



MONGOOSE PUBLISHING PRESENTS



# Signs & Portents

# 26

## Roleplayer

### Hyborian Field Guide

The vicious Man-Ape is covered in this series' debut article!

### The Red Credit Crew

A complete Babylon 5 criminal syndicate!

### Ice Station Zebra 24

Carnage awaits Starship Troopers players in this thrilling adventure!

Plus... New 'Masters of Deceit' Prestige Classes, the Return of the Gamers' Symposium, The Psyker's Guide to Brit-Cit and lots, lots more!

S&P Roleplayer 26

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Hello there!

Welcome to the first edition of the new look, cyber-enhanced, online *Signs & Portents Roleplayer*! Mongoose Publishing have gradually been increasing their miniatures lines (I expect you've noticed the increased page count they've been getting) until Critical Mass was reached, allowing *Signs & Portents* magazine to split into two separate components – *Signs & Portents Roleplaying* and *Signs & Portents Wargamer*! The *Roleplayer* magazine will cover all of Mongoose's roleplaying lines (obviously) as well as including most of the regulars such as 'Tales from Mongoose Hall', 'Inside the Chainmail Bra' and 'Jonny Nexus' while the *Wargamer* magazine will cover the miniature games lines, with articles covering everything from new and improved rules, miniature painting, scenery building as well as assimilating the Battle Reports and Design & Conquer. We'll be retaining the old numbering system, so this is Issue 26 of *Signs & Portents Roleplayer*.

As both magazines now have dedicated pages, there should be a lot more space to include a much wider scope of games every issue. This allows for the return of old favourites like 'Gaming Symposium' (there's some truly epic articles in the pipeline for that!) as well as allowing us to cover the older games in greater detail – fans of the likes of **Slaine**, **Judge Dredd** and **Armageddon 2089** need fret no longer. Of course, we'll still be covering the likes of **Babylon 5** and **Conan** – in fact, I can almost guarantee that there'll be articles for these two games in every issue. Plus, there's a massive **Lone Wolf** article beginning next issue...

Of course, we still need people to write articles, so keep those submissions coming in! I'll see you at the editorial for *Signs & Portents Wargamer*!

**Matt**

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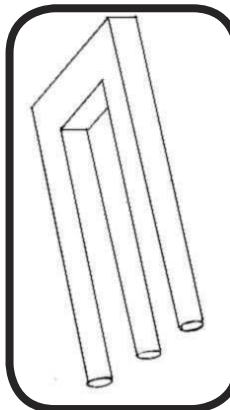
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I found this 'Pin A' in my flatpack furniture kit. I must now find 'Slot A', into which 'Pin A' connects. 'Slot A' is probably a black hole or somesuch. I hate flatpack furniture.

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# Signs & Portents Roleplayer

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#### 16 A FIELD GUIDE TO THE CREATURES OF THE HYBORIAN AGE

The first part of a massive field guide to the creatures that inhabit Conan's Hyboria, this article takes an extremely detailed look at the vicious, degenerate beings known as Man-Apes, carnivorous fiends that haunt the jungles and mountains of Hyboria.

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In a welcome return for Gaming Symposium, we take a look at one of the questions that has bedevilled roleplayers since the dawn of creation (well, the late nineteen seventies) – how to deal with a character when his player can't make it to this week's session...

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#### 47 THE RED CREDIT CREW

The Babylon 5 station holds a wide diversity of beings from all over the cosmos. Presidents and emperors can be spotted alongside the lowliest lurker. The Downbelow section of the station holds a surprising diversity of criminal elements along with the detritus of society. The infamous Red Credit Crew is a syndicate formed from this collection of dregs...

### Features

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This month's scenario is our first article for the new *Starship Troopers Roleplaying Game*. A squad of Mobile Infantry are given the seemingly simple task of checking in at a base - but find that the bugs got there first...



