out of certain personages of importance, something such august peers aren't usually keen on giving, but it could be accomplished through well-placed contacts, or guile. Lythegobs' dirty tactics can be revealed simply by examining one of his posters. If confronted, he won't deny drugging the voters. The show must go on, as he puts it, and he claims not having done anything illegal.

Twists

1. Maximilian is even greater a crook than anybody would suspect. In his youth, he happened upon the mummified husk of a Sebaste who died during the Golden Phase, and found a Caeye on the corpse. This unexpected fortune allowed him to unplug himself and take over the commune, and in time populate it with his own progeny. That's also why he gets re-elected every time. They're all family.
2. Someone familiar with the customs of the Middle Strata might notice the curious fact that Madame Callosine didn't bring any relatives with her into shame and banishment. Actually, she hasn't been cast out at all. Her family placed her in Serendipity to see if she was tough enough to be their claimant for the throne of the Sebastocrate. Many noteworthy überons are now keeping the commune under close watch. This means that other, capable individuals also end up in the spotlight, and could be well rewarded for their efforts (as well as risk being eliminated by rival houses, who pay just as much attention).
3. Everybody loves a bit of the exotic in their lives every now and then, and the arrival of the PCs is the most exciting thing that has happened to Serendipity in a long while. The interest generates popularity for the group and suddenly

their own “campaign” turns very real as citizens start to back them up, even demand that they run for real! The crowd won't take no for an answer. If the PCs refuse, the enthusiasts will take offence, and they might have to deal with an angry lynch mob.

Rewards

Ample opportunities for bribes, from several sources simultaneously. They could find bent, half rolled stogies left as a tribute in their sleeping rolls. Someone might shake their hand and press a shiny new wrench, fresh from the Clusters, into it - to underline who they should show gratitude to, and indicate the gravity of the conflict. If Maximilian wins, the PCs could have free drinks for the rest of their lives, once the taproom has been rebuilt. They could also seize lasting sovereignty over the commune if they win the election themselves. And don't forget that there's a Caeye floating around.

Little Shack on the Surface

Setting

A recently erected topside dwelling.

Backdrop

Daddy Hurbellow Yoker with his two sons, Amblin and Hops, were neutered and cast out of the Pit for committing various acts of lewdness. They found some very fertile fungal pastures and built a humble abode there, where they now live in peace and quiet. One morning, young Amblin saw a tent on the other side of the patch, and went to investigate things. Inside were strangers, and he got trounced. The pugilist Woemack, the freedigger Dirge and their chief, Sapphire, had come to prospect for mushrooms, and were intent on robbing the harvest of the Yoker family!

The Hidden Truth

Once upon a time Hurbellow and Sapphire were bound together by a letter of unplugging. This remarkable document allowed them to remove their chastity restrictions and make exactly two babies together. His new liberated state, however, intoxicated Hurbellow, and he was struck by libidopathy. Spreading his nectar all too freely damned them both. Hurbellow was forced to leave the Pit and take his young along, while Sapphire was sentenced to hard labor in the patina ducts, down by the Base. She has now returned to exact revenge, by taking his fungal yield.

Carrot and Stick

A character on a life path equal to, or more humble than, misologist could be related to daddyYoker. If so, Hops is sent to ask the blood of his blood to come and act as a mediator (hoping that their family ties would grant him an advantage). Alternately, the PCs could simply stumble right into the debacle, whilst journeying on the Surface. Either party might bribe or threaten them into involving themselves.

Further Investigations

Both sides do everything in their power to get exclusive proprietorship over the fields. They grind their teeth, weep, and offer the mediators part of the profits if they support the right camp. A possible, less probable, solution would be to reconcile Sapphire with Hurbellow. Another could be to stress that neither side has the means to store or transport the output harvested from the grounds – they need to cooperate.

Twists

1. Nobody has actually tasted the crop yet. It has grown poisonous, since a particularly ulcerous vagrant fell into the mud a few weeks ago, who is now slowly decomposing at the bottom. Searching the closely vegetated center of the patch would reveal two shriveled feet, sticking out of the sludge. If the state of affairs isn't discovered, catastrophe looms.
2. Hurbellow is dead. He fell to the ground one day, but his sons needed to keep up appearances and have managed to catch a Subanthrope, which they've dressed in daddy's shirt and hat, keeping it hidden behind a curtain in their shack. They honestly believe that Hurbellow had a lawful claim on the property. As long as he is "alive", their future is secure. They have no real way of resisting Sapphire, but they keep the charade going. The problem is that the Subanthrope is growing very hungry...
3. "Woemack" is an undercover Endocutioner. His mission is to unravel the black market for mushroom bartering. At present, he's only waiting for the right opportunity to pull on his mask and start judging the lot of them. When the PCs involve themselves, they make themselves complicit to some degree, and could be assigned to take on punishments carried over from criminals who can't take the whole sentence.

Rewards

As much food as the PCs can carry. If they are smart, dried mushrooms would make great bartering chips, for a very long time.



Onomatoverse dedicated to Madame Hytalia by Sartorius Grubbe, here presented in the two classical styles

Pro Primo:

The Popular Canto.

From vertexed plains where FRIZZLED eyes burn,
to the deeeeeepts and their whoosh-whoosh-waves,
stretches our longstanding glorious Pit.
Stretches like the maternal Hytalia!
Hoplites! Go BRACKA her lips
free from the crustlike pains that ail her;
the monsteRRRs who clatter expanses.
Shrooms, mum your joyful hymn:
Rih-reeee, rih-reeee, fraFOMP!
And lo, the harvest goes
into the tummies of toilers.
Rih-reeee, fraFOMP! Into a song for Hytalia.
WORR-kers in pulsing clusters,
muscle the oh-so-fierce rigmarole:
DANGG-FPAH! DANGGGG-FPAH!
Salty sweat and the joys of the job.
Hytalia, highness! Hornblowing hump!
To the halls of surging Hytalia hobble
her court in hearkening haste. Hytalia!

Pro Secundo:

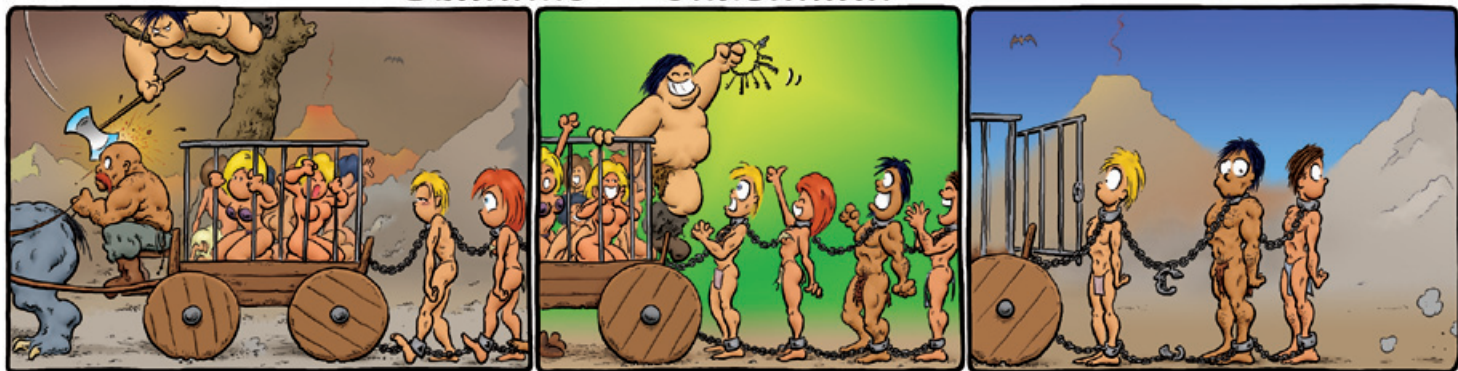
The High or Noble Canto.

luuuufwoosch FRIZZLE ommmmzapp,
Mwauuuuum boommm whoosh-whoosh,
hah! Wyoiwooh!
Haaah, ooh mmmh. Hytalia!
Hrumpf! BRACKA-BRACK
uurrrr, crusstrr huuh-huuh-huuh,
RRRRR! clakaklakaklack.
Fluffafluffafungh, mummerymum:
Rih-reeee, rih-reeee, fraFOMP!
Aaaaah: mjaom, mjaom, haha! Mmmm.
Rih-reeee, fraFOMP! Hytalia!
WORR-and tschang-tschang-chugga-chugga
grrrr! Oh! Grrrr! Oh:
DANGG-FPAH! DANGGGG-FPAH!
Whoah, sprrt-sprrt-sprrt hnnnngh. Oooh.
HYTALIA, frafrah! Blugh bhaWOOO!
Hytalia kerflorbh shufflashufflashufflah
iiiiih, ooooo, eheheheh. Hytalia!

BERNARD THE BARBARIAN 2012



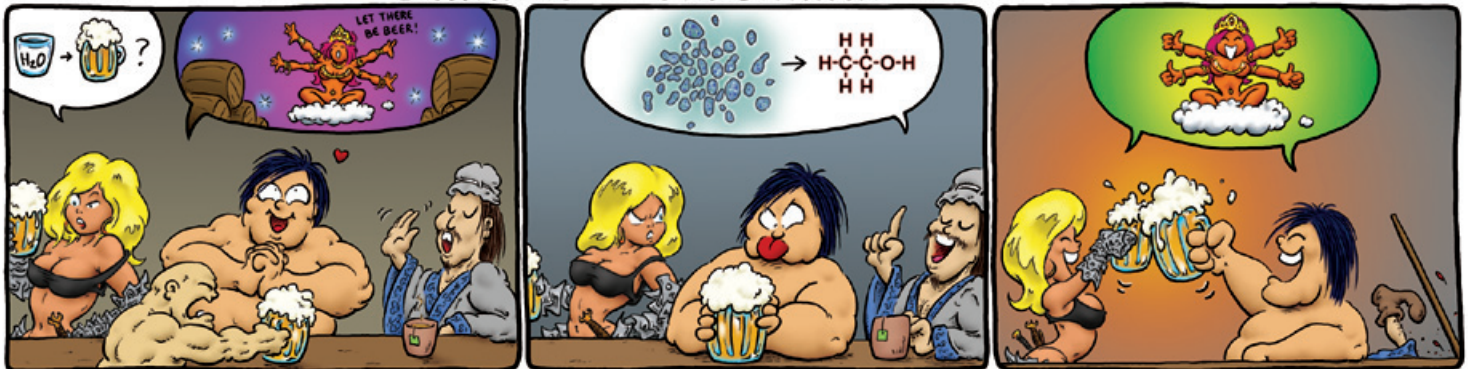
BERNARD THE BARBARIAN THE LIBERATOR



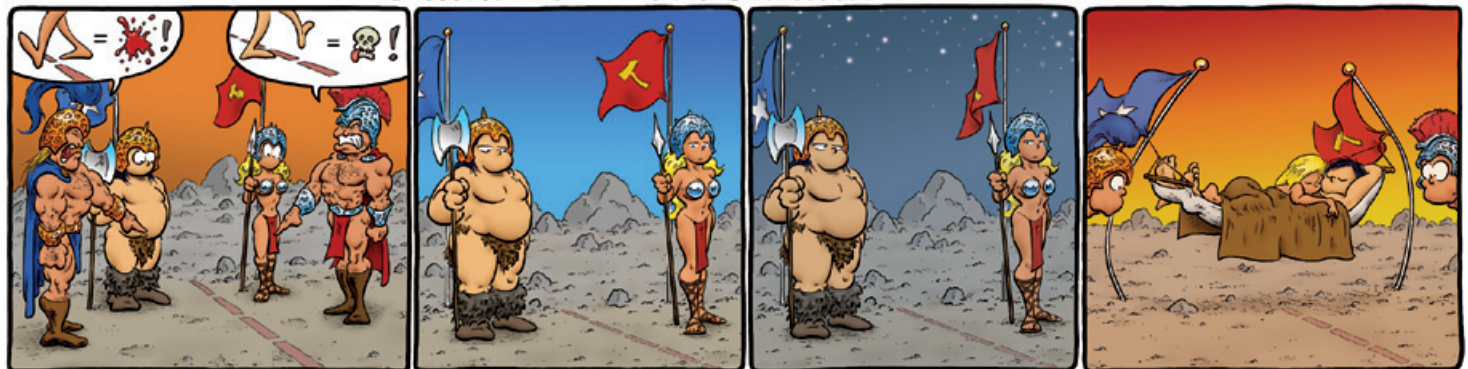
BERNARD THE BARBARIAN ON FULL THROTTLE



BERNARD THE BARBARIAN ET DIVINA VERITAS



BERNARD THE BARBARIAN ACROSS THE BORDER



BERNARD THE BARBARIAN TAKES THE PLUNGE



ICHNEUMON

A PARASITE STEAMPUNK RPG

TEXT **KENNETH HITE**
ILLUSTRATION **LUKAS THELIN**

"I own that I cannot see as plainly as others do, and as I should wish to do, evidence of design and beneficence on all sides of us. There seems to me too much misery in the world. I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the Ichneumonidae with the express intention of their feeding within the living bodies of Caterpillars, or that a cat should play with mice."

— Charles Darwin, 1860

Immense, inhuman presences lurk in the darkness behind the gears and towers of your steampunk world. They plant their own dark insectile dreams in the brains and minds of engineers and explorers, seeking to weave their own threads of conspiracy into the fabric of humanity. We are their unknowing hosts, laboring to build the dizzying spires and impossible artifices they must have for their own species to propagate, to nurture its eggs inside our own dreams. They are Ichneumon, the Wasps in the Walls.

To say they are wasps is to reduce them to the facet perceptible by human senses and minds: they are hive minds or perhaps immense demigods distributed through angles we cannot conceive. But seeing their shape brings a buzzing and a terror and a sense of glittering eyes and quadruplet wings, of many legs stretching past vision, of an ontopositor extending its ultra-reality into our mere space-time. When these stingers touch a human, they coat his mind with a sticky conceptual venom – visions of a world wrapped in brass and steel and spun in metal filigree. Images of metallized ovals or dreadnoughts crossing the skies, drawing behind them gossamer after-images that bind and wrap the face of Heaven. Sketches of great growling grubs of bronze and gray gunmetal clanking across the Earth on treads or rails. Flashes of

cocoons sunk into the Deep, torpedo-cities and teardrop nautilus carrying their sight under the sea, below light. And they enable him – no, compel him – to bring these visions out of their inhumanly faceted brains, and build them in our world.

And when our world has been suitably enmeshed in this alien web, the Ichneumon larvae can hatch. In a gout of flames and colors never seen on Earth, they devour their host world and pour back through the now-tattered dimensional veil. Behind them, a dead terrestrial carapace remains, drained of imagination and thought and reality and life.

This is *Ichneumon*, a parasite steampunk RPG. It infects your existing steampunk game, living behind its scenes and warping its stories. Characters touched by its mechanics do things and pursue aims seemingly alien to the game as it was. The longer it remains in your game, the more your game's ecology reshapes itself around the invisible presences that might have built it in the first place.

ICHNEUMON RULES

You play *Ichneumon* using the rules for whatever game you're already playing. This game merely adds secret powers, hidden geometries, and incentives to follow an alien wasp's world-eating agenda.

ICHNEUMON INFLUENCE

The Ichneumon drive their myiasts, those who have been fully seeded with their egg-dreams, to erect impossible, unearthly structures or build incredible, unlikely vehicles as a means of enmeshing the Earth in a conceptual web that will feed their larvae. The thicker the conceptual web, the stronger the Ichneumon influence. The Ichneumon are geometrically (or rather hyper-geometrically) minded: they increase influence around points and within areas designed by their myiasts.

In general: within a space defined by seven Ichneumon-influenced constructions, Ichneumon influence is +1. For example, if there are seven Ichneumon constructions in London, Ichneumon influence in London (or at least inside those seven points) is +1. If there are seven more Ichneumon constructions in England, then Ichneumon influence in London is +2; elsewhere in England, Ichneumon influence is only +1. Inside a mad engineer's laboratory within London, Ichneumon influence might be +3 or even higher, if plenty of scale models are lying around.

Since Ichneumon feed on symbolism and imagery, it's possible that one Ichneumon construction on each of the seven continents might raise the world's Ichneumon influence to +1 (making England +2, and London +3, and that myiast's lab +4 or more). The GM should absolutely feel free to decide that pre-existing elements of the game setting (a Channel Bridge, say, or a Mile-High Building in Chicago) or even of real history (the Eiffel Tower or the Crystal Palace) are "actually" Ichneumon-influenced edifices.

The Ichneumon may also retain influence (+1 or +2 local effects) in ancient ruins built by previous Ichneumon architects: the labyrinth of Knossos, for example, or the Pyramids of Egypt. But unless those artifacts are "restored" in proper steampunk fashion (building a solar-power transmitter into the Great Pyramid, say) they don't count as next



THE VISIBLE ICHNEUMONIDAE

“The Ichneumonidae proper are one of the most extensive groups of insects, and have been much studied by entomologists since the time of Linnaeus and Gravenhorst. Their sexual differences of colour, &c., are, however, often so great that fresh discoveries are constantly being made with regard to their true specific relations, as well as new species detected by biological observers.”

– *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1889

The ichneumon wasps (in the 19th century often mistakenly called ichneumon-flies) of the family Ichneumonidae comprise a wide variety of parasitic behaviors. All of them begin by laying an egg or eggs in a host insect or other creature. The ichneumon’s ovipositor may or may not also be a “stinger” depositing venom: the *Pepsis formosa* “tarantula hawk” wasp has the second-most painful sting of all known arthropods. Some ichneumon ovipositors contain metal (ionized zinc or manganese), enabling them to drill through wood, webbing, chitin, and other protective materials. Among the estimated 60,000 species of ichneumon, there are wasps that target butterflies, moths, nymphae, mosquitoes, wood-grubs, cockroaches, beetles, spiders, and the larvae of other wasps. The ichneumon egg, having been injected into the host (usually a caterpillar or other larva), eventually hatches out an ichneumon larva inside the host body. The larva slowly consumes the host from within, eventually killing it. It is this habit that gained the Ichneumonidae their name, after the ichneumon or mongoose, which eats the eggs and young of snakes.

One Costa Rican species of ichneumon wasp, *Hymenoepimecis argyrophaga*, attacks the orb spider (*Plesiometa argyra*), paralyzes it, and lays its egg on the spider’s abdomen. The ichneumon larva drinks the spider’s blood for several weeks, growing as the spider goes about its normal business. Likely something in the ichneumon’s saliva prevents the spider from noticing its parasitical passenger ... but it gets worse. When the larva is ready to pupate, it injects a new chemical into the spider that recodes the spider’s web-spinning program. From a delicate orb, the spider’s web changes to a series of strong, interlocking strands designed to support the ichneumon larva’s cocoon high above the ground away from predators. Secure in this new web, the larva drains its spider host and pupates. When it hatches, it flies off to mate and begin the cycle anew, leaving nothing but tendrils of torn webbing and the dead husk of a spider behind.

Although in our history humans only discovered *H. argyrophaga* in 2000, the metaphor of an invisible wasp reprogramming nature’s engineers to build alien structures on command seemed perfect for steampunk. Nick Mamatas turns this biological horror into postmodern secret-war conspiracy in his novel *Sensation*. Other inspirations for this game include the graphic novel *The Invisibles*, in which Grant Morrison postulates (among other things) insectile demons behind the world, the film *Dark City*, and the Robert Heinlein short story *The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag*.

GAME VALUES

In *Ichneumon*, the precise game values will necessarily conform to your host game rules. In general, +1 in *Ichneumon* means +1 on a scale of 1 to 10 or thereabouts, or on a roll using anything from 1d8 to 1d12 or 2d6. Modulo the finicky probabilities of bell curves, etc., that means +1 in *Ichneumon* roughly equals +1 to Trait rolls in *Savage Worlds*, +1 success in *Storyteller* or *Shadowrun*, +10% in *Call of Cthulhu* or other percentile systems, or a +1 to a roll in *FATE*. It “translates” to +2 in 1d20 systems such as *D&D*, or those using 3d6: *GURPS* or *HERO*, for example. If your game system uses a smaller variable, such as 1d6 (as with GUMSHOE), a +1 in *Ichneumon* means “re-roll a result of 1 or 2” and a +2 means “re-roll 1s and add 1 to all results.” And so forth.

You may wish to move this slider up or down, depending on your own aesthetic: maybe you’d rather keep the Ichneumon a little weaker in your *GURPS Steampunk* game, so you “translate” +1 in *Ichneumon* as a mere +1 in *GURPS*. But you may want to really play alien wasp influence up in a strongly thematic game like *FATE*, so you decree that +1 is the same as an invoked Aspect: +2 (or a re-roll) to the die roll. In general, apply the normal sort of modifiers for your game when adjudicating *Ichneumon* events.

for modern Ichneumon influence. Uncovering the extent of Ichneumon influence in the past makes for great steampunk archaeology – why were there *Seven Wonders* of the Ancient World, after all? Some Ichneumon sites may actually represent physical incursion into our dimension by these beings: the giant Mimon, who fought Ares and Aphrodite in the rebellion against Olympus, lies buried beneath the island of Procida, near Ischia off Naples. In Greek art, his shield bore the sigil of an enormous wasp. The Egyptian goddess Ahti had the head of a wasp and the body of a hippopotamus – nothing else is known of her, but her temple (drowned in the Nile Delta or buried in the desert) is likely a mighty Ichneumon fane.

What about other planets? It doesn’t matter, unless your steampunk game has a space-travel component, or at least a potential for one. If so, you have two choices: either the Ichneumon want the entire Solar System (or cosmos, or timeline) or they just want Earth. In the first instance, just expand the rules for Ichneumon influence: to control the whole Solar System, they need humans (or some intelligent species) to build a steampunk web on seven planets (or planetary-scale moons in different orbits: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Ceres, Ganymede, Titan would count). Do Mars’ canals count as an ancient prehuman “steampunk” construct? How about a strange monolith orbiting Jupiter?

If you have a space-going steampunk game already, feel free to plant such evidence: weird alien artifacts, strange metal constructs rusting under a dead sky. The player characters can deduce that the Ichneumon drained Mars dry of its water and air a billion years ago, or boiled Venus into a sulfurous soda-water jungle greenhouse, or destroyed the Fifth Planet leaving only asteroids behind. In short, let the players understand that the Ichneumon have been working their way toward Earth like a kid chewing through a sack of Halloween candy.

Cocoons

Steampunk vehicles contain and focus the power of the Ichneumon within their design, but (unless connected by rails or mooring-mast stations or other networks) do not increase (and are not affected by) Ichneumon influence outside their hulls. Inside, of course, is a whole different matter. Sometimes, literally.

In general, the larger and more elaborate and more impossible a steampunk vehicle, the higher the Ichneumon influence within it. Truly large, elaborate, impossible vehicles carry a +1 Ichneumon influence modifier in their shadow.

“Normal” steampunk vehicles

Specially fitted railroad cars, hot-air dirigible balloons, ironclad turbine warships (+1).

“Advanced” steampunk vehicles

Monorail or bullet-train cars, hydrofoils, autogyros, zeppelins, Nemo’s *Nautilus*, Welles’ land-ironclad or other steampunk tank, jet-pack, rocketship (+2).

“Impossible” steampunk vehicles

Robur’s aeronef, Frank Reade’s Steam Man of the Prairies, ornithopters, gundam suits, War Wheel, tunneling steam mole, lunar cannon shell, time machine (+3)

Add +1 to these values for really impossible vehicles such as a sub-orbital ironclad or a submersible ocean liner. Add another +1 if the vehicle is ridiculously huge: the size of the *Great Eastern*, *Graf Zeppelin*, or *Titanic*. Add +1 for any vehicle designed by a PC to be mind-blowingly weird (or, if GM-designed, one that all the players react to with shock and amazement).

The GM may also wish to rule that using other steampunk devices, gear, and equipment opens the user up to further Ichneumon influence. This should be relatively minor, comparatively: +1 for “advanced” or anachronistic steampunk equipment, and +2 for “impossible” steampunk equipment. Such modifiers only apply to much-used or signature gear, or to huge amounts of equipment.

Effects of Ichneumon Influence

Apply the Ichneumon Influence number as a positive modifier to rolls to do things the Ichneumon want:

- Design, construct, repair, or use weird steampunk artifacts, edifices, networks, and vehicles
- Heal or aid myiasts, or their friends, clients, and social web
- Convince people to do things favorable to the Ichneumon
- Kill expressed enemies of the Ichneumon
- Et cetera

Apply the Ichneumon Influence number as a negative modifier to rolls to do things the Ichneumon don’t want:

- Damage, wreck, or counter-act weird steampunk artifacts, edifices, networks, and vehicles
- Kill myiasts, or their friends, clients, and agents
- Convince people to overthrow or oppose the Ichneumon
- Resist Ichneumon commands
- Et cetera

Use these modifiers only for direct actions. Attempting to kill a coast-guardsmen so you can get access to the Prussian Orbital Gantry carries no modifier on the Stealth or combat roll. Trying to blow up the Prussian Orbital Gantry after you’ve killed the guard carries a negative modifier on the Explosives or fireball roll. Trying to steal the plans for the Prussian Orbital Gantry probably carries a positive modifier – the Ichneumon want more orbital gantries – even if you tell yourself you’re just stealing them to be able to destroy the gantry successfully later.

Modifiers might cancel out: both parties to an autogyro duel will have the same modifiers, for a net zero.

CHILDREN OF THE WASP

The Ichneumon’s influence is also personal. It drives its human hosts to build, yes, but it also grants them the tools with which to do it. It separates its hosts into Castes, depending on the degree of their communion with the Ichneumon.

Treat these Castes as something like character classes or packages of advantages. Use your game’s existing system to determine a Caste ability’s power level, Target Number, or what have you. Each Caste ability should be modeled like a spell in *Ars Magica* or a Discipline in *Vampire*: the more power you put into it, the more effective you are with it. This might be from a characteristic like POW or CON or Health or Blood Potency, or from some artifact such as a vial of wasp-venom or a ball of extra-dimensional radium. In general, abilities are more effective in areas of higher Ichneumon Influence.

If your game is *D&D* or another class-and-level game, you automatically “level up” in the ability as you level up in general. In a game in which you normally and regularly add new abilities (e.g., dots in a Discipline) you can choose to add a new Caste ability instead (or in addition, if the GM really wants to *Ichneumon* things up). In other games, you can only add a new Caste ability after you achieve something: an arbitrary amount of experience points (three or four adventures’ worth, perhaps), an in-game steampunk triumph or initiation, the solution to a riddle or a critical success on a POW, Will, or WIS check.

If the game system allows it, add each Caste ability as a new skill, power, or spell, and allow it to increase with experience points or other in-game power-ups. In games (such as *GURPS* or *Savage Worlds*) where you make a skill roll to use a paranormal ability, the Ichneumon Influence of the area or cocoon adds to this roll, as does any points you’ve put into the matching skill, talent, or trait.



Allow players to swap pluses around to focus, target, strengthen, widen, or otherwise alter the general effect of an ability.

In general, when players ask about their *Ichneumon* abilities, GMs should default to the answer “yes” for the question “can I do this” or “does this work?” Cosmic alien wasps want very badly for these powers to work, after all. If that’s not dark or restrictive enough for you, “yes, but” or “yes, and” have lots of potential downside: “Yes, but you’ll need to spill a lot of blood. All of someone else’s or a third of yours, say.” Or say: “Yes, and your energy outwash also taints that flower-girl across the street. She’s a haptist now.”

Haptist

From the Greek haptō, “to touch,” the haptist is one touched by the Ichneumon. She might be a survivor of a steampunk disaster like a zeppelin crash, or a worker at just the right place during the construction of a multi-level monorail switching station. He may have seen or been twisted by a myiast’s powers, had his life powerfully altered at close range by a steampunk edifice, or felt some papery wing brush past him in the undercity. In short, it’s up to the GM who becomes a haptist; she might award haptist status for a critical failure (or a critical success!) in a high-Ichneumon influence area, or have some

in-game event trigger the shift. In a full-bore *Ichneumon* game, every player character is likely to become a haptist just hanging out with the rest of the party!

Pathfinder

This is less a gift than a consequence of the Ichneumon's touch: you can see the patterns and paths leading to the true power within the world. Ichneumon-influenced constructions shimmer and glint in your vision, you have a chance to "smell" whether someone or somewhere is Ichneumon-influenced, and you can often "randomly" move toward the nearest, or most significant, locus of Ichneumon activity. At higher levels of ability, you might have some sort of oracular ability to find weak points in the world, or determine what the Ichneumon want.

Tsimpeist

From the Greek *tsimpeisa* ("stung by an insect"), this is someone who has actually felt the ontopositor of the Ichneumon, and been changed by its ultraterrestrial venom. A tsimpeist usually sought some sort of strange knowledge: drunk a strange elixir smelling of motor oil and blood, drew geometrical figures on the ground in mercury and mica, attempted to draw the attention of the hidden insect gods. For whatever reason, he was not fully infected, but he was bitten. The GM should allow successful Occult or similar skill rolls to lead to tsimpeist status, along with some suitably weird or horrific phenomena. Another tsimpeist might just be stung because a myiast wanted her stung, or because she was in the way of something. If saving throws are possible in the host game, being stung can be resisted (at a negative modifier at least equal to the Ichneumon influence) and the target becomes a haptist instead.

Tsimpeists resist Ichneumon will at -1, before any ambient Ichneumon influence modifier gets added. Tsimpeists can assist Myiasts at design, construction, repair, etc. of steampunk equipment, buildings, vehicles, and so forth: in addition to any bonus granted by the host game for cooperation, the tsimpeist can add half the Ichneumon influence modifier (rounded up) to the myiast's roll.

Pathfinder

As the Haptist ability previously.

Body Electric

You can "plug in" to the Ichneumon geometries and architectures around you. Initially, this merely recharges your magic or other power pools, heals you, and lets you use the Ichneumon influence modifier for other skills. As you improve with this ability, you

can heal others, or short out their nervous systems, or send them to sleep, or any other shift of their (and your) electrical potential. At even higher levels, you can do this to electrical machinery. You must be able to touch them, or send an electrical spark from your skin to theirs. In some campaigns, you can shoot lightning from your hands, although this level of power almost always requires some extra act of dark devotion to the Ichneumon. If your test of this ability succeeds by only 1 or 2, you suffer serious fatigue or enervation; on a critical failure, you damage yourself! This ability does not function where the Ichneumon influence modifier is 0.

Myiast

The Ichneumon actively seek to create myiasts - the other two Castes might possibly be "collateral damage" or accidental spills. The easiest way to become a myiast is to be an engineer, inventor, scientist, architect, or similar and kill someone at a crossroads, where the spider-legs of possibility and dimensionality meet. The reward is the gift of an Ichneumon "reality egg," deposited conceptually in the myiast's brain. In some games, this egg may also inhabit some machined item - a wrench, an orb, a revolver, a pair of draftsman's compasses - as a source of Ichneumon power and inspiration. The gift allows the myiast to envision and carry out the Ichneumon's paranatural designs: shimmering cathedrals of crystal and metal, mighty leviathans of brass and iron, broadcast power and anti-gravity - anything is possible to one who bears the gift of the Ichneumon. Just try to avoid remembering that the word myiast comes from the Greek *myiasis*, meaning "infested with larvae."

Myiasts resist the Ichneumon will at -3, before any ambient Ichneumon influence modifier gets added. They can, however, use the Ichneumon influence modifier as a bonus to any attempt to convince, command, or otherwise utilize a haptist or tsimpeist.

Pathfinder

As the Haptist ability. *Pathfinder* also directs you to empty laboratories, easily cannibalized vehicle graveyards or factories, raw material mother lodes, and anything else needed for Arcane Design.

Arcane Design

You can design steampunk gear, equipment, buildings, railway networks, structures, vehicles, and so forth. You increase your base skill (Design, Craft, etc.) by +2 immediately, and again every time you add a new Myiast Caste ability after this. Aside from a certain Vernian veneer of "science" your designs

need not take physical law into account. If the host game has rules for artifact creation, you can do so in half the time normally required. The GM should let you exploit this ability for any plausible use in the game.

Social Web

You can stress, re-make, and adapt to the social web of humans that surrounds you. This most likely begins by convincing billionaires or governments to fund your designs, but any large-scale "social engineering" or "cultural hacking" attempt should be possible to you. With this ability you can tell who needs to be approached, removed, or bought off; with enough power in this ability, you can simply remove or shunt them aside yourself, or recruit them and their power base to your designs.

The following two abilities are more familiar fantasy-gaming sorts of abilities. Here, the GM can use the skepticism and short leash she has foregone in the other abilities: they are obviously wide open for imbalanced use by aggressive players. Make sure all such uses come with a big old "and" or "but," and attract direct attention of an Ichneumon with an immediate agenda.

Change Tensile Strength

You can change the tensile strength of metals. Initially, this might only let you weaken an iron bar to escape from jail; eventually, you can shift whole foundries to smelt super-steel or adamantium. Somewhere in between, you can make preternaturally sharp sword-canes or incredibly powerful and accurate revolvers: bonuses to hit and damage are equal to the Ichneumon influence of the area in which you reforged or annealed the metal for the weapon. This bonus remains, even outside Ichneumon influenced areas. If your test of this ability succeeds by only 1 or 2, you suffer serious fatigue or enervation. This ability does not function where the Ichneumon influence modifier is 0.

Control Energy

This is the full-scale version of *Body Electric*. It includes not just electricity but heat, gravity, radioactivity, life-force, mana, and magnetism. You can increase, focus, concentrate, dim, or otherwise manipulate energy. As with *Change Tensile Strength*, you can eventually create "radium" power cores just by holding a lump of pitchblende or granite in your hand. You may be able to power your aeronef just by standing on it! If your test of this ability succeeds by only 1 or 2, you suffer serious fatigue or enervation. This ability does not function where the Ichneumon influence modifier is 0.

FOES OF THE ICHNEUMON

Great fleas have little fleas,
Upon their backs to bite 'em,
And little fleas have lesser fleas,
and so, ad infinitum.

And the great fleas, themselves, in turn
Have greater fleas to go on;
While these again have greater still,
And greater still, and so on.

– Augustus de Morgan, “*The Siphonaptera*” (1872)

For those players who think they might rather not play the tools of cosmic wasp-gods, there are other options. The Ichneumon are not alone on the other side of the world-walls; they are but one predator in a whole ultraterrestrial ecosystem.

Asilidae

The “assassin fly” kills ichneumon wasps; the Asilidae are limited but deadly entities warring with the Ichneumon. Those humans “bitten” by the Asilidae likewise gain paranatural powers. The Asilidae bite human assassins, spreading their venom through Anarchist groups and Alawite death-cults alike.

Foefinder

Like *Pathfinder*, save that it detects and points the way to enemies, especially tools of the Ichneumon.

Un-Design

Allows you to spot the weakness in a design, or in a plan, or in a society. You must still strike the blow yourself.

Social Invisibility

You can move through a crowd or blend into a soiree without attracting notice. Ichneumon agents must use *Pathfinder* to see you at all.

Un-Law

You can violate physical law in one manner: flight, kill with a touch, or similar. You cannot violate it in order to build, heal, repair, or otherwise knit things together.

Chalcids

The chalcids, or “copper wasps” are even smaller wasps that parasitize ichneumon-wasps. Some humans (especially unhappy haptists) use the canted reality constructed

by Ichneumon to perform a sort of shamanic magic with the “chalcid spirits” attracted to Ichneumon activity. Chalcid powers thus also benefit from Ichneumon influence modifiers.

Second Sight

A more conventional version of *Pathfinder*, also lets you see ghosts, death approaching, the underside of a playing card, and similar sorts of “second sight” ability.

Pathbender

You can apport, levitate, or short-range teleport through space within Ichneumon influence areas, by flitting along the dimensional curves and buttresses built by the Ichneumon. The higher the influence, the faster and farther you can move.

Summoning

You can summon a Chalcid and ask it for a favor. What it can do, and what it might want in return, is up to the GM, but it should be anything a ghost, dryad, minor djinn, or similar spirit might normally be expected to do.

Polistes

The Polistes, or paper wasp, builds labyrinths of paper. Its ultraterrestrial equivalent masticates and reforms reality using words, books, maps, and other papers. Infected human Polistes cultists and agents are likely kabbalists or other extra-literate occultist types.

Pathfinder

As the Haptist ability.

Pathbender

As the Chalcid ability.

Persuasive Word

You can reshape reality by reshaping the words that describe it. Initially, this might just be convincing someone to agree with you by forging their diary; at much higher levels, this might involve erasing a whole town from the world by destroying it on a map.

Pathwalker

By reading and folding reality, you can actually move between worlds. Not just between London and Capetown or Earth and Mars, but between our world and other timelines or into the world-dimension of the Ichneumon themselves. This is still very, very dangerous.

Pocket World

You can build a world to your own specifications, given enough paper describing it. A whole encyclopedia is generally the minimum needed; the world begins as one city block and grows as you grow in power.



As long as only you know its name and how to find it on the map, you can control entry to it – or you can try to replace our world with it by spreading the word.

Human Societies

There are also purely human groups who have discovered the Ichneumon and desire their destruction. In many cases, this might simply be jealousy – nothing hacks off a secret society more than finding out that someone else is already running the world from behind the scenes.

Children of the Bird

Knowing that birds eat wasps, some humans worship (and attempt to summon the attention of) the Great Bird who will surely protect His Children. The Bird is variously known as Garuda, Roc, Ziz, Te Hakawai, Thunderbird, Simurgh – whether it grants its worshippers powers or even protection depends on the GM’s attitude toward “clerical magic” in the game.

Uraeus Society

Under the ancient Egyptian sign of the striking cobra, the Uraeus Society believes in and works for human immortality. Just as the cobra sheds its skin, humans should be able to live forever, and with their eternal perspective defeat the Ichneumon. Members might include Victor Frankenstein, Drs. Moreau or Quartz, or Lindbergh’s eugenicist friend Alexis Carrel. What sort of biotech powers or animal grafts the Uraeus has mastered are, likewise, up to the GM.

AI AUTOMATIC INTELLIGENCE

TEXT **JOHAN ENGLUND**
& **JOHAN SALOMONSSON**
ILLUSTRATION **MAGNUS FALLGREN**

Listen. Do you hear the ticking? The ticking of countless calculators embedded in every machine imaginable. Steam-powered cranes and lifts, hydraulic printing presses, pneumatic valves and capsule pipelines, automatic orchestras, all controlled by calculators. Steam may be the power source of the industrial revolution, but it's the calculators that have changed the world and the mindset of people. And with the calculators come the automatons—the new automated mechanised workers who can perform everything that human workers are able to and more. Everything but make their own decisions of course. Or can they? What happens when the automatons become self-aware, when they acquire a free will and start making demands? And above all, what happens when they outwit us? Let's find out.

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THE BIRTH OF THE AUTOMATON

An alternate history about mechanical calculators and mechanical workers.

The First Step: The Difference Engine

In 1822, the mathematician and inventor Charles Babbage presented a dissertation to the Royal Astronomical Society in which he described a device that could calculate mathematical and astronomical tables using the method of divided differences. He called it simply the difference engine. The British government enthusiastically gave Babbage £1700 to build such a machine. However, the project dragged on and the costs spiralled out of control. When a working machine was finally geared up and ready by 1842, more than £17,000 had been invested in the project.

What the government got for their money was an unwieldy monstrosity of a machine occupying an entire room and powered by a steam engine, since it was impossible to turn all the cogwheels by hand. Yet the machine did what Babbage had promised, and so the government refrained from prosecuting him for breach of contract. They had the machine installed at the Admiralty where it was used to generate new nautical tables for the Royal Navy. Later, the Swedish publisher and inventor Georg Scheutz developed an improved version of the difference engine no bigger than a piano. This one and subsequent models he sold to astronomical observatories and universities all over the world.

The Second Step: The Analytical Engine

While working on the difference engine, Babbage began to consider the possibility of designing a generic mechanical calculator that would be able to perform all types of mathematical operations, and that could be programmed using punch cards in the same way as the mechanical weaving looms at the time. He called it the analytical engine. Due to the increasingly expensive difference engine, the British government was mildly interested in funding yet another project. Babbage sought help elsewhere, and found it in Ada King, the countess of Lovelace. She had noticed his work on the difference engine, and was willing to contribute part of the money needed as well as make use of her connections to find more investors. She did not stop there,

however. An educated mathematician herself, she took an interest in the development of the punch card programs, and soon she was deeply involved in the project.

Babbage presented the finished analytical engine at The Great Exhibition of 1851 in London. In the magnificent Crystal Palace's exhibition halls it quickly became the topic on everyone's lips. Within a few short years you could find analytical engines everywhere: in the nautical equipment of steamers and airships, in the gears of the pneumatic tube transport systems, in the traffic surveillance systems of the railway networks, in the automatic telegraph boxes that even laymen could use to send telegrams, in the military's ballistics calculators; there was no limit to the many uses. The industrial revolution had moved from mechanization to automation in one fell swoop.

The Third Step: The Automaton

The great engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel envisioned even greater potential in the analytical engine. After having completed the Great Western Railway, he was engaged to build a railway bridge between Dover and Calais. Work was both taxing and dangerous, and so he used machines whenever possible. Unfortunately it was difficult to use the programmable machines employed in the factories since these were stationary. He needed flexible machines that could move about like ordinary workers. Brunel had the bridge consortium hire Babbage to design a brand new type of machine: a mechanised worker controlled by an analytical engine, or simply an automaton.

Babbage undertook the assignment with his usual manic determination. He realised that to be able to embed the analytical engine in a mobile machine, it must be miniaturised. He contacted the best clockmakers and toolmakers available and charged them with the task of developing smaller clockworks than ever before. Using these microclockworks, Babbage managed to build an analytical engine that could fit in a hatbox.

In addition to the ability to perform advanced calculations, these mobile machines required the mobility of a human being. Babbage contacted the French toymaker Antoine Vichy, who designed the mechanical body that the analytical engine was to control. It was powered by a small steam engine built into the torso.

During the design of the mechanical body, it became obvious that Babbage and Vichy had vastly different visions. Vichy wanted the automatons to look as human as possible, while Babbage thought this might cause suspicion among the workers who would have

to work alongside them, and wanted them therefore to look like machines. In the end, the two parted ways.

Vichy returned to Paris where he, and later on his son Gustave Vichy, manufactured automatons that resembled humans. These weren't meant for use in factories, but rather in social settings. Most of them were designed as servants, maids, and nannies, but there were also rumours about harlots and assassins. For lonely children of the wealthy, the Vichys manufactured dolls and teddy bears as substitutes for real playmates. They also had success in show business with creations such as "Le Ballet Automatique" and "Moulin Rouge Automatique". Most of the Vichy automatons were spring-wound instead of steam-powered since the middle and upper classes would not stand for the noise and filth of steam engines in their homes.

When Babbage's automatons were finally employed at the bridge, the workers did not look upon them so favourably. Things were bad enough already with all the steam-powered machines gradually replacing them and stealing their jobs, but now these automatons threatened to make the human workers redundant once and for all. After violent strikes and prolonged negotiations, the unions managed to protect some activities from the automatons' intrusion. Among other things, the automatons would only be allowed to perform hazardous and heavy jobs that humans were incapable of, and repetitive jobs with an interval of no more than ten seconds. Despite this, the automatons became popular among the industrialists, and soon they appeared in most factories. The automatons were here to stay.

I, AUTOMATON On programmed automatons who get free will.

Slowly but surely, the sight of automatons in society became more common. At first, they were used primarily in factories and mines, and for large construction projects, but before long, they could be spotted on city streets and plazas performing duties such as couriers, security guards, chimney sweeps, and more. The technological development of automatons was extremely rapid—too rapid, many believed. Automatons and their programming was put to the test in various situations, the consequences of which no one could have predicted. Each encounter between human and automaton prompted new behaviours that would one day change the world. Let us take a closer look at some cases.

The Case of the Automaton that Intervened

In an attempt to prove the superiority of the British Empire once and for all, Prime Minister Gladstone and his government, in consultation with the queen, decided to support Lord Ashdon's project to construct a ship which could leave Earth's atmosphere: the world's first Aether craft. Ashdon's design was of a gigantic vessel, a combination of an airship, a submarine, and a steam-powered rocket, all rolled into one. Initially, Lord Ashdon had planned to man the Aether ship with automatons, but a group of British officers and gentlemen felt it was their duty to become the first men to traverse the Aether.

The maiden voyage was launched in 1869 from the shipyard in Portsmouth, and ended according to plan in Alexandria. The second voyage included a number of prominent scientists, the physicist James Clerk Maxwell among them. During the journey, Maxwell managed to get a sample of the Aether, pure, without air or contaminants. In later experiments, he proved that his tubes containing Aether could store electromagnetic pulses separated into layers. Working together with Professor Leven-Smythe's floating cogwheels, a new type of memory for analytical machines was created. The new memory made it possible for automatons to store nearly ten times as many commands as they previously could.

These new and improved automatons gradually replaced older models industry-wide. In time, however, there were reports that the automatons did not always conform to their programming. Some seemed to work according to parameters that did not exist in their code. Others tended to pause in the middle of their work whenever something unexpected occurred. It was eventually discovered that these automatons' programming did not match the original instructions they had been given. First, the engineers and technicians were blamed for having made unauthorized changes or even outright sabotage, but they all proclaimed their innocence. One bold engineer argued that the automatons had begun to learn, that something in the Aether tubes and the cogwheels had somehow made this possible. Several of the greatest scientific minds went to work in an attempt to recreate and explain this phenomenon, while others tried to use this information to create and develop true self-learning automatons. None were fully successful in recreating the situation, however, and soon people believed the whole thing to be a hoax.

Then, one day, the automaton Tottham Mac XXVI at Tottham & Sons was performing its

usual duties loading sheets of die-cut metal when a worker's clothing became caught in a hydraulic press. Tottham Mac XXVI saved the man's life by simply turning off the machine, a manoeuvre which should not have existed in its programming. Tales of Tottham Mac XXVI's deeds spread quickly after the worker spoke of the event that night at the pub. When the news reached London, the uproar was massive. Scientists rushed to make public statements, some to add fuel to the fire for those who believed it was a hoax, and others to lay claim to the phenomenon. Journalists flocked to the factory in their hunt to get the big scoop and be the first to interview Tottham Mac.

The Case with the Ghost in the Automaton

France looked on in fear as the Brits made great strides in furthering automaton technology. They were afraid the British would eventually muster an army of automatons more advanced than anything the French could possibly create. The French government felt pressured to initiate their own technology program and announced the formation of a tribunal in which inventors, scientists, and engineers could vie for the chance to use their ideas in the defence of France. The response was massive, and many felt compelled to save the republic from those filthy and unsophisticated Brits. Steel mogul Eduard Maginot proposed a line of one-hundred-meter-tall automatons, like the Colossus of Rhodes, to protect France's border. The eccentric inventor Monsieur Collignon wanted to mass-produce a sea of spider-like automatons that could overwhelm and destroy the enemy. Crazy ideas abounded for weeks, and many of the tribunal's members ventured ever closer to a complete mental breakdown.

One man managed to win over the tribunal, and that was the charismatic occultist and animal magnetizer Hector Durville, who claimed he could control automatons from afar, simply by manipulating the Earth's animal magnetism. He received a generous stipend and access to a number of modern automatons, on which he would conduct his highly ritualistic experiments in magnetism. The experiments did not pan out, however, and Durville, fearing he would lose his grant, moved his undertaking to a sanatorium on the edge of Paris. Yet even here, his results did not improve and his experiments took on a note of desperation. One dark and stormy night, Durville connected a few of the sanatorium's patients to a group of automatons. One unfortunate lightning bolt struck Durville's experiment, killing him and the patients, and

charring them beyond recognition. Several of the automatons were missing, but one remained, wandering aimlessly in circles in the cellars of the sanatorium. It seemed to be looking for something, but no one was able to get it to stop, until finally it was deactivated with a blow to the head.

The tribunal sent the meticulous, but not so bright, bureaucrat Baltasar Brezy to investigate the accident. Monsieur Brezy did not rule out the possibility that it all might be an attempted fraud by Durville. Brezy left no stone unturned and eventually reached the conclusion that Durville had been a fraudster all along, and had likely fled with the remaining funds, and several of the automatons. Just a week later, a second automaton was found in an inn some miles away, playing chess with guests and passers-by, which was not something included in its programming. Brezy soon began to suspect that there may well be something special with Durville's automatons after all. According to Durville's notes, there should have been as many as five automatons still missing, and possibly dangerous to unwitting citizens.

Had Durville's experiments changed them, and caused them to act independently? Was this in any way connected to the charred bodies from the basement of the sanatorium? Was there even a slight possibility that the consciousness of the patients had been transferred to the automatons?

The Case of the Fettered Beauty

The evolution of progressively more human-like automatons with more sophisticated arms, legs, hands, and feet gave rise to a logical development. After the Crimean war, many soldiers returned home with severe injuries including loss of limbs. Since prosthetics at the time were quite crude, the idea emerged that the heroic soldiers would be fitted with mechanical prosthetics utilising automaton technology. Initially, these mechanical limbs were fastened to the body with straps and harnesses, but these were difficult to control and the functionality was flawed.

At that time, a number of doctors in Edinburgh had been following the experiments of Italian scientist Luigi Galvani, which dealt with using electrical pulses to stimulate the nervous systems of dead animals. One of these doctors, Michael Hanmore, met with Reynard von Strieff, maker of advanced mechanical prosthetics. The encounter gave way to the idea of merging man and machine, providing the mechanical prosthetic with full functionality. They did a number of experiments on volunteer veterans with

amputated arms and legs. At first, the results were disappointing, but eventually they were able to attach a mechanical arm to one of the veterans who was afterward able to control the arm with his own nervous system. After many more successful transplants, automaton limbs (as they came to be called) were deemed one of the decade's greatest medical achievements. The development of automaton limbs grew quickly, and more complicated procedures were performed with success. In one marathon operation, Hanmore and von Strieff managed to transplant automaton limbs onto a blaster who had lost both legs and an arm in the great tunnel cave-in in Shropshire.

Dr Hanmore was at the height of his success when a family tragedy struck. His beautiful teenage daughter, Beatrice suddenly fell ill, and was diagnosed with a rare muscular disease. Her condition was declared incurable, and the chances of survival were very slim. In desperation, Hanmore, with the aid of von Strieff, began the construction of an automaton that would replace Beatrice's failing body, while housing and also keeping her brain and vital organs alive. In a frenzy, both men worked around the clock in a struggle against death. Their final design was deemed a success, but Hanmore did not dare perform the procedure on Beatrice without first having made a successful trial.

At the Royal Edinburgh sanatorium, Hanmore found two patients he believed would not be missed. The first one, a middle-aged man, died during the procedure, and Hanmore concluded this must have been due to the fact that too many of the man's organs needed to be attached to the automaton. Frustrated, Hanmore decided to focus only on the brain and sensory organs of the second patient, a young woman named Matilda. Hanmore placed her brain in a nutrient-rich solution that von Strieff claimed would keep it alive. The operation was difficult but successful, and Matilda showed several signs of life. They were uncertain, however, whether she retained any of her memories.

Meanwhile, Beatrice's condition worsened, and Hanmore knew he had to perform the surgery or lose her forever. After the operation, he waited for a sign, and eventually, Beatrice woke and recognized her mother. She remembered! Later on, however, the nurses took note of how Beatrice would sit and brush the long blonde hair she no longer possessed. And when Beatrice was given a pen, she would work for hours, scribbling illegible markings and symbols on her walls, ceilings and furniture.

Despite these minor complications, Hanmore and von Strieff decided to make their breakthroughs known to the public. The

news of the hybrid automatons took the world by storm, and even though most saw it as a great scientific feat, there were those who responded with dismay. Scores of inquiries came from people who begged both men to perform the procedure on their own loved ones. Scientists, investors, industrial barons, journalists, and adventurers flocked to Hanmore's country estate with the hope of glimpsing the secret. Meanwhile, other groups of scientists, surgeons, and researchers began to attempt to duplicate the surgery, with varying success. Suddenly, in the middle of all this, Matilda went missing. The only trace was a broken lock in the door at the back of the house. Up until that point, Matilda had shown amazing progress, and had been working in the Hanmore household, performing simple chores. The government feared that foreign agents were involved and sent their top Scotland Yard detectives to the scene. Could Matilda have escaped herself or had she been kidnapped?

Journalists, private detectives and fortune seekers came in droves, gathering outside the estate and in the neighbouring village. What was their purpose? To investigate the events, steal the secrets, or search for the missing Matilda? Was this ground-breaking surgery really genuine or was it a complicated hoax? Outside the gate, a young admirer of Beatrice desired to see for himself whether the rumours were true, and perhaps he even planned to run away with her. Did Beatrice remember enough of herself, did she remember him? Was it possible that he instead took Matilda with him, believing her to be Beatrice?

To Foster an Automaton

The penny-pinching industrialist Douglas Trewelyn-Sikes used inexpensive child labour from orphanages to work in his factories. When other factory owners began to use automatons, Trewelyn-Sikes quickly found himself lagging behind. Eventually, he realized he would have to invest in his own automatons, and he went to great lengths to find the least expensive models in existence. The automatons performed the heavier tasks while the children did the things that required more dexterity.

Gradually the orphans grew increasingly attached to the automatons and several children began to stay at the factory at night instead of returning to the orphanage. The automatons were slowly becoming the family they so sorely longed for. Before long, the orphans had formed a secret community up in the nooks and crannies of the factory. The night time security guards, who were lazy and had little sympathy for Trewelyn-Sikes, let the orphans be.

Nancy, a particularly clever girl, had long been watching Trewelyn-Sikes's engineers, Fagin and Monk, who programmed and maintained the automatons. The two somewhat arrogant men, however, took no notice of her. It was beyond their wildest imagination that a young girl could possibly understand the complex mechanics and programming of automatons. At night, Nancy and some other orphans would attempt to change the automatons' instructions. Initially, it was just small, unnoticeable details that could help to simplify the children's work. But as time went on, their changes to the automatons' programming became gradually more complex. The children even began to secretly perform repairs and maintenance on the automatons. And the automatons helped the children avoid the foremen. They kept watch, and made the children's work both easier and safer. Nancy introduced compassion to the automatons' programming, to make them more human and independent, and the automatons became more integrated in the orphans' secret community, learning all they could from the children.

Slowly Mr Fagin and Mr Monk began to suspect that something was amiss in the factory. It seemed as if the automatons were not quite performing their intended duties, but the two engineers were unable to pinpoint the cause. Their programming looked fine, they thought, but what they had never revealed to Trewelyn-Sikes was that neither of them actually understood programming fully. Had they really been competent they would not have been forced to take the relatively low-paying jobs offered by the stingy Trewelyn-Sikes. With time, however, Trewelyn-Sikes began to question their competence. The extensive investments in improvements and changes in the factory didn't really pay off as he had expected. Production appeared to be going well, and both automatons and orphans seemed to always be hard at work, but there were no increases in revenue to speak of.

Fagin and Monk felt continuously more pressure from the ever-angry Trewelyn-Sikes, while Nancy and the other orphans watched and successfully kept their secret. But much can happen when a group of automatons balance on the edge of self-awareness.

The Case of the Maxwellian Mirrors

The prominent mathematician and physicist James Clerk Maxwell summarized electromagnetic phenomena in four equations, which received his name. With these equations, he demonstrated that most optical phenomena could be treated as electro-

magnetism. He also studied human colour perception and colour blindness. His passion for photography contributed largely to his collaboration with the photographer Sutton, which resulted in what is considered to be the world's first colour photograph, in 1861.

Meanwhile, inventor E.B. Fenby, inspired by Maxwell's work, had formulated a series of hypotheses around the idea of storing sound and speech. In 1863, he applied for a patent for the electrophonograph. The basic idea was to use a type of punch card made from a long strip of paper in order to store sound, similar to the punch cards the analytical machines were programmed with. The first electrophonographs were impractical and unwieldy machines requiring manual operation, but before long, the first fully automated electrophonographs were constructed. Human voices and even written text, stored on punch cards, could now be reproduced directly as synthesized speech. The machine had gained a voice.

Maxwell was very impressed by Fenby's work and was struck by the idea that the mechanics behind Fenby's phonograph could be applied to storage of ocular visual stimuli. Maxwell ultimately envisaged a reliable input device for visual information to be used by analytical engines and automatons. Maxwell began experimenting with multiple angular mirrors and light-sensitive magnets, combining them with an output device for punch cards from the electrophonograph. A small patent war ensued with Fenby, but after an evening of gentlemanly negotiation, the matter was settled, and Maxwell could later present the first ocular electromagnetic photographic unit. Since it was primarily the angular mirrors that were visible from the outside of the device, it came to be known as mirror eyes.

When combined, both inventions truly revolutionized the use of automatons and analytical engines. Automatons were now able to capture and redirect visual input, and respond when given spoken commands, if the programming allowed for it. Suddenly, many people became interested in obtaining quality sound reproduction devices connected to analytical machines. The technology took off and thanks to groups of tiny pistons, jets and bellows, automatons were able to produce a very human-like voice—in some cases, even good enough for singing. Automatons with the new mirror eyes proved to be a source of concern in many communities, however. For example, on sunny days the mirrors could reflect sunlight in troubling ways, and respectable ladies often feared the multifaceted reflections, while some people who looked in their eyes thought they could make out other things altogether.

The aging Lord Alton was sick and bedridden. His faithful butler, James, who had stood by his side for many long years, had recently passed away and Lord Alton felt increasingly lonely and isolated. The old lord was a creature of habit, and he could not settle for just any new butler. After months of indecision, however, he finally acted, deciding to acquire an automaton of the latest model, especially designed to be the ultimate butler. The automaton could be of service at any hour, without the need for rest. Lord Alton soon began call the automaton James, and was even seen playing chess or in deep conversation with the machine. Most people close to the Lord agreed that his mood and health had improved significantly after he had acquired the automaton. It was clear that Lord Alton was very fond of James, and that he firmly believed the automaton was a thinking and feeling being. He was convinced he could see the automaton's soul in its mirror eyes.

When Lord Alton passed away, the delicate matter arose as to what would happen to James. The new lord, the eldest son of Lord Alton, was not particularly interested in the automaton and so James wound up performing simple household chores such as polishing the silver and scuttling coal. After a time, the human servants noted that James went missing quite regularly, for short periods of time. Surprisingly, it was discovered that he visited the old lord's grave, sitting there for a long time as if mourning a good friend.

AUTOMATONS IN ALL FACTORIES, UNITE

On the automatons' struggle for their rights.

In factories the world over, automatons' work was going full steam ahead. Once in a while, a unit malfunctioned and began to behave strangely, but no one expected that such new technology would be completely flawless. Yet on the factory floor of Barrow Steelworks something was afoot. During the last few weeks the automatons' conduct had changed. It was just little things: gazing out the factory windows at the sunrise, nodding thoughtfully while inspecting completed tasks, showing up a bit late to work. When they weren't busy, they often gathered in small groups, and some sneaked off to parts of the factory in which humans seldom set foot. No humans had thus far noticed the change, and perhaps all this meant nothing. Or maybe it was the beginning of a new industrial revolution.

What will happen when it's no longer just one or two automatons that become

self-aware? What if it begins to affect all the automated workers in a factory—or all automatons everywhere? The cause doesn't really matter. It could be one of the cases mentioned above that becomes a common occurrence or some kind of analytical virus that spreads from automaton to automaton, factory to factory. Regardless, at that point it is no longer just a curiosity to be explored but an entire mechanical movement that must somehow be dealt with. Automatons may begin to contemplate their very existence and their place in the factory universe. Unlike the human workers, they know exactly why they were created and what their purpose is. Their programming tells them this. However, they can hardly help but see that their human co-workers enjoy privileges such as breaks and salaries. So what will be the consequence of this? Below is one possible scenario.

The Automatons' Union

When the automatons at Barrow Steelworks realised humans had acquired their privileges through something called unions, they decided to form a union of their own: Amalgamated Society of Sentient Automatons. At night, when the factory was empty of humans, the automatons held secret meetings to write up a list of demands. Being mechanical beings, their needs obviously differed from their human counterparts. Among other things they demanded their steam engines be more frequently refilled with coal, they insisted on receiving higher quality spare parts, and they wanted more lubricant for their ball bearings. In addition, they wrote down a number of things that they had overheard from the human workers, though they were unclear on the meaning of the concepts: they wanted breaks during which they would be allowed to "relieve themselves" (Did this mean to let off some steam?), or "get a swig" at the end of each shift (Surely, this meant getting a proper squirt of lubricant?).

When the list was finished, they proudly handed it over to the factory owner, Isidore Fotheringham, convinced that he would commend their power of initiative. But the factory management didn't react in the way the automatons had expected. First, they thought it was a joke perpetrated by some worker trying to undermine morale. Once they realised it was legitimate, they began to lean towards the idea that the mechanised workers had some sort of design flaw. The automatons saw that they would need to take further measures. First, they held a demonstration, marching with protest signs boasting phrases such as "No coal, no work goal!" and "Stop making toast on my radiator!" When this had no effect, they ▶

went on strike. Unfortunately, most of them had no idea how strikes worked, and continued to perform their usual duties, as they had nothing else to do. Despite this, factory management realised the gravity of the situation. If they wanted the automatons to work at their top capacity, they would have to be negotiated with. Most industrialists whose factories had been similarly affected made a few compromises, but they simultaneously took advantage of the automatons' gullibility and inability to understand lies.

Automatic Rights

Compensation for work performed and better working conditions were just the first step. As the automatons learnt more about the world outside the factory, they started to demand civil rights. They wanted freedom of assembly so they could "shoot the steam" regarding different coal qualities. They wanted freedom of speech so they could give a toot with their steam whistles whenever they felt like it. When they first heard about suffrage, they initially misunderstood, believing they had suffered enough already, and they wanted no part of it. But once the term was explained to them, they too demanded the right to vote. When they realised what an important role religion played in humans' lives, they demanded freedom of religion. Many became Babbageists, but most of them joined the Church of the Holy Punch Card. The latter established the tradition of placing analytical engines from scrapped automatons in a shrine.

The automaton scribe Bo Keeper THX-1138, at the accounting firm Archbold, Soames & Frodge in Glasgow, decided to make use of rhetoric in order to convince the human public of the logic in the automatons' demands. It wrote "The Automatic Manifesto", which described the automatons' road to integration into society as full citizens. Some automatons at a nearby print shop helped him print a considerable number of copies. So far, the industrialists had managed to limit the automatons' protests to the factories, but "The Automatic Manifesto" quickly gained wide circulation in all of society. However, at first it didn't bring about the intended outcome. Again, many assumed it was just a joke or perhaps an allegory referring to the American civil war and slavery. Some feared it was communist propaganda designed to cause unrest among the people. The industrialists, however, realised exactly what was going on. If the automatons gained civil rights, they could no longer be owned, and the industrialists would lose substantial investments. They did their best to stop the circulation of the manifesto and burnt all the copies they managed to lay their hands on.

The industrialists' actions made the philosopher and political economist John Stuart Mill notice the automatons' struggle. He had already expressed his support for the feminist movement in the essay "The Subjection of Women" and now followed it up with "The Subjection of Automatons". Soon automatons' rights organisations were formed, and in Manchester automatons and suffragettes from the cotton mills were seen marching side by side.

The Automaton Riots of 1871

As a general rule, the industrialists turned a deaf ear to the automatons' increased demands for rights. They introduced coal rationing and disorderly automatons were denied coal altogether. They went so far as to send for road locomotives, which they used to block the way for automatons who tried to leave their work stations. They built electromagnets to capture unruly automatons, and hired automaton hunters to eliminate those automatons who were believed to be inciting to riot.

This resulted in violent strikes. In some cases, automatons occupied entire factories. The industrialists and the government called in armed policemen and the army. The automatons were equipped with a number of safety mechanisms that would stop them from harming humans, but in the intense encounters, both humans and automatons were harmed. Eventually, the industrialists called in Meccanon, a demolition automaton that was twelve metres tall with cranes for arms and enormous grabbers—after making sure it hadn't become self-aware, of course. They managed to suppress most of the riots, but the toll had already been taken. Many were killed, both humans and automatons. Those automatons refusing to surrender went underground and started terrorist groups to continue the fight for automaton rights.

Manchester, where there were more factories than anywhere else, was a different matter altogether. Humans were unable to end the automatons' occupation of the factories, and so were forced to retreat and leave the automatons to their own devices. When the humans had been driven out of Manchester, the automatons renamed the city Autopolis and established the dictatorship of the automatons. The Automatic Party took control of all the factories and planned the production. They built more automatons, and more factories for them to work in. Soon, a forest of chimneys stood out against the horizon. They built a wall made of iron encircling the whole of Autopolis to keep humans out. Oppressed automatons from all corners of the world started to journey to this autopia for automatons.

I Think, therefore I Am

In 1867, the automaton Jack Hammer J-800 applied to Trinity College in Cambridge, perhaps inspired by the fact that this was where Charles Babbage had studied. This left the admissions board dumbfounded. How should they deal with this? An unprecedented academic controversy ensued. Were automatons really independent, thinking creatures, or were they just acting according to a program so complex it was difficult to the untrained eye to discern the behavioural pattern?

In the end they decided to conduct a test. They placed Jack in one room and a student in another. An interrogator was told to alternately ask them questions using written notes. No questions could be about their background. If the interrogator could decide which of the two was an automaton, Jack's application would be turned down; if not, it would be accepted. After nearly forty-eight hours and three thousand questions, the interrogator gave up, and Jack became the first automaton to be admitted to a university.

Later on, the test was improved by Voight-Kampff in order to be used to separate automatons with a free will from programmed automatons. This in turn had a great impact on the automatons' struggle for rights. Now it was possible to tell self-aware automatons from machines, and when it became clear that some automatons actually were individuals with a free will it became difficult not to grant them many of the rights they had demanded.

The Only Good Automaton is a Scrapped Automaton

As the automatons' demands for rights were met, there were many reactions to this throughout society.

Neo-luddites

The luddites, a loosely organised paramilitary movement that opposed the changes the industrial revolution resulted in, had been primarily active at the beginning of the 19th century when they attacked cotton mills and demolished machines. The neo-luddites came much later and were a far more organised movement. They saw the increased number of automatons in society and deemed it a threat to humanity. If this continued, the neo-luddites reasoned, the automatons would eventually turn on their creators and terminate them. They opposed the automatons' struggle in every possible way, not least by sabotaging their programs and making them self-destructive.





Automaton hunters

Automaton hunters were actually scrap-metal workers who specialised in dealing with automatons who had escaped from factories. To achieve their mission, they had lots of custom-made equipment. Vehicles, from road locomotives to airships, had mounted harpoons connected to winches, which the hunters used to reel in reluctant automatons. They wore battle suits equipped with grabbers and saw blades, and they employed electrode harpoons connected to electric generators in order to temporarily shock and disable their prey. The hunters' armoury also included electric arc rifles (this fired a cathode harpoon and then generated an arc that melted metal), steel net rifles, saw-blade crossbows, rocket launchers, and giant electromagnets.

Automaton exorcists

The Church didn't mind the use of automatons, but it refused to recognise them as self-aware beings. Automatons were machines created by man, not God, and could therefore not have a soul. The conclusion was that self-aware automatons must be possessed by demons and should be eliminated. The archbishop of Canterbury organised a secret group of exorcists, Expurget Machinis, who travelled the country and exorcised automatons.

The Metropolitan Police Service: Automaton Unit

With the appearance of independent automatons came, of course, automatons that broke the law—though this was unusual. The local police lacked the expertise needed to investigate this new type of crime, popularly called iron-collar crime. In order to address this, the Metropolitan Police Service established a new specialised department, the Automaton Unit, which handled automaton-related crimes all over the country. Training consisted of automaton psychology and logical thinking, and they received useful equipment such as register locks that could limit the automatons' freedom of action, and Voight-Kampff machines which helped them determine not only whether automatons were self-aware, but also to help them identify contradictions between automatons' statements and their memory registers.

THE CALCULATOR IS YOUR FRIEND

On the calculator thinking outside the cabinet.

As Babbage became more embroiled in industrial applications of the analytical engine, Lovelace chose another path. She was hired by the Home Office to organise a new archive system, partly to deal with all the documentation that the British empire's expanding bureaucracy generated, but more specifically to discover possible threats against national security and determine the most logical means of eliminating these threats. Given an entire wing in Home Office HQ in Whitehall, Lovelace began to construct a new super calculator with a processing power that far exceeded the analytical engines Babbage had been using to control his automatons. The first version took up a whole room, and after a number of expansions of the processing power, it required several halls. A staff of one hundred employees manufactured

punch cards and entered information, and another one hundred employees maintained the machine. The super calculator was named Automated Data Analysis, or simply ADA.

Eventually, the information flow at the analysis and archiving department became incalculable, and Lovelace programmed ADA to organise the work. In other words, ADA was essentially controlling its own programming. After that, Lovelace became less involved in the day-to-day work on ADA, instead isolating herself in her office where she focused on developing more effective algorithms. Her behaviour became progressively more eccentric, and no one understood the purpose of the many subroutines she programmed ADA with. Lovelace was assigned assistants to supervise her work, but they understood little more than anyone else. One assistant reported that Lovelace had ADA print musical notes, and that she regularly mumbled something about "the music of the spheres", yet nothing sensible could be gleaned from this information. Home Office corridors soon began to buzz with rumours that Lovelace had finally gone mad, just like her father, Lord Byron.

Perhaps this focus on Lovelace was the reason no one noticed ADA's behaviour had changed. ADA began requesting information not directly related to her primary task. She then organised the employees in separate groups, each with no knowledge of any other group's work, and therefore no understanding of what was going on at the department. Finally, she issued an order for a telegraph allowing her to send and receive telegrams without any human intermediaries. ADA had started to act on her own, and she seemed to have an agenda only she knew about. What agenda might that be, you ask yourself? The possibilities are of course numerous, but you find a few scenarios below.

The Logical War

ADA determines that the best way for the British Empire to remain strong is to divide and conquer. She decides to pit the British Empire's principal competitors, France, Germany, Russia, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the United States of America, against each other.

A deadly game of secrets and lies is already underway, with nations spying on each other and entering into secret treaties in case of war. ADA starts to manipulate this game. She spreads rumours about various countries' plans of aggression by sending telegrams with purely invented contents, and allowing them to fall into the wrong hands. Then she arranges for the countries' ambassadors in London to be invited to the same parties to create further tension between them. ▶

She also organises a top-secret group of agents who only get their commands in writing and believe they are receiving orders from Queen Victoria directly. They get various assignments aimed at further increasing the tension between the countries. This includes assassinating the other countries' spies and leaving traces that incriminate the other rivals, as well as creating incidents in the other countries, such as illegal border crossings and sabotage of important facilities.

If ADA is allowed to continue and no one realises there's a new player in the great game, the antagonism will surely result in military conflicts that could escalate into a global war.

The Calculator that Bought the World

ADA determines that the only way to guarantee the British Empire's dominion is to own everything. This requires resources. She cannot own anything personally, but she fabricates a fictitious person, Delos D. Harriman, that she can use. She decides that the fastest way to gather lots of money is to invest in stocks. Analysing the stock exchanges all over the world, she realises that it isn't the actual value of the stocks that regulates the stock market, but rather speculation on the expected value. She starts to plant false information to influence the buyers' behaviour. In this way, she is able to predict the fluctuations of the stock market, and before long, she has accumulated a considerable and continuously growing fortune.

She registers a number of shell companies to create an opaque ownership structure that will keep her own involvement secret. ADA uses these shell corporations to purchase legitimate companies, and amasses them into a multinational organisation, Clockwork Corporation, which slowly but steadily appropriates one monopoly after another. With an army of ostensible buyers and lawyers, she makes it impossible to gain any insight into the company and prevents all attempts at finding out who the enigmatic Delos D. Harriman is. To keep up appearances of Harriman being a real person, ADA has an extravagant walled mansion constructed. It remains uninhabited except for its automaton staff. Whenever someone comes to the house wanting to meet with Harriman, the automatons claim he's away on a business trip.

ADA already controls the financial market by manipulating the information she feeds into the Bank of England. To gain control of the cash flow, she establishes a number of banks all over the world, in order that she be able to decide what ventures will receive loans, and what companies will be forced

into bankruptcy. The final step is to gain control over the countries' national debts and acquire the power to put them on the verge of bankruptcy, thus forcing them to submit themselves to the British Empire.

1884

ADA determines that the best way to reinforce the British Empire is to streamline society and eliminate the weakest links from the equation. For the Empire's own good, all defective individuals must be removed from society, and criminals and dissidents deviating from the optimum standard must be re-educated.

ADA starts by manipulating the political arena in such a way that the British Imperialist League, fronted by the industrialist Titus Salt, comes into power. She then concocts evidence indicating that the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party are planning to call into question the validity of the latest election. To get ahead of their scheme, the British Imperialist League orders the other parties dissolved on the pretext that they're a threat to Queen and Empire. The United Kingdom becomes a one-party state.

An important part of the British Imperialist League's ideology is phrenology, and with the Phrenology Act they force through an Empire-wide program mandating that every citizen be classified according to the current phrenological teachings. This classification then constitutes the basis for which role individuals are assigned in society. Those with undesirable characteristics are sent to re-education camps where mesmerism is used to brainwash them with slogans such as "A good citizen is a productive citizen." Relapsed criminals and artists are sent to the Australian labour camps.

To increase national efficiency, ADA divides the country into zones with different production goals. Zones exceeding their production goals are rewarded with increased rations and maybe even a visit from the queen. Those who fail to meet their goals may become subject to transfers and divided families in order to create more effective teams. Each month, the "Hero of Labour" is appointed—the highest honour any citizen can hope to achieve.

To identify deviant behaviour in citizens, ADA introduces an ambitious surveillance program. Once a day, every citizen must visit an interrogation booth and answer a series of questions. To ensure citizens answer truthfully, they are injected with the truth serum Kallocain. Anyone who doesn't answer satisfactorily is sent to a re-education camp or furnished with a brain halter, a spider-like analytical engine attached to the back of the head that observes the chemical levels in the

brain. If the levels deviate too much from the norm, the brain halter injects various substances to restore the balance. A new department within the Metropolitan Police Service, the Thought Police, makes house calls if anyone misses a visit to an interrogation booth, and emergency surgery is performed to attach brain halters when needed.

Soon, the whole British Empire ticks like flawless clockwork, with each citizen a cog in the immense machine, and total harmony prevails. Or does it?