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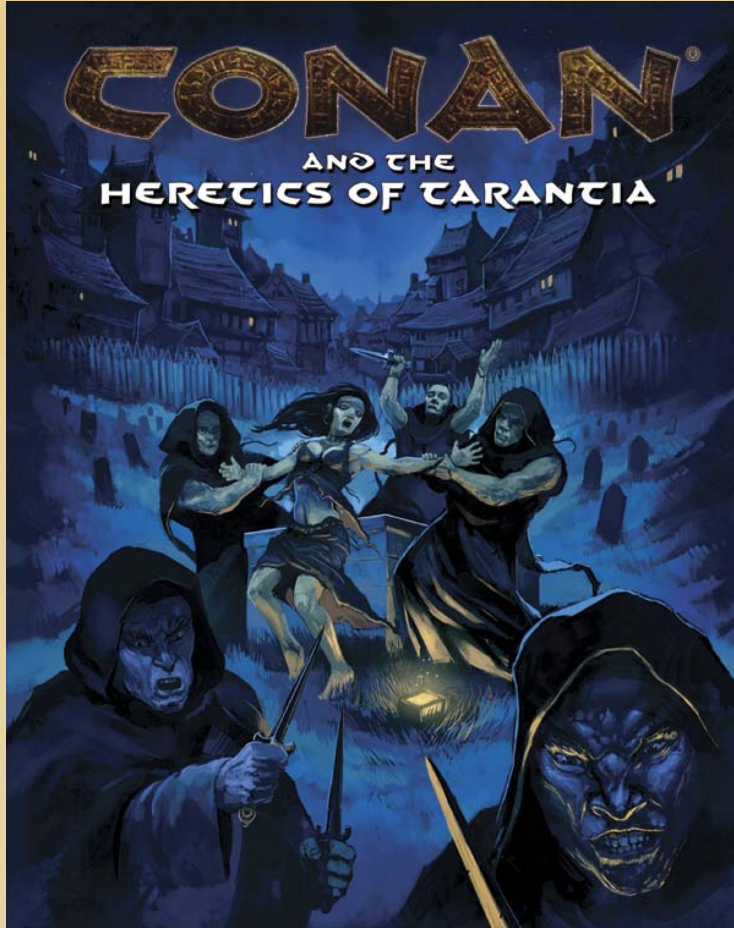
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# EYE ON MONGOOSE

*New Releases This Month*



**IF THEY ARE BLACK MAGICIANS, HE HAD SAID, HOW WILL THEY SUFFER YOU TO HARRY THEM? IF THEY ARE NOT, THERE IS NO EVIL IN THEM. CROM'S DEVILS! LET MEN WORSHIP WHAT GODS THEY WILL!**

*Robert E. Howard, The Hour of the Dragon*

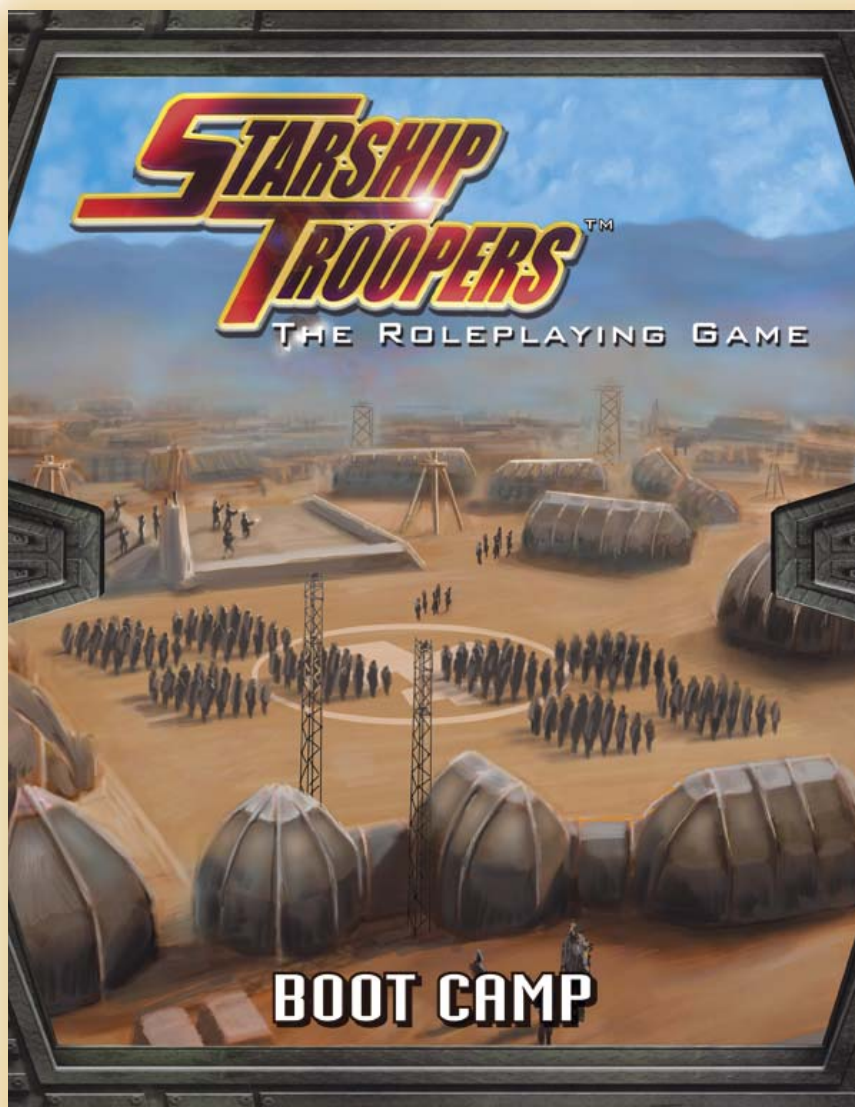
Heretics of Tarantia is a Conan Roleplaying Game scenario of a different breed. Rather than hunting through a plague-ridden jungle in search of a city so old it has been forgotten by history - and would best stay that way, or tracking a corrupt sorcerer to his demon-haunted lair, bringing him to bay and slaying him to prove the might of metal over magic, Heretics of Tarantia is a story of intrigue, backstabbing, politicking and murder in that most princely of cities, Tarantia, capital of Aquilonia, the Flower of the West.

A foully murdered priest of Mitra sets the Player Characters upon a course of investigation and adventure, searching for the culprit in a quest that takes them from the greatest halls of the city to the lowest dregs. At first glance, the answer seems clear, but as the Player Characters uncover more and more information, they will learn that not all is as it seems, and that they have stumbled upon an intricate plot that could very well spell doom for Tarantia, even for Aquilonia itself.

Strong sword arms are needed here, certainly, but Player Characters who are to succeed must recognise there are times a carefully laid plan, or a few questions asked of the right person, can be stronger allies than a thousand blades. The time for bloody work will come at the end of the scenario, but to get there, the Player Characters must rely on cleverness, guile and intellect.

Heretics of Tarantia is intended for a group of four to six Player Characters of approximately 5th to 7th level, though since much of it relies on the Player Characters' problem-solving abilities, it can easily be adjusted to accommodate groups of higher or lower character levels.





*'You are Troopers when I say you are Troopers. Not one moment before. And until I believe you fit to carry on that fine tradition, you are nothing. Less than nothing.'*

*'I will break you and mangle you and grind you beneath my boots. You will beg to be released. You will beg for death - for anything that might save you from me. And I will let you go. Because I don't want you here. No one does. You think you have what it takes. We are about to find out.'*

*'Welcome to Boot Camp.'*

Congratulations on joining the Mobile Infantry, the backbone of the Federation military. Starship Troopers: Boot Camp will teach you everything you need to know about being part of this elite fighting force. You will learn how to fight, how to think, and how to survive. You will learn to use power suits, Morita rifles and other tools. You will learn how to stare Death in the eye and laugh.

Starship Troopers: Boot Camp details the process of becoming Mobile Infantry. It covers every step from recruitment through the first mission. It offers players a chance to see exactly what their characters go through, leading to a better grasp of their characters' training and personal history: How characters become recruits; the training itself and the boot camp where training takes place; the postgraduate placement when they have escalated from recruit to private; and finally, their introductory mission. Whether you are a player or the Games Master, this book will tell you how the Mobile Infantry are created from lesser men and what rites of passage they must endure to gain that ultimate privilege - citizenship.





***Are you being served? The 128-page PARANOIA supplement 'Service, Service!' enlivens your game with detailed depictions of the eight sprawling service groups in Alpha Complex. Actually, 'enlivens' is the wrong word for these stultifying bureaucracies -- how about 'complicates' or even 'utterly disarranges'?***

'Service, Service!' gives you new service firms, interesting personnel to torment players, new 'mandates' duties to make service groups more important and EIGHT Classic-style missions, one for each group. Send your Troubleshooters into a Power Services generator facility that accidentally duplicates them. Have them teach sensitivity therapy to hardened Vulture Warriors. Make them train their own mechanical replacements, R&D's advanced 'Troublebots'. Along the way they'll try to appease surly vending machines, protect a rock star from his not-so-loving fans and learn, at long last, exactly how many Troubleshooters it takes to change a lightbulb.