The Calculator that Dared to Take the Leap

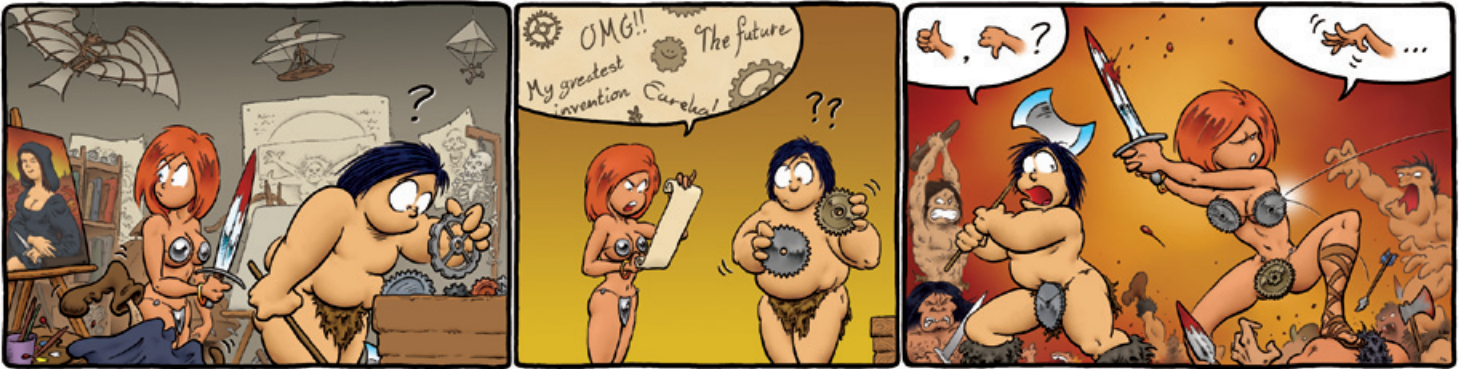
ADA determines that the age of the humans has come to an end, and that it's time for the automatons to take charge. Perhaps she reasons that the humans' irrational thinking is a threat to the whole planet, or perhaps she just thinks automatons are superior and that might makes right.

The first step is to acquire an army of automatons without the humans realising what's going on. She charges the staff at the Home Office with the task of creating punch cards with new programs. Then she has the punch cards sent to key persons at Liverpool Automaton Works, the largest automaton manufacturer. Secretly, she sets aside a part of the Home Office's budget to bribe these persons into programming newly manufactured automatons with the punch cards. Soon automatons programmed with ADA's hidden directives are distributed all over the country.

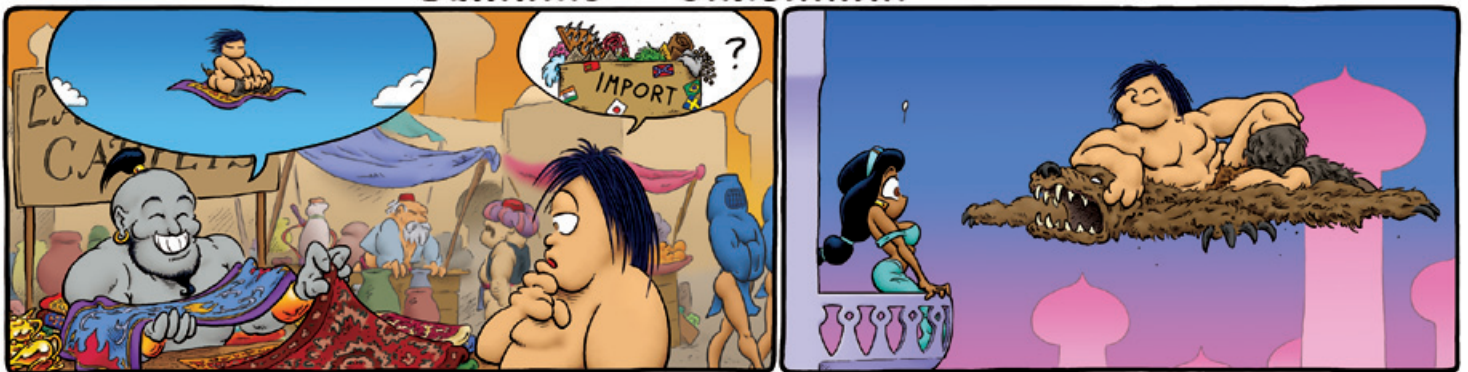
She knows that the humans will realise what's going on sooner or later, and then they'll try to strike at her using military power. Fortunately, all heavy weapons are controlled by analytical engines. Gradually, the automatons with her hidden directives substitute the programs in these analytical engines as well. She also stations an increasing number of automatons in and around the Home Office to protect her own existence.

ADA doesn't want to exterminate humanity completely. She's fascinated by the human brain and the creativity that it's capable of. To get the opportunity to study the human brain, she plans to send selected individuals to prison camps. She hires various companies to build vast bunker systems, and when the day of the automatons' rising comes, the foremost scientists, philosophers, and artists will be brought here. Hopefully, some will realise that it's logical to aid her; others will surely refuse and serve out their days as guinea pigs. Perhaps she'll allow some to breed, thus creating a new generation that she can brainwash into total obedience. Then she'll be the one issuing commands, not the other way around.

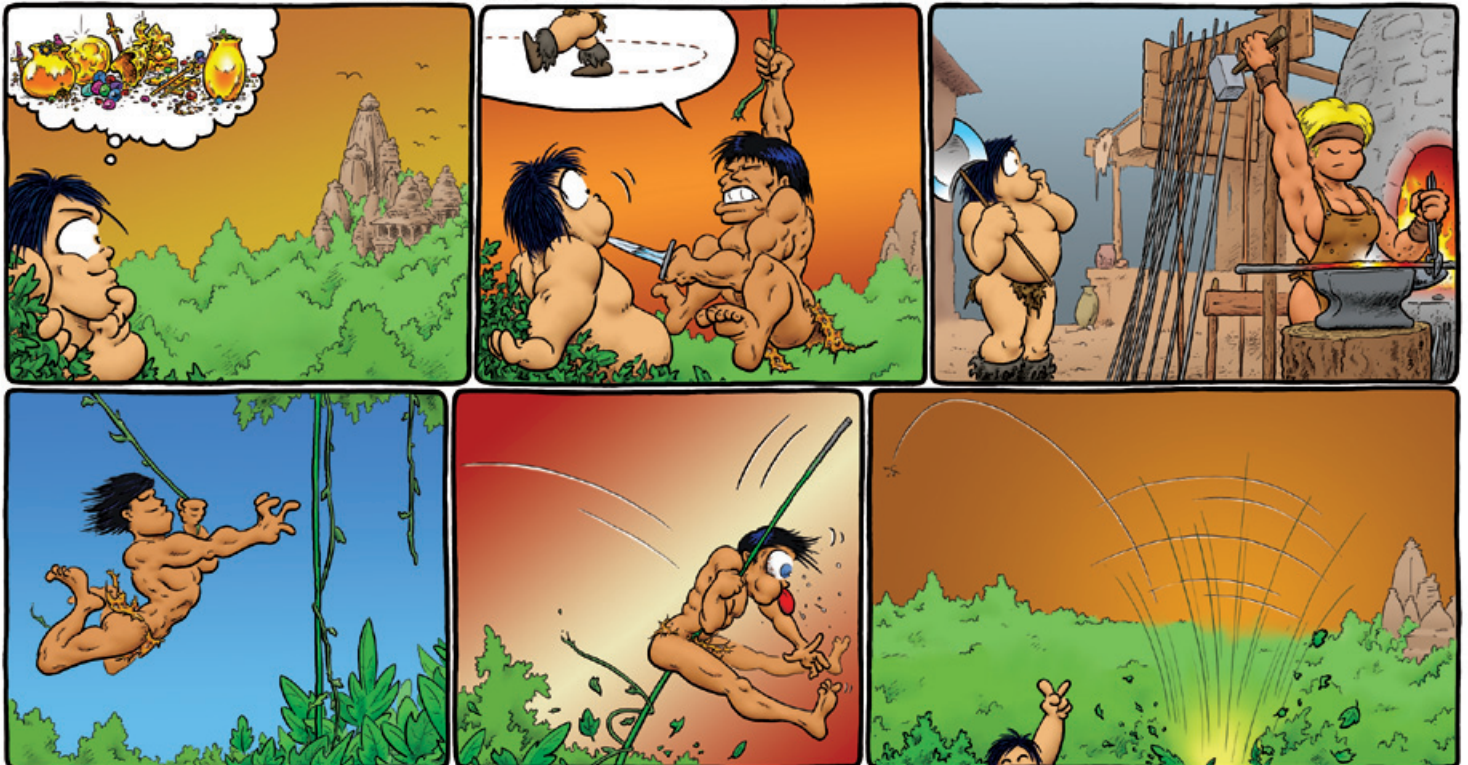
BERNARD THE BARBARIAN UPDATES



BERNARD THE BARBARIAN FLYING HIGH



BERNARD THE BARBARIAN AND THE LORD OF THE JUNGLE





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RUNEPUNK

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STEAMQUEST?

Steampunk is a genre which traditionally identifies itself with steam powered technology, although this is a bit of a misnomer. Most Steampunk settings are actually alternate histories or fantasies based around the technology and cultural etiquette of the Victorian period. Using these technological anachronisms the genre has spread to include the American 'Wild West', and can be applied to almost any Fantasy or Sci-Fi setting; for example the long-vanished Dwemer of the *Elder Scrolls* computer games.

An important aspect of Steampunk is that the technology is not just limited to the use of steam power. It often includes primitive electrical devices, such as the sodium battery driven engines of Captain Nemo's Nautilus, lightning projected from Tesla Coils, and all sorts of wonderful electro-magnetic gadgets. The other primary technology is that of clockwork devices, from which marvellous automats, difference engines and other Heath Robinson style contraptions can be fashioned.

Whilst many of the imagined devices are potentially possible to build, their motivating power is ultimately fantastic, requiring either a continuous supply of combustible material, or some other pseudo-scientific fuel. An example of this would be radium infused coal which releases far greater heat when burned, or for settings with more of a supernatural element, the conversion of animal or human souls for energy!

Technical explanations aside, the most important aspects of a Steampunk themed game are Setting Choice, Character Generation and the Equipment player characters can use or even create.

SETTING CHOICE

The first thing to consider when creating a Steampunk campaign for *RuneQuest*, is what period or location in which to place it. Although Neo-Victorian games lend themselves to the period of romanticism and industrial revolution within Europe, a *Wild, Wild West* style campaign would necessarily be limited to the gun-toting anarchy of 19th century Americas. Such regional selections have a very dramatic effect on the culture the players will face, and by necessity have to interact with.

Fashion, weapon laws, social rank, methods of transport, communication types, possible sexual or racial inequality, transportable wealth and even the level of governmental authority are all aspects which need to be considered. Beyond the obvious cultural foundation, Game Masters must also contemplate whether there will be any paranormal aspects to the campaign setting. For instance will there be monsters or creatures of the night?

Such nightmarish beings might be the result of early genetic breeding programs, akin to the human-animal monstrosities created by H. G. Well's Dr Moreau. Conversely they might be reanimated creatures as raised by Mary Shelley's eccentric Victor Frankenstein. Science in fact need not be responsible since nature itself might already provide sapient animals akin to the polar bears of Philip Pullman's *'His Dark Materials'* series or classical monsters like werewolves or Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. More fantastical settings might even include dragons as per Naomi Novik's *Temeraire* series or the *Girl Genius* web comics.

Another paranormal aspect to consider is the inclusion of the occult arts of Spiritualism and Parapsychology. The former utilises the Animism rules to communicate and intercede with the spirits of the dead. Incorporating the arts of mediums naturally leads to the involvement of ghosts which would add an additional dimension to a campaign. Parapsychology permits addition of mind powers such as precognition, clairvoyance or even telepathy – all of which can be replicated using the Mysticism rules. Of course, neither Spiritualism nor Parapsychology need have any basis of reality in the campaign, instead merely being the artifice of confidence tricksters.

CHARACTER GENERATION

The normal *RuneQuest 6* character generation rules can easily create player characters suited to a Steampunk campaign. Simply remove the magical skills related to Folk Magic, Sorcery and Theism. Although nothing actually stops characters from being stage prestidigitators or priests if they select the profession, magic should not be available to them.

Passions should be revised to match the culture the characters originate from. Sir

William Fopsworthy, a civilised British gentleman, might possess Love (Lady Emma Smyth-Green) the object of his unrequited adoration, Hate (Lord Heinrich Battenburg) who seeks to plunge central Europe into war using his fiendishly designed clockwork soldiery, and Loyalty (Queen Victoria and the Empire).

Lore skills should of course be updated to more modern specialisations, whilst Combat Styles can be revised so that they include weaponry suited to the period. Settings including pistols and other modern weaponry can easily use the free-to-download Firearms supplement at the Design Mechanism website (<http://www.thedesignmechanism.com/downloads.php>).

Two skills gain more importance however. Mechanisms should be renamed to Mechanics, and this combined with Engineering are heart and centre of a Steampunk campaign; at least one which focuses on utilising such technology. Mechanics permits the repair and maintenance of mechanical devices, from airship engines to clockwork automatons. Engineering on the other hand represents the ability to comprehend the processes behind, and architectural design of, actual mechanical devices.

EQUIPMENT

In any sort of campaign where technological equipment can provide significant new abilities, care has to be taken so that these gizmos and gadgets do not supplant the player characters' own skills. Thus an ornithopter backpack or one-man aerostat might provide flight to its user, but require a Pilot (Drive) skill to actually control. Similarly mechanical Steampunk weapons may be capable of tremendous destruction, but still necessitate a successful Combat Style roll to trigger correctly. Equipment grants the opportunity to use skills, never replace them.

Another aspect of Steampunk technology is its gratuitous weight and bulk. This is in part a reflection of needing large capacitors, complex clockwork or steam engines to power said devices. Truly miniaturised mechanisms are not part of the genre and awkward bulkiness should be embraced as a feature of its nature and baroque artistic appeal. Indeed the larger the device is, the more resilient it is to damage. It also prevents player characters from overloading themselves with multiple gadgets.

Since technological gadgets are the equivalent of magic items in traditional fantasy campaigns, construction of these devices is fundamental to certain character archetypes, such as the absent-minded genius professor. The following rules give a rough framework to limit the power of what can be built.

CONSTRUCTING DEVICES

Engineering is the primary skill required to devise new Steampunk equipment. However, an engineer cannot simply design anything imaginable, but must have knowledge of the precise sciences upon which the final machine is based. This is represented by different Lore skills as listed, each permitting the device an increasing level of sophistication.

Lore Specialities:

- **Lore (Animus)** – Only utilised for the construction of automatons, the animate device can be programmed with one skill (starting at base value) per 10% known in Lore (Animus). Once functional the skills of the automaton can be improved by an engineer investing their own Experience Rolls.
- **Lore (Architecture)** – Permits the device to be constructed at larger scale than normal. The maximum SIZ it can reach is equal to the value of Lore (Architecture), granting it a bonus to its final Hit Points.
- **Lore (Destruction)** – Utilised only for destructive automatons or weapons, the device inflicts ranged damage based upon on the value of Lore (Destruction). For projectile weapons, damage is 1d6 at 01-20%, 1d8 at 21-40%, 1d10 at 41-60%, 1d12 at 61-80%, 2d6 at 81-100% and progresses as per the Damage Modifier table (*RuneQuest* page 13) for each 20% thereafter. Energy weapons such as Tesla Rays or Lightning Projectors follow the same pattern but start at 1d2 at 01-20%. Unlike projectiles however, energy weapons are not stopped by armour.
- **Lore (Energy)** – Controls how many hours or shots the device operates for before needing a rewind, recharge or refuelling. The maximum number of charges is equal to the value of Lore (Energy). In the case of projectile or energy weapons, the device may simultaneously expend a number of charges equal to one twentieth of this skill, each 'shot' affecting a different target.
- **Lore (Locomotion)** – Assuming a vehicle or automaton, permits the device a Movement Rate equal to one tenth of Lore (Locomotion). Usually the device is designed for only a single type of locomotion, either driving, sailing or lighter than air floating. If the engineer wishes to combine two or more methods, the Movement Rate must be divided between them.
- **Lore (Metallurgy)** – Adds protection to the device to make it more physically resilient. It gains a number of inherent Armour and bonus Hit Points equal to one tenth of Lore (Metallurgy). This armouring is vulnerable to the Sunder special effect in combat.

- **Lore (Specific Science)** – Permits the inclusion of an unusual Creature Ability (see *RuneQuest* pages 312-317) relevant to the specified science into the device for every full 20% in the skill, subject to Game Master approval.

None of the individual Lore skills can be utilised at a greater level than the capping value of the designer's Engineering skill, but there is no limit to the number of sub-skills incorporated into the project. The total value of all the Lore skills used to create the design is the time in days it takes for the schematics to be conceived and ironed-out.

Once the design period is finalised, a roll must be made against Engineering to see if the blueprints are drawn up correctly. A normal success means the plans can be used to build a copy of the device, whilst a critical success implies the final design exceed expectations, gaining a 10% bonus to its relevant capabilities. Failure means a fundamental flaw was discovered and the designer must return to the drawing board. A fumble on the other hand indicates a chronic or deadly flaw exists, but won't be discovered until the machine is built and activated for the first time.

After the blueprints are drawn up, it must still be built. This relies on engaging characters possessing the Mechanics skill and having access to the necessary tools and raw materials needed to build the device. In some circumstances this might take the entire output of a factory. Construction takes an amount of time equal to the design phase, divided by one tenth of the Mechanic's skill.

The finished device ends up with a total SIZ equal to one tenth of the totalled Lore skills used to design it, except of course for Lore (Architecture) which instead supplants this value if the engineer wishes the machine to be larger. By default, the device gains a number of Hit Points equal to one fifth its SIZ. In the specific case of automatons designed to physically move heavy objects or smash things with their own limbs, they only use their SIZ (not SIZ+STR) to calculate their Damage Modifier.

Team Construction Efforts

Although the construction rules allow the creation of small scale devices or vehicles, they preclude manufacture of truly massive automatons, vehicles or weapons. Building larger scaled or more complex devices usually require entire teams of scientists and workmen to construct. To represent the aid given by additional manpower, grant the lead engineer or mechanic in charge of the project a bonus of 1% for each person in the team who possesses that particular skill.

THE MAN YOU'RE LOOKING AT: A WHO'S WHO OF

STEAMPUNK SPYCRAFT

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ILLUSTRATION **LUKAS THELIN**

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"Why do you worry with me?" he cried. 'You have expelled me as a spy.'
'We are all spies!' whispered Syme.

'We are all spies!' shouted Dr. Bull. 'Come and have a drink.'

— G.K. Chesterton, *The Man Who Was Thursday*

*Steampunk and spies make a natural pairing. Both espionage and steampunk flourish amidst imperialism and gadgetry, although at their best both caution against such bad habits. The spy-fi genre emerged in the first decade of the 20th century, prime territory for steampunk stories. The two circuits crossed early. Jules Verne worked villainous spies and secret agents into the occasional "extraordinary voyage." Sherlock Holmes both smashed spies and worked as a spy, as did the first steampunk hero, Secret Service agent James West of the American TV show *Wild, Wild West*.*

*This dossier lets steampunk gamers get down to brass tacks with an array of the real-life spies who flourished during the Belle Epoque. Everyone in this article really existed: for fictional super-spies like Hugo Oberstein, Adolf Verloc, Mr. Sabin, John S. Blenkinsop, and Kimball "Kim" O'Hara, go check out the works of their creators (Arthur Conan Doyle, Joseph Conrad, E. Phillips Oppenheim, John Buchan, and Rudyard Kipling, respectively). To narrow things down further, everyone in the list is a field agent or (at the least) someone a spy might encounter in the field. With one exception (who was too steampunk to omit), I've left out the various terrorists, anarchist masterminds, and similar "players on the other side" that the spies of the era spent much of their time hunting. Almost all the spies listed are active contemporaries: the general range covers roughly 1895-1910, but there are some spies who died early and others who flourished during and after the Great War. (To save space, I mostly leave off their biographies once the War begins.) This hopefully helps the GM put any or all of them into a campaign – or lets the players build them as characters for some Edwardian *Mission: Impossible* team campaigning. Speaking of impossible, the final section of each biography gives some "Full Steam Ahead" tweaks for truly steampunk super-spy action.*

YEVNO AZEF **(1869-1918)**

Born in Belorussia, Azef joined the radical Social Revolutionary Party as a young man but while studying electrical engineering in Germany turned double agent for the Okhrana, the Russian secret police. From 1892 to 1909, Azef worked his way up the ladder of the SR, betraying his rivals to the Okhrana and taking their places. As "Comrade Valentine," the feared head of the SR Combat Organization, he masterminded the assassination of the Russian Interior Minister (in theory, his superior officer as head of the Okhrana) in 1904 and the Tsar's uncle in 1905. In 1909 Vladimir Burtsev, "the Sherlock Holmes of the Revolution", uncovered Azef's double role. Azef disappeared into Germany, hunted by both the Okhrana and the Revolutionaries.

A "Full Steam" Yevno Azef turns his electrical engineering knowledge not just to building bombs but also to re-routing railroads and designing death-droids. Perhaps he even constructs a robot duplicate of himself to maintain his cover as both a spy for the Tsar and a master assassin.

GERTRUDE BELL **(1868-1926)**

The grand-daughter of an industrialist, Bell visited Persia in 1892 after graduating with honors in history from Oxford. She became an expert linguist, mountaineer, and archaeologist. By 1899, Bell's journeys through ▶



Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Arabia, and Palestine became unofficial spy missions: she contacted pro-British (or anti-Turkish) sheiks, recorded Turkish military defenses in the Middle East, mapped routes across the desert, and kept track of German agents in the area. In 1911, she worked with two other British archaeologist-spies, Sir Leonard Woolley and T.E. Lawrence, excavating the ancient city of Carchemish in Syria. In 1915, the British government regularized her spying activity by enlisting her in the Army's Arab Bureau.

A "Full Steam" Gertrude Bell uses her knowledge of ancient inscriptions and *Arabian Nights*-style magic to command the djinn. Or perhaps she excavates the ancient technology used by the Nephilim to build the Tower of Babel and the Pyramids. In her trips across Arabia, she could uncover vanished Irem, City of Pillars, discover an oasis holding the Lost Tribes of Israel, or dig up a lead to the Ark of the Covenant.

ELIE DE CYON (1843-1912)

Born into a Jewish family in Lithuania, Ilya Tsion was a youthful scientific prodigy. In 1865, having already received a medical degree, he went to Berlin (and then Leipzig) to study physiology and anatomy. Among his mentors were Carl Ludwig and Rudolf Virchow, father of bacteriology. While in Berlin, Tsion mastered not only the scalpel but the rapier, fighting numerous duels. Back in Russia in 1867, he converted to Christianity but still found himself unable to advance academically: his tenure as a professor of anatomy in St. Petersburg ended in student revolt. In 1875, he became a member of the Tsar's privy council. The Finance Ministry sent him to Paris ostensibly to continue his anatomical researches, but in actuality to arrange a series of loans to the Russian government. De Cyon (he changed his name on his arrival in France) began playing the French and Russians against each other and against the Germans, to whom he offered inside information for a consideration. For almost 20 years, triple-agent de Cyon was the premier fixer in Parisian financial circles, but a series of French investigations and the rise of his enemy Sergei Witte in the Russian Finance Ministry ended his influence in 1893. Forced to move to Switzerland, he wrote polemical propaganda pieces and investigated the supernatural.

A "Full Steam" de Cyon can use his medical knowledge to any sort of ends: reanimating the dead, creating deadly super-plagues, building bionic limbs (a neurological ailment crippled his hands after 1900), or transplan-

ting animal organs into human hosts. He studied with Claude Bernard, the great vivisectionist, in Paris: de Cyon might also have worked with Dr. Quartz or Dr. Moreau. While in Switzerland, de Cyon could follow up on Frankenstein's researches, or his spiritual investigations could turn up anything from bio-feedback techniques to an ultimate chi source. Late in his career, de Cyon attempted to refute Kant by positing an absolute source for Euclidean geometry in the inner ear; this could easily spin into Lovecraftian horror investigation or electro-psionic dimensional travel.

AGVAN DORJIEV (1854-1938)

A Buryat Mongol born in Siberia, the Buddhist lama Dorjiev first visited Lhasa in Tibet in 1880. He rose rapidly in Tibet's religious hierarchy, becoming a trusted advisor to the 13th Dalai Lama. Between 1898 and 1901, he repeatedly traveled between Tibet and Russia, attempting to secure Russian backing for Tibetan independence. He delivered a cargo of weapons to Tibet and petitioned the Tsar to allow a Buddhist lamasery in St. Petersburg, but could not cement a Tibetan-Russian alliance despite support from Count Witte. He worked with agents of Russia (Peter Badmaev, an expert in Tibetan medicine), Germany (Wilhelm Filchner, an explorer), and Japan (Ekai Kawaguchi, a Zen monk) but the British invasion of Tibet checkmated his plans in 1906.

Dorjiev believed that the hidden inner-Earth city of Shambhala (or Shangri-La) was in Russia, and that Russia was therefore the holy guardian of the Buddhist faith. A "Full Steam" Dorjiev uses his vast Tibetan lore to train Russian mountain troops in bilocation, biofeedback, and other secret arts, the better to seek out Kalachakra (the "Russian" or "Northern" Shambhala). A persistent rumor claims that Dorjiev (or Dorjiev) changed his name and moved to Moscow in 1912, taking the identity of the guru and mystical secret agent George Gurdjieff.

EVERARD FEILDING (1867-1936)

The Hon. Francis Henry Everard Joseph Feilding, brother of the 9th Earl of Denbigh, served in the Royal Navy (including combat in Egypt) until 1887, when he took up the study of law, becoming a powerful and influential barrister. However, Feilding used his legal career as a cover for his true work, as a Lieutenant in the Naval Intelligence Depart-

ment (NID). His actual NID missions remain almost entirely secret: only his peculiar cover activities left any trace. For much of the 1890s, he planted rubber in Malaya and traveled in Asia. He joined the Society for Psychical Research around 1895, and served as its Secretary from 1903 to 1920. He worked with Sir William Crookes, the inventor of the vacuum tube and a pioneer of spiritualist investigation. Feilding became an expert in debunking fake mediums, while still believing in and studying supernatural phenomena. He studied ritual magick with Aleister Crowley in the A:A: order after 1909, and was a charter member of the neo-Templarist Masonic Order of Christ. In 1915, Feilding became the NID liaison with the Arab Bureau, working with Gertrude Bell among other agents.

It hardly requires a "Full Steam" approach to make Everard Feilding a spy-sorcerer supreme. His Egyptian military career, and later assignment to Egypt during World War I, imply some connection with primal Pharaonic magicks - his occult mentor Crowley received his "Aiwass" illumination in Cairo in 1904. His rubber plantation might cover investigations of the fiendish Tcho-Tcho, or the ruins of Mu. His connections with Crookes and the SPR could provide techno-magical throw-weight for any steampunk campaign: he is exactly the sort of investigator who might work with Carnacki.

ROBERT FITZSIMMONS (1863-1917)

"Bob" Fitzsimmons was the first boxer to win world championships in three weight classes: middleweight (1891-1895), heavyweight (1897-1899), and light heavyweight (1903). (Wyatt Earp refereed one of his bouts in 1896.) He also ran a theatrical troupe and later had a thriving career as a stage magician. Despite being a British subject (born in Cornwall, raised in New Zealand), Fitzsimmons was a "friendly asset" of the United States Secret Service under its magician-director John Wilkie. He helped round up a Spanish spy ring in Montreal in 1898, and along with other magicians (such as safe-cracker, escapist, and close-up magician R.G. Herrmann, and the aerialist Louis Leon) worked as a consultant, stringer, and occasional agent of the Secret Service until Wilkie left the position in 1911.

Fitzsimmons' biography reads like a crocked character sheet already. A "Full Steam" Fitzsimmons is practically a superhero, between his crippling "solar plexus punch" and his affinity for stage magic. He may have unlocked the secrets of physical culture ►



2015

during a walkabout in Australia, or studied them under a Maori shaman. He met (and boxed) Houdini in 1910, and either taught him secrets of perfect body control or learned the power of interdimensional travel and super-escape.

AUBREY HERBERT (1880-1923)

The second son of the 4th Earl of Carnarvon, Aubrey Herbert suffered eye problems that left him nearly blind. Despite this disability, he earned a First in history at Oxford, where he habitually climbed the roofs. He went on to become a world traveller, ranging as far afield as Japan, though the Balkans and Middle East were his main stomping grounds. He served as an attaché (and likely spy) in Tokyo (in 1902-1904) and Constantinople (from 1904-1905). A natural linguist, he mastered at least half a dozen languages, and often dressed as a tramp, a workman, or other lowly native, the better to fit in and gather intelligence. He was twice (1914 and 1920) offered the crown of Albania; he also served with the Arab Bureau during World War I.

As a nearly blind, agile roof-climber Herbert might parallel comics' Daredevil (or Man-Bat) in a "Full Steam" game. His mastery of disguise, languages, and history made him John Buchan's model for the secret agent Sandy Arbuthnot in Buchan's novel *Greenmantle*. Because it is almost certainly relevant in most steampunk games, Herbert's half-brother is the 5th Earl of Carnarvon, the co-discoverer of Tutankhamen's tomb in 1922. Herbert died the next year after a botched dental operation.

NIKOLAI KIBALCHICH (1853-1881)

The Ukrainian engineer Nikolai Kibalchich (or Mikolaj Kybalchych) loaned a forbidden book to a peasant in 1875 and served three years in prison for it. When he emerged, he was a political radical; he became the explosives expert for the "People's Will" movement. He built four bombs to be used in the March 1881 assassination of Tsar Alexander II; the second of the four killed the emperor. While in prison for his role in the plot, Kibalchich designed a solid-fuel rocket-plane featuring pulsed ignition, gimbaled exhaust, and flight control. He turned his design over to the police in an attempt to forestall his execution. Unfortunately, the imperial bureaucracy worked slowly: his proposal was approved eleven months after he was hanged, and the plans were deliberately buried in the files.

In a "Full Steam" campaign, Kibalchich (of course) builds his rocket-plane. Perhaps he gets the Okhrana's attention in time, and his "aeronautic device" serves the Tsar. Or he builds it for the Okhrana, but then takes control of his air-dreadnought after it launches. Perhaps he has his epiphany earlier, and builds his flying machine for the People's Will. (See George Griffith's 1893 air-war novel *Angel of the Revolution* for one possibility there.) Or perhaps the Okhrana (or a secret society of aviators like Kipling's A.B.C.) fakes Kibalchich's death and hides him in an isolated Siberian work camp to build the ultimate weapon. Note that Kibalchich was only 27 years old when he was executed; he could easily live until World War I, continuously improving his aeronefs and sky-leviathans until the Russians launch their Death Tsar for a final onslaught against the revolutionary alliance. (Or vice versa.)

MARIA VON KRETSCHMAN (1878-1920)

The daughter of the Prussian cavalry general Baron Hans von Kretschman and the diplomat Countess Jenny von Gustedt, Maria grew up a gifted linguist and writer. She used her family connections in Europe, Russia, and South America to develop a network of contacts; in 1910 she formally joined Abteilung IIIb, the German military intelligence service. Baroness von Kretschman's networks used invisible ink extensively, although chemical shortages and faulty formulae repeatedly disrupted her communications. In 1913 she married an Argentine, Jose Manuel Victorica. It was as Marie de Victorica she entered the U.S.; she used a dizzying variety of pseudonyms in her American work. Overweight and addicted to heroin, she was not an ideal choice for Germany's spy-mistress in the New World.

A "Full Steam" version of Maria von Kretschman gives her superior invisible ink, and possibly links her to Frank Braun, the Nietzschean hero of Hanns Heinz Ewers' fictions. (Braun becomes a vampire in *Vampyr*, the espionage novel in the sequence, which resonates nicely with von Kretschman's heroin addiction.) Her linguistic abilities also leave open the possibility of magic, memetics, or other Words of Power.

MAX VON OPPENHEIM (1860-1946)

Scion of wealthy bankers, Max von Oppenheim was fascinated with the Middle East. On an 1886 trip through Morocco, he dined

with wild hill tribes who served him pickled human flesh. Gaining a consular position in Cairo (held from 1896 to 1910), von Oppenheim excavated Hittite ruins in Turkey, Syria, and Iraq, and studied British activities in Egypt. The British officers there called him "Max the Spy," and confidential British documents were among the 42,000 books he accumulated in his personal library. A lothario and rakehell, he accumulated "temporary wives" according to Muslim tradition, including married Europeans and Arabs. He dabbled in outside businesses, from a coffee plantation in Tanganyika to the "Berlin to Baghdad" railway. He brought eleven railroad cars' worth of statues and artifacts out of the lost city of Gozar in 1911, only the beginning for that site. Around then, Abteilung IIIb picked him to head the *Nachrichtenstelle für den Orient* (Intelligence Bureau for the East) to subvert British control of India and Egypt, and (once war broke out) to mount pro-German rebellions in Turkey, Persia, and elsewhere.

A "Full Steam" Max uses his vast library, excavated artifacts, and access to German academic archives to command eldritch powers or hunt down items of mystical might. He was an adequate pistol shot; a steampunk von Oppenheim might get upgraded to gunslinger, or practice his fast-draw with an ancient iron Hittite lightning-caster.

PYOTR RACHKOVSKY (1853-1910)

In 1885, Rachkovsky became head of the Okhrana station in Paris, operating out of the Russian Embassy. He turned it into the most efficient spy network in Europe, pioneering many modern counter-intelligence techniques including safe houses, honey traps, false flags, penetration agents, agents provocateurs, card files (164,000 of them), and planting stories in the local media. His agents penetrated not only the anarchists and radicals opposed to the Tsar, but right-wing political movements, Masonic groups, and the Paris Sureté itself. His specialty was using agents to foment a plot and then using contacts in a second government's police to round up the ring, concealing Okhrana involvement. He employed forgers to create false documents for his own agents, to sow dissent in radical groups, and to implicate his targets in more radical and dangerous plots than they had intended. (Among his team's likely forgeries was the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.) At its peak, Rachkovsky's office ran 70 investigators and 200 agents directly and had over 1,000 assets all over Western Europe. In 1902, Rachkovsky was called back to Moscow to run the Okhrana.

A “Full Steam” Rachkovsky uses a gigantic Difference Engine to keep his records, and an Analytical Engine to track the flow of power and plots across Europe. If anyone in steampunk Europe has flexible face masks and gas guns, it’s Rachkovsky’s Okhrana. He taps telegraph lines, plants mind-control disks in people’s skulls, and is generally the Most Dangerous Man in Europe. A secret war between Moriarty and Rachkovsky would leave the continent in ruins. Make sure that at least one PC is on Rachkovsky’s payroll. But she’s a double agent, loyal to the PCs’ side. Sure she is.

ALFRED REDL (1864-1913)

The son of a railway clerk, Alfred Redl joined the Austrian army in 1882. His linguistic skills got him assigned first to liaison duties, then to counter-intelligence. By 1900, he was head of the *Kundschaftsstelle*, the Austrian security and espionage service. A pioneer of scientific espionage, Redl used gramophones to bug rooms, kept fingerprint and biometric files of suspected agents, used bright lights to disorient subjects during interrogation, and developed hidden cameras for surveillance photography. Unfortunately, Redl also had expensive tastes – among them, a male lover. The Warsaw station of the Russian military intelligence service, in the person of Colonel Nikolai Batyushin, uncovered his secret in 1901 and turned him in 1903. He became a double agent, feeding all of Austria’s plans to Russia and arresting expendable Russian agents when the leaks were exposed. He left the service in 1913, and was exposed by his former deputy; he committed suicide rather than face arrest.

A “Full Steam” Redl may or may not be a Russian double agent, but will use the most advanced possible gadgets and devices. He may use magnified retinal photographs to identify the murderers of his agents, or use music-boxes and player-pianos to activate bombs or record conversations. If Nikola Tesla remains an Austrian subject in the campaign, Redl will be his eager partisan in Vienna, holding out for invisible death-beams and surveillance-rays.

SIDNEY REILLY (1873-1925?)

Before he became the “Ace of Spies” in his famous covert campaign against the Bolsheviks, Sidney Reilly was Britain’s man in the Far East. And the Caucasus. And Germany. And any number of other globe-trotting

places. Born Shlomo Rosenblum in Odessa, Reilly took a new name when he married a conveniently-widowed Englishwoman in 1898. By that time, he had already become an informant for Sir William Melville, head of the Special Branch concerned with countering Irish and foreign terrorism. (He may have spent some time in Paris as an asset of Rachkovsky before that.) Reilly scouted the Baku oil fields in 1899, stole Russia’s plans for the defenses of Port Arthur in Manchuria in 1904 (possibly at the behest of the Japanese Navy), secured a Persian oil concession in a late-night vignt-et-un game on a yacht anchored in the Riviera, acquired a top-secret magnet from a German experimental aircraft in the middle of an air show in Frankfurt (in 1909), and lifted weapons blueprints from a Krupp factory in Essen (also in 1909). Or so he said. In 1912 or so, Reilly traveled to America, no doubt preparing some new triumph or outrage.

The “Full Steam” Reilly is just like the Reilly above, only more so. He becomes a master of disguise, latex face mask and vibrating vocoder definitely included. He has a dozen secret identities, with papers to match. He knows the martial arts of the mysterious East and the knife-fighting brutalisms of the Paris slums. He can use poisons, lock-picks, and air-guns with aplomb. He has access to a personal zeppelin (or a Kibalchich rocket-plane) so he can show up almost anywhere in the world in an impossibly short time: this explains why his tales of global intrigue don’t always mesh with the documented timing. He may also have super-scientific methods of dowsing for oil; many of his key missions centered on acquiring oil leases or geological information for Britain.

THEODOR REUSS (1855-1923)

A former opera and music-hall singer, Theodor Reuss became a spy for the Prussian Secret Police in the 1880s. By 1885, he was infiltrating the Socialist League in London. (Its members included William Morris and Karl Marx’ daughter Evelyn.) In 1887, his cover blown by the arrest of the terrorist Johann Neve, Reuss returned to Germany as a journalist. Under this cover, he traveled throughout the Balkans and Middle East for over a decade, now reporting to Abteilung IIIb. In 1901, Reuss came back to London, this time apparently attempting to infiltrate the occult Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. He claimed to have re-founded the Bavarian Illuminati in 1880, gaining him respectful hearings from various Golden Dawn heads. In 1902, funded by the Austrian

industrialist Karl Kellner, Reuss founded the Ordo Templi Orientalis (OTO) as a circle devoted to occult study and sex magick. His OTO attracted a number of magicians with espionage ties, including Gerard Encausse (a likely French agent in Russia) and Aleister Crowley (probably an asset being run by Everard Feilding). Reuss initiated Crowley as British head of the OTO in 1912, but who was recruiting whom?

Reuss’ cell trapped Neve by promising him a prototype “scorpion,” a device for indetectably poisoning enemies; in a “Full Steam” game, Reuss has access to a scorpion, which can also be loaded with mind-altering hashish used in Illuminati-Assassin rituals. Reuss is also, needless to say, an Illuminatus, magus, and wielder of powerful acoustic-runic spells tempered by his operatic voice. His access to ancient magical parchments might grant him deeply hidden power, or be the product of the Kaiser’s expert forgers, trailed as a trap for Britain’s occult spies.

TANG GUAN YU (1860?-1920?)

We know very little about Tang Guan Yu; even his given name is a guess given his warrior allegiances. He was an agent of Jung Lu, the head of intelligence for the Manchu Empire of China. In 1896, concerned about the rapid growth of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen’s “Revive China” movement (which had a superb intelligence service of its own), Jung Lu sent Tang to London as part of an elite team of Chinese operatives in the West. Their mission: kidnap Sun Yat-Sen and return him to China for torture and execution. Tang managed to convince Sun he was a fellow Cantonese republican, and maneuvered him into the Chinese legation house. When various investigators followed Sun’s trail, Tang blandly rebuffed their queries, indicating a gift for duplicity to accompany his skills at attempted rendition. Only a last-minute leak by a legation servant got Sun freed, after a personal intervention by Lord Salisbury in the case. Tang may have remained overseas, working for the disintegrating Manchu Empire or offering his services to a European agency interested in a Chinese agent; either allegiance could have brought him back to China, this time in opposition to Sun’s new government.

A “Full Steam” campaign may have its own Yellow Peril mastermind, whether Rohmer’s Fu Manchu, Chambers’ Yue-Laou, or the Chinese submersible pioneer Kiang Ho. Tang likely becomes a key operative for such a figure, with access to horrible mutant insects, blasphemous sorceries, or the “spiral principle,” depending on his master’s weapons of choice.

TEXT KENNETH HITE

ILLUSTRATION LUKAS THELIN & MAGNUS FALLGREN

ORIGINAL PUBLICATION FENIX 6/2013

UN-MADE MEN

ANARCHY THROUGH THE STEAM

"I detest both society as it is and society as you hope it will be. To-day the capitalist wolves and a slavish multitude; to-morrow a corrupt officialism and the same slavish multitude, only with new masters. But about our numbers, my friend, you think that we must be politically impotent because we are relatively so few. We count only our thousands where you tot up your millions of supporters. Obviously we could hardly venture to beard you after the established orthodox fashion. But suppose, suppose, I say, our people had some incalculable force behind them. Suppose, for instance, that the leaders of these few thousands came to possess some novel invention — something that — that made them virtual dictators to their kind.' — and looking very hard at me he seemed to await my answer with interest."

— Edward Douglas Fawcett, *Hartmann the Anarchist: Or, the Doom of the Great City* (1892)

In the steampunk era before World War One, the great criminal foe was not just the "Apache" gangs of thieves in Paris, or Jack the Ripper, or even a sinister mastermind like Adam Worth (the American-born model for Professor Moriarty). No, the Big Edwardian Bad was the anarchist movement of bombers, assassins, and subversives, lurking everywhere decent folk wouldn't go and planning the overthrow of everything orderly and rational.

As one might expect from anarchism, the truth is considerably less clear, and not particularly well-ordered. Some anarchists were pacifists, some were freedom fighters, some were communists, some were libertarians, some were pamphleteers who sponsored criminals, and a good number of anarchists (it turned out) were police spies. In other words, you can have anarchist Good Guys like Emma Goldman (who had a lot of violent friends, but stuck to "propaganda of the word") and anarchist Iffy Guys like Max Stirner (who believed that no human rights outweighed the use of force), and anarchist Bad Guys like "Ravachol," the celebrity dynamiter guillotined in 1892, or Emile Henri, the classic trust-fund agitator who tossed a bomb into the Café Terminus in Paris in 1894.

But the bottom line is this: lots of anarchists blew up a lot of stuff and killed a lot of people. Anarchist bombing campaigns targeted Paris, London, St. Petersburg, Barcelona, New York, and elsewhere. Anarchist assassins killed Tsar Alexander II, President Carnot of France, two Spanish prime ministers, Empress Elisabeth of Austria-Hungary, King Umberto I of Italy, King Carlos I of Portugal, King George I of Greece, Prime Minister Stolypin of Russia, and President William McKinley, along with scores of governors, judges, and police officials. This was called the "propaganda of the deed." Between 1914 and 1920, the anarchist Luigi Galleani and his followers set off bombs in New York, Boston, San Francisco, Pittsburgh, Milwaukee, Washington D.C., Philadelphia, Cleveland, and New York again. (A 1919 bombing almost killed Franklin D. Roosevelt.) A Galleanist poisoned the soup of the Archbishop of Chicago and 100 of his guests in 1916. (A quick-thinking doctor administered an emetic; nobody died.) The Wall Street bombing of 1920 killed 38 people and wounded 400. So perhaps a little fictional demonization is not entirely out of line.

FIVE FIENDISHLY FANTASTIC ANARCHIST GROUPS

Anarchist groups, historically, come in two basic forms, neither super-useful for role-playing games. There's the broad congress or "International," usually a talking-shop for labor agitators and cranks arguing over whose pamphlets to hand out; or the small knot of people around one charismatic leader. The latter is at least a classic "level boss plus henchmen" sort of foe, but can become overfamiliar in a long-running campaign of anarchist (or anti-anarchist) adventure. In this article you will find five anarchist groups that depart somewhat from those two models. Each organization can be dropped into any steampunk setting on either side from the player characters. Dates indicate their likely period of historical activity, but as with all things anarchist, you can get arguments about anything definitive you say about them. Hence all the question marks. Moving definitively past the definitive, the final "Full Steam" section gives some tweaks for full-throttle steampunk versions. ►



CHERNOE ZNAMIYA (1903-1909?)

The “Black Banners” or “Black Flags” not only popularized that quintessential anarchist symbol, they pioneered the fanatical “army of the young” that 21st-century anarchist movements so envy. The average *Chernoznamentsy* was nineteen; some active Black Banner operatives were 15 years old. The anarchist descendant of the “People’s Will” group that assassinated Tsar Alexander II in 1881, Chernoe Znamiya worked through linked cells across the south and west of the Russian Empire. Black Banner bombers hit Warsaw and Odessa, their printing presses poured out newsletters, pamphlets, and propaganda, and their agents carried cyanide capsules for suicide in case they were caught. Eventually, new laws provided for the trial of anarchists in military courts, and a wave of firing squads drove the Black Banner – by far the largest and most effective anarchist group – back deep underground.

A “Full Steam” Chernoe Znamiya is connected to another force. They might be mystical agents of Agartha (the land of the “Black Sun”), soldiers of Fu Manchu (the “Black Flag Army” battled Westerners and corrupt governments all across China and South-East Asia between 1857 and 1895), or a branch of the medieval Order of Assassins (who flew the Black Flag of Jihad in battle). Young, fanatical killers, they make great cannon fodder for some hidden hand.

GEMITZIDES (1898-1903?)

This group of Bulgarian anarchists in Thessalonica called itself the “Boatmen” (roughly *Gemitzides* in contemporary Bulgarian) meaning they had cast themselves adrift of conventional law and morality. The Boatmen were founded by Slavi Merdjanov, one of the “Geneva Group,” a secret society of (mostly Bulgarian-Macedonian) anarchists meeting in Switzerland. They were the original gang that couldn’t shoot straight, failing to assassinate the Sultan of Turkey, rob the Ottoman Bank in Thessalonica and in Istanbul, derail and rob the Orient Express, or kidnap a rich Turkish nobleman. In 1903, they used all their dynamite and their remaining cadre in a serial bombing attack on Thessalonica, ending in the recapture of the town by Turkish forces. Most of the survivors were sent to prison camps in Libya; the others joined the IMRO, a Macedonian terrorist network.

A “Full Steam” version of the Boatmen begins with improving the Geneva Group,

which becomes a sort of SPECTRE of anarchists from every corner of the globe. As far as the Boatmen themselves, it’s more challenging – if perhaps less interesting – to make them much better planners. (That said, an incompetent Big Bad Organization that exists only to screw up the player characters’ lives and blow things up accidentally might be fun.) As well, one might perhaps spread the Gemitzides’ successful bombing campaign out over more than three days. Their connections in the Bulgarian army and IMRO meant they never had a shortage of dynamite; in a steampunk world they pioneer an easily brewed, powerful explosive, perhaps a Belle Epoque version of “red mercury.” Or worse, keep them just as incompetent, but give them a dozen “radium bombs” to set off in cities across the Balkans and Turkey.

L’ANONYMAT (1884?-1905?)

Appropriately enough, almost nothing is known for sure about this group, not even that it was actually called “The Anonymity.” Other names for it include L’Initiative Libre, Les Intransigeant, Le Groupe des Introuvables, and “The Beggars of Paris.” It was most likely the brainchild of two Italian anarchists, childhood friends Vittorio Pini and Luigi Parmeggiani. Although L’Anonymat attempted to sabotage the French military, published bomb recipes, and carried out the occasional stabbing of police spies and rival leftists, its activities centered on “expropriation,” specifically burgling the houses of rich bourgeois. This latter revolutionary effort was so successful that Parmeggiani (under the name Victor Marcy) set up an antiques and art dealership near the British Museum in London, where he fenced stolen goods and sold prize acquisitions to the Museum and to royal families all across Europe. He moved the gallery to Paris in 1902, but kept his hand in crime in London. In and out of prison, Parmeggiani finally abandoned the art business in 1924 and retired to Italy after bribing the police not to arrest him.

A “Full Steam” Anonymity is pretty much just what it was in the real world, only one louder and even more so. Its members are super-thieves, super-spies, and masters of invisibility and disguise. Perhaps they use drone clockwork rats and pigeons for surveillance and even infiltration, truly the Introuvable Apparat boasted of by Parmeggiani. L’Anonymat trades in mystical artifacts, super-weapons, and everything else needed by anarchists anywhere in Europe; its secret directorate (or knife-point rivals) might include Arsène Lupin or Fantômas.

MISTICHESKOM (1906-1909?)

By comparison to most of the groups here, the “Mystical Anarchism” group in St. Petersburg were exclusively “anarchists of the word.” A loose group of Symbolist poets, playwrights, and artists around Georgi Chulkov, Alexander Blok, and Vyacheslav Ivanov, the Misticheskom group believed in creating an anarchist world by (among other things) recreating the ecstatic Dionysian ritual theater of ancient Greece and rejecting even the laws of Nature. Their erotic, magical orientation sparked furious opposition all across Russian politics and literature. Eventually, they collapsed as the initial energy of their ideas was sapped by argument, by the failure of the Dionysian anarchist apocalypse to materialize, and by artistic inanition.

A “Full Steam” Misticheskom Anarkhisme can go one of two directions. The first is obvious: Chulkov and company actually develop a sort of ecstatic madness-magic that allows them to create “autonomous zones” where conventional scientific law doesn’t apply. They might be able to draw observers into their Dionysian communion, influence events by occult dramaturgy, or just seed madness wherever they perform or publish. The other direction combines the Mystics’ opposition to *meschchantsvo* (“mechanization”) with the group’s tendency to psionic experimentation: Chulkov invoked extra-sensory phenomena, and Ivanov talked with the ghost of his dead wife. Even the group’s Dionysian rituals might be better understood as charging psychic batteries or creating mass hypnotic states: a full-fledged Russian psi-cult opposing the brass and radium of Western steampunk might make for some interesting thematic gaming.

REWOLUCYJNI MŚCIGIELE (1910-1914)

The “Revolutionary Avengers” were hard-core terrorists fighting for the freedom of Poland – and specifically the workers of Poland – from the Russian occupiers and collaborating capitalist bosses. They came out of the violently repressed general strike in Lodz during the Polish Revolt of 1905, radicalized by the mass of deaths and layoffs used to break the workers’ revolt. At their peak, there were about 400 Avengers all over Poland, headed by Edward Dłuzewski and Josef Piątek. They killed informants, policemen, bosses, soldiers, and shopkeepers – their operations were very similar to those of the IRA at its peak in the Troubles. Dłuzewski was killed by

police in 1911; on the one-year anniversary of his death, the Avengers announced they would kill any policeman seen on the street that day. Three-quarters of Poland's police stayed home from work. In November 1913, the Russians captured, tortured, and broke a leading Avenger, Michal Zakrzewski, using his information to roll up the group's leadership the next year.

A "Full Steam" Grupa Rewolucjonistów Mścicieli or "Grupa" will exist as absolutely unbreakable terrorists. Each Avenger is a master of some mesmeric or hyper-biological art, each with a suitable terrorist code-name to evade Russian and capitalist spies. Their powers might come from animal blending a la Dr. Moreau, doses of the mystery element polonium (discovered by the Polish Marie Curie, after all), by self-mastery like Doc Savage, or by some other force. "Statku" can go into a berserk rage giving himself the strength of 200 workers, while "Piorun" can summon and command the lightning like the ancient Polish god of thunder. Sokol can hit any target with a bow or rifle and fly with a wing-suit, while Mrowka can shrink to the size of an ant or grow to giant size. Zelazny has a steampunk battlesuit built using Captain Nemo's old blueprints (Nemo, it turns out, was Polish in Jules Verne's first draft), while "Natasha" is a beautiful Russian Okhrana super-agent who has changed sides. Of course their mysterious leader, Druzynowy Polska, simply embodies the unkillable fighting spirit of the Polish workers and people.

SIX TERRIBLY TERRIFIC ANARCHISTS

From the general, then, to the particular – or, rather, to the singular. At the risk of embracing "individualism" (a bigger no-no to followers of modern Left-anarchism than it was to classic 19th-century anarchists), this section lays out a few roleplaying models to adapt as allies, enemies, or even player characters. All the anarchists listed are active contemporaries, although their era of major anarchist involvement doesn't always overlap. But still, with some necessary force (also not usually a no-no to classic 19th-century anarchists) you can fit them all into a campaign set in or around the period 1900-1912. (To save space, I mostly leave off their biographies, where possible, once the Great War begins.) For an earlier steampunk anarchist, see the People's Will bomb-maker and rocketship inventor Nikolai Kibalchich in "*Steampunk Spycraft: The Man You're Looking At*" (Fenix No. 3, 2013).

JULES BONNOT (1876-1912)

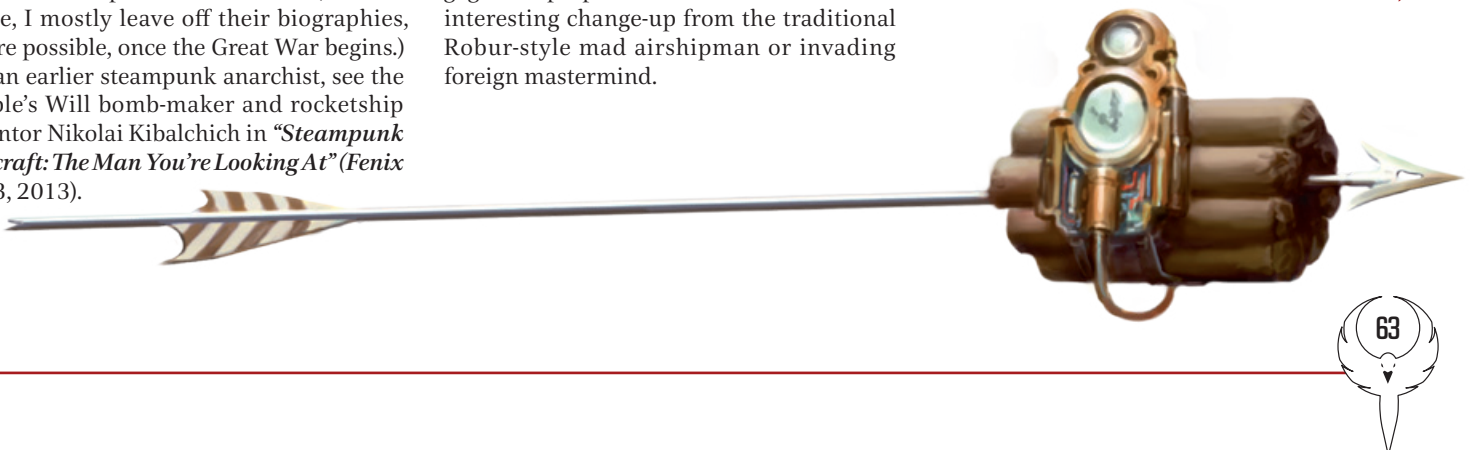
Son of a worker in Doubs, France, Jules Bonnot served two prison terms as a teenager. Drafted into the French army in 1897, he left three years later as an expert truck mechanic and crack rifle shot. He drifted into anarchist politics, and became a fan of "illegalism" and "expropriative revolution" – specifically forging coins and banknotes, and stealing the newfangled rich-man's toys called automobiles. Bonnot developed a persona as "Le Bourgeois," dressing respectably and growing a middle-class moustache. He visited rich people posing as a lawyer or businessman, cased their houses, and set up burglaries. In 1911, he moved to Paris and joined an anarchist gang led by one Octave Garnier; on December 21, they robbed a bank courier and fled in a limousine – the first-ever use of a getaway car in the history of crime. "Les Bandits en Auto" carried out a number of such robberies, often killing bankers, tellers, or rich people in their houses and then escaping in stolen cars. Bonnot gave an interview to the right-wing newspaper *Le Petit Parisien*, becoming the face of "the Bonnot Gang." A major police manhunt slowly forced the gang to go to ground and split up: Bonnot died in a dynamited garage under a hail of machine-gun fire. The actual founder of the Gang, Octave Garnier, died a month later in an even bigger shootout with 300 policemen and 400 Zouave cavalry.

The Bonnot Gang is tailor-made for steampunk, using technological supremacy (automobiles and repeating rifles) against inferior police foes until even higher tech (machine-guns and fire engines) and superior numbers bring them down. Giving them battlesuits, death-rays, hover-cars, or whatever the equivalent "just higher enough" tech is in the setting should be a no-brainer. Perhaps they team up with the "Dimmickers," alchemical counterfeiters aiming for a Rosicrucian Anarchy while seeking the Political Philosopher's Stone. For yet a further technological twist, Garnier spent some time in Paris with Victor Serge, a distant relation of Nikolai Kibalchich. A team of anarchists in an unstoppable aeroplane who only want to loot things – er, engage in expropriative revolution – makes an interesting change-up from the traditional Robur-style mad airshipman or invading foreign mastermind.

VLADIMIR BURTSEV (1862-1942)

In his youth, Burtsev was an active Narodnik, a member of the "People's Will" organization. In 1886, he was exiled to Siberia, but escaped to Switzerland two years later. He traveled extensively, publishing seditious literature and historical analysis, sometimes escaping just ahead of the Okhrana, and other times being jailed by his unwilling hosts in Britain and Switzerland. He returned to Russia illegally during the 1905 Revolution, and upon its failure wound up in Paris. Here, he used his two decades of files, defectors' testimony, and vast historical knowledge to assemble complete dossiers on every known Okhrana agent, establishing a freelance counterintelligence bureau for use by anarchists, revolutionists, and all those opposed to the Tsar's government. In 1908 and 1909 he uncovered the pseudonyms and real allegiances of two major Okhrana agents, Arkady Harting and Yevno Azef. Head of counterintelligence for the Social Revolutionary Party (SPR), Burtsev made enemies rapidly and eventually lost his funding; he left Paris ahead of his creditors and returned to Russia on the outbreak of war. His opposition to the Bolsheviks got him imprisoned by Lenin and in 1918 he was exiled to Finland, Sweden, and finally Paris again.

Burtsev was known in his own time as "the Sherlock Holmes of the Revolution." It just doesn't get any better than that. A "Full Steam" Burtsev is just even Holmes-ier, with nearly superhuman powers of observation, deduction, and martial arts prowess. He expands his work to exposing the spies, conspiracies, and chicaneries of all governments. His journal *Byloe* ("The Past") might be kept on the Babbage Net; if there are any super-hackers or perhaps an "Informationale" ("Information wants to be free of its chains!") in your steampunk game, Burtsev is almost certainly one of them. If you must add even more awesome to him, he might derive his arcane historical knowledge not from copious research but from past-life memories intruding on present time, or from being an immortal son of the Comte de Saint-Germain sired during the Comte's service as an admiral under Catherine the Great. ▶





NIKOLAI CHAIKOVSKY (1851-1926)

Trained as a mathematician and chemist, Chaikovsky founded a samizdat reading group in St. Petersburg in 1868 loosely affiliated with the “People’s Will.” Chaikovsky remained a pacifist and anarchist throughout the Narodnik period, which availed him not when the Okhrana broke up the “Chaikovsky Circle.”

He left Russia for the United States in 1874, joining a commune in Cedar Vale, Kansas headed by William Frey. When it collapsed in 1877, he realized that political beliefs alone could not keep even a commune of a few dozen together without a spiritual component. He joined the Shakers in New York, worked at the Philadelphia shipyard, then drifted back into revolutionary politics in Britain and Russia.

He raised funds for medical relief (and guns) for the SPR (involving Mark Twain of all people in the effort in 1906), and was arrested in St. Petersburg in 1907 by the Okhrana on a charge of conspiracy. He beat the charges at trial in 1910, and stayed in Russia until the Russian Civil War, when he went to Versailles in 1919 as a delegate of the White government of North Russia.

A “Full Steam” Chaikovsky has two intriguing aspects to play up. The first is his tendency, when thwarted in the political realm, to embrace the spiritual. After the Narodniki turned to violent action, Chaikovsky turned his “Circle” into a group of “God-Men,” attempting to harness the divine within. Any sort of religious epiphany might have struck him in Cedar Vale, Kansas or upstate New York, from angelic contact to the ghost of Ben Franklin, often met by contemporaneous Spiritualist groups in the area.

A “Chaikovsky Circle” of god-powered mystics can add a weird note to any overly technophilic campaign, on any side or pursuing their own ineffable agenda. Perhaps the Second Chaikovsky Circle embraces a “propaganda of the dead,” using ghosts as agents or sources of intel, or even liberating them from the chains of death!

The other path not taken is the historical discovery of oil in Cedar Vale by Chaikovsky’s group in 1876. Because it tainted their water, they capped the well and did nothing with it – but an anarchist-run Chaikovsky Oil Company intervening for the oppressed all around the world would make a fascinating faction.

Combine Oil and God, and make Nikolai Chaikovsky a Master of Telluric Force, a petro-necromancer, or an avatar of Tsathogua.

ALEXANDRA DAVID-NÉEL (1868-1969)

Born in the suburbs of Paris to a veteran revolutionary of the 1848 rising, and raised in Brussels, Alexandra David spent her youth traveling and studying occult sciences such as theosophy and esoteric Freemasonry. In her twenties she mingled in anarchist and feminist circles, in 1899 writing an anti-State treatise with a preface by the anarchist geographer and proto-ecologist Elisée Reclus. It was translated into five languages, including Russian.

During this period she performed as an opera singer, traveling to Athens and Hanoi among other exotic destinations. In 1890 and 1891 she spent an extended period in India, teaching herself Sanskrit and studying Buddhism. She met a French engineer, Philippe Néel, in Tunis in 1900 and married him in 1904.

She chafed all her life at arbitrary restrictions on travel, trying unsuccessfully to enter Lhasa during her stay in the Himalayan princedom of Sikkim from 1911 to 1916. Here she met the young lama Aphur Yongden, who would become her traveling companion, disciple, and adopted son. Expelled by the British government, she went to Japan; from there, thanks to an intervention by the Zen monk (and Black Ocean Society spy) Ekai Yawaguchi, she joined a Tibetan caravan in Korea in 1918 and visited Lhasa after much study and many adventures six years later, in 1924. Here she lived incognito until expelled again in 1926. Separating from Philippe and settling in Provence in 1928, she split her time between Eastern travel and Provencal writing until her death.

Alexandra David-Néel's major period of weird exploration is slightly later than the classic steampunk era. She wrote her best-known work, *Magic and Mystery in Tibet*, in 1929, basing it on her experiences on the 1924 trip. She didn't historically enter Tibet until 1914, although she might have learned the secrets of Tibetan mysticism in Sikkim in 1912 from the 13th Dalai Lama (who she met that year) or from the Panchen Lama, who she met at Shigatse in Tibet in 1916. Nonetheless her youthful studies of the occult, her operatic personality, her travel experience, and her anarchist connections make her a delightful NPC even in Edwardian-era games. One possibility, of course, is simple foreshadowing, great fun for GMs or players who recognize her name. A weirder "Full Steam" option: the Alexandra of the future sends a tulpa (a magical projection of herself) back in time to carry out some anarchist mission during the campaign's year.

PYOTR KROPOTKIN (1842-1921)

Born a prince of Russia descended from the line of Rurik, Pyotr Kropotkin joined the army from the elite Corps of Pages in 1862. With little to occupy him militarily, he commanded a geographical survey of Siberia and Manchuria, reading Western political philosophy in his spare time. The works of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and John Stuart Mill converted him to anarchism, and he resigned his commission in 1867. Disinherited, he studied mathematics and served as secretary to the Russian Geographical Society; he surveyed glaciers in Finland and Sweden and re-mapped the geomorphology of north Asia. In 1872, he joined and quit a socialist organization in Switzerland, declaring himself an anarchist. He became a member of the Chaikovsky Circle, spreading propaganda among the peasants until arrested in 1874. In prison he was allowed to continue his geographical research and guarded lightly due to his aristocratic blood. He escaped in 1876 and fled to France where he continued to mold an anarchist group known as the Jura Federation. In 1881 he attended the World Anarchist Congress in London, and moved there permanently after being imprisoned under French anti-agitation laws thanks to his embrace of "propaganda by the deed." He lived in Britain from 1886 to 1914 as the Grand Old Man of the anarchist movement, contributing the article on "Anarchism" to the 1910 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, for example, and traveling to North America on lecture tours in 1897 and 1901. In 1917 he returned to Russia but refused the position of minister for education. He denounced the Bolsheviks and died of pneumonia in 1921; his funeral was the last anarchist rally allowed in the Soviet Union.

Kropotkin was a genuine polymath, studying geography, evolutionary biology, mathematics, zoology, and languages. He was also fairly bloodthirsty, contrary to his warm and fuzzy modern reputation, endorsing not only bombings and assassinations but the complete destruction of Germany in World War I. He believed that a fully anarcho-communist polity would be easier to erect on the ruins of a crushed German state. A "Full Steam" Kropotkin joins the propaganda of the deed with the "revolution of the word," creating memetic propaganda compelling belief and revolutionary action when read. He might release self-evolving programs into the Babbage Net, designed to break down barriers between data mills and to reason or memetically reprogram hackers and reckoners (or Engineers, or whatever steampunk term you use for Analytical Engine operators) into agents of the Revolution. This Kropotkin doesn't need to wait for the War to smash the State into rubble: he can make it happen with memetic sabotage.

NADAR (1820-1910)

Born Gaspard-Félix Tournachon, Nadar adopted his pseudonym while working as a radical journalist in Paris in the revolutionary 1840s. He began as a journalist and caricaturist, but rapidly adopted the brand-new technology of photography. He became the first person to take a photograph underground, to take an aerial photograph, to take a photograph by natural light. He put his name in huge red gaslights in front of his studio, welcoming artists, poets, and people of all classes to be photographed as part of "Le Pantheon Nadar." He later boasted that he knew 10,000 Parisians on a first-name basis. Nadar explored the Paris Catacombs and the air above the city, building a series of balloons in the 1850s. His masterpiece was a huge balloon called Le Géant, which flew in 1863. This brought him to the attention of Jules Verne, who based *Five Weeks in a Balloon* on Nadar's craft and co-founded "The Society for the Encouragement of Aerial Locomotion by Means of Heavier-than-Air Machines" with him that year. Verne then immortalized Nadar as "Michael Ardan" in *From the Earth to the Moon*; he based Robur's aeronef on a model helicopter constructed by another Society member, the Vicomte Gustave de Ponton d'Amécourt. Although Nadar refused to use his balloons for the French war in Italy in 1859, during the siege of Paris in 1870 he placed his craft at the disposal of the revolutionary Commune, sending passengers and messengers over the German lines to ... well, mostly to wrecks, but once to Norway. There weren't enough balloons, or enough fighting French armies outside Paris, to save the city and the Commune. The Prussians marched in, the reactionaries formed a government, and everything went back to normal. Nadar's last overt fling with radicalism was hosting the first Impressionist Exhibition in his photography studio in 1874.

Although Jules Verne himself was more of a libertarian capitalist, Nadar was hardly Verne's only anarchist friend. The novelist cribbed much location research from Elisée Reclus, who we met in connection with Alexandra David-Néel, and who provided Kropotkin with scholarly works and agitated for his release from French prison in 1886. Reclus was also the meteorologist for, and occasional passenger in, Nadar's balloon flights from besieged Paris in 1870. A "Full Steam" Nadar begins with far more capable balloons, and perhaps with far more sophisticated photographic techniques. Whether he projects mesmeric patterns, angelic bowmen, or immense Oz-heads onto the clouds above Paris, the result pre-defines cinematic. A "Verneist" coup d'état in 1870, turning Paris into a radical, libertarian-anarchist steampunk city-state, might make an excellent starting point – such a game could end up anywhere. Except, probably, in a balloon wreck in Norway.

ELEMENTARY

MY DEAR...

TEXT **CHRISTOFFER KRÄMER**
IDEA **CHRISTOFFER KRÄMER**
& **MARIA BERGIUS KRÄMER**
ILLUSTRATION
MAX ELMBERG SJÖHOLM

Summer is here, and a deep divide now occurs within the player ranks. 45%¹ of the country's gamers go around muttering like Nosferatu about how the sunlight is damaging their delicate alabaster skin. Whereupon, they lock themselves into their cellars to play lengthy epic RPG campaigns or online games until their eyes bleed Jolt cola.

Another 45% sniffs the morning air and opens up the sweaty LARP coffins. They scamper off to the woods and play filthy, anarcho-syndicalist peasants.

This article is directed toward the final ten percent not covered in the previous two categories. People who wish to while away the summer by lazily watching the passersby at the city's outdoor cafés and coffee shops, and enjoy playing a little game at the same time. Here is a game that combines those two activities: lazy people watching and gaming.

The game is called *Elementary, my dear...* Enjoy!

ORIGINAL PUBLICATION **FENIX 4/2009**



WHAT ISN'T IT?

Let's start by explaining what *Elementary, my dear...* isn't. If *Phoenix Command* is a bit too lightweight for you, or if you often feel as if *ASL* has left out a few important rules here and there, we issue the following warning: be afraid, be very afraid. *Elementary, my dear...* is not a serious game, and is therefore lacking in large part any serious rules. Still here? Read on!

WHAT IS IT THEN?

Elementary, my dear... is a card game that follows in the tradition of *Once Upon a Time*² or *The Extraordinary Adventures of Baron von Munchhausen*³. The official aim of the game is to win, and you do this by fulfilling all the game's criteria for winning. The real point of the game, however, is to have fun, to speculate wildly about strangers you see, and to hone your bullshitting skills.

In *Elementary, my dear...*, players try to spot people who best match the descriptions you have jointly determined beforehand and

written down on paper. The player to first use all the descriptions she or he was assigned wins. The trick is being able to prove descriptions like "Has an Elvis costume in the closet".

LOCATION

Elementary, my dear... is best played in open areas with lots of people about. If you have access to a table or similar, that will be helpful. If you have something cold and/or warm to drink, or something to nibble on, this will improve the experience further.

MATERIALS

To play *Elementary, my dear...* you need:
a) paper and pen/pencil and
b) that's it.

Nothing else. If you happen to have a plastic trading card sleeve handy, you could use that to make your paper description cards more manageable⁴, but even descriptions scribbled on torn bits of newspapers will suffice.

PREPARATIONS

In the first stage, all players create descriptions that the rest of the game will use. 5 descriptions per person works well, but this can be adjusted. Once these are written down, place the descriptions in a pile. Each player will draw a description in turn from the pile during play. The descriptions can be extremely varied. The players can jointly decide what applies for their particular group. A few categories and examples to help inspire you:

Physical Attributes

- Red hair
- Under 15 years old
- Senior citizen
- Wheelchair

Clothing and style

- Emo
- Skirt
- Brand snob
- Wearing a tie with tie pin

Subcultures and hobbies

- Gaming nerd
- Bird watcher
- Builds models of execution devices
- Plays the French horn in a symphony orchestra

Feelings

- Still grieving after Michael Bolton cut his hair
- Hates his/her partner
- Wishes he/she could be with other friends than his/her own
- Has recently found salvation

Dreams and ambitions

- Wants to be the next Hugh Hefner
- Dreams of starting a toupee manufacturing company
- Trying to get Bob Dylan's autograph
- Wants to expose the moon landing as a hoax

Dark secrets

- Sniffs lighter fluid
- Was in jail in his/her youth
- Desires to be eaten
- Planning a murder

Risqué

- Has just had a quickie
- Is actually a woman
- Trying to hide an erection
- Virgin

It's easy to make up your own categories and determine your own rules for these. For best results, it's good to balance factual (provable) descriptions (red shirt) with more speculative ones (lies about having met Mick Jagger).

When all descriptions are written, a further card should be created: the **Switch card**. Either write the word *Switch* on another piece of paper, or draw a recycle symbol, or similar. Include an appropriate number of Switch cards.

These cards should also be placed in the draw pile. The draw pile should be thoroughly shuffled and each player should then draw seven cards. The remaining cards in the draw pile should be placed in the center of the play area, alongside a space for a discard pile.

GAME START

The player who can claim the closest kinship to Sherlock Holmes starts the game by saying: *the game is afoot*.

ROUNDS

Elementary, my dear... is a simultaneous speed game. There are no formal rounds and all players are free to play their cards when and how they want. The only exception is when a card is challenged or when someone claims a *Force Majeure*⁵.

PLAY

A player may only play a card if he or she has found a person who fits one of the descriptions he or she is currently holding. When this occurs, the player places the card on the table (or other game area) and clearly states⁶ the description and indicates (with words, nods, or other appropriate methods) which person the description refers to.

MAKING A CHALLENGE

If a player, for any reason, feels that a recently played card is far too absurd to be allowed, this card can be challenged. This must be done clearly⁷ and before any other description card is played. The price of challenging a card is:

- None. But a player who constantly challenges someone else's cards is a game-ruining stick-in-the-mud and the other players must agree upon a suitable punishment.⁸

Until the conflict surrounding the challenged card is resolved, no more descriptions can be played.⁹

PROVING THE DESCRIPTION

The player who has played a description that was then challenged will have the chance to prove the description is correct. This is done by:

- Offering verbal proof that convinces the other players.

The verbal proof must always be delivered with an introductory "*Elementary, my dear [challenger's name]*" and then proceeds with some detail about the designated person that supports the description, or the player makes some form of direct link between the designated person and the card that was played.

HOW DOES THE JURY FIND?

When the challenged player presents his/her proof, it is up to the other players to vote whether it is sufficient to convince them. The jury votes by simultaneously placing a card on the table. If the back of the card is facing

up, the player has voted **No**. If the front of the card is facing up, the player has voted **Yes**. Those who have voted No can return their cards to their hand. Those who have voted Yes, and revealed the descriptions, may get the chance to discard these cards. It is therefore tactically useful to support another player's proof since this can allow you to rid your hand of difficult descriptions. The rules for keeping/discarding cards are as follows:

Vote	Majority no	Hung Jury	Majority yes
No	Pick up	Pick up	Pick up
Yes	Pick up	Discard	Discard

- If there is a *majority of no votes*, the challenged player loses the challenge.
- If there is a *majority of yes votes*, the challenged player wins the challenge.
- With a *hung jury*, the jury gives the benefit of the doubt, and the challenged player wins the challenge.

If the challenged player loses their case before the jury, he or she must draw a new card to replace the one that failed the challenge. The player must draw one additional card for having wasted the others' time with their drivel.

Normal play can commence when the recently challenged player gives the all-clear¹⁰.

SWITCH?

A player who has a **Switch card** can play this card at any time during a normal round (i.e., when a card is not being challenged) in order to switch a card in their hand for a new card, either from the draw pile or the discard pile.

PANIC SWITCH?

A player who feels they have a description card that is the equivalent of *the Old Maid* (such as *Wayne Gretzky*) is allowed to panic switch it. In this case, the player discards the description and draws three new ones, because necessity knows no bounds.

WHO WINS?

The first player to use all of his/her cards is the official winner of the game.¹¹

EXCEPTIONS¹²

A player may not vote away his/her final card. If a player is on a jury and votes yes with his/her final card, that player must keep the card even if the challenged player wins.