For all your service group needs (or at least the ones we feel like providing right now), take a number, fill out all appropriate forms in sextuplicate and, when you're called this October, buy 'Service, Service!'

# Masters of Deceit

## Four New Prestige Classes for All D20 Fantasy Game Settings

*There are many professions in the world. Some of them we consider noble, some we are indifferent to, and others we look down upon. There are those we believe are shameful or beneath our station, and others that we admire or are in awe of. Some professions we frown upon while others make us raise a curious or suspicious eyebrow. Some we envy, some we loath, and some we fear. Such is the case for the men and women who consider themselves masters of deceit.*

— Morthendar the Wise

Although most lawful government would never admit it, bandits, con artists, rogues, swindlers, thieves, ruffians and thugs play an essential role in their respective societies. Whether they are treated as a nuisance or a blessing, the people who specialise in these shady professions are usually well received among adventuring parties. Individuals who excel in stealth, who know how to disarm a deadly trap, or pick a complicated lock are well paid for their services - especially among ruddy would-be heroes who travel the world in search of adventures, riches and glory.

Among these individuals are those who became experts at deceiving people in combat, who mastered the deed of burglary, who learned to manipulate the shadows around them or who turned the act of deceiving people into a complex and lucrative art form.

Presented here are four new prestige classes whose members deserve to be called *masters of deceit*.



## Deathblade

Deathblade is the name of an ancient fighting style developed by members of an influential thieves' guild. Centuries ago, the grand guild master of this organisation joined forces with a small covenant of banished monks in order to add a little muscle into the guild's ranks. These ex-monks taught the elite members of the guild the complicated art form that later became known as the deathblade fighting style.

The deathblade martial art relies heavily on cunning, stealth and deceit, and it is said that only the most agile and intelligent individuals can truly master it. The basis of this art is founded on constant and fluid movements as well as on a number of sharp manoeuvres designed to trick opponents in battle. These moves, combined with a lethal accuracy with the dagger, give an edge to the deathblade fighting style specialist engaged in melee combat.

A deathblade is a master at wielding a dagger and using it to maximum effect. Although this style is rarely practiced anymore, the ancient martial art is highly regarded among those who know of such things. It is said that some monasteries adopted a

**RICHARD FARRESE**

version of this fighting style - which includes the use of the kama rather than the dagger - but it is in ancient and prestigious thieves guilds that this martial art is most likely to be found.

**Hit Die:** d6

## Requirements

To qualify to become a deathblade, a character must fulfil all the following criteria:

**Base Attack Bonus:** +5

**Feats:** Dodge, Expertise and either Weapon Finesse or Weapon Focus (dagger).

**Skills:** Jump 4 ranks, Perform 4 ranks, Sense Motive 4 ranks and Tumble 8 ranks.

**Special:** The character must study under a deathblade master of at least 5<sup>th</sup> level in order to learn the intricate fighting style. Alternately, he may join a thieves' guild in which this prestige class plays an important role and gain an understanding of the style from a number of members who already know its secrets (one among them must be a deathblade of at least 2<sup>nd</sup> level).

## Class Skills

The deathblade's class skill (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Perform (Cha), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spot (Wis) and Tumble (Dex).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 4 + Int modifier



## Class Features

All the following are class features of the deathblade prestige class.

### Weapons and Armour Proficiency:

A deathblade is proficient with all simple weapons as well as in the use of all light melee martial weapons. The character is also trained in the use of light armour, but may never use a shield while using any of his deathblade fighting style special abilities. Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket and Tumble.

### Deathblade Stance (Ex):

When wielding a dagger in one hand and nothing in the other, or when holding a dagger in each hand, the deathblade gains a dodge bonus to AC equal to his Intelligence modifier (if positive). If a deathblade is caught flat-footed or otherwise denied his Dexterity bonus, he also loses this bonus.

### Deathblade Style (Ex):

Starting at 2<sup>nd</sup> level, the deathblade becomes so efficient with the dagger that he gains a +1 competence bonus to his damage rolls while using such a weapon. At 4<sup>th</sup> level and every two levels thereafter (6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> level), the deathblade gains an additional +1 competence bonus to damage rolls made with a dagger. This bonus stacks with any other modifiers the character may have, including those from the Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (dagger) and Weapon Specialisation (dagger) feats.

**Evasion (Ex):** A 2<sup>nd</sup> level deathblade also gains the evasion extraordinary ability if he does not already have it. If exposed to any effect that normally allows him to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage (such as a *fireball* spell), he takes no damage

with a successful saving throw. If he already has the evasion ability, he gains a +2 insight bonus to all Reflex saving throws instead.