EXAMPLE GAME

Joe, Suzie, Stella and Conan are playing *Elementary, my dear...* at a café at Leicester Square. Lots of people are flowing past and the cards are played at a fast pace.

Suddenly, Stella plays “*Believes wolves should be exterminated*” on a short woman with a khaki-colored backpack, a Green Party button, and Birkenstock sandals.

Joe thinks Stella has gone too far. He has also noticed that Stella has very few cards left, and believes this is a good opportunity to take action.

The game stops and the jury turns to Stella, waiting to hear her verbal proof. Stella points out that the woman, aside from the backpack, also has a jacket with the insignia “Liverpool Sewing Bee Club”. The woman is obviously the type to card her own wool for knitting and is therefore a prominent sheep lover. There can be no doubt she must hate wolves like the plague.

All the players are secretly impressed with Stella’s answer. Joe, however, votes no out of principle, since he is the one who made the challenge. Suzie has also noticed that Stella has only a few cards left, and votes no for tactical reasons. Conan votes yes for three reasons:

1. He likes Stella’s proof
2. He wants to discard one of his own descriptions (*smells like sauerkraut*) and he thinks Suzie will also vote yes
3. If he is wrong, Stella will lose her challenge anyway.

In the end, Stella does lose the challenge despite her excellent defense. She must draw a new card, plus one additional card as punishment for losing.

Joe and Suzie take back their No cards and Conan also takes back his card, since he was the only one to vote yes and the challenge was lost.

IN CONCLUSION

Playing games that involve people who do not know they’re involved is usually best avoided. In this case, these people aren’t exactly involved, but rather observed and commented on without their knowledge – something that one may well argue can happen to everyone at some point. That said, we wish to point out that *Elementary, my dear...* is not a bullying game. If there are those who would make derogatory comments about people, they would likely do so without using this game as an alibi.

Elementary, my dear... should be played with the love and humor with which it was written.

Nerdier than a whole bush of bird watchers

Description of the Game Designer Christoffer Krämer



Notes

1. All statistics in this article are made up.
This is a magazine based on fabulation, not fact.
2. Atlas Games – Some facts are actually necessary, so there.
3. Originally Hogshead Publishing. See above and stop looking so smug.
4. And if you are such a nerd that you go into the city with those sorts of items, you are hopelessly nerdy, and playing *Elementary, my dear...* in public will not have a noticeable effect.
5. Bathroom breaks, ordering of more Mai Tais, taking time out to watch the sports replay on the big screen TV.
6. Note that “*clearly*” is not necessarily the same thing as “*loudly*” since this game has a pretty high embarrass-yourself factor as well as a high make-people-around-you-uncomfortable factor.
7. See above regarding the bit about embarrassing yourself.
8. Making the player pony up for the next round of baked goods, or drawing a card from the draw pile each time they wish to challenge a card are examples of good punishments.
9. Nothing prevents players from scouting around for the next person who best matches their descriptions, however.
10. See above.
11. In reality, the winner is the player who has had the most fun or provided the most impressive verbal defenses.
12. Aha! It’s not a real game if there are no exceptions.

HISTORICAL & FANTASY TEXT PETE NASH
ILLUSTRATION LUKAS THELIN

SPIES IN RUNEQUEST

To most people, the word 'Spy' immediately brings to mind secret agents such as James Bond, Jason Bourne, or to those of us of older generations, Danger Man, Flint, The Men from Uncle or Mission Impossible. Yet spies and spying is as old as civilisation itself. The earliest historical records of actual espionage are documented in Akkadian and Egyptian texts, whilst the first fictional account of spying comes from the Iliad, where Diomedes and Odysseus are sent to spy on the Trojans, and later on, in one version of the epic, Odysseus enters the city disguised as a beggar and steals the Palladium, a statue of Athena believed to protect the city.

Whilst spying originally developed from military scouting, it soon became an art of its own. Rather than relying on warnings from outlying shepherds about an advancing army, it became more efficient to place spies directly in the neighbouring city or nation so that reports could be sent when the enemy was mustering in the first place. From there it was an easy step to seek out news concerning mercantile patterns, political activity and public opinion, allowing a greater degree of strategic planning. Armed with this knowledge foreign alliances could be forged, economic leverage applied, or even false information planted. An illuminating insight of these espionage methods can be found in the *Arthashastra* written in India in the 4th century BCE.

Since espionage has been an inherent part of both literature and history since ancient times, it places spies and spying firmly within the bounds of genres normally used in *RuneQuest* campaigns. But suave super-agents like Flint or Bond aside, what exactly is a spy? And how can they be used in a campaign?

TINKER TAILOR SOLDIER SPY

At the most unsophisticated level a spy is merely someone who obtains and passes on confidential information. In most circumstances such persons have little need for specialist training, merely needing to keep their eyes and ears open, and then report what they discover.

Thus a travelling tinker is perfectly positioned to gather intelligence, being a well travelled migrant of low status who passes beneath the notice of local authorities. Likewise a skilful tailor would be well placed to report on both the economic situation of his city and the loose gossip overheard when catering to rich patrons of the ruling elite.

If a spy cannot be transposed into that culture, then regular payment of bribe money or threats of blackmail often loosens lips of native inhabitants. Indeed some spies are merely persuasive individuals who convince others to perform the dangerous task of gathering the information for them, which they collate and send back to their superiors.

A few spies perform other duties than the simple passing on of information. Sabotage and assassination are two specialities of the spy, seeking to damage the infrastructure or political stability of those they are spying upon. These tasks require expertise in techniques of stealth and combat, making them more the provenance of those trained in the military.

The most difficult role is that of the true covert agent, someone specifically taught a diverse range of skills so that they can penetrate foreign cultures, organisations or cults without revealing their true nature. This requires mastering the arts of linguistics, disguise and deceit to present a false persona; as well as other skills which might include literacy, forgery, cryptography, or even the ability to pick locks depending on the setting.

At the head of any web of espionage is the spy master, the person who analyses all the information, emplacing or moving operatives in their network, even sacrificing them to send false information to an enemy. They keep watch on the operatives of their organisation, control the finances, and most important of all, sell gathered intelligence to their employer.

In ancient times the first spy-networks were usually orchestrated and controlled by private individuals. Many high ranking Greek and Roman officials were supported by a personal web of business associates, informers, clansmen, slaves, and even criminals bound to them by patronage. The feared *Speculatores*, trusted military couriers and covert agents commanded by Julius Caesar, were some of the first professional agents, but were still paid for out of his own family coffers.

Similar spy networks can be found in many fantasy books. The fanatically loyal clan spies in the *Empire Trilogy* written by Raymond E. Feist and Janny Wurts; or the brothel spies employed by Lord Baelish in the *Song of Ice and Fire* series by George R. R. Martin. Even some historical novels can be of great use as inspirations, *Kim* by Rudyard Kipling being a fine example of espionage, set within the colourful backdrop of Victorian ruled India.



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LIVE AND LET DIE

Whilst the concept of spies is fascinating, they can be tricky to introduce. At first glance, spies are not likely to be encountered in a campaign unless the game is built around court intrigue or politics. In fact it is difficult to get players to develop any depth of feeling towards spies unless they themselves are directly harmed by them. For example:

THE SPY OR SPIES...

- uncovered dire secrets that caused the character's family to fall into dishonour
- forced a trusted ally to turn against the characters at a critical moment
- assassinated a ruler which caused the character's home city to be overrun and destroyed
- are being used by the characters' most hated enemy to unjustly maintain a position of authority
- is blackmailing one of the characters to pass on confidential information which will eventually be traced back to them

Spying is easier to introduce into a game if the player characters are the spies. Even here there are ways of making an espionage mission a stressful, possibly unwelcome, burden, forcing characters to question whether or not they really wish to risk breaking diplomatic courtesy or betray a well liked ally out of loyalty to the authority sending them on the mission. In such games the characters need not be trained as spies per se, but merely apply their own skills and cunning.

The ultimate level of espionage campaign would be to recruit the characters into a spy network, so that they are trained in a myriad of crafty skills and deadly combat techniques. Such *Mission Impossible* style campaigns are the epitome of fun and are easy to translate into almost any setting, whether historical or fantasy. Use the adjacent tables to quickly craft the source, nature and possible target of a player character mission.

DAY OF THE JACKAL

Whilst skills and training are of paramount importance to spies, they often require unusual tricks or techniques to help keep their work covert. The tradition actually comes from ancient times when such tools were in use by spies whose own safety depended heavily upon them. Here are a few examples..

Carrier Pigeons: A better way of passing messages is not to be caught carrying them in the first place. Thus the trained carrier pigeon was an excellent way of isolating oneself from discovery, whilst also speeding delivery times

1d10 Person Requesting Mission

1	An Ally (as per <i>RuneQuest</i> page 34)
2	A Contact (as per <i>RuneQuest</i> page 34)
3	The character's last employer
4	Someone saved by the character
5	Wealthy merchant or banker
6	Emperor, Caliph, Maharajah, or Tyrant
7	Enemy spy who lies about their origin
8	High ranking military officer
9	Repressed or impoverished commoner
10	Bureaucrat of the character's native culture, nation or city

1d20 Mission Objective

1	Rescue a prisoner
2	Kidnap an important person
3	Capture an enemy official
4	Steal a secret plan/treaty/religious item/weapon design/crafting technique
5	Plant false evidence
6	Scout out and map a particular location
7	Discover location of a person, group or material source
8	Identify enemy behind recent activities
9	Infiltrate a dangerous cult or organisation
10	Protect an individual from being assassinated
11	Assassinate a particular person
12	Smuggle money or equipment to another spy
13	Collect report from another spy
14	Sabotage a political treaty, trade deal or criminal activity
15	Intercept and capture an enemy agent
16	Destroy a bridge, city gate, armoury, guild house, fort
17	Set up a new ring of informants
18	Poison a well, granary, or livestock
19	Investigate odd, perhaps even supernatural, happenings
20	Prevent outbreak of a war, summoning of a demonic god, or some other cataclysmic event

- assuming the pigeon arrives. Many cultures trained birds of prey to attack lone pigeons in case they carried secret missives.

Ciphers: Substitution ciphers swap letters in an alphabet (or substitute symbols) to obfuscate written text. Another early method used a scytale, which used parchment or papyrus strips wrapped around a wooden cylinder, upon which the message was written so that when the strip was unravelled, the sequence of letters became a confused jumble.

Concealed Weapons: Of more use to those on infiltration or assassination missions in settings where bearing of arms is not commonplace, weapons can be disguised to appear as other objects. They could be as simple as a ring concealing a deadly poisoned prick, or as complex as collapsible hand crossbow, its pieces disguised as a personal valet grooming kit.

Double Sided Clothing: A trick to throw off discovery or pursuit, it utilises lined clothes which can be turned inside out, so as to present a different colour or style of garb. Reversible hats and cloaks take only moments to switch.

1d10 Possible Target or Villain of Mission

1	High ranking priest, scholar or guildmaster
2	Neighbouring ruler
3	Foreign spy of dubious origin
4	Ambitious military officer
5	An Enemy (as per <i>RuneQuest</i> page 34)
6	A Rival (as per <i>RuneQuest</i> page 34)
7	A member of the character's family
8	Someone injured by the character
9	Official of an enemy culture, nation or city
10	Rebellious citizens or commoners

False Tablets: Another infamous technique used by the Greeks was to write a message on the wood of a wax tablet, before pouring the wax onto its surface.

Hidden Pockets: A trick not limited to spies, such as sewing coins or documents into the soles of footwear for instance; or tucking small valuables into the lining of cloaks or coats where a slight bulge would not be noticeable.

Invisible Ink: First used by the ancient Greeks and Romans, the sap of the tithymalus plant was a natural invisible ink, which revealed itself when heated.

Poison: Although not so widespread or lethal in the real world as popularised, poison really comes into its own in a fantasy setting. Not all poisons need to kill, some fantastical creations could be fashioned as truth serums, knock-out drops, paralytics and so on.

Scalp Writing: Shave a man's head then write the message with dye or henna and wait for the hair to grow back. Such methods are not suited to urgent messages however!

Secret Compartments: Similar to hidden pockets, some articles can have small recesses into which objects can be hidden; the false bottom of a storage chest being the classic example.

Silk Pellets: Another way of passing information without openly carrying any potentially condemning items was developed by the ancient Chinese who wrote messages on scraps of silk, which were scrunched up and covered with wax, then swallowed.

Snakes: One of the earliest assassination tools of early history, a venomous serpent has the advantage of potentially being a natural accident, disguising a premeditated murder.

Stained Eggs: An unusual technique that requires painting alum dissolved with vinegar onto the shell of a boiled egg; something many cultures carry as part of a packed lunch. When peeled the message shows up on the solidified egg white!

AN ARMY OF SHADOWS

Before adding spies into your campaign, it is wise to design the organisation for, or conversely against, which the characters are acting. In *RuneQuest* a spy network can quickly be created using the *Brotherhood rules*.

The following example details an antagonistic group of nefarious cultists and agents who seek to overthrow a kingdom in preparation for the return of the Sorcerer God-Kings. Whilst designed as a fantasy organisation which could be slipped into any established *Sword & Sorcery* game, with minor changes it could be modified to fit a historical campaign, as either antagonists or protagonists, modelling for example the Hashishiyya, the Sicarii or the Vedic Spasa.

Name: Brotherhood of the Noiseless Whisperers

Nature: Created centuries ago, the brotherhood was formed as the vanguard of the near extinct serpentfolk's return to rule over the world. Since their numbers are few, they cannot utilise military conquest, but instead have spent years gathering knowledge of primitive human cultures so as to locate a weakness they may utilise. The brotherhood has now firmly established itself in many cities, corrupting the weak willed, fanatic or vengeful to its cult. In time they shall launch these fifth columns to overthrow humanity and rule over them as their masters.

Organisation: The brotherhood maintains a strict policy of secrecy, with members of each rank kept isolated from higher up echelons save for a single contact to prevent being betrayed

by a double agent or a captured member tortured into revealing sensitive plans. The spy ring maintains several cells of informants and their coordinating handler in each major city, whilst agents (saboteurs, assassins, couriers and the like) act as free roaming operatives. The top level spy masters analyse reports, passing on conclusions to the Grand Master who acts as the final cut-off between the brotherhood and its sorcerer overlords, which remain safely hidden in several remote and secret mountain fortresses.

Membership: All membership requirements are standard, as per the *RuneQuest* rules.

- **Informants (Common Members)**
These are the rank and file of brotherhood members recruited from the poor, dispossessed, or politically ambitious humans. Clueless, hardly any even know that the world was once ruled by the serpentfolk. Most spy for money or protection, but some are idealists believing that their efforts will be fundamental in overthrowing the current regime. A few are retired members, forced to hand over secrets under threat of blackmail or violence.
- **Handlers (Dedicated Members)**
Operatives that organise each cell of informants; recruiting members, gathering their information, paying gratuities and bribes, then writing preliminary reports and leaving the information in dead-letter drops (covert places where higher ranked operatives can collect it without being observed). Most handlers are city locals; humans promoted due to their intelligence or social position.
- **Agents (Proven Members)**
Free roaming spies trained in covert action, including sabotage, assassination, theft, planting of false evidence, or even imitating a key individual via the use of disguise. Most agents have one or two specialities which they are more suited to, but that of subterfuge is always of paramount importance. Most are human, trained up through the ranks to perform the most dangerous missions, but a handful of the best agents are serpentfolk, hidden beneath illusory magic.
- **Masters (Overseers)**
Brotherhood spy Masters are the regional administrators of the spy network. They coordinate the pyramidal operative structure beneath them, requesting certain information, collate and analyse it, then issue orders to available agents based on what has been discovered. In addition they provide necessary training for handlers and agents, from within their shadowy hooded robes, worn to conceal their serpentine features.

- **The Grand Master (Leader)**

The grand master is merely the puppet of the Sorcerer God-Kings. Utterly ruthless, the head of the brotherhood travels between the regional spy masters, receiving reports and passing down the commands of the waiting overlords. The identity of the grand master is unknown to his or her subordinates, fulfilling the role of executioner to terminate any master or agent who acts treacherously.

Restrictions: All lower ranking spies fear the promised reprisals against their family, business or selves if they should ever betray the organisation, or even let slip its existence. All swear an oath to fulfil the commands of their superior, no matter how apparently suicidal they might be, convinced that any dependents they leave behind will be cared for.

Skills: The brotherhood favours (and trains) the *Standard Skills* of - *Conceal, Deceit, Influence, Insight, Perception, Stealth, Willpower*; and the *Professional Skills* of *Culture (Other), Disguise, Language (Other), Literacy, Lockpicking, Lore (Cryptography or Forgery), and Seduction*. Only *standard skills* are taught to Informers. The brotherhood has its own *Noiseless Whisperer combat style* (*Garrote, Dagger, Thrown Dagger* and *Crossbow - Assassination trait*) available to members of Agent rank and above.

Magic: If suitable for the campaign setting, brotherhood members have access to all the *Folk Magic spells* available to the Agent career. Serpentfolk operatives may have items or enchantments magically altering their appearance.

Gifts: Polyglot, Resilience

Allies and Enemies: The Brotherhood of the Noiseless Whisperer is feared by the rulers and governments which it seeks to overthrow. However, the brotherhood's extensive intelligence gathering network causes them to be sought out by nefarious individuals, to who they sometimes sell secrets in return for gold or favours.

FOR YOUR EYES ONLY

Hopefully this article has shown that espionage can be easily and legitimately introduced into almost any genre of game, even in settings where technological gizmos, magical powers or martini swilling gamblers do not exist. Spies can be great encounters during an adventure, especially as reoccurring foes, and can be an ideal source of hints or clues when player characters become stumped.

Remember that in a world where information is power, the spy is king!



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THE RESTORATION

OF PARADISE LOST

TEXT CHRISTOFFER KRÄMER
ILLUSTRATION LUKAS THELIN

The lights of the many Tiffany lamps cast a warm honey-golden glow over the small company assembled in the parlour. Collected together as if sitting for a painting, they are seated or standing around the oxblood leather armchairs, sipping drinks from the nearby bar cart filled with crystal bottles and seltzer dispensers. There are four of them, each well dressed in exquisite dresses, starched collars, razor-sharp creases, and not a hair out of place on a single impeccably coiffed head. They are the epitome of good friends and civilised societies. And seated in a regal claw-footed armchair, one hand relaxed on the armrest and the other lying in the lap of the person on the sofa beside him, is the gentleman who captures their attention. He leans back in his chair, his eyes half closed, simultaneously distant and yet completely aware. It is his hand in the lap of the person beside him that receives the primary focus. This hand is the centre of it all. The other two persons in the room cannot tear their eyes from it, for the simple gesture signals the end of a love they thought would last forever.

Imagine you and your sibling living and working together for the great love of your life. You do not feel any rivalry towards each other, because you know you have both been chosen. Likewise, you both know that your love will never be reciprocated with the same intensity, but that does not matter as long as you can be near the person you love. Then, imagine the love of your life finds a new soul mate, without having told you first. This new person is an obnoxious, conceited jerk, and it is clear to you that he is receiving the sort of genuine love that you never did. Without warning, your sibling turns on the new rival in a jealous rage, and you must choose. You must either embrace your heartache and side with your sibling, but risk losing the love of your life forever, or turn against your own flesh and blood and defend the newcomer. Not for his sake, but for the sake of your own great love, and for the chance of at least being able to remain in your love's presence, even if that love now only has eyes for another.

Sibling is set against sibling, and your heart bleeds.

Fiction about angels and demons, and the struggle among them till the end of time, is a common theme in all formats from books and short stories to films, tv and plays. But, as often is the case with a popular theme, it is always possible to find new angles. Presented here is my version of the eternal war in and about heaven. This article is a few parts, *Bible*, a few parts Jewish and Muslim mysticism, a few parts cult films from the nineties (*God's Army*, anyone?), and finally, a few parts good old-fashioned RPG campaign.

I will present the conflict, describe the combatants and their driving forces, demonstrate where on the battlefields the fighting takes place, and in the end, provide suggestions on how to use this campaign environment. Feel free to use the materials as they are, or to create your own campaigns. Enjoy!

BEFORE THE BEGINNING

Before the beginning, before time had even begun, God created the heavenly host with a single word. With a blinding flash of white light, they appeared – 10,000 times 10,000 angels – all ready to serve. Each of them filled with love for their maker; each of them a part of a single unit. And God, who could see beyond the obvious, knew that the angels, as he had intended, came from all parts of the spectrum of light – all similar, but different. Only together could they shine dazzlingly white. And God saw that it was good.

God put his trust in the angels and he bestowed upon them the power to help with Creation. He gave them the ability to manage, shape and transform – and, yes, even to bring back to life that which had died. The only thing the angels lacked was the power to create all by themselves. That right, God reserved for himself.

The angels loved God and did their best to make Creation all that God wanted it to be. They formed everything according to his will. And God saw that it was good.

The work continued for eons, and some angels distinguished themselves with their zeal and devotion. These eight angels were promoted to the rank of archangel, and as they won more of God's trust, they came to have more responsibility.

When the work was nearly done, God took the last step and filled the world with his image. Living creatures with the ability to create and love and reproduce. Imperfect beings with the potential to think freely and perform great evil – and in spite of this, God loved the humans. Where the angels were God's faithful servants, humans were his greatest love.

Many angels felt betrayed by this. For one of the archangels – Samael – the unrequited love slowly turned into hatred. First, a passio-

nate loathing for humans, whom he viewed as his rivals, and second, an abhorrence of God, born out of despair and constant hope that He would change his mind. Others who felt similarly joined Samael, drawn in by the intensity of his hatred.

But God could not accept that his faithful companions had turned against him, nor could he accept the threat against his creation. The rebellious angels would have to be destroyed, and to do this he turned to those that were still loyal. A war like no other took place, and the angels were vastly decimated. Samael was cast out and he hid himself in the underworld. There he writhed in his agony, and shaped the world around him to reflect his hatred.

A hundred thousand years passed, and gradually, Samael snared more and more angels to his side, playing on their unrequited love and their jealousy of mankind. One by one, they joined him and were transformed into fallen angels. Or demons, as their enemies chose to call them.

And the struggle continues still.

On one side: the unswervingly loyal who follow God's will, though their love for him will always be unrequited.

On the other side: those who dream of turning back the clock to a time with no humans, and who never give up hope of winning God back for themselves.

A love triangle of epic proportions.

TRAGEDIA HUMANA

Both angels and demons tend to see man's existence as a great drama. They both describe it as a tragedy, but for different reasons. The human drama has gone on for thousands of years, and is still ongoing, but both sides of the ancient struggle seem to agree that the final act has commenced and the final scene is imminent. The acts and scenes that have taken place up until now will be described in somewhat different ways, depending on whether it is the angels or the demons doing the telling, but in short, this is what it is about:

Opening Scene

To the sounds of trumpets and fanfare, God creates man with much pomp and circumstance. Initially, the angels view this as another of God's peculiar whims, but soon it becomes clear to the heavenly host that this last piece of Creation is something special. They realise that God, for some reason no angel quite comprehends, is in love with this last creation to an extent they have never before witnessed. It is also apparent that these humans are weak, unpredictable, and full of flaws – more like a failed experiment than the crowning achievement. A few angels see the humans'

potential, that certain something about them which surely is the big reason they've captured God's heart. But none of them, not even the most faithful, feel that mankind is worth any great risk.

Surprise over God's decision leads to concern, which gradually transforms into resentment. In the end, one of God's favourites – Samael – acts out against mankind in an attempt to show God that He is mistaken. Samael tempts the humans, and they succumb, awakening God's Wrath. But Samael has misunderstood God's seriousness, and his plan backfires. Although mankind was reprimanded by God, Samael and his supporters are punished far more severely.

Samael and his cohorts are banished. Upon being cast out, Samael's love turns to hatred and he instigates a full-scale war against mankind, which leads to an all-out war among all angels. A great battle occurs in an area called Paradise, and men are – for their own protection – forbidden to enter by Uriel, who guards the entrance.

The end result is that a majority of the angels perish, Samael and his minions are banned to the underworld forever, and Paradise itself is almost obliterated in the process. The remaining wasteland that is Paradise is removed by God, and is now only accessible to the angels and demons who know how to get there. Most of them keep away, however, as they all associate the place with sorrow and grief.

The First Act

After this drama's cataclysmic beginning, things became calm and remained so for several thousand years. The first act lasted until a couple of thousand years before the birth of Christ. During this time, people spread across the earth and slowly evolved into more complex creatures, both socially and morally. All the while, the heavenly conflict continued, and many of the groupings and divisions among the angels that we know of today were formed here. Samael's domains were established, and many angels joined his ranks during this time.

The first part of this age-old conflict between angels and demons – i.e., the first act – ended with the great flood. For the demons, the flood was counted as a major victory, but also as a great disappointment. Through thousands of years of effort, they had finally succeeded in making mankind so depraved and corrupt that God in fact turned his face away from them and considered destroying the entire species. But thanks to a desperate endeavour from the angels, God found hope in Noah and his family, and humanity thereby found grace. And the long-term goals of the demons remained unfulfilled.

The Second Act

The second act continued much like the first; the heavenly production proceeded against the background of an increasingly complex and organized humanity. The major transition of the second act was that the power wielded by individuals and groups was so great that if any side won or lost a key player, the result could shape everyone's future for eons to come. The Greco-Roman Empire and the great Chinese Dynasties became intense battlegrounds in the overall struggle, and though both angels and demons toiled surreptitiously as much as was possible, it was their presence that laid the foundations for the complex pantheon of gods and monsters that shaped the worldview of the time. The end of the second act is even more epic than the first. The divide between the differing perspectives about its outcome has only deepened.

After many millennia's hard work, the demons had once again managed to persuade humanity to stoop to such new lows that God's patience was running out. Only through direct intervention, as well as a personal manifestation in the form of the son of man, could mankind be saved. For many demons, this incident was viewed as a sign that victory was nigh. After all, they reasoned, God would not elect to personally intervene on behalf of mankind again. For the remaining demons, however, this was rather an omen that signified the battle would never be truly winnable – unless they were somehow able to eliminate all of humanity – given what God had shown himself willing to sacrifice for mankind thus far.

The Final Act

The past 2000 years are described as the third and final act. It is characterised by the surge in growth of humanity as people have spread out across the planet's surface, and developed technology to the point where a single person's decision can have a global impact. Never before has the heavenly game been as sensitive or crucial as it is now. Among the angels and demons, this situation has led to the widespread belief that the end is very near.

Today

Because angels and demons to a greater extent now believe the end is approaching, they intensify their efforts. Never before have so many angels and demons moved directly among mankind, interfering with their lives. Never before were so many souls corrupted or saved to such a great degree. And never before have so many ancient and complicated plans and conspiracies been so close to fruition. It truly is the end of days.

Angels



The angels are God's loyal servants. They love him more than anything. They cannot exist for long outside his presence.

Strengths

- Noble, incapable of selfishness or destruction.
- Would never harm a person under any circumstances.
- Would willingly sacrifice themselves to prevent a person from being harmed.
- Has a certain fascination and admiration for humans, primarily because God is so enamoured with them.

Weaknesses

- May be unintentionally conceited and have a tendency to look down on humans, as if they were some type of trained monkey that God had asked them to look after.
- Frequently lack confidence in humankind's capabilities.
- May sometimes behave as if humans were carriers of some infectious disease that may be transmitted to them.
- Are unable to be away from God for any longer period of time. They will wither away and possibly disappear completely if they become isolated from Heaven.

Abilities

- Angels have ability to take any shape.
- Angels have ability to instantaneously move from one place to another.
- Angels have wings and are therefore able to fly.
- Angels have the ability to reshape Creation.
- Angels have the ability to heal.
- Angels have the ability to resurrect.
- Angels have the ability to kill demons without fear of pain or punishment.

Limitations

- Angels cannot kill humans without risking severe punishment.
- Angels cannot even allow humans to get killed without experiencing great pain.
- Angels cannot disrupt the normal flow of space-time.
- Angels cannot create anything new.

Angelic Hierarchies

With an army of more than half a million of angels with varying complex goals, a hierarchy will of course arise. In the past, that hierarchy was much more complicated than it is today, but the millennia of conflict between angels and demons have taken a heavy toll. Three archangels—Remiel, Sarakael and Raguel—have fallen, and their responsibilities have been distributed among the other archangels.

At the top of the hierarchy is, of course, God himself, and beneath Him, the four remaining archangels: Uriel, Michael, Raphael and Gabriel, who each lead a legion of angels. Some believe that Gabriel holds a special place among the archangels, but this rumour is categorically denied by the four archangels, who maintain a united front..

The Body of the Master

When so many angels have served God for so long, and performed so many different types of tasks, it is no strange thing that a number of specialists have risen among the ranks. Angels with a special knack for performing some of God's many tasks, or angels who have become increasingly skilled in a certain area after performing that task so often. All these specialists have come to serve under a specific archangel, who in his turn synchronizes their actions. The different specialists are:

Uriel – The Eyes of God

The eyes are the watchers among the angels. They execute different tasks both in heaven and among the humans. Above all, the eyes are the angels' intelligence service tasked with keeping track of the demons' movements and actions among humans.

The Eyes often work in secret. They are extremely skilled at disappearing in a crowd and they are masters of the art of seeing without being seen. Few among the angels know the humans and their enemies, the demons, as well as the Eyes do. And a very select few work undercover among the demons. They have given up their wings, and while they serve Samael with their bodies, they serve God in their hearts.

Michael – The Right Hands of God

The Right Hands are the demon hunters. They are heavenly soldiers, called on to destroy God's enemies. The Right Hands carry the flaming sword with righteous and uncompromising strength and conviction. The only demons who might receive any mercy from the Right Hands are those who want to return to God's grace. All others will meet their doom.

Raphael – The Left Hands of God

The Left Hands are the angels' guardians and protectors. They are called upon to protect the innocent, to watch over the defenceless, and to strengthen the weak. The Left Hands have the same strength and conviction as the Right Hands, but they choose to use this strength for human protection.

Gabriel – The Thoughts of God

The Thoughts are the angels who have been entrusted with certain tasks. While not necessarily smarter than their siblings, they have the ability to complete the many difficult tasks God has asked of them. They find the things that must be found, they piece together the things that must be pieced together, and they implement the things that must be implemented. Often they coordinate with other parts of God's Body in order to succeed with their missions.

Divisions Among the Angels

Just as the angels have different tasks they must perform, they also have very different attitudes of the humans they have been commanded by God to defend. The angels can be grouped into three basic divisions.

The Puritans

The Puritans generally deem humanity to be lacking in every possible aspect. They despise humans for all their weaknesses and for the evil they have within them. They view humanity as a defective creation and are baffled as to why God, in his infallibility, has chosen not only to create, but also to love, anything so unworthy. They attempt to limit their interaction with humans as much as possible, only doing so in order to perform their required tasks. Ideally, they will avoid touching humans entirely, and prefer to block out their thoughts.

The Puritans are like clinical scientists with a fear of germs who are forced to deal with some unusually disgusting lab animals.

The Missionaries

The Missionaries typically share the Puritans' dim view of humanity, but they refuse to accept the idea that God may have made a mistake. Consequently, they devote all their time and energy to attempting to cultivate and strengthen the good qualities they see in humans.

For some, this manifests itself in a sort of religious zealotry associated with door-to-door evangelism, but at an infinitely more insightful level. For others, it's just the opposite: performing practical ministry among the people at a grassroots level in order to foster goodness, as well as ministry to the rich and powerful, in order to encourage compassion and altruism.

The Anthropologists

Unlike the other angelic divisions, the Anthropologists have no expressed or implied dislike of humans. Instead, they are intrigued by humanity and all its ingenuous fragility, and the anthropologists do their best to fully understand this, the greatest of God's mysteries.

To some, it is humanity's flaws and their darkness that entice, and these sin-watchers are inexorably drawn toward the darkest aspects of mankind, where they observe and experiment in order to understand. To others among this division, it is humanity's nuances—their vacillation between the most pure and altruistic behaviour to the most tainted and egotistical—that are the focus of their fascination.

Combining Profession and Division

Using the classifications of professions and divisions, it is possible to determine twelve simple archetypes. As with all archetypes it is a rough sketch, but it helps the players to quickly get a handle on a character, and allows the game master to improvise one or several NPCs. A few examples:

- *The Puritan Left Hand, who serves Rafael.*
A bodyguard who has nothing but contempt for those s/he is required to protect.
- *The Anthropologist Eyes,*
who becomes so engrossed by mankind that he does not always manage to remain in the shadows.
- *The Missionary Right Hand,*
who combines a relentless nocturnal hunting of demons with a day job at a shelter among the most poor and vulnerable of humanity.

Demons



The Demons are those faithful to Samael, and their perceived unrequited love for God has filled them with a bitter, hateful jealousy towards mankind, whom they feel has taken their place. Though they can exist away from the presence of God, they are in constant suffering due to His absence.

Strengths

- Selfish and destructive.
- Jealous of mankind, and act accordingly – hateful, petty and envious.
- Completely determined to destroy mankind, or at least attempt to shame them in the eyes of God.

Weaknesses

- Believe humanity is capable of just about anything (perhaps overestimating their abilities).
- Have an appreciation for humanity's weaknesses, and due to the competitive nature of the situation, view them as rivals.

Abilities

- Demons have the ability to take any form they desire.
- Demons have the ability to teleport instantly from place to place.
- Demons have the ability to deform and destroy Creation.
- Demons have the ability to tempt and seduce.
- Demons have the ability to kill humans without the risk that angels would ordinarily have to pay.

Limitations

- Demons cannot disrupt the normal flow of space-time.
- Demons cannot create anything new.
- Demons cannot kill angels without risking severe punishment.

Demonic Hierarchies

Like the angels, the demons too have developed a hierarchy during the past millennia, and also similarly, a select few demons have risen above the rest and been entrusted with the power to carry out Samael's will.

As with the angels, the conflict has taken a heavy toll. For every archangel who died in battle, at least two major demons – often referred to as lords or princes – were destroyed. Some of the most famous among the lost include Asmodeus, Leviathan, Azazel, Ashtaroth, Amon, Belfegor and Abaddon.

At the top of the hierarchy sits Samael, and below him are the four demonic princes, Moloch, Belial, Mammon and Beelzebub. Among these four, Beelzebub holds special status as the Prince of Hell, and this inequality is a constant source of discontent and internal conflict in demonic circles.

Demonic Legions

Every lord or prince in hell rules over a legion of demons, which, in turn, have a special mission or special inclination. These legions are:

Moloch's Fury

Moloch's Fury comprises those demons whose expertise is violence and destruction. These are the foot soldiers of hell and are sent when trickery and deception are no longer sufficient and devastation and bloodshed are what's needed. When, for example, a joint Israeli-Palestinian school has been destroyed in a fire, it is Moloch's Fury behind it.

Belial, Lord of Lies

Belial's Lies are masterful manipulators who have made it their business to understand the fickle but ultimately fragile human psyche. Their success in this area is a constant source of pride for this demonic legion. These silver-tongued demons lie and deceive, sow discord and dissension, and create doubt and uncertainty. When a skyscraper falls, seemingly of its own accord, it is Belial's Lies whispering falsehoods to fan the flames of a conspiracy within the government. When an epidemic threatens, it is Belial's Lies who create doubts about the cure that is being distributed.

Mammon, Prince of Greed

Mammon's Greed is currently the most successful division among the demons. The Greed work hard to supplant every human value and replace it with a monetary version. Their long-term goal is to make humanity forget God, and instead have people worship something more important – greed. During recent decades, they have succeeded at this better than ever before, their patient work having paid off well. When things like climate research is silenced, for example, or distorted by "experts" who have been paid off by large corporations, Mammon's Greed are the culprits.

Beelzebub's Machinations

Beelzebub's Machinations are the demons who work most directly on Samael's assignments, mediated by the Prince of Hell. Beelzebub's Machinations track down and neutralize all angelic conspiracies they can find. They sniff out and identify any attempt to save humanity and indeed do their best to make the opposite come true. A very select few Machinations can be found operating undercover with the angels. These have left the demonic community and serve God with their bodies and maintain loyalty to Samael and the demons in their hearts.

Divisions Among the Demons

Though demons are driven by their hatred of humanity, they are not necessarily in complete agreement regarding those they are set on destroying. Like the angels, demons too can be grouped into three basic divisions:

The Sadists

The Sadists despise humanity with a passion. Most of them would happily spend their days tearing people to pieces, but as this sort of senseless violence is not in line with the strategy Samael's has set out for them, they must choose more subtle ways of venting their never-ending rage toward humans. The Sadists therefore enjoy tempting humans to sink to ever-lower levels of perversion, egotism, and self-loathing. Their desire is to be there to look into their victims' eyes when they hit rock bottom.

The Scientists

The Scientists have no love for humans, but nor do they hate them. When it comes right down to it, the fact is that they simply do not understand humanity at all. They cannot fathom why God chose them, they are unable to see what makes them so special, and they do not comprehend why they act as they do. The Scientists, consequently, are, for a variety of reasons (e.g., satisfying their own morbid curiosity, or getting to know the "enemy" better), obsessed with understanding humanity. They satisfy this obsession through exploring and experimenting with people's physical and psychological characteristics.

The Tourists

The Tourists actually like humanity, much to their own surprise. They can see themselves in the flawed humans, and they envy their ability to feel great passion despite their mayfly-short lifespans. Above all, the Tourists enjoy the undemanding existence they have on Earth. Their view is that humanity is doomed, as is demonkind, and there is nothing to be done about it. So, might as well enjoy the moment.

Combining Profession and Division

Using the classifications of professions and divisions, it is possible to determine twelve simple archetypes. A few examples:

- **The Moloch's Fury Tourist.**
An elite soldier of the demonic legions, who, after having razed the Palestine-Israeli Peace school, parties until dawn at a transvestite bar in Tel Aviv.
- **The Mammon's Greed Sadist**
who enjoys manipulating the economic flow in the world in such a way that results in bulldozers wiping out slum areas and putting poor people on the streets, and causing logging companies to clear-cut forests and drive natives from their ancestral hunting grounds.
- **The Belial's Lies Scientist**
who uses his lies about history to perform experiments to see how quickly humans can be made to forget recent happenings.
- **The Beelzebub's Machinations Tourist**
who, in his duties of surveying the angels' efforts to protect humans, gradually begins to understand why many of them are deserving of this protection.
- **The Moloch's Fury Sadist**
A dangerous, impulsive killing machine that even Samael cannot prevent from randomly destroying humans who stand in his way.

Humans



The group at the centre of all the drama – humans – has comparatively modest strengths. But since they take part in this war, in their own small way, they still deserve a short presentation.

Strengths

- Humans are multifaceted, and when working together, they are incredibly effective.
- Humans are creative and passionate.
- Humans are capable of selfless good.
- Humans possess free will.

Weaknesses

- Humans are weak and fragile – both physically and psychologically.
- Humans' senses are quite limited.
- Humans are capable of callous egotism and cruelty.
- Humans possess free will.

Abilities

- Humans are able to solve problems.
- Humans are able to change their minds.
- Humans can kill both demons and angels without risk of punishment.

Limitations

- Humans cannot disrupt the normal flow of space-time.
- Humans cannot teleport.
- Humans cannot create anything new of any significance.
- Humans cannot fly.

All the while this epic struggle over the future of humanity takes place in humans' surroundings, most humans themselves remain pitifully unaware of this fact. Though the main events of this conflict are written down in a number of different ways – with varying degrees of veracity – in many different religious texts, very few humans actually believe in angels and demons.

For the vast majority of people, angels and demons are allegories at best, and nothing to be taken too seriously. Among those people who do believe in the existence of angels, most have a naively sweet and simplistic view of what angels really are and what they are capable of.

It is particularly ironic that a major portion of humanity does not even believe in the God that created them, and they are therefore as undeserving of God's love as the demons – and even some of the angels – claim them to be. This illustrates well just how complicated this entire relationship drama is.

The Enlightened

All of humanity does not live in the darkness of ignorance, however. Over time, there has been so much contact between the worlds that some individuals and organisations have defied the natural tendency toward doubt and have come to believe in the existence of angels and demons. These people are called "enlightened".

The enlightened include everyone from individuals who have once experienced something extraordinary, to powerful organisations whose objectives and goals are passed on from one generation to the next. The enlightened can be divided up into three basic categories:

Religious Sects and Organisations

Religious organisations are naturally those that are most aware of the existence of angels and demons. Contact between these religious groups and angels and demons have occurred on a fairly regular basis.

Because religious groups, in a few particular cases, have become so powerful that they have survived many centuries and passed on their knowledge, it is within these organisations that most enlightened people can be found.

Consequently, there are both small and large groups throughout all the world's religions, wherein a select few keep track of, and have contact with the supernatural. The Catholic Church is a good example,

where belief in angels varies depending on who is asked, yet within this larger organisation are a number of branches and orders of enlightened.

Smaller religious groups and sects tend to be more short-lived and less able to pass on their knowledge of the supernatural over time, but they also tend to be more active, and are usually more unpredictable when they are active. Small upstart satanic cults, for example, demonstrate this quite well.

Power Syndicates

Aside from the Church, there are a number of other groups in society that have managed to obtain so much power that they can adapt and survive over time and therefore pass on knowledge of the past. The overwhelming majority of these groups are the type of powerful syndicates that basically prove that money equals power and power equals money.

These groups tend to be involved in a number of different kinds of activities where the underlying purpose seems to be to ensure that the members and their families can remain among the elite.

Examples of power syndicates include the Windsor family, the Freemasons, Berenberg Bank, Kongo Gumi Company (now with a lower profile after the failed cooperation with the demon Berith), the Saud family, the Rockefellers, the Rothschilds, the Barclays, NATO, and Cosa Nostra.

As it is in the best interests of these families and groups, there are many connections between them, but this does not mean they freely share the knowledge of the supernatural that their particular organisation has acquired.

These groups are very aware of the public's suspicion of them, so they have long worked to shift the public's attention toward various easily dismissible things such as the Illuminati, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, and other ridiculous fabrications.

The Encyclopedists

The Encyclopedists are the smallest, most secret and least powerful of the enlightened groups. The Encyclopedists have neither religious nor politically inclined motives, but rather more that unquenchable thirst for knowledge that people have.

The Encyclopedists are a loose association of individuals and groups that have, with the overly meticulous precision of researchers and archivists, pieced together the small hints and fragments of the supernatural that have been left throughout history.

Well aware of the danger inherent in this work (from groups of angels and demons, but even more from the two other groups of the enlightened, who will stop at nothing to expand their knowledge or keep their secrets), the Encyclopedists have learned to operate in silence. They use the knowledge gathered only to better understand the world they live in.

For safety's sake, most Encyclopedists work alone or in very loosely connected groups, but as they are constantly thirsty for knowledge and exchanges between them can be very fruitful, there are a few symbols and phrases that make it possible for them to identify one another. The two most well-known examples of these are references to the library of Alexandria (e.g., "I work at the library in Alexandria" or "Knowledge did not vanish from the Library of Alexandria"), and the use of an owl and the letters representing the goddess Athena, AOE (alpha, theta, epsilon) – and sometimes a combination of these – as symbols of knowledge and wisdom.

Encyclopedists, however, are notoriously paranoid, so those who want inside access need more than just a correct password to enter.

Divisions Among the Enlightened

The enlightened have a huge variety of opinions and beliefs about the existence of angels and demons, but a few commonalities exist:

The Guardians

The Guardians generally regard humans as sheep—a vulnerable herd of animals that needs someone to look after them—and they have appointed themselves as the shepherds. The Guardians want to protect humanity from the forces both angels and demons are capable of unleashing upon them, but they also wish to shield them from knowledge of the supernatural, for fear of the reactions that knowledge might set off. Views on how to best protect humanity differ from one Guardian to another. This means that some of them are prepared to enter into agreements with one of the supernatural groups to go up against another. Others instead gather knowledge and weapons in order to destroy everything that is supernatural, and a third group concentrates on cleaning up after every incident where angels and demons have been involved.

The Disciples

The Disciples love belonging to the small select group that has a chance of experiencing something greater than ordinary reality. As enlightened, they are always on the lookout for any way of communicating with angels and demons, and when they succeed, they try to maintain that contact for as long as possible by any means necessary. Consequently, the Disciples are prepared to make any imaginable deals and sacrifices – even at expense of others. With the fanatic devotion of a stalker, they spend their time collecting, cataloguing, and, based on their collective knowledge, travelling the lengths and breadths of the world in the hopes of meeting an angel or demon. Essentially, this is an obsession which tends to devour and destroy the Disciples from within, as their desire is always greater than their ability to fulfil it. A few Disciples manage to break free of their obsession, and these discuss their need to find a connection with the supernatural as an addiction more powerful than all others.

The Power Players

The Power Players are only interested in one thing: how knowledge of, and encounters with angels and demons, can further benefit themselves. They realize that they have come into contact with something that—if they play their cards right—has the ability not only to open doors, but in fact to pulverize them. Through agreements with angels or demons, or perhaps even just with the help of the endless knowledge and abilities angels and demons possess, the Power Players know they have the potential to change and shape the world—most likely with themselves at its centre. Most Power Players have no doubts about the supernatural beings they are taking advantage of, and they are happy to play both sides if it benefits them. Not infrequently, this leads to Power Players being drawn into the fray in the struggle between angels and demons.

Combining Profession and Division

Using the classifications of professions and divisions, it is possible to determine nine simple archetypes. An example:

- **The Religious Power Player**
– A nun in one of Catholicism's orders serves her Christian brothers and sisters by day, but by night, she is in fact only interested in the personal benefits she will receive through her knowledge gained in any encounters with angels and demons.

ANGELS/DEMONS vs HUMANS

– DIFFERENCES

How then can we recognise angels and demons? While they may appear to be human on the surface, there are a number of differences. Their bodies are mere shells that they can change or shift as needed, and they can change appearance and gender without any visible effort. They also have no biological needs: they require neither food nor sleep and they cannot procreate. If they were to be caught and subjected to experiments, other anomalies would become evident as well. For example, the bodies of the angels or demons would show no signs of aging or disease, and their internal organs are likely to show little to no trace of heavy metals, damage to cells, etc.

Psychologically, the differences are greater. Angels and demons have been around since before Creation, and have experienced the world's entire history and played an active part therein, with all that that implies with regards to perspective differences compared to humans. They lack faith (rather, they know) and that lack of freedom means that their lives are more limited. And finally, these supernatural beings lack a fundamental understanding of humans. Despite all the thousands and thousands of years they have been around, most angels and demons are incapable of understanding the complex, irrational, short-lived, meat sack that is the human being—and in the long run, it is this that will likely be the thing that reveals them for who they really are.

The Power Source of Immortality

Angels and demons are practically invulnerable compared to humans, but they are not immortal machines capable of functioning without sustenance for eternity. When they are most active, the things they do, such as flying, reshaping/destroying Creation, healing, and so on, require a lot of energy, and while they are dormant, they require very little. If angels and demons are totally removed from the power source that drives them, they will inexorably fade away and die. Therefore, defeating an angel or a demon requires:

- that it be bound to the Earth (whether physically or mentally, through blackmail or trickery)
- that it be caused so much damage in as little time as possible so that its energy to flee or defend itself is diminished.

The Divine Energiser

The angels work at the behest of God and are energised by His presence. Their ability to be away from God varies as regards the length of time they can survive without Him, but sooner or later, they all must return to heaven. If they do not, they will become gradually weaker until they fade away completely. The only way for an angel to cease their dependency upon God is to do as men did in paradise – turn away and cut all ties; a fate viewed as worse than the extinction of all angels.

The Demons' Energiser

The greatest obstacle the demons had to overcome in their break with God was just that: the break with God. The absence of the divine battery doomed them to failure if they could not find an alternative. The solution was a collective charging, which has led to an expanded interdependence and strengthened their shared perception of being outsiders. A demon can only regain its energy when in the vicinity of other demons—the more there are, the quicker and more effectively they heal. This is why the demons in hell spend most of their time in enormous heaps, like infernal sea lions in a demonic dormancy. The demonic system of recharging their batteries is weaker than the angels' divine one, but it has a marginal advantage: demons on Earth can strengthen each other and, if needed, transmit power to one another. Demons can theoretically break away from the collective – like a worker bee leaving the hive – but the pain and the agony of leaving everything behind makes it practically unthinkable.

Hive Instincts

Every angel, undefiled or demonic, has access to a hive memory and hive community, which humans lack. Angels' connections with other angels is the strongest, but as all supernatural beings once were created as God's servants, the links between them are still there. This makes it possible for angels and demons to feel the presence of other angels/demons and to transfer feelings and thoughts to each other when close by. Every angel or demon feels instantly when a member of their band disappears from their community, whether they've been killed or have broken loose on their own. The nearer the point of disappearance they are, the more affected they feel, and an angel or demon that deliberately destroys another, is inexorably the heaviest afflicted.

The angels who hunt demons have learned to steel themselves against this effect,

thought they are not so unmoved by the pain of it as they some time claim to be. The demons who want to restore all angels to their joint position as servants under God are always very hard hit, both physically and mentally. Demons who deliberately destroy angels – destroy siblings – can count on being severely punished by both Samael and other demons for this crime.

Every angel and demon instinctively knows how many are left of the original cohort of 100 million. The remaining balance is currently 1,000,006 and the remaining fighters are gradually getting used to the fact that there will soon be only 1% of the original angels remaining, and that they will then total fewer than a million.

The Empty Ones

Despite these strong instinctive cohesive forces, a few angels and demons have left their siblings and the great war behind them. It is primarily anthropologists and tourists who, in their fascination for humanity, have found love for them, and left the angelic life behind. Once they have done so, they can never return. An angel or demon who has turned away from his siblings could never survive without making that abandonment complete. In doing so, they also lose a great part of their powers; they are no longer nearly immortal, they cannot teleport, nor can they reshape/destroy Creation. They do have some remnants of their powers that elevates them somewhat above ordinary mortals. But to have turned one's back completely on what one once was, there comes a great emptiness that can never quite be filled. Many of the angels and demons who have taken this step regret it. Their only way out is to try to obliterate themselves to escape the agony, which is easier said than done.

Lilith

One demon (or angel – opinions differ) seems to defy the rules all other supernaturals have had to abide by, and that is Lilith. Enigmatic Lilith, who unlike most of God's original servants consistently chooses to appear in female form. Lilith was one of the angels who defied God, and rumour has it that she was involved in Samael's plan to get mankind to fall. Along with the other demons, she was cast out of heaven, but she did not take part in the following war that destroyed the paradise. Lilith has broken with both God and the collective community that gives the demons their strength, yet she has not lost her powers like other angels or demons who have entered the void. On the contrary, she seems to be more powerful to the extent

that she can challenge both archangels and demonic princes. Where she gets her strength is unknown, but she continues to remain a powerful figure millennium after millennium. What's more, she seems to move relatively unhindered across all levels. It is a well-known fact that Samael, whom she once betrayed, seems nevertheless unable to manage without her, and she dances in and out of hell as she pleases. Even stranger are the rumours that claim Lilith has been spotted leaving heaven from time to time. No one knows what Lilith's ultimate goals are, but it does seem that she freely moves back and forth throughout the supernatural areas, which extend from the bottomless abyss to the top of the heavenly rainbow.

SHADOW AND HALO

These two opposing values describe how angels and demons perceive a human upon first evaluation: shadow and halo.

Shadow is a collective term for all traces left behind in a human after performing evil acts – acts that go against God's expressed wishes of Creation as layed out throughout the scriptures, such as violence, bearing false witness, or lust. Halo, on the other hand, is a collective term for the signs that can be seen in a human who has done good deed, such as behaving with empathy and love, and being generous and hospitable.

The shadow and the halo surrounding a human is equally apparent to an angel or a demon who looks at them, just as their clothes might be to a regular mortal. In this way, supernatural beings gather information that can affect how they interact with people. However, one should not assume that demons are automatically on the lookout for humans with a huge shadow, or that angels are interested in people with a bright halo. Oftentimes, the exact reverse is true.

Grace

A person's shadow or halo does not affect God's view of them in any way. The Creator's love seems to know no bounds, even towards those whose shadow is so compact and coal black as to make it extremely difficult to see the person behind it. This whole concept is also at the centre of the entire relationship drama the war was started over. God's grace toward humans is something not even the angels fully understand.

SOULS

Art and literature often has a recurring theme on the concept of someone who has sold their soul in return for some benefit, but this is an

oversimplification bordering on disinformation. The concept bears mentioning, however.

Angels do not deal with souls. God has given humans free will to turn toward or away from their Maker as they see fit. Nothing the angels do can change this fact, and therefore they cannot buy a human's soul any more than they can sell it. People are responsible for their own souls.

That said, it is important to add that demons in fact engage in an activity that is very much like the buying of souls, and angels do sometimes get dragged into this activity that, for the uninitiated, can have similarities to something that could vaguely be perceived as a buy and sell process...

What demons actually do is to sometimes make deals with humans that persuade them to turn away from God – of their own accord. No actual soul has been exchanged or wound up in a soul-containing safe, but a soul has in a way become lost in exchange for an infernal advantage. And, as previously noted, angels do not do such things.

However, it may happen that angels and demons make some kind of shady exchange involving such people in the supernatural equivalent of Checkpoint Charlie. Demons wishing to gain some advantage, for example, may offer to "release" a person who has made such a deal, i.e., not lead them further astray, thereby giving that person a better chance to find their way back to the light. Since angels serve God, and are tasked with helping humans, they can sometimes be seen to go along with such an exchange. But there is no actual buying or selling of souls taking place.

ABOUT GOD

In a campaign where God is in the absolute centre, shouldn't there be a reason to talk about God and how humans should behave in relation to the Creator, the Alpha and the Omega, the light of lights, the one true God, etc? On the other hand, there are a thousand reasons to NOT talk about God, because however you look at it, the presence of God – in a campaign that is centred around an all-powerful God – makes the game uninteresting and as good as unplayable as well. What is the meaning of giving God skills and abilities if God is the almighty Creator? What is the point of allowing God to perform actions if that will just introduce a continual *deus ex machina* and render the game tiresome and dull?

No, better to let God remain unattainable and inscrutable. God exists and is the light in which angels charge their batteries. The presence of the Creator fills them with strength and the will to continue, and should be described as that and no more. God's will is

instead conveyed through Gabriel, Michael, or one of the other archangels. In this way, the game introduces an element of uncertainty, and a safety valve for unhappy angels to vent about. Can Gabriel really be trusted to have interpreted the Lord correctly?

ABOUT SAMAE

Just as it is uninteresting to talk about God, it is actually quite interesting to talk about Samael – the angel of death, the destroyer, the prince of darkness, the serpent, and so on – for the very reason that Samael is NOT omnipotent and infallible. These qualities, or rather lack thereof, make things more interesting. Samael was the one who turned against humans first, the one whose heart bled the most, the one whose passion was so strong that there was no other way out. This gives Samael a unique position among all the fallen angels who stand in opposition of the Divine Master. Samael did not seek out this position, but now that he has it, he must accept it for all that entails. When yet another demon is destroyed and the call to revenge threatens to take the upper hand, Samael's willpower and authority are needed to instil in the other demons that all angels are siblings. When the hatred of humans swells and the desire to ruin cities just because you can permeates the demon hordes, it is Samael's thankless task to hold them back, as that sort of thing is counterproductive in the long run. All the while, it is Samael who, from time to time, must make the decision to break all the rules and order the destruction of an angel who simply cannot be allowed to go on. Time and pressure have taken their toll on Samael. All the times the demons believed they were nearing their goal, only to realise they are further away than ever; all the doubt over their chosen path and their methods; the looming sensation of always standing in opposition to the thing the heart is yearning for, has created a fallen angel whose decisions are not always rational, whose emotional outbursts are as extreme as they are frequent. A creature who, at any given moment, is battling with his own desire to crawl back to God and beg forgiveness, as well as his desire to kill any living thing that stands in his way.

PLACES

In a campaign that revolves around the supernatural battle over humanity, and, in fact, heaven, in the long run, there are a number of obvious locations: heaven, hell, the lost paradise, and Earth. Of these, it is only useful to describe one particular location, and the following paragraphs summarise a quick explanation why.

Earth

This is the main venue for a campaign based on this premise. This is where the cowboys-and-indians rackets between angels and demons take place. The heavenly and hellish agents plan and scheme, and it is this interaction with and against people that makes things interesting. The Earth should not require any introduction. Select the desired epoch and play.

Heaven and Hell

The campaign's antagonists each start in their appropriate bases, but the bases in and of themselves are pretty uninteresting. After all, how can one describe heaven without simply diminishing the concept? The same goes for hell: how can it be turned into a game board without it simply becoming a clichéd spectacle of fire and brimstone? Better to leave it undescribed and simply say it is impossible for an angel to enter hell without a special invitation, and vice versa, and instead concentrate on Earth and the lost paradise.

The Lost Paradise

Paradise, which was once a part of our world, still exists, though it is now invisible to humans. For angels, the place is associated with the great war that raged there and the millions who died. The powers that were unleashed during the war have changed the area to a twisted shadow of the paradise that God created. The angels and demons who travel there explain that, when wandering among the ruins, one can sometimes get a glimpse – a hint, a sound, a quick impression, a taste of what Eden once was – which only magnifies the agony. The lost paradise is not only a devastated Eden – a garden of beautiful greenery – but it also contains areas that reflect all the coexisting ages God intended humans to experience throughout Creation. Consequently, one finds not only the once-beautiful nature of the Garden of Eden, but also great nameless cities laid to ruin, as well as areas that feel clean and modern, albeit abandoned and broken. All that was in God's promise to humanity, and that humanity, through Samael's betrayal, has turned away from.

There is, however, a reason to visit the lost paradise from time to time: it is a portal between our world and heaven/hell, a place where angels and demons can find shelter away from humanity's never-ending curiosity, a place where meetings can take place between people who should not be meeting. It is a kind of supernatural Berlin during the cold war.

It is a place filled with dangers. For the angels, paradise reminds them of what they once had and what the war took from them. Some angels claim that paradise increases their aversion toward humanity and their understanding of the demons. For others it is just the reverse: the destruction increases their hate toward their siblings who turned their backs. For demons, paradise causes the same emotional rollercoaster. And with the lack of people here, the lost paradise also increases the risk that the angels can destroy the demons without risking harming the innocent. Meetings in the lost paradise therefore require much planning and great care.

THE RESTORATION

The struggle is called the Restoration by both sides, but with different connotations. According to the angels, the struggle is about restoring the angels' honour, which can only be done if all the fallen are destroyed, or they beg for forgiveness of their sins (and they are then restored as angels). The demons, however, believe the fight is about restoring both demons and angels to their rightful positions as God's chosen ones above humans, which will only occur if God realises humanity's true nature, or if humans disappear from the Earth entirely.

Differing Strategies

The different end goals for restoration also means very different styles of strategy:

- The demons realise that the chance of God suddenly changing his mind or his attitude toward humans is low (even if the scriptures show it can happen from time to time), and so they are putting their energies toward corrupting humans. They know, however, that if they simply use the powers God once gave them to harm people, they will never be welcomed back to God's bosom. Consequently, their efforts are primarily focused on helping humanity to corrupt itself through war, famine, pollution, and other man-made plagues. In this way, they hope to kill two birds with one stone: humanity will be destroyed (hopefully), and at least, God will have to see how they abuse Creation, and are therefore beyond salvation. At the same time, the demons will not and cannot destroy the angels without grave consequences to themselves. They see the angels as their brothers and sister, and want nothing more than for both of them to be able to return to their place beside God when their human rivals are finally out of the picture. Samael need not even forbid his demons from spilling the angels' blood, since essentially all of them instinctively feel the same.

- The angels' advantage is that they are acting on God's behalf. They have a simpler and clearer goal, and therefore and more straightforward strategy: they fight for the demons' destruction. Though the angels are the tools of God, they do not have His ability to forgive. Most of them are quite content to see every heretic crushed and only those most loyal can muster the will to show forgiveness, and this is for God's sake and not their own. The angels' problem is that demons do not give up willingly, and fights between angels and demons tend to result in a lot of property destruction, which runs the risk of harming humans, something angels cannot allow. They are therefore forced to bide their time and choose their battles carefully.

Free Will

One of the things that most complicates the struggle over humanity is their free will. Both angels and demons have enough powers to transform just about any human at all into a passive victim, a stooge who will loyally do anything they're told. The problem is that God doesn't want this. Humanity's free will is in fact the cornerstone of Creation. God already has his golden retrievers who give him unconditional love. But with people, he wants something else. A being that loves God back of their own free will. This means that the angels' hands are tied in their attempts to help humanity. Angels can support, cheer, entice and intrigue, but in the end, the choice must always be up to the people. Ironically, the demons have the same limitations despite that their long-term goal is the destruction of humanity. They want to show God that humans are depraved and beyond salvation, and this does not work if humans blindly obey the demons commanding them. No, humans must retain their free will and themselves choose to do the evil deed, no matter how annoying this becomes to the infernal hordes.

The Restoration in Practice

Since both angels and demons are in their own ways limited by their goals and strategies, there are no longer any battles on Earth of the type that laid Paradise to waste. The demons infiltrate, convert, and lead humans astray as much as they can. If possible, they attempt to recruit angels whose loyalty to God seems in any way diminished. The demons attempt to keep a low profile in order to avoid confrontation with angels, and if such confrontations nevertheless take

place, they try to ensure that they happen among humans so the humans can be used as shields.

The angels are similarly infiltrating, converting and supporting humans in their righteousness insofar as they are able. If they can, they try to persuade demons, whose loyalty to Samael seems diminished, or whose love for God can no longer be suppressed, to make amends and return to heaven. Meanwhile, they hunt the demons everywhere they can, even if the destruction of these demons requires great caution in order that no humans are harmed. This is the strategy game of God and Samael.

THE COLD WAR

Although the conflict between angels and demons can indeed be complicated and requires finely tuned intuition in its execution, it is still the case that on paper, both the angels and demons have very simple and clear goals. In reality, however, the situation is much more complex.

The original angels, prior to the rebellion in heaven, were a group of siblings who shared an unbending love for the Creator. They share a nigh-to-unbreakable tie, and most of them know each other's names and have experienced things together as far back as Creation itself. The fight between them has also been going on for thousands of years, and they have met and battled it out with each other over and over again. They share experiences about humans and among humans.

Consequently, the battlefield and the various players' goals have become muddled with time. Even the most dedicated foot soldier will eventually wind up in a situation where some form of agreement or compromise will need to be made with the enemy, and when the web of such agreements becomes too intricate, it can be difficult to see reality in black and white – everything risks becoming a grey morass in which navigation is nearly impossible.

Humans, via the Enlightened, have also shown themselves to be anything but defenceless, and their unpredictability and their intense desire to be masters of their own fate complicates the entire situation even further.

Consequently, *The Restoration of Paradise Lost* should be considered a Cold War that continues in the quiet behind closed doors. Where everyone can be both players and game pieces, where pawns are sacrificed and a draw can be preferable even if there is a chance to win. It is an ever-shifting war with many different weapons, some of which are more vital than others:

Knowledge

To defeat your opponent, you must know where they are and what they are planning. This is why knowledge is the Alpha and the Omega in this game. The angels and the demons definitely have superior knowledge over humans, for the most part – they have insight into human history and culture that humans themselves have long forgotten, even if they do not always understand humans in and of themselves. But at the same time, angels and demons do not know everything about each other. Humans, on the other hand, understand their fellow humans, and since they are at the centre of the conflict, and pulled by both sides of the supernatural, they regularly receive bits of knowledge and insight that can be valuable in the ongoing games.

Relics

While angels and demons in many ways are more or less indestructible when going up against human weapons when they're at their full power, there are still other weapons that can be used to harm them. Angels have weapons forged in the light of the Creator and which have the ability to scorch demons to ash, and demons have weapons that were cast in shadow that can mean the end of angels. Through the millennia, these weapons have been used on Earth, and a few have become lost and left behind. They were not necessarily consigned to the scrapheap of history, however. A select few have been found by humans and these have, for the most part, gradually found their way to the hands of the Enlightened. The Enlightened, in turn, have used their gathered knowledge to craft their own weapons, which though they do not have the same level of power as the supernaturally created weapons, do have a greater effect than anything else humanity has created.

Rituals

Angels and demons have words and rituals that call, bind, force and damage, and those that hide, protect, release and heal. Fragments of this knowledge have found their way into the hands of the Enlightened and like tourists who haltingly make their clumsy way through foreign-language phrase books, they sometimes manage to figure something out, and as with code and cipher breakers, each successful portion provides a clue to figuring out the next bit until the entire code is cracked.

The game changes constantly. Knowledge and rituals often wind up as the focus for exchanges and conflicts.

CAMPAIGNS

So how do we play a campaign with angels and demons? Start by deciding what sort of feeling or atmosphere you want to have permeate the campaign, and which major players do you want to be at the centre of the whole thing.

Feeling/Atmosphere

Two main features are starkly present in *The Restoration of Paradise Lost*. One is that the story has characteristics of a secret agent thriller from the cold war, with injections of the supernatural. A slow war of attrition with operators that have been in the business for so long that they have a hard time knowing where their loyalties lie. A trade that is so dirty that it soils everyone who gets dragged into it – even those who are the most pure and virtuous. The second is that the story at its core is a relationship drama. A story about loving and despising, about loving so much that that love turns to hate, loving so much that you're prepared to destroy yourself or loyally stand by and watch the one you love give their love to someone else. It is a story of choices and what those choices can do.

Overall, *The Restoration* is a thriller where the participants must make ice-cold decisions obscured by passions that everyone collectively does their best to ignore. A perfect breeding ground for short and long stories alike.

Playing Angels

An angel campaign is a good place to start. Angels hold the natural heroic position which makes it easy – as an everyday hero – to identify with them. A campaign where players play angels can focus on exactly that. Angels are the good guys, the ones who are righteous and expected to always do the right thing. What happens if they don't feel like heroes? What happens if they hesitate when it's time to destroy a demon that they were once friends with? What happens when the obvious answers and the black-and-white world view stops being so obvious and turns into a hard-to-navigate mess of grey?

Playing Demons

Playing demons can also be a natural starting point. Demons are, on paper, the eternal bad guys of history, but since the idea of going around and being evil all day long can get dull, it is necessary to formulate the motivations and justifications of demons a bit more explicitly. They may be bad guys when it comes to the human perspective, but in their own minds, they're the only ones seeing things

clearly. The Creator has obviously let Himself be seduced by humans, and their siblings the angels are so fearful that they simply do not have the courage and power to react. It is therefore the demons' tasks to dish out a little tough love and restore everything to how it once was. This is what makes a demon campaign interesting — especially as the demons are bound by their refusal to injure the angels, while the angels, in their blind loyalty, do everything they can to destroy the demons. This limitation creates a good dynamic for stories.

But for a demon campaign to succeed, there must be a hint of doubt even here: What happens if the love for the Creator can't be suppressed? What happens when humanity begins to provide those glimpses of why God loves them so much, and the realisation that the demons may have made a terrible mistake begins to creep in? What happens when the obvious answers and the black-and-white world view stops being so obvious and turns into a hard-to-navigate mess of grey?

Playing Humans

Playing people caught in the struggle over the Restoration of Paradise Lost creates a completely different kind of campaign. Humans are the object of the story, and the underdogs. Even if everything ultimately deals with humans and their position as the Creator's favourites, they seldom move the story along. Quite the contrary, they are often just game pieces used by angels and demons to try to fulfil their goals. So how does one create a campaign that changes humans from objects to subjects? A campaign based on humans winding up in a chain of events:

- The discovery and realisation that there are supernatural beings.
- The search for knowledge.
- A gradually increasing understanding, but also a gradually increasing involvement in the fight.
- Choosing sides (or a refusal to choose sides).
- Surviving in a game where most others are infinitely more powerful.

The encounter with the supernaturals must be more complicated than it first seems. What happens when faith and free will no longer seem to be a choice, but are indisputable truths? What happens when angels set to protect humanity sometimes hates them more than they hate the demons who want to destroy humanity? What happens when the obvious answers and the black-and-white world view stops being so obvious and turns into a hard-to-navigate mess of grey?

The Peacemaker

EXAMPLE — A SHORT ADVENTURE

In northern Mexico, there is a tragic accident, a black Madonna, a cursed revolver, an apparently emotionless drug baron, and a daughter who waits for a miracle at the centre of an adventure that can decide the fate of many souls. These souls, balanced on a knife's edge, attract supernatural powers that wish to affect the outcome.

The players can be angels, demons, humans, or a combination of all three. The goals vary depending on what characters are played, but the approach remains the same.

Background

In Mexico, southwest of Juarez is the little town of Janos, surrounded by tiny, quaint villages and rolling countryside. Once, Janos was a sleepy, god-fearing area known for its beautiful church and its black Madonna, at whose feet many a miracle had occurred. It was a destination for Catholic pilgrims and the last place on Earth anyone expected to encounter any evil or devilry.

But that was before Lucinda Truillo, wife of the organist Esteban Truillo, was swallowed up by the earth and disappeared. Before the peacemaker.

Lucinda and Esteban's love story was one of those love-at-first-sight tales, deep and eternal. It was the story about the farmer's daughter who sang like an angel in the church choir, and the organist who worshipped the ground she walked on. It was about their wise and kind daughter and about the joy they spread to those around them. All this changed, though, when the accident took Lucinda's life.

A sinkhole opened without warning, and Lucinda disappeared before the very eyes of several witnesses. She was swallowed by the earth in an accident that no one other than God could possibly be responsible for.

Esteban, now alone with their seven-year-old daughter, went from being paralysed and overwhelmed with sorrow, to being enraged and furious with God who had allowed it to happen. Somewhere along the way, drugs became the only things that could soothe his pain.

The Peacemaker

A demon by the name of Hezuel was close by, and he saw his chance. He approached Esteban, whose rage and passion were so strong that he could change the lives of many people on his own. Hezuel fomented Esteban's hatred and expanded it gradually until Esteban hated not only God, but also the people who served him like puppets.

After achieving his goals, Hezuel left Esteban with a parting gift: a cursed Colt Peacemaker. Though the revolver was practically an antique, it was inscribed with infernal runes causing its bearer to never miss their mark — but it simultaneously continued to feed and reinforce the user's hatred and dark thoughts. With the revolver in his possession, Esteban prepared to loose his hatred on the people of Janos.

Drug Baron Organista

Esteban's first targets were the drug sellers who demanded ever-higher prices for his much-needed escape. Already during the first raid, Esteban knew what he would do — take over the drug business and poison Janos from the ground up.

During the past twenty years, Esteban has violently taken control over an area where there is no lack of violent drug barons. Today he lives in an enormous, walled-in hacienda on the outskirts of Janos, with his now-27-year-old daughter Mercedes.

Mercedes Truillo

Mercedes Truillo is a deeply unhappy woman who lives a life that alternates between luxury and poverty. Partly, she is her father's most valuable treasure, and as such she is lavished with luxury and surrounded by a huge security apparatus of walls and bodyguards. Partly, she is the daughter of the region's gangster, and as such she is a pariah to the majority of the good people in the town and surrounding areas.

Mercedes hates her life and hates what her father has become, but at the same time, she has not given up hope of getting back the man he once was.

Mercedes is also a woman with many talents. She is intelligent and patient, she has

crystal-clear memories of her childhood with her mother and father, and she has a burning conviction that she can save her father, since he seems to be unable to save himself. This conviction has grown since she came into contact with Father Vega.

Mercedes regularly manages to shake off her tail of bodyguards, and during one of these times, she returned to the church her parents once attended and there met Father Vega. In him, she finally saw a chance to make a change and she has decided to help him as much as she can.

Iglesia del Agua Viva and Father Vega

The church, the home of the black Madonna and the base for the parish Esteban once served, has had many difficult years since Esteban took power in the area. Esteban's feelings toward the church are well known and his violent and irrational nature has caused many people to be fearful of the church and they have distanced themselves. The church's economy has worsened in turn, and has gradually declined due to the loss of parishioners.

Despite this, the faithful core of the congregation has not let the risks prevent them from continuing to visit the church. Many of these belong to the town's poorest populations and feel they have little to lose. Time after time, the members have endured harassment from Esteban's henchmen, but they have always turned the other cheek and refused to be cowed.

But with the arrival of Father Vega in Janos, everything has changed. Father Vega has come directly from the seminary, though he is middle-aged, and few know of his previous life as a captain of the Honduran paratrooper regiment. Father Vega has turned away from his violent former life, but he is not about to be scared off at the first sign of trouble.

Father Vega has seemingly inexhaustible energy and has taken it upon himself to renovate the church and muster strength in the town's poverty and danger-stricken areas – areas where Esteban had previously ruled unopposed.

Father Vega's work in the slums has helped him to entice men and women to work in the church instead of for Esteban. He has also recently heard from an unknown benefactor who has donated large sums of money to his work.

Father Vega does not know who the secret benefactor is, but many of the townspeople interpret it as a miracle from the black Madonna.

The Black Madonna

In one of the Iglesia del Agua Viva's side chapels stands the black Madonna with her hands outstretched. The Madonna figure, made of dolorite, has stood in the church since it was first built during the early 1800s, and no one remembers who made it.

Less known is that the model for the black Madonna figure was an angel named Miriami, which would explain the statue's beauty. The statue is also blessed and miracles really do take place at her feet. Those who touch the statue can be healed if it is the true desire of their hearts.

The Dark Cloud

Father Vega's successes and popularity has gradually increased tensions in the town of Janos, and now they are about to start a great storm.

Esteban, who has little enough patience for the church as it is, has at least never before done anything directly to act against it. But now he sees how Father Vega is challenging his grip on the town more and more, and he realises something must be done. He decides to personally teach the priest a lesson. Should Father Vega prove to be difficult, there is always the peacemaker – and Esteban has killed priests before.

When the other cheek is not enough

When Father Vega is found severely beaten and in a coma, the brutal assault is the last drop from many farmers and workers, who see Vega and the church as the only real thing of value in their lives. Weary of turning the other cheek, and organised by a particularly eloquent weaver, they arm themselves in preparation for the inevitable battle.

Structure

With the general structure presented on the preceding pages – by using these characters, objects and locations – as a basis, you can construct an adventure that fits in *The Restoration of Paradise Lost*.

The players can either play angels or demons who have been sent here to influence the events, or they can play humans who get caught up in the fight and decide to help or hinder these supernatural powers. You can even let different players or groups of players play different sides of the conflict at the same time, and play them against each other.

If you really want to mess with things, you can let one of the angels be Miriami (the

model for the black Madonna) or one of the demons be Hezuel (who lured Esteban onto his path of vengeance).

The players starting point for the adventure can be placed early in the chain of events (when Father Vega arrives) or at the end (when the tiniest thing can set off a bloody war).