**Deathblade Feign (Ex):** At 3<sup>rd</sup> level, the deathblade becomes so accustomed to trick people in battle that he gains the extraordinary ability to deceive his opponents during combat. He may use the full attack action to feign a deadly manoeuvre which forces an opponent in melee to compromise his defences. When he does, the target must succeed at a



Reflex save (DC 10 + deathblade's level + deathblade's Dexterity modifier) or lose his Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) as well as any dodge bonuses he may have. For the remainder of the round, the deathblade may strike the targeted opponent (with the normal number of attacks normally allowed to him) and treat these attacks as if his opponent were flatfooted. The deathblade may use this ability once per day at 3<sup>rd</sup> level, twice at 6<sup>th</sup> and three times every day at 9<sup>th</sup> level.

**Sneak Attack (Dagger) (Ex):** Also at 3<sup>rd</sup> level, while fighting with a dagger, the deathblade gains the extraordinary ability to sneak attack opponents. This ability works like the rogue class ability of the same name (as presented in *Core Rulebook I*) and stacks with any other sneak attack bonuses the character may already possess. However, the deathblade must use a dagger in order to benefit from this ability. At 3<sup>rd</sup> level, the additional damage provided by the sneak attack is +1d6 and another +1d6 is added every two levels thereafter (5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> level).

**Uncanny Dodge (Ex):** From 4<sup>th</sup> level and onward, the deathblade gains the extraordinary ability to react to danger before his senses would normally allow him to do so. He retains his Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) regardless of being caught flatfooted or struck by an invisible attacker.

At 9<sup>th</sup> level, the deathblade can react to opponents on opposite sides of him as easily as he can react to a single attacker: he can no longer be flanked. This defence denies other character to use the sneak attack ability against him.

**Conceal Blade (Su):** At 5<sup>th</sup> level, the deathblade gains the supernatural ability to conceal one dagger in each of his hands. As soon as the deathblade uses this ability, the daggers are automatically hidden from view, as if they had turned invisible. He can use this ability even while he is being observed. Furthermore, as long as the weapons remain hidden, it is impossible to discern their location by any means, whether from a spell, a *crystal ball*, or other forms of scrying, as though they were under the effect of an *obscure object* spell. While concealed, the deathblade may not use his hands to perform tasks requiring precise manual dexterity, such as opening locks, picking pockets or writing.



## The Deathblade

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+2	+0	Deathblade Stance
2	+1	+0	+3	+0	Deathblade Style +1, Evasion
3	+2	+1	+3	+1	Deathblade Feign 1/day, Sneak Attack (Dagger) +1d6
4	+3	+1	+4	+1	Deathblade Style +2, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC)
5	+3	+1	+4	+1	Conceal Blade, Sneak Attack (Dagger) +2d6
6	+4	+2	+5	+2	Deathblade Feign 2/day, Deathblade Style +3
7	+5	+2	+5	+2	Sneak Attack (Dagger) +3d6
8	+6	+2	+6	+2	Deathblade Quick Strike, Deathblade Style +4
9	+6	+3	+6	+3	Deathblade Feign 3/day, Sneak Attack (Dagger) +4d6, Uncanny Dodge (Cannot be flanked)
10	+7	+3	+7	+3	Deathblade Smite, Deathblade Style +5

As a free action, the deathblade can reveal the concealed blades and immediately use them in battle. This ability is especially useful when the deathblade wants to surprise his foe.

**Deathblade Quick Strike (Ex):** An 8<sup>th</sup> level deathblade may surprise an opponent with a quicker-than-the-eye melee attack. This attack is a free action and may be made at anytime the deathblade wishes. It can even be used during a surprise round after the deathblade has been made aware of danger, allowing him to counter strike immediately. Regardless of when this ability is used, the deathblade's strike is so fast that its target is considered flatfooted and he may not react to the attack. If the deathblade quick strike provokes attacks of opportunity from any of the deathblade's opponents, the attacks of opportunity are lost.

The deathblade uses his full attack bonus for this attack. This extraordinary ability is usable a number of times per day equalling one plus the deathblade's Intelligence modifier (if positive).

**Deathblade Smite (Su):** Once per day, a deathblade of 10<sup>th</sup> level may attempt to smite an opponent with a normal melee attack. When using

this ability, the deathblade gains a +20 insight bonus to his damage roll. The deathblade smite is a supernatural ability.

## Master Burglar

A master burglar excels at breaking and entering as well as at locating valuables. He is also an expert at disarming traps and avoiding their sometimes deadly effects, which makes him the perfect candidate to steal from a nobleman's vault, make his way through the thieves' guild trapped maze, or survive fatal hazards found in ancient dungeons.

Although all master burglars have different goals, agendas and personalities, they unanimously take great pride in the successful, famous and sometimes legendary thefts they commit. They might not readily reveal their identities to others or openly admit they are guilty of a specific crime, but those in the profession who learn about their deeds are usually greatly impressed by them. It is even said that some thieves' guilds and other powerful organisations - sometimes even the governing faction of a nation - hire master burglars to steal specific items

from their enemies, sometimes to foil their plans or render them less powerful, but most often to shame them.

For a master burglar, wealth is essential - especially the accumulation of it through well planned and executed burglaries. Most, however, consider how they acquired a treasure more important than how valuable such a treasure actually is. The challenge of robbing a fortified vault in the depths of the dungeon maze under the king's castle is more enticing than the rewards that can actually be found therein.

**Hit Die:** d6

### Requirements

To qualify to become a master burglar, a character must fulfil all the following criteria:

**Alignment:** Any non lawful.

**Base Attack Bonus:** +4

**Feats:** Alertness.

**Skills:** Appraise 8 ranks, Disable Device 8 ranks, Open Lock 8 ranks, Spot 8 ranks and Search 8 ranks.



## Class Skills

The master burglar's class skill (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Disable Device (Int), Disguise (Cha), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Search (Int), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spot (Wis), Tumble (Dex) and Use Rope (Dex).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 6 + Int modifier

## Class Features

All the following are class features of the master burglar prestige class.

### Weapons and Armour

**Proficiency:** A master burglar is proficient with all simple weapons and in the use of the rapier, sap, shortbow and short sword. The character is also trained in the use of light armour. Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Hide, Move Silently, Sleight of Hand and Tumble.

**Burglar Instinct (Ex):** When he takes on this prestige class, the master burglar's instincts are so honed that he gains a +3 competence bonus to any one of the following skills: Appraise, Disable Device, Hide, Move Silently, Open Lock, Sleight of Hand, Spot and Search. At 3<sup>rd</sup> level and every two levels thereafter (5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> level) he gains a +3 competence bonus to any other skill from this list. He may only select each skill once.

**Trapfinding (Ex):** Also at 1<sup>st</sup> level, the master burglar gains the trapfinding extraordinary ability, as presented in *Core Rulebook I*. If he already has the trapfinding ability, he gains a +4 competence bonus to any Search check made to locate a trap instead.

**Evasion (Ex):** At 2<sup>nd</sup> level, the master burglar gains the evasion ability if he does not already have it. If exposed to any effect that normally allows him to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage (such as a *fireball* spell), he takes no damage with a successful saving throw. If he already has this extraordinary ability, he gains a +2 dodge bonus to any Reflex save made in combination with evasion.

**Sense Secret Door (Su):** When he attains 2<sup>nd</sup> level, a master burglar's senses sharpen. When he merely passes within 5 feet of a secret or concealed door, he is entitled a Search check to notice it, as if he were actively looking for it.



**Locate Valuables (Su):** This ability, gained at 3<sup>rd</sup> level, functions as the *locate object* spell but only works for valuable items, such as money, gems, artefacts and other treasures. The character can use this supernatural ability once per day for every three master burglar levels he has attained (once at 3<sup>rd</sup> level, twice at 6<sup>th</sup> level and three times at 9<sup>th</sup>).

**Sense Trap (Ex):** At 4<sup>th</sup> level, the master burglar gains the extraordinary ability to sense traps. By merely passing within 5 feet of a trap, the master burglar is entitled a Search check to notice it as if he were actively looking for it.

**Improved Evasion (Ex):** At 5<sup>th</sup> level, the master burglar gains the improved evasion ability. He now takes only half damage on a failed Reflex saving throw against spells (such as *fireball*). If he already has this extraordinary ability, he gains an additional +2 dodge bonus to any Reflex save made in combination with evasion.

**Evade Trap (Ex):** At 6<sup>th</sup> level, the master burglar's understanding of traps is so attuned that he may add his Intelligence modifier (if positive) plus half his master burglar's level to all saving throws made to avoid the effect of a trap. This is an extraordinary ability.