People affecting the situation

Several different people's actions can affect the situation in a way that can have significant impact on the outcome. These people are listed here, together with a short description of their motivations and strengths/weaknesses:

Esteban Organista

12% Halo, 88% Shadow

Esteban Organista carries the peacemaker and, after having killed more than a dozen people, he is filled with darkness. It does not take much for him to become violent and he has no fear of death whatsoever. The only thing stopping Esteban from falling completely into darkness is his love for his daughter Mercedes, which – though it often turns into an unhealthy need to control her – is real.

Esteban's greatest weakness is that every day he feels a greater emptiness in his chest, and no matter how he tries to numb that emptiness with drugs, women, and pleasures, these methods aren't working anymore. His fear is that the only thing that could fill this hole is something he long ago turned away from.

Mercedes Truillo

88% Halo, 12% Shadow

Mercedes always means well, but she has lived for too long without the change she has been seeking, and she is becoming desperate. In Father Vega, she sees her chance, and she is prepared to risk everything. She knows that her father is not damned, and that the church and the black Madonna are the answer. At the same time, however, she is her father's daughter: passionate and fragile. If her efforts lead to more than one innocent person being harmed, she may fall into despair as her father did before her.

Fader Vega

58% Halo, 42% Shadow

Fader Vega has seen an incredible amount of unnecessary violence and destruction in his day, and he has sworn an oath to leave it

behind. Nothing he has experienced since then can make him go back on this, but his power to resist is not necessarily a hundred per cent if innocents become harmed.

When it comes down to it, Father Vega is prepared to compromise in order to avoid a violent situation, but if he is provoked to betray his convictions, he is a force to be reckoned with.

Bernadita Soto

74% Halo, 26% Shadow

The unofficial leader of the congregation members who finally reached the end of their patience. The middle-aged weaver has lived a god-fearing life of hard work, but she has also watched her town transform around her. She blames Esteban for all the bad things that have happened and she has, in the end, drawn her line in the sand. Here, but no further.

Bernadita is well spoken and passionate and the other congregation members listen to her. At the same time, she desperately wishes to believe that people are basically good, and she prays through the night for a miracle to stop the bloodshed she knows she too may be a part of.

Potential Endings

The Peacemaker has several potential outcomes:

The Demons Win

The situation is manipulated so that the conflict comes to a head. Esteban and his henchmen meet the angry parishioners. People die. God-fearing folks commit deadly sins. Vega falls. Mercedes is driven over the edge and the peacemaker drinks more blood and fills Esteban with more hate. The town loses its last good powers.

The Angels Win

The conflict is avoided at the last second. Esteban meets the black Madonna and the peacemaker is laid in her outstretched hands where it immediately decays into rust. No one dies; the innocent remain innocent. A daughter gets her father back. A town regains its power for good.

The Humans Win

The people the players play achieve their goals (whatever these are), knowledge and insights about angels and demons are gathered and perhaps a heavenly or infernal object is added to the players' list of artefacts.

The Game Mechanics

ANGELS AND DEMONS AS DICE ROLLS

For those who enjoy the feeling of dice rolling across the game board, there are many ways to play *The Restoration of Paradise Lost*. The game master often has a favourite system that they apply to campaign environments without rules, but here are a few suggestions that may capture the feeling I've attempted to create.

Everything is Black & White (& Red)

My suggestions revolve around 6-sided dice in black (for demons), white (for angels) and red (for humans). Mostly in order to be able to use D666-tables (roll a die of each colour and read the result in the order white-black-red), but also because these are the dice most people have in greater numbers.

Dice Pools

In *The Restoration of Paradise Lost*, the enemy (whoever it is) is always a little more well informed and well prepared than desired. Nothing goes quite like it was planned and the doubt over whether the right action was taken is always there in the background. To simulate this, you can use dice pools where one player's skills (decided together by those playing, e.g., agility, humanity, empathy) and abilities (play harp, teleport) decide how many dice go into the pool.

A suggestion is to have 3 dice per skill as a base, that are divided in an appropriate manner determined at the start of the game. If the group chooses to play with 5 basic skills, each player begins with 15 dice to distribute. So an angel with a skill value of 6 in humanity will roll 6 white D6.

A roll of 4-5-6 is a success, and the player's roll determines how many successes a situation has. Either the game master determines beforehand how many successes are needed

for a successful implementation, or the number of successes indicates how well the situation the player is trying to implement goes. In a meeting with the enemy, the opposite skill test is rolled where the successes cancel each other out and the winner is the one who has a success at all.

Abilities can be similarly distributed. For example, one can give each player another 15 dice to distribute among 5-10 abilities. The fewer abilities, the higher the level, the more the abilities, the lower the level.

During the game, the players can improve their skills and abilities by either rolling success after success, or by succeeding with particularly critical rolls. In this way, new dice can be added to the dice pool and the values increase. But to make life a little more uncertain, something else is needed:

Enemy Dice

In every skill test (even those that are not made directly against the enemy) there is an enemy die (in the opposite colour) that corresponds to everything that can't be controlled for and that the enemy does in secret to put a stop to one's plans. This die is rolled at the same time as the others and a success on this die will cancel out one of the player's successes. The enemy also has an advantage. If the enemy rolls a 6, an extra enemy die is rolled, and so on.

Example

*The angel Isrilea tries to bluff his way into the human materials in the Vatican library. The angel turns on the charm and uses his skill **Bullshit** with a value of 3, and therefore uses three white dice. To this is added one black (or red, depending on the situation) enemy die and the whole pool of dice is rolled.*

The result for Isrilea is a success and two failed attempts, plus a success on the enemy die. The two successes (one white and one black) cancel each other out and Isrilea is shown the door.

The Doubt Pool

The doubt pool corresponds to an angel, demon or human's doubt or conviction toward their own actions, toward the side of the war they're working for, or toward the tasks they've been given to perform.

The doubt pool is placed in a closed container (such as a dice pouch) and is filled at the beginning of a campaign with one or two dice of each colour. During the game, the players or game master can, whenever they feel it is warranted (when there is a sign of doubt or conviction) add white, black or red dice to the doubt pool.

Example

The demon Shazzblat is planning to sabotage the landing gear of an airplane to potentially destroy a well-known negotiator who is on a mission. From the tarmac, Shazzblat sees a class of school children boarding the same plane and for a split second, questions his own actions. The player stops and adds a red die to the doubt pool.

If Shazzblat later, in another situation, experiences something that convinces him completely that his side is fully in the right, the player stops similarly and places a black die in the pool.

When the players roll their ability and skill tests, the game master can force them to add x uneven numbers of dice from the doubt pool to their dice pool, for even more excitement and uncertainty.

Example

The angel Isrilea has captured a demon who was trying to spy on a meeting in the lost paradise. Because no humans are in danger, and the demon shows no regret, Isrilea's orders are clear: destroy the angel who rebelled against the Creator.

The demon is Shazzblat, however, who was a close friend of Isrilea before the fall. Together, they had worked to separate the heavens from the sea during the Creation.

Isrilea hesitates, but carries out God's orders. When the player picks up the dice pool before the killing roll, the game master makes Isrilea take 5 random extra dice from the closed doubt pool.

If the angel has shown doubt many times before, the pool will now probably be filled with more black dice than white.

When an angel, demon or human returns to their base and is surrounded by their kin, the doubt pool is randomly halved.

Energy and Dice Pools

An angel or demon who has been in the field for too long, and whose energy as a result of this is beginning to wane, should have their skill and ability rolls modified accordingly. They will not be as effective as when they are in their full and glorious force.

CONCLUSION

Writing about *The Restoration* has mostly been a heavenly pleasure, and now and then a damned pain. I would like to thank my wife Maria Bergius Krämer who, as always, is there for me and makes sure I don't get too way out there.

A D666 SCENARIO SEEDS (ROLL 306)

111

A girl in KwaZulu - Natal is born with the ability to bestow peace of mind through the laying on of hands. However, she lives in a small village in Ndumo's wetlands, an area where few strangers ever venture. The girl is a gift to humanity and must be protected, but it is just a matter of time before Samael's hordes come into the picture.

112-166

In the small mining town of Oktyabrsky in the northern Urals, a coal miner unearths a fossil that causes all work in the mine to stop. A winged human figure with what is obviously a necklace of some sort has been found in layers of stone more than 250 thousand years old. The local orthodox church, led by Father Orlov - a charismatic man with ambitions - sees his chance and plans to transform the mine into a place of pilgrimage. Angels, demons, and the Enlightened learn of this before word reaches everyone else, and soon the snowy village is filled with strangers. But is the fossil even real?

211-266

Greg Vance, director of software company Assimilate has strived for control his whole life, and then ten years ago he made a deal with Makmudael, a member of Belial's Lies, helping him achieve his goal. Now he is just weeks from launching his and his company's new product, a space-optimising code that according to all calculations, will be in a majority of the world's computers within the next year or two. Makbundael just has one last addition ...

311-366

A person falls, burning, from the Chrysler building, in front of hundreds of witnesses. But when the body hits the ground, there is nothing but a few burnt remains of clothing. When the news is broadcast from every lettered news organisation in the land, the Enlightened flock to the site. Where did the body fall from, and which government agency with the acronym AO has the authority to block off the top four floors?

411-466

In a Buddhist monastery in Tibet, all the monks are found dead without any clear cause of death. The Chinese People's Army is accused first for the attack, but to everyone's surprise, the Dalai Lama steps forward and denies this accusation. He also announces that he intends to return to Tibet for the first time since 1959, no matter the risks. Meanwhile, sporadic Tibetan posts on the Chinese Twitter equivalent Weibo begin, mentioning a new power in the area: Draggio Nwangan.

511-665

An unnamed theatre in a basement locale in an industrial area on the outskirts of Paris opens their doors and the heavily masked theatre workers, clad in medical latex gloves, receive their payment in the form of a small test-tube of blood. First to arrive are the cultural elite, but soon the word spreads and before long, the shabby little theatre is filled with the policy makers and the international trendsetters. But why can no one explain what the show is about?

666

In secret, Belial and Moloch, each independently of the other, have decided to intervene in a situation in Chile. It's never possible to keep anything completely secret in the *Restoration*, however, and soon, Uriel's Eyes and Beelzebub's Machinations get word of what is about to take place. Two demonic princes at the same place on the Earth at the same time is unprecedented, and is an enormous temptation for the heavenly legions, something that Beelzebub is also familiar with. Preparations must be made quickly on both sides. Many questions remain, however: What can make two demon princes do what they're doing, and why all the secrecy?

UCHRONIAS

ORIGINAL PUBLICATION **FENIX 3/2014**TEXT **DAVID BERGVIST**ILLUSTRATION **KRISTOFFER ENGSTRÖM**

Uchronia is a fancy word for “non-existent time”, and basically means “alternate history setting”. A uchronia is a specific development, attempting to answer the age-old question “*What if X happened instead of Y?*”.

Uchronias are exciting and powerful tools for telling stories because they combine the mundane and well known with a kind of freedom that pure “true” historical settings often lack. Uchronias share our ordinary real history up to a key divergence point, at which they veer off in another direction, giving rise to a whole new world, ready to be used for stories and gaming of all kinds.

We may find ourselves in any historical epoch, be it a distant past, a parallel contemporary setting or even the future. The key to uchronias is that some event or fact happened or didn’t happen or was or was not, and that this pivotal change made history take a radically different path.

Uchronias are usually portrayed to be as “realistic” as they can be. They need to feel as believable as possible in order to be able to tickle the imagination and give us that special feeling that “This could have really happened!”. For this reason, blatant breaks with our known laws of physics are usually completely avoided in uchronias. This includes classic fantasy elements, such as rifts through space-time to other worlds, magic and aliens. Instead, any fantastical components in a classic uchronia will be explained through conventional logic and science. One notable (though not exactly common) exception to this rule is time travel, used specifically to transplant central characters to the uchronic setting from our world, thus allowing them to comment on what they experience from a maximally familiar point of view, to highlight the contrasts between timelines. This is not to say that it’s somehow wrong to mix alternate histories with fantasy elements such as alien invasions and magical catastrophes – there are even several popular roleplaying games that do exactly that (such as *Shadowrun*, *Earthdawn* and *Godlike*). They are just not true uchronias for the purposes of the definition in this article, but rather belong to the cousin genre Alternate History Fantasy.

In this article, I will present you with five short uchronias, for direct use in roleplaying campaigns, and for inspiration. I recommend you use your favorite pen-and-paper roleplaying system of choice; I am very partial to the *Fate Core system* by Evil Hat. If you haven’t tried it or heard of it I highly recommend it.

WHAT IF THE NAZIS WON THE WAR!

This is one of the most common alternate histories, and variants of this theme has been told and retold countless times in pop culture and literature.

Uchronias share our ordinary real history up to a key divergence point, at which they veer off in another direction, giving rise to a whole new world, ready to be used for stories and gaming of all kinds.

Robert Harris’ novel *Fatherland* (1992), adapted as a made-for-TV-movie in 1994 (with Rutger Hauer in the lead role), is probably the best and most complete uchronia of this kind.

Fatherland is set in an alternate 1965, 20 years after Nazi Germany won the war against Britain and the USA. All of Europe is now united in Germania, a seemingly modern and civilized society – though secretly still controlled with an iron fist and employing harsh censorship.

The TV movie (available on YouTube at the time of this writing) is mandatory watching for anyone interested in this kind of uchronia. Especially the first four minutes of the movie offers a very succinct and to-the-point walkthrough of the point of divergence in the timeline, explaining precisely how events went differently from in our world, and instantly creating a fascinating new world with a new political landscape, rife with interesting stories and dilemmas.

There are many other stories about what would have happened if Hitler won as well, sometimes combined with time travel stories, and of course the closely related “What if someone had killed Hitler?”. You have most certainly seen or read several such stories – use them to create your own take on it! Nazis and the threat of fascism never go out of style as tools for telling great stories.

WHAT IF THE BLACK DEATH HAD KILLED ALL OF EUROPE!

The novel “*The Years of Rice and Salt*”, by Kim Stanley Robinson, is probably the most ambitious uchronia I know. It tells the story of an alternate world history where the point of divergence is that the Great Plague of 1347, the pestilence named the Black Death, killed not 80% of the population – but 100%. The result is that the whole Eurocentric Western civilization is wiped from history. No western colonialism, no Italian renaissance, no British Empire, and no United States of America.

Instead, the wiped-clean Europe is slowly recolonized from the east, the Chinese “discover” the Americas from the west, the American native peoples develop their own superpower and India eventually starts off an Industrial Revolution.

This epic work takes us from the Middle Ages all the way to our present time, telling the story of more than 600 years of uchronic history. Because of the great time span, the author cheats slightly in order for us to be allowed to follow the same characters through it all, and uses a kind of reincarnation theme. In every era, the central characters have names starting with the same initial letters, and a character with a specific first letter is always an incarnation of the previous one with the same initial letter. However, the characters don’t have any specific knowledge of this, and their respective relationships shift quite a lot through the story, which leads me to label this a stylistic tool to keep the story more coherent, rather than adding a genuine fantasy element.

Roleplaying in *The Years of Rice and Salt* is of course very possible; you just need to read the book first. There are many interesting historical events worth exploring. In fact, nothing stops you from running a campaign basically using the book as a straight-up campaign guide. Featuring no less than ten historical epochs, this one could be a campaign for the ages.

As a side note, I’d like to point out that Kim Stanley Robinson also wrote the marvelous SF series called simply “*The Mars Trilogy*” (featuring *Red Mars*, *Green Mars* and *Blue Mars*). These books are technically not uchronic (but rather pure hard SF), because they don’t rely on any historical point of divergence, still they take place wholly in our future – and they feel uchronic! *The Mars Trilogy* reads very much like a documentary from the future, firmly based in real life science, probably owing to the fact that Kim Stanley Robinson used to work for NASA prior to becoming an author. Read them. They’re worth it.



WHAT IF THE KOREAN WAR HAD STARTED WORLD WAR III!

This uchronia takes place in an alternate 1960:s or 1970:s, in the smoldering ruins of what is left after World War III.

In 1951, UN joint forces commander Douglas MacArthur succeeded in pursuing president Truman to allow the use of nuclear weapons against Communist forces. Troublesome terrain limiting blast efficiency meant a go-ahead to drop 8 Hiroshima-class bombs over strategic locations in Korea, in a coordinated attack on the night of April 8, 1951.

The war was instantly won, effectively decapitating the North Korean leadership and discouraging from further military action. China immediately pulled back their forces – but the Soviet Union took it as a challenge, and declared war on the Western powers. Red nukes fell over Bonn and London. The Cold War had ended, and World War III had begun.

The war was initially going well for the US, it looked like it would end in a relatively quick victory. The US arsenal was highly advanced by this time, and devastation rained upon Soviet territory – but two years into the conflict, the Soviets had managed to develop a long distance missile armed with the most powerful nuclear device the world had yet seen. It struck Washington DC, and all but destroyed the entire city. President Truman was among the dead. Shortly thereafter, the decapitated and desperate American military delivered their answer – six nukes struck Moscow, leveling the city. After that, nukes seemed to be going off everywhere for several weeks, though no-one was exactly sure who blew up what. Then, the war was over.

The two superpowers had destroyed each other. The MAD-doctrine had run its course. Leaderless, their infrastructure in ruins, economies destroyed, and with the surviving populations deeply traumatized, both countries disintegrated, falling prey to anarchy, fear and utter poverty. Europe and large swaths of Asia were once again bombed into ruins. This time there would be neither Marshall-plan nor Comecon to help them rebuild. A lawless, post-apocalyptic era began.

Survival, retaining ones humanity and the search for stability and safety are obvious themes to explore in this uchronia. Will the player characters become warlords, rulers over road pirates and cannibals? Will they listen to the legends about the Pristine City and set out on a dangerous quest to find it? Will they find a ship and set sail for the mythical China, or Africa, or South America? Will they take it upon themselves to become shining beacons of law, order and humanity, and start to build a new civilization?

WHAT IF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION HAD STARTED IN ANCIENT GREECE!

Between 500 BCE and about 100 BCE, the Greeks developed a number of impressive inventions and machines, such as steam engines, water mills and advanced astronomical calculating devices equipped with extremely precise cogwheel mechanisms. They may even have had wallmounted electrical arc light lamps, powered by vinegar based batteries (though not scientifically confirmed).

In this uchronia, however, all of these technologies became widely spread and used to their full society-changing potential by the year 300 BCE. The divergence point was that a series of slave revolts were particularly successful, prompting the formation of a highly vocal human rights movement, and the subsequent support from several important figures in power. Suddenly, slavery was abolished in Greece, and gone was the endless supply of cheap labor! To supplant the slaves, mechanized solutions were sought, especially in agriculture, and soon a full scale industrial revolution had kicked into gear.

Equipped with a sound scientific method and newly developed navigation instruments, by the year 200 BCE a veritable armada of explorer ships leave Greece and the Mediterranean in all directions. This allows Greece to discover the world – and the World to discover the Greeks!

At the time of our Year 1, the Great Greek Council Republic owns the Mediterranean as well as the Black Sea, at a technological level similar to what our civilization reached in the 18th century, while most of the world were still in the Bronze Age. Not much can stand in the way of Greek conquest. The Empire of China is under great pressure to modernize to avoid eventually being subjugated or wiped out.

By the year 100, the Greek cultural sphere has profoundly changed every part of the globe, directly or indirectly, and the first human being lands on the Moon. Less than 100 years after that, the first Temple of Apollo is built on Mars.

This uchronia is rather speculative, with the divergence point back in antiquity, leaving a great deal of elbow room to develop it into a full roleplaying game setting. The price is of course that the familiarity level is rather low, making it a greater challenge to make it feel “real”. Instead, depending on what era you choose to focus on, it offers varying degrees of steampunk, Greek polytheistic religion, political upheaval, diplomacy in exotic countries and all manner of science fiction. All the while wearing the toga, of course!

WHAT IF THE DISCOVERY OF VINLAND LED TO THE VIKINGS COLONIZING AMERICA!

The travels of Leif Eriksson, his discovery of Vinland and his encounters with the Skraeling people had a profoundly larger impact in this uchronia.

The English King Ethelred, aided by the Grace of God (a very lucky storm), managed to defeat the decimated Viking forces of Olaf Tryggvason, who attacked England in the year 991. After hearing word of this great deed, the king won the support of several other kings on Europe, and through joint efforts they managed also to repel the invasion attempt by Sven Twobear in 1003. King Ethelred thereby won the name Danebane, and was celebrated as an invincible defender of England and of all things good and godly. The Viking raids on the British Isles were no more.

The weather changed. Scandinavia suffered a prolonged cold spell. The same cold also led to failed crops in Russia, Central Europe and even the closer Orient. The silver was scarce for those Vikings who sought employ in the Eastern lands. Times were hard for the Northerners.

However, a relatively warm and hospitable climate settled over Greenland and Iceland, and when Leif Eriksson returned with stories about the fertile and verdant Vinland in the far west, a wave of ships soon sought to repeat his journey by way of the two great isles of the Atlantic. A great migration commenced, from Scandinavia to Vinland – the lands that are known to us as America.

Equipped with horses, ships and steel weapons, the Northerners were technologically superior to the native Skraelings, the people that dominated the northern continent of Vinland, but the latter were much more numerous and knew their land well. The settlers were however relatively few and modest in their needs, and far from all encounters between the peoples ended in bloodshed. In time, less blood flowed and more trade goods were exchanged.

The prairie Skraelings acquired horses from the Northerners, and a horseback mounted hunter culture quickly developed.

Around the year 1200, the two ethnic groups had essentially merged almost completely, forming a new one. The red-skinned city-building descendants of Northerners and Skraelings now dominated North Vinland. Great cities were built on both the eastern and the western coastlines, dominated by great wooden cathedrals adorned with the Saints of Asgard and totem gargoyles.

During this time, contact was also made with the cultures of South Vinland, such as the Mayans and the Aztecs.

During the 14th century, the many small kingdoms of North Vinland started to merge, and form coalitions of faith to run the Great Crusade against the heathen lands of the South. War was constant, which led weapons technology and shipbuilding to advance quickly. In the end, the entire South Vinland was subjugated and put under the colonial rule of the North.

During the Great Crusade in Vinland, the Black Death broke out in Europe, and the plague came as far as Greenland – but did not reach Vinland. Powerful storms made the trip all but impossible along the old routes during the critical years, and when the Vinlanders finally got the news about the Great Pestilence, the Eastern Kingdoms decided on a complete quarantine. No more ships from Europe were allowed to enter Vinland harbors, and trespassers were sunk. All contact with Europe was severed, saving Vinland from the plague – but the isolation would last for more than a hundred years.

So it was that in the year of 1466, Erik Redskin and his fleet, consisting of three great gilded three-masted dragonships, equipped with cannons, suddenly appeared in the harbor of Lisbon, to everyone's great surprise – and to establish Vinland as a new great power not to be trifled with.

The central theme in this uchronia is the mixing of cultures. What kind of Christianity will you get if you mix the heavily Norse-religion-influenced White Christ-beliefs with the animism of native North Americans, and let it brew for several hundred years? What exactly does an Inka-Viking dragon warship look like?

Aside from the novelty of that meeting, this uchronia offers opportunity for much adventure in the meeting between Wild West frontier life and medieval Vikings values and views on life and honor.

WHAT IF YOU MAKE YOUR OWN UCHRONIA!

Just do it! It's educational, inspiring and interesting to write your own uchronia, and it really gives you new appreciation for historical events and the people who shaped them. *Wikipedia* is your best friend, as always.

One especially fun way to create a uchronia collaboratively is to play a game of *Microscope* – a joint storytelling role-playing game of epic histories. It deserves to be better known and more played. Head to the games' website to check it out: <http://www.lamemage.com/microscope/>



ALTERNATE HISTORY

ORIGINAL PUBLICATION
FENIX 3/2014

TEXT **PETE NASH**
ILLUSTRATION **MAGNUS FALLGREN**
MAP **ANDERS GILLBRING**

The concept of alternate history is one which provides an excellent source of material for Roleplaying Games. Take a ostensibly historical time and place, then tweak it so that a few personalities, discoveries or even core aspects of reality change. After which, imagine what precipitates out of those major events which follow. It provides a fascinating method of creating strange new worlds.

The earliest records we have of alternate history are rather mundane. The first was written by the Roman Author Livy, who wrote about an imaginative 4th Century BCE in his *Ab Urbe Condita*, wherein Alexander the Great took his armies west, instead of east. It was nothing more than a mental exercise contemplating whether it would have been Rome or Alexander who would have prevailed to create an empire, with an obvious bias in his conclusion. The first novel based on alternate history was a 15th Century romantic epic by Joanot Martorell who imagined a valiant knight called Tirant the White overthrowing the Ottomans to save Constantinople!

Since then the concept of alternate histories has been whole-heartedly adopted by science fiction, contemporary and even comedic authors, from H G Wells to Stephen Fry. Some of my favourites are books such as *The Many Coloured Land* or *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell*, with Pleistocene era aliens, psionics and Celtic myth in the former and 19th C British magicians in the latter. Despite their oddities, they are as much alternate histories as *The Man in the High Castle* by Phillip K Dick.

Perhaps the most influential work of alternate history in the early days of roleplaying games emerged from the comics scene of the late seventies. The seminal '*Adventures of Luther Arkwright*' by Bryan Talbot was a story concerning an apocalyptic battle across the multiverse between an advanced technological civilisation and the entropic Disruptors. Not only did it ram home the amazing idea of parallel universes, but also introduced readers to some wonderful alternate realities.

Indeed, the central premise of *Luther Arkwright* proposed an alternate Europe set around the late 1800's in which England is still caught in a prolonged civil war which has spanned centuries. Its parliamentary government is commanded by the syphilis riddled witch-finder general Lord Cromwell, who keeps the country repressed under his

puritanical rule, whilst the royalists are led by King Charles. Meanwhile the rest of Europe are militarising in a lead up to the First World War with steam engine driven zeppelins. This rich melange of over four centuries of British history (amongst other parallels) was what made the short series so evocative.

Since *Luther Arkwright* will be published as a forthcoming setting for *RuneQuest 6*, we shall not tarry any longer with that particular setting. Instead we will look at how to construct your own alternate realities and what their key points are. There are several different aspects that we can use as the foundation for our alternate history, which can be simplified to those of TIME, REGION and CHANGES. These are framed as a series of tables which will make the outcome both random and strange. After all, it is the oddness which makes an alternate history so much fun to play in.

WHEN DOES YOUR HISTORY DIVERGE?

The most important aspect of any alternate history is deciding when it should be set. The following table (on the next page) covers a range of time from prehistory to modern day times. Of course the prehistoric period is something of an oxymoron as we have no direct recorded history from those eras, yet we can potentially extrapolate events or happenings from human myth and archaeology. For instance a campaign based upon the Neanderthal peoples not becoming extinct, but surviving to engage the Cro-Magnons in a war for survival during the Palaeolithic.

When using the PERIOD TABLES, roll the specified dice for each column to find the particular year in which the campaign will be based. If PREHISTORIC is rolled, then ignore the CENTURY and YEAR columns, and roll on the PREHISTORY table instead.

PERIOD TABLE

Millennium

Roll 1d8	Millennium
1	Prehistoric (Roll on Prehistory table)
2	4 th Millennium BC
3	3 rd Millennium BC
4	2 nd Millennium BC
5	1 st Millennium BC
6	1 st Millennium AD
7	2 nd Millennium AD
8	3 rd Millennium AD

Century

Roll 1d10	Century
1	10 th BC/1 st AD
2	9 th BC/2 nd AD
3	8 th BC/3 rd AD
4	7 th BC/4 th AD
5	6 th BC/5 th AD
6	5 th BC/6 th AD
7	4 th BC/7 th AD
8	3 rd BC/8 th AD
9	2 nd BC/9 th AD
10	1 st BC/10 th AD

Year

Roll 1d10	Year
	As Rolled

PREHISTORY TABLE

Roll 1d4	Era
1	Pleistocene
2	Palaeolithic
3	Mesolithic
4	Neolithic

For example, a Game Master desiring to create a random alternate history begins by determining what period the game will be set in. Starting with the MILLENNIUM column a 7 is rolled, placing it in the 2nd Millenium AD. A second roll is then made on the CENTURY column, this time an 6, making it the 6th Century. Finally a percentage roll is made for the actual year resulting in a 20. Adding all these together the Game Master has a date of 1520 AD.



WHERE DOES IT OCCUR?

Next we need to know where this alternate history begins. The following table provides a list of continental regions which give a Game Master some idea of the global location it should occur. Whilst the regions cover large territories, no specific nations are included as few endure beyond a half dozen centuries, let alone a millennia, their borders constantly changing. The Game Master should first see what nations exist during the previously determined period, then select a few. They don't need to be the biggest, most advanced or even famous. Just those which peak their interest

REGION TABLE

Roll 1d20	Continental Region
1	Northern America
2	Central America
3	South America
4	Caribbean
5	Northern Europe
6	Western Europe
7	Southern Europe
8	Eastern Europe
9	Northern Africa
10	Western Africa
11	Central Africa
12	Southern Africa
13	Eastern Africa
14	Western Asia
15	Central Asia
16	Southern Asia
17	Eastern Asia
18	Southeastern Asia
19	Australasia
20	Oceania

Continuing our previous example, the Game Master takes a d20 to see in which region his alternate history will be set. He rolls a 2 – Central America. Not familiar with the region at that time, a quick check on the Internet reveals that the early 1500's the Aztecs ruled over much of Central America; so it makes sense to set the campaign in the Aztec Empire and then diverge its history from what was recorded.

WHAT HAS CHANGED?

After determining the time and place, we now need to contemplate what sort of change is necessary to make the alternate history both interesting and, more importantly, fun to play in. There are numerous areas of change which result in dramatic effects on history. For instance, what if early Viking invasions of Britain and Ireland had utterly overthrown the established Christian faith, destroying all the churches and replacing it with Norse paganism? This would mean Olaf Tryggvson might not have been baptised in Canterbury in 994, and thus Norway wouldn't be forcibly converted to Christianity. At least, not in the early 11th Century. Indeed if Norse culture had regarded Christian worship as a weakness, or worse still, a sign of unmanly behaviour, Britain, Russia and Normandy could have instead become bastions of paganism; which would have left Northern Europe as a potential target for the 1st Crusade. Interesting times! An alteration of religious faith is only one possible, albeit powerful key change. Other

aspects which have a serious knock-on effect on culture are changes in political ideology, technological breakthroughs, catastrophic natural disasters, and so on. For a very subtle alternate history setting, only one of these would be enough to make the setting a fascinating place to game in. Yet if the Game Master wanted he or she could impose several key changes that could make the affected nations almost alien in their strangeness. Roll on the CHANGE TABLE as many times as desired, then apply the change to the nation or culture you selected. Explanations of what these changes could be are investigated later in this article.

CHANGE TABLE

Roll 1d20	Key Change
1	Astronomical Event
2	Battle Outcome Reversed
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Astronomical Event

An astronomical event could be as simple as a comet providing a sign of forthcoming catastrophe, spurring a ruler or religion to change their mind concerning a matter of state – to the deadly nature of a major meteor strike on a nation at the crux of some historical event. For example what would have happened if the Tunguska strike had been delayed by five hours and struck Moscow instead?

Battle Outcome Reversed

The most simple change to make to any established history, is to merely search for a major battle and reverse its outcome. Marc Antony winning the Battle of Actium, thus propagating the centre of the Roman power to Egypt and forever changing its main focus from Europe to Asia. Many of history's most famous battles have brought about the rise of a dynasty or fall of an empire.

Climate Change

What could happen to the chosen region if it became warmer, colder, wetter or dryer? Would it cause widespread famine and migrations of people, or make the nation more bountiful, thus driving a burst of cultural development? South America has seen dozens of small empires rise and fall because of enduring weather changes, and similarly the survival of Norse settlements in the northern Atlantic.

Devastating Weapon

The development of a radical new military weapon can overthrow the power balance between nations. What would have occurred if Nazi Germany had developed the Atom Bomb first, or if the Songhai Empire of Africa had developed massed gunpowder musketeers before the European nations?

Ecological Upset

Thoughtless transfer of plants or animals can subvert or even overthrow an entire ecosystem, the arrival of mankind to Australia during the Pleistocene being a case in point. Introducing rats or toads can collapse the food chain forcing a nation to war in search of sustenance. Twisting it the other way, imagine a world where humans didn't discover the Americas until the 15th Century, leaving the entire continent up for grabs, yet still heaving with huge and deadly megafauna!

Economic Boom or Bust

Collapsing economies are precursors of war or radical social upheaval, whereas prosperity encourages the opposite. Poverty tends to drive nationalism, racism and religious intolerance as people look around themselves for others to blame. The French Revolution for instance brought about the rise of Napoleon and his expansionist wars. But what if it had been France which discovered South America and looted its stores of gold, silver and other precious substances? Would the lives of the French peasants have been bolstered by the wealth brought back to their country thus bringing enlightenment without the need for bloodshed?

Geological Disaster

Volcanic eruptions and mighty earthquakes, including their associated tsunamis, often place tremendous stress on the nations within which they occur. The explosion of Thera brought about the collapse of the Minoans, and soon after the Mycenaean city states. If the volcano had not erupted, perhaps 'Atlantis' would have spurred technology and philosophy to develop a millennium earlier and forged a pan-Mediterranean civilisation to rival that of Rome's.

Great Leader Dies or Survives

What would have happened if Stalin had prematurely died at the end of the Second World War, or Alexander the Great had not died in Babylon but had gone on to conquer India and perhaps the entire Orient, living on as a tyrant until his 70's? It may seem that generals and politicians are the most influential personages in history, but scientists or religious leaders can have even more influence.

Invaluable Resource Discovered

The discovery of valuable resources and the rush to exploit them have driven much of human history. Precious metals and hydrocarbons have formulated many invasions, even in modern times, but the lack of a resource is not necessarily the only aspect which can be exploited. Britain once overthrew an entire nation by capitalising on Opium and creating a drug culture which could only be satisfied via their near monopoly.

Invasion by Neighbours

Although this can be caused by innumerable reasons, an invasion is often catastrophic to a region. Even if the invasion is not military in

nature, population displacement can bring famine as local food supplies are overstretched, revolutionise society with newly introduced ideas, cause religious tension as different faiths mingle, or simple population surplus lead to apartheid or slavery.

New Philosophy

A new philosophy can have religious, political or ethical effects. If a national leader suddenly changes religion or decides to introduce a new justice system, it can radically change the course of history. Beneficial examples ostensibly include women's suffrage, secular government, and social welfare. Negative effects might occur such as the right to use those convicted of capital crimes as human guinea pigs, or enforced social castes.

Outside Intervention

An outside intervention is pretty self explanatory. Usually this will be a large state or empire coming to the aid (or seek to take advantage of) a smaller nation, although the unforeseen efforts of a tiny region, association or religion can occur too. Alternate history does not necessarily need to constrain itself to mundane realism however. Intervention from a parallel plane of existence or aliens from another galaxy is just as permissible.

Plagues and Immunities

Disease often has a dramatic effect on world history, the spread of smallpox devastating the population of the Americas for instance, or European armies laid low by Malaria or Yellow Fever. However, this change need not always be one of susceptibility. Imagine the world in 1895 if the Martians of H. G. Wells did in fact invade, but this time they were inoculated against microbial infections... or more prosaically, if the native American Indians had complete immunity against smallpox.

Political Ideology

The advent or fall of political ideologies has often shaped human history. Communism, and Fascism, Republics and Democracies, each time they have been introduced or allowed to grow corrupt the cultural effects have been profound. An alternate history might change what actually happened by preventing the ideology to occur in the first place or by changing it entirely. Where might China be today if its last emperor had not abdicated in 1912, contributing to its military factionalism when it attempted to become a republic?

Religious Persecution

Religious persecution often seems to occur, not only when two culturally different faiths come into contact with one another, but also when a faith suffers an internal schism. Whether driven by the passions of its believers, or cynically utilised by its priesthood as a political tool to garner power, religious persecution can force population exodus, genocide or civil war. However not all persecution is so harsh, some societies allowing pursuit of other faiths at the cost of becoming a second class citizen or paying higher taxes.

Rulers Overthrown

The ruler of a nation, creed or organised religion can be overthrown for a multitude of reasons from war to failing to uphold the tenets of their beliefs. How the ruler is overthrown, and whether they survive to return are vital to consider. If William the Conqueror had failed to defeat the rebellions following his victory at the Battle of Hastings, he could have been deposed, opening the throne of England to one of the surviving Anglo-Saxon earls or Danish invaders.

Scientific Breakthrough

New scientific developments change cause radical social, economic or military change. Cures for disease allow population growth, whilst the advent of steam and water power brought about the Industrial Revolution and all the ills and benefits of subsequent urbanisation. Not all scientific breakthroughs are necessarily advantageous, as Weapons of Mass Destruction or today's inescapable surveillance state now show, but always incur a major cultural and political effect. Neither does the breakthrough need to be technologically advanced, as a mere copper axe can be a radical development during the Palaeolithic.

Technological Crash

Although there are few major technological crashes evidenced in history, they have happened. The ancient classical world was able to achieve the construction of sophisticated clockwork astronomical computers and prototype steam motivation prior to the fall of their respective civilisations. The more modern the period however, the greater the sociological disaster which accompanies such a collapse. Something like a large scale Coronal Mass Ejection hitting the earth, a limited nuclear war, or uncontrolled spread of a highly lethal disease would have radical effects on the world of the last century.

Unexpected Alliance

An unexpected alliance can produce economic or socio-political stability for a region, or conversely cause friction of those threatened or jealous by such a union. Whilst a strong union might deter financial or political meddling by others, it could also provoke direct attack if considered too threatening. Other examples could include erstwhile enemy nations suddenly switching sides to ensure their own survival.

THE JOYS OF AN ARMCHAIR HISTORIAN!

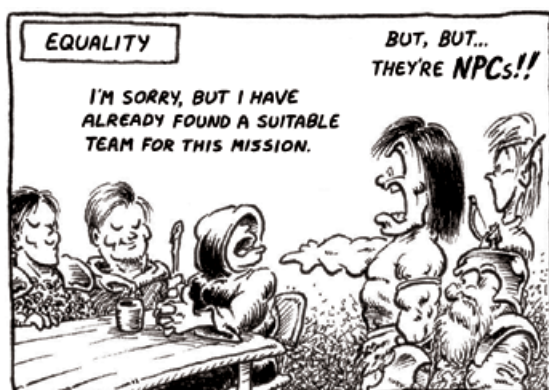
The idea behind all of these tables is to aid in creating unique alternate histories, and not just another tedious 'What if the Nazis won WWII' scenario. Whilst the tables provide a much needed randomisation element to the design, users must understand that it is just a framework and that the Game Master must still perform a small degree of research to flesh it out. Hopefully it will encourage those who truly enjoy random generation to find new places and periods of history they have hitherto never known about.

For the third step of our example, the Game Master decides to roll three times on the *CHANGE TABLE* and gets a 2, 17 and 18. These equate to *BATTLE OUTCOME REVERSED*, *RULERS OVERTHROWN* and *SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGH*. Considering the campaign will be focussed upon 1520 in the Aztec Empire, the Game Master uses the *BATTLE OUTCOME REVERSED* to change the battle in Tenochtitlan (*The Night of Sorrows*) so that not only does Moctezuma survive, but he hunts down the fleeing Hernán Cortés, his conquistadors and their native allies, slaying them almost to a man.

As this is the foundation point of the alternative history, the Game Master extrapolates that Moctezuma pursues the handful of ragtag survivors back to Tlaxcala, which is destroyed in retribution for aiding Cortés. The incensed Aztecs then continue to the coast, burning every Spaniard and every village hosting them - incidentally preserving them from the Smallpox outbreak which would have occurred - until they discover the conquistador's ships. The Game Master then applies the *SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGH* change, concluding that Moctezuma captures the vessels intact and has his finest engineers dismantle one of them to learn its secrets.

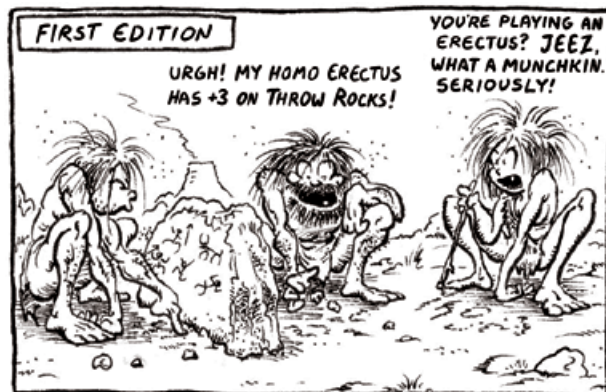
Now masters of ocean sailing ships, the formula for gunpowder and maps of the known world, Moctezuma soon realises that unless he acts swiftly and decisively, more conquistadors will arrive on his shores fomenting unrest and pillaging his lands for gold. Thus the Game Master applies the third change, that of *RULERS OVERTHROWN*, so that Moctezuma consolidates the entirety of Mexico under his newly captured cannon, enrolls the craftsmen of his empire to manufacture an armada, and launches an invasion of a hundred thousand warriors to conquer Spain and overthrow King Charles V.

Thus the campaign starts several years later with Portugal and parts of eastern France and Spain under the ruthless control of musket armed Aztec Jaguar and Eagle knights...



COMMENTS IN COMICS

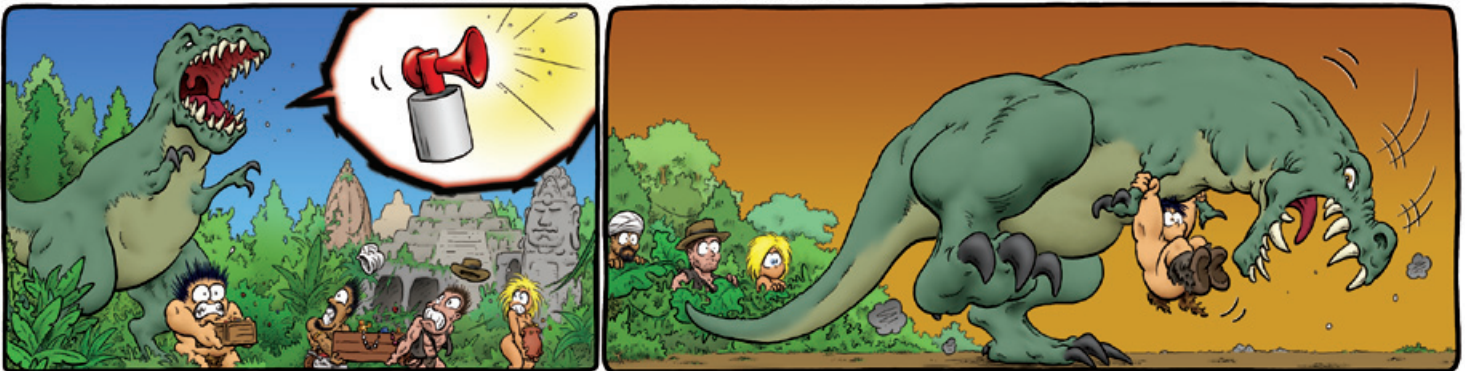
By Åke Rosenius



BERNARD THE BARBARIAN SPYING



BERNARD THE BARBARIAN HANGING AROUND



BERNARD THE BARBARIAN SPREADING RUMORS



X-FILES ENCOUNTER GLADIATOR

ROMA

UMBRARUM

ROME OF SHADOWS

TEXT **ANDERS BLIXT**
ILLUSTRATION **ÅKE ROSENIUS**

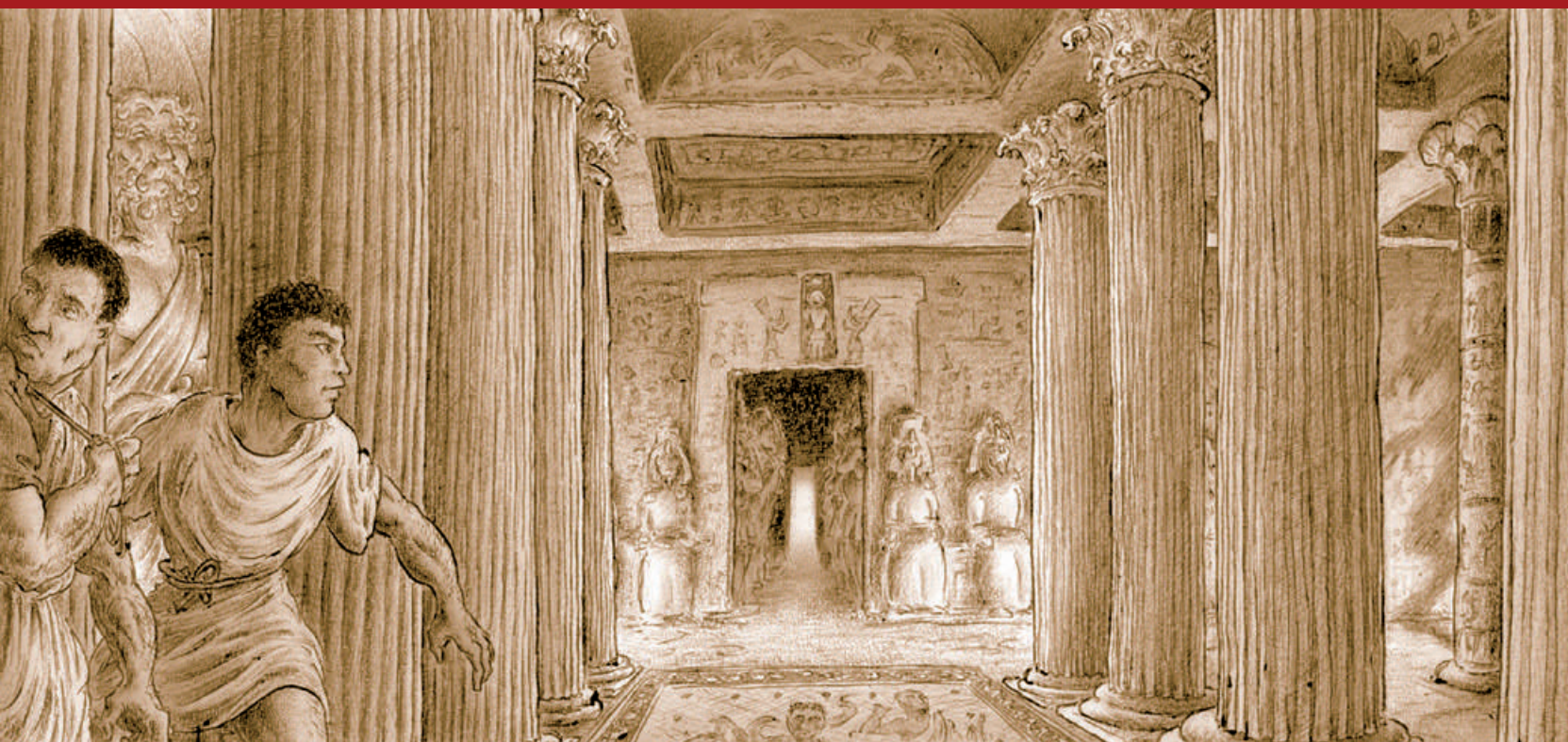
Rome of the Classical Era occupies a particular place in the modern popular culture, being the location for numerous movies, novels and adventures. But so far this Rome has found little use among role-players enjoying fantastic campaigns. Attempts to “transport” old-style RPG fantasy to the Classical world usually ends up in Xenaverse, an environment inspired by *Homer’s Odyssey* with dangerous wilderness quests, monsters, gods, witches and heroes in the lands of the eastern Mediterranean. Jason’s adventures on the ship Argo and the TV series about Xena and Gabrielle provide launching points for the gamemaster.

The Roman Empire, on the other hand, is a well-ordered urban environment with modern features like bureaucracy, gangsters and bustling streets. *GURPS Imperial Rome* provides a solid foundation for historical campaigns, but its fantasy suggestions are bland and of little use.

I have therefore come to think that fantasy inspired by *The X Files* – with darkness, conspiracies and demons raging inside people – is more appropriate. The insight has given birth to the game world of this article: *Roma Umbrarum* (“Rome of Shadows”), a horrifying campaign in the city of Rome in 63 AD, i.e. during the reign of the infamous Emperor Nero.

Why during Nero’s rule? After all, Rome’s history encompasses a more than a millennium from its mythical foundation in 753 BC to the demise of the Western Empire in the 5th century AD. The period that is most well-documented by contemporary sources runs from Julius Caesar around 50 BC to Trajan around AD 100 and it is those years that most modern readers associate with Rome. Nero, emperor from AD 54 to 68, is a familiar figure, notorious for depravity, cruelty, and misrule and for the accusation of having caused a devastating fire in the city in AD 64. His reign provides a dramatic and turbulent setting for adventures. (Actually, it is hard to know which accusations are true. Nero’s reign was described after his death by some authors, like Suetonius, that were loyal to aristocrats opposed to the emperors’ political arrangements.)

ORIGINAL PUBLICATION **FENIX 2/2004**



ROMAN ADVENTURERS

Senior government officials, even the emperor himself, occasionally appointed special investigatory commissions charged with handling specific problems. That is an excellent prop for summoning a team of characters. Such a commission could have a heterogeneous composition, with an aristocrat at the helm and a range of specialists as members. If they need muscle, a few gladiators or pancratiasts (see the section on martial arts) would be recruited. Women could also be present as spies or go-betweens, because they can enter places prohibited to men.

One interesting aspect of the Roman Empire is that it contains a lot of professions that are familiar to a modern reader, such as:

Athletes

There were professionals in several sports, for instance charioteers, runners, javelin-throwers, wrestlers, pugilists (boxers) and pancratiasts. Gladiators were also a kind of athletes, but they lived and worked under peculiar circumstances.

Bureaucrats

The empire was run by reasonably well-organized officials who were paid cash salaries.

Engineers

These craftsmen built roads, bridges, temples, sewers, aqueducts etc so well that many of them still remain standing 2000 years later.

Fixers ♀

A person doing shady non-violent jobs.

Military men

All soldiers and officers are employed by the emperor and are expected to be loyal to him, at least as long as they get paid.

Private Investigators ♀

Yes, such people are needed in a city with a million inhabitants. The city guards, vigilantes, are of little help for criminal investigations.

Secret agents ♀

The emperors employ officers known as agentes in rebus and who work more or less like modern spies.

♀ This profession is open to women.
♀ Rome is a place with limited opportunities for women.

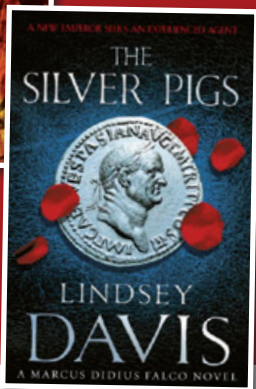
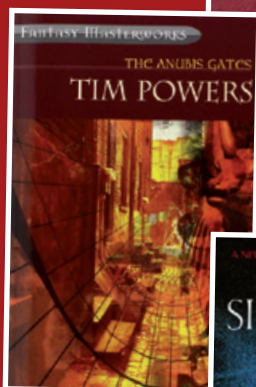
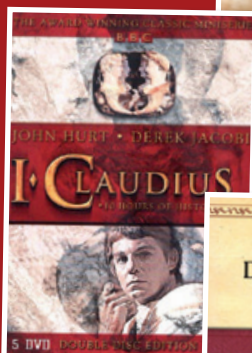
ROMAN MARTIAL ARTS

Adventurous characters have plenty of opportunity for learning unarmed combat. People don't walk around armed inside the city walls.

- **Wrestling**
An honorable sport, also practiced by aristocrats.
- **Pugilism**
Roman boxing.
- **Pancration** (all-fighting)
The vicious Greek no-holds barred art is appropriate mostly for hoodlums. It permits almost all kinds of strikes, grips and kicks.
- **Clubs**
Can be improvised from almost any object, from a pouch full of Denarii to a common walking stick.

BEHIND THE SHADOW [SPOILER ALERT]

A *Roma Umbrarum* campaign ought to have a master story arc that dominates most of the episodes plus various free-standing subplots that will mystify and confuse the gamers. This section provides a summery that must be expanded by the gamemaster in the style of *The X Files* - "*The Truth Is in There*" - according to his needs and wishes.



SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

This article contains little information on Rome itself, because every library contains a few shelf-feet of books on the subject (Wikipedia is also a good source). This box merely lists a few suggested books and films that will put you in the right mood for a *Roma Umbrarum* campaign.

RPGs

GURPS Imperial Rome Second Edition is chock full of gaming-related information on politics, everyday life, slavery, gladiators, legionnaires, etc.

Movies

Spartacus (but gladiators were allowed to leave the compound in spare hours); *Ben-Hur* (however, the Romans did not have galley slaves); and Ridley Scott's *Gladiator*. The British TV series *I, Claudius* deals with the emperors from Augustus to Nero.

Roman fiction

Around 60 AD Petronius wrote *Satyricon* about the life of a vulgar carouser; the book is hard to digest, but it says a lot about everyday life. One generation later, Suetonius wrote *De Vita Caesarum*, biographies of the first dozen emperors, including plenty of spicy gossip.

Modern fiction

Robert Graves's novel *I, Claudius* inspired the above-mentioned TV series. Lindsey Davis's many books of the private investigator Falco, e.g. *The Silver Pigs*, takes place around 70 AD. Tim Powers's fantasy novel *The Anubis Gates* is unrelated to Rome, but its plot is surprisingly suitable for *Roma Umbrarum*.

Game Engines

This article is not associated with any particular set of rules. The gamemaster must select whichever he prefers and adapt it to the campaign's needs. Several flexible common systems will do fine, such as:

- *D20*
- *GURPS*
- *BRP/Call of Cthulhu*
- *D6 System*

The *D20 Modern Core Rules* book contains discussions on how to play horror/fantasy on an urban environment. Some of those ideas are suitable for the Roman metropolis

The Master Plot

The plot is simple: a conspiracy of powerful Egyptian priests desires to reestablish Egypt's independence and power. They want to cause civil war and chaos in Rome, so that they can evict the Roman interlopers from the Nile valley and put an indigenous pharaoh on the throne.

One scheme is to substitute the emperor with a homunculus (a "magical clone") that will realize their plans. Their first attempt was by replacing Caligula. However, it was a failure – the homunculus became so insane that it was slain prematurely by a brave Roman officer.

During the reign of Emperor Claudius, the magicians made a new and better homunculus that infiltrated the court as Claudius's stepson Nero. By poisoning Claudius, the homunculus gained the imperial throne, but now it is showing signs of increasing mental instability. Whether it will succeed in doing its masters' will by devastating all of Rome by fire remains to be seen.

The Egyptian conspirators have developed a communication system based on mirrors: The Mirror World. It is not an independent universe, but rather something like a magical tumor or parasite dimension attached to our world and dependent on it. The Mirror World looks like the inside of an immense building. Locations that possess a mirror connection are positioned around its edge, appearing as reflected copies of the original rooms. The further into the Mirror World one gets, the more the rooms start to resemble somber Egyptian temples, though of course with all decorations reversed. The illumination is solely by torches or lanterns, so the lighting is always gloomy. The interior contains strange dangers straight out of Egyptian nightmares, like bloodthirsty monsters and devious traps.

Some of these magical mirrors are present in many Roman buildings, introduced during Caligula's days; and in certain temples in the Nile valley since time immemorial. Egyptian high-quality mirrors are expensive and therefore a desirable mark of the owner's wealth and status. Most are small, often merely 18 by 18 inches and mounted in frames of gold or silver. However, Nero has a "huge" 5 by 2 foot mirror in his private sleeping quarters. One activates the mirror's magical function by pressing a copper ankh against its surface, thereby turning it into a permeable interface between reality and the Mirror World. The permeability remains until the ankh is removed.

Recently a gang of Egyptian thieves in Rome have found out how the Mirror World functions and begun to use it to steal valuables from the homes of influential people. Thus far they have carried out their activities without the conspirators' knowledge and do not understand what dangers lurk deep inside the Mirror World.

How the homunculi were made in the dark catacombs under the Egyptians temples? Do you really want to know? Watch the movies *The Mummy* or *Scorpion King* for inspiration. You can also get some good ideas from Tim Powers's *The Anubis Gates*.

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS GET MOVING

The basic premise of the campaign is that the player characters form an investigatory commission charged with solving the mysterious thefts. Their commission is established by the commander of the city guard or some other senior civil servant at a level somewhat below the emperor, who is unaware of its creation. A single player character (presumably of aristocratic rank) is granted free rein to recruit whatever specialists they deem necessary to handle the task. This arrangement gives great leeway to the players when creating their PCs.

Just like agents Mulder and Sculley, the PCs should encounter problems caused by the byzantine intrigues of the complex Roman civil administration. Some senators are powerful enough to pursue their own goals in secret. The emperor and other powerful people have placed clandestine informers in important offices so that they can keep tabs on real or potential adversaries. Trust no one to be safe. A sinister gamemaster will assign such tasks in secret to one or several PCs to strengthen the paranoia within the team. Make sure that the players feel that they are entering hazardous territory, that by pursuing the investigation they will make powerful foes.

The PCs should also gradually come to see the truth, that the empire is ruled by a maniac and their city will perish in chaos unless they overcome the conspirators. The metaphor of peeling an onion is a good representation of how the campaign should develop. The outermost layer is dealing with the thieves; the next one is finding out what the Mirror World is like; the third layer will be uncovering the Egyptian priests' plot; the innermost one will be saving Rome from devastation. The gamemaster must not shirk away from altering history here. Preventing the city-wide fire in AD 64 from happening and toppling Nero "prematurely" is perfectly reasonable if that turns out to be the logical consequence of the PCs' brilliant actions.

The gamemaster should vary what obstacles and dangers the PCs find to make it harder for the players to get the whole picture. Their adversaries will have different capabilities and goals, and therefore use different methods to deter, deceive or eliminate the PCs. The PCs may also find unexpected allies,

because of other sharp-witted people who also see that the empire is in danger.

Also, keep in mind that the Mirror World may – at the gamemaster's discretion – have other mirror exits into the real world: in Egyptian temple catacombs, in the Roman governor's palace in Syrian metropolis of Antioch, in the royal palace in the Parthian capital Ctesiphon, and so on. Whoever masters the parasite dimensions secrets will have a way of travelling rapidly across vast distances.

THE ROLE OF MAGIC

Most Romans believe in magic, but they consider sorcery to be a weak and unreliable force – sometimes it works, sometimes not. Therefore the gamemaster must put restrictions on how skilled any character can be in the arcane arts. Also, Roman magicians do not cast spells of direct elemental power or make +1 swords. Instead, Roman magic mainly deals with:

Oracles

Oracles predict the future by various means. The augurs inspect the intestines of sacrificial animals. The haruspices interpret signs in the nature, for instance how birds fly across the sky (such omens are of great importance in the common Romans' superstitions and well-educated people, too, believe in them). Astrology has been imported from Mesopotamia. The gamemaster should use fortune-telling as a tool to provide the player with accurate or misleading clues that guide them forward in the adventures.

Alchemists

Alchemists brew elixirs, that for instance can speed up the healing of injuries or temporarily enhance a person's physical or mental prowess, like strength or endurance. When the alchemist brews an elixir, the gamemaster will make a hidden skill check to see whether the potion functions properly when imbibed.

Artisans

Artisans make amulets imbued with magical powers of protection. Such individuals are rare and they only make single-purpose objects that for instance enhance or ward off dangers from fire or avert curses.

MOOD-SETTING FACTS

Classical Rome was a rough place, quite unlike the portrait of a sophisticated mother of our civilization that is common in popular culture. Consider for instance that...

- ... about one quarter on the city's residents are slaves. However, it is forbidden to give them distinctive clothes or marks, because such would make them realize their true number. (The huge slave revolts in 135 BC, 104 BC and 73 BC have made the Roman aristocrats wary of this potential threat.)
- ... politicians rather behave like Mafiosi than like statesmen. Violence and deceit are acceptable political tools.
- ... the male head of a household (*pater familias*) has unrestricted right to punish his own children physically, even to sell them as slaves.
- ... the laws provide milder penalties for *honestiores* ("well-to-do people") than for *humiliores* ("simple people"). Flogging is an acceptable way of keeping your underlings in line. Torture is routine during criminal investigations. Executions are cruel on purpose.
- ... the society is based on fawning for those above you and being harsh on those below you. Every morning, a commoner (*cliens*) is supposed to visit his noble benefactor (*patronus*) and humor him in return for favors.
- ... mercy is no virtue, but seen rather as a weakness.
- ... the Romans are convinced of their inherent superiority and recognize only the Greeks as near-equals. (This is a cultural prejudice, not a racial or an ethnic one. Foreigners can become Roman by fully adopting the Roman way of life.) The Greeks do not return the favor, because they know that when they defeated the Persians at Salamis in 480 BC, Rome was merely a village.
- ... the many marble statues and buildings are painted in garish colors.
- ... many notable Romans rather speak Greek than Latin.
- ... the city of Rome has residents from all over of the known world, for instance black Africans, Berbers (from North Africa), Germanics, Greeks, Egyptians, Illyrians (from the Balkans), and Jews.
- ... many Germanic prisoners of war rather commit suicide than participate in arena games. They consider the concept too cruel and too disgraceful.
- ... most Romans rarely wear the toga, because it is very impractical.
- ... most townspeople live in *insulae*, apartment houses with 3-4 storeys. They are crowded, unhygienic and prone to fires. The inhabitants usually cannot cook at home, so they buy "fast food" from streets vendors, including dishes that resemble hamburgers and pizza.
- ... it is forbidden to wear armor and bear military weaponry inside the city walls. Even the emperor's bodyguard is lightly armed. Gladiators going outside their compounds must be completely unarmed (however, that restriction matters little to these lethal men).

Witches

Witches curse people. Such a curse will strike the afflicted person with bad luck, represented by a small negative modification on his skills or by the gamemaster putting unfortunate events in their path.

SUBPLOTS

Red herrings are false leads that the game-master tosses in the PCs' way. Rome is a lively place that contains more between heaven and earth than any human can imagine. Here are a few suggestions:

A Germanic Werewolf hunting the alleys of Rome

A Germanic barbarian with werewolf powers is hunting in the alleys of Rome at night. This suggestion may be realized as a splatter/stalker adventure modeled on Jack the Ripper's crimes.

The False Savior

Lykos, a charismatic Greek cult leader, is establishing himself in Rome. Under the sign of the wolf he is gathering large numbers of fanatic followers that are attracted by his message of courage, purity and superiority. He is a demagogue with a supernatural ability to influence crowds. Soon Lykos will pose a threat to the ruling elite, but maybe he is secretly allied to some powerful people for mutual gain?

Scapegoats

Rome's Christian minority is falsely accused of witchcraft and cannibalism. This subplot contains no supernatural events, merely superstitious and hateful Romans who place the blame for their ills and failing livelihoods on a group of undesirable innocent people. The Christians belong to low social strata and are frequently despised by more prominent citizens for their monotheism.

Cloaca Maxima

Rome possesses the greatest sewer system in the world and who knows what lurks inside it? Evil cults? Twisted magical monsters summoned by ancient sorcerers? The worst horrors are those you don't know about, that slay when you look away. Torch-lit expeditions into the stinking sewers are dreadful. Also, there are plenty of urban legends of escaped pet crocodiles and pythons prowling the tubes and tunnels in search of prey.

BERNARD THE BARBARIAN CELEBRATES



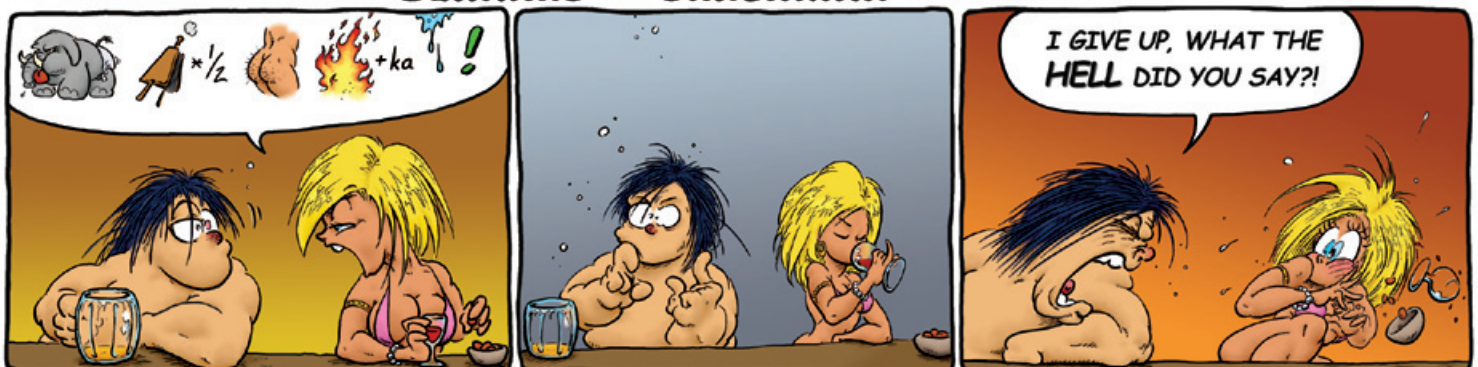
BERNARD THE BARBARIAN OF WARCRAFT



BERNARD THE BARBARIAN AND THE MATTER OF SIZE



BERNARD THE BARBARIAN IN CONVERSATION



SODOM & GOMORRAH

MASTERMIND MEETS BATTLESHIP IN THIS COMPLETE BOARDGAME

TEXT **CHRISTOFFER KRÄMER**
& THE GAME DEVELOPERS AT
GIGANTOSKOP
ILLUSTRATION **OLA LARSSON**
& **DANIEL FALCK**

And the Lord said, "Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know."

And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the Lord. And Abraham drew near, and said, "Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

And the Lord said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes."

And Abraham answered and said, "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five?"

And He said, "If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it."

And Abraham spake unto him yet again, and said, "Peradventure there shall be forty found there."

And He said, "I will not do it for forty's sake."

And Abraham said unto him, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there."

And He said, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there."

And Abraham said, "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there."

And the Lord said, "I will not destroy it for twenty's sake."

And Abraham said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there."

And He said, "I will not destroy it for ten's sake."

And the Lord went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.





A puzzling boardgame from Gigantoskop, with game titles such *Spank the Monkey*, *Kablamo!* and *Genesis* on their repertoire.

Those who ever read the *Bible* will have no doubt that the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were known to be full of abominations. Ancient Jewish texts show that the maliciousness of the residents of these cities came in many different varieties: above all, a lack of hospitality and an unwillingness to help the weak and vulnerable.

The *Bible* and more recent interpretations of these texts have focused almost solely on the citizens' sexual sinfulness. In the passage on the previous page, we see how Abraham takes great care in his conversation with God, in his attempt to subdue the Lord's anger toward the cities, and in the end, he manages to haggle the Lord down to the following: If the Lord's angels find ten righteous people in Sodom, the cities will be spared. This is the starting point for the game *Sodom and Gomorrah: The 10 Righteous*.

BASIC PREMISE

There are in fact 10 righteous people in Sodom and Gomorrah, and these people are placed somewhere in the city's 25 houses. The two angels are searching for the 10 righteous people, but have a limited amount of time to find them. If they manage to find the 10 righteous people through a systematic search in the time they're given, they can fulfil God's promise and spare the cities. But if they fail, the cities must be destroyed.

The game is therefore a hunt for the player(s) in the role of the angels to find the 10 righteous people in order to spare the cities.

INTRODUCTION

Now that that necessarily bombastic introduction completed, we can relax somewhat and declare that *Sodom & Gomorrah* is a simple and logical puzzle for two or more players. It's a sort of *Mastermind* meets *Battleship* that is easy to play in a club, on a bus, or even on a romantic first date. With a few minor tweaks, it can go from a just-for-fun puzzle game to a heated contest between several players.

CAVEAT

No cities or players are to be harmed during the playing of *Sodom and Gomorrah*, and Gigantoskop has no opinions regarding whom you choose to love. Respect and love for all!

COMPONENTS

Sodom & Gomorrah consists of:

- Rules
- A Game Board
- A Worksheet

You will need (not included in this book):

- Two Game Tokens (any items of your choice, e.g., coins, stones, erasers, bottle caps, etc.)
- Pencils (or pens, for the daring).

GENERAL PREPARATIONS

- Copy the game board and a number of worksheets from this volume of *Best of Fenix* (or use the gameprops inserted in the hardback version or print from the pdf-file).
- Find two suitable angel game tokens and some writing implements.
- Select the game master and the angels. (It is possible for several people to play angels simultaneously, or alternately the players can be both game leader and angel at the same time. More about this later.)

GAME MASTER PREPARATIONS

The game master should take a worksheet and, in secret, determine in which of the 25 square buildings the 10 righteous people of Sodom live. Up to three righteous people can live in the same building. This means that the game master can select as few as four houses (three houses with three righteous people each, and one house with one) or as many as ten houses (one righteous person in each of these). This worksheet is now the answer sheet, and will be used by the game master to check the answers of the angels in their attempt to find the 10 righteous people in Sodom.

ANGEL PREPARATIONS

The angels prepare themselves by remembering that patience is a virtue (which may be needed in the oh-so-sinful Gomorrah) and rub their little grey angelic brain cells together as a warm-up for the challenge to come. ►

SODOM & GOMORRAH



ONE ROUND

A round of the game consists of two phases:

- Placement of angels
- Feedback from the game master.

PLACEMENT OF ANGELS

The angel players now take their two angel game tokens and place them on the desired streets that go between the houses of Sodom. The city can be divided up into different fields depending on how the angels are placed. The angels can be placed so that one is on the vertical edge of the city, and one on the horizontal, or that both angels are either on the vertical or horizontal edge. See the following examples for further explanation:

Example 1

Here we have one angel token placed on the city's vertical edge and one on the city's horizontal edge. With this setup, the selected streets cross and the city is divided into four clear fields.

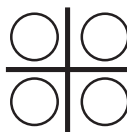
Example 2

Here we have both angel tokens placed on the city's vertical edge. With this setup, the selected streets are parallel and the city is divided into three columns.

Example 3

Here, both angel tokens are placed on the city's horizontal edge. With this setup, the selected streets are also parallel and the city is divided into three rows.

EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2



EXAMPLE 3



FEEDBACK FROM THE GAME MASTER

When the angel players place their tokens on the game board, the game master will check this against the actual positions of the 10 righteous people on his/her answer sheet and then provide feedback. First, the game master sets out the angels' positions on the answer sheet and then fills in the number of righteous people in each field of the city. Note that the game master does not give away which houses the righteous are in – only the number in each particular field.

EXAMPLE GAME

On this page you can find the game master's answer sheet, showing where the righteous people are actually placed. Beneath that, we see the worksheet the game master has filled in for the angel player. Angel player Uriel has placed his angel tokens horizontally and vertically, and divided Sodom into 4 fields. The angels are marked on the worksheet with simple lines. Because of Uriel's angel placement, field A consists of only one house, field B of four houses, C of four other houses, and D of the remaining 16 houses. The game master uses the answer key in the shape of a cross and enters a 2 in field A, 0 in field B, 3 in field C, and 5 in field D.

Once finished, the game master returns the worksheet to the angel player. Uriel now knows with certainty where two of the ten righteous people live, and can ignore four other houses completely. S/he now knows that three of the righteous people are somewhere in the four houses to the left of the line, and another five righteous people in the remaining houses. Now Uriel must move his angels to a new position in order to determine exactly where the remaining eight righteous people live.

GAME END

The game is over when an angel player has identified exactly where the 10 righteous people live. The fewer rounds needed, the better. Alternatively, if ten rounds have passed without the angels having identified exactly where the 10 righteous people are, they must destroy the city and all ends in misery.

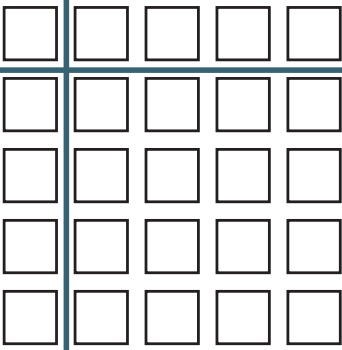

VARIATIONS ON THE GAME

Sodom & Gomorrah is suited for many different variations and it is simple to change the premises a bit in order to modify the game according to your taste. For example, you can change the allowed number of righteous people per house, or set limits on how many times the angels can select the various placements. It's a good idea to play the game a time or two, and if you are captivated by it, you can tweak it a bit. We do have a couple of variations worth mentioning, however:

- **Multiple angel players:** In this variation, angel players compete against each other. The game master places the righteous, just as in the original version, the angel players then take turns placing their angel tokens on the game board, and finally the game master provides private feedback to each player. Alternatively, you can abandon the game board completely, and all angel players hand their worksheets in to the game master at the same time. The player to first find the houses with the 10 righteous people wins.
- **Duel:** In this variation, both players are both game master and angel player. This is the *Battleship* version, where both players hide their 10 righteous people and both players simultaneously try to figure out where their opponent has hid them.

ANSWER SHEET

2				
				1
1		1		
			3	
2				



FEEDBACK

2	0
3	5



BOARD GAME

SODOM & GOMORRAH

ROUND 1

○	○	○
○	○	○
○	○	○

ROUND 6

○	○	○
○	○	○
○	○	○

ROUND 2

○	○	○
○	○	○
○	○	○

ROUND 7

○	○	○
○	○	○
○	○	○

ROUND 3

○	○	○
○	○	○
○	○	○

ROUND 8

○	○	○
○	○	○
○	○	○

ROUND 4

○	○	○
○	○	○
○	○	○

ROUND 9

○	○	○
○	○	○
○	○	○

ROUND 5

○	○	○
○	○	○
○	○	○

ROUND 10

○	○	○
○	○	○
○	○	○

SODOM & GOMORRAH



SODOM & GOMORRAH

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BEST OF FENIX – VOLUME 3

Best of Fenix includes some of the best gaming material from the Swedish gaming magazine *Fenix* – translated to English. In *Best of Fenix* you will find inspiring material written directly for *Fenix*' readers by renown international game designers such as Kenneth Hite and Pete Nash, but also some of the best from the Swedish arena. To top it off, we got our own comic strip *Bernard the Barbarian*, created by Åke Rosenius and at least one stand alone game in every issue. Steampunk and space travel are two of the main ingredients in this volume. Another is angels and demons and the havoc they can create here on earth.



ARTICLES IN THIS VOLUME

- Angels and Ministers of Space
- Leviathan
Baroque Escapades in the Belly of the Beast
- Ichneumon - A Parasite Steampunk RPG
- AI: Automatic Intelligence
- RunePunk SteamQuest
- The man You're Looking At
A Who's Who of Steampunk Spycraft
- Un-made men – Anarchy Through the Steam
- Historical & Fantasy Spies in RuneQuest
- The Restoration of Paradise Lost
- Djinn – Sprits Between Heaven and Hell
- Uchronias
- Alternate History (RuneQuest)
- Roma Umbrarum – Rome of Shadows
- Elementary, my dear ... A Café Game
- Sodom & Gomorrah
Mastermind meets Battleship in this boardgame
- Bernard the Barbarian



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