**Treasure Lore (Su):** Once per week, the 8<sup>th</sup> level master burglar may gain automatic knowledge on information that might help him locate, identify or uncover long lost treasures, deadly traps or forgotten secret doors. This is a supernatural ability that functions as the *legend lore* spell, with the exception that the knowledge gained must be related to finding a valuable treasure or gaining knowledge concerning either a lethal trap protecting it or discovering the secret entrance or passageway leading to it. The treasure in question may be anything from a pile of coins in a noble's hidden vault in the middle of a busy city to an ancient magical artefact lost for generations uncounted deep in the wilderness.



## The Master Burglar

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	0	+2	0	Burglar Instinct, Trapfinding
2	+1	0	+3	0	Evasion, Sense Secret Door
3	+2	+1	+3	+1	Burglar Instinct, Locate Valuables 1/day
4	+3	+1	+4	+1	Sense Trap
5	+3	+1	+4	+1	Burglar Instinct, Improved Evasion
6	+4	+2	+5	+2	Evade Trap, Locate Valuables 2/day
7	+5	+2	+5	+2	Burglar Instinct
8	+6	+2	+6	+2	Treasure Lore
9	+6	+3	+6	+3	Burglar Instinct, Locate Valuables 3/day
10	+7	+3	+7	+3	Shady Deal

**Shady Deal (Su):** When a master burglar reaches 10<sup>th</sup> level, his knowledge, reputation, and skills have become so remarkable that, once per day, he may benefit from a +20 insight bonus on any one check that relates to dealing with others (such as trading or gathering information) or evaluating valuables of any kind. This bonus may be applied to the following skills, when appropriate: Appraise, Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Intimidation and Sense Motive.



## Servant of the Shadow

A servant of the shadow is an elite member of a special clerical order within the church of specific evil deities. The church in question must be of a god that has darkness, death or evil in its folio. Typically, these gods offer their clerics two or more of the following domains: Chaos, Death, Evil and Trickery. It is up to the Games Master to determine which evil deity (or deities) in his campaign setting has servants of the shadow among its worshippers. A servant of the shadow is an intimidating master of stealth who manipulates the darkness around him. He is often called to serve his church as an assassin, spy or special bodyguard for head priests and other high-ranking dignitaries.

**Hit Die:** d8

### Requirements

To qualify to become a servant of the shadow, a character must fulfil all the following criteria:

**Alignment:** Any evil.

**Base Attack Bonus:** +5

**Feats:** Blind-Fight.

**Skills:** Hide 10 ranks and Move Silently 10 ranks.

**Special:** To become part of the order of the servants of the shadow, a character must perform a service to his church. Typically, the character is sent upon a special quest that furthers the power of the church, the will of his deity, or both. Such missions may include the assassination of an ardent and influential opponent of the god the character is serving (such as a high priest who worships the deity's sacred enemy or a important lord who opposes the religion), the recovery of a long lost item that the clergy could use to further the deity's cause, or any other quest that would align with the god's ambitions.

### Class Skills

The servant of the shadow's class skill (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Disable Device (Int), Disguise (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Search (Int), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spot (Wis), Tumble (Dex) and Use Magic Device (Cha).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 4 + Int modifier





## Class Features

All the following are class features of the servant of the shadow prestige class.

### Weapons and Armour Proficiency:

A servant of the shadow is proficient with all simple weapons and in the use of the hand crossbow, net, sap, scimitar, shuriken, shortbow and short sword. Additionally, the servant of the shadow gains automatic proficiency in the favoured weapon of his deity. The character gains no new armour or shield proficiency. Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Hide, Move Silently, Sleight of Hand and Tumble.

**Spells per Day:** For every level a servant of the shadow attains, he gains the ability to cast a small number of divine spells per day, as shown in the table below. His spellcasting ability is based on Wisdom, so casting any given spell requires a Wisdom score of at least 10 + the spell's level. A servant of the shadow's bonus spells per day are based on Wisdom. When casting servant of the shadow spells, the character's caster level is equal to his servant of the shadow level. The Difficulty Class for saving throws against the servant of the shadow's spells is 10 + the spell's level + the character's Wisdom modifier.

Like a cleric, a servant of the shadow can prepare one domain spell at each spell level in addition to his regular allotment. When he becomes a servant of the shadow, the character must choose two domains from the following three: Death, Evil and Trickery. Thus, he has access to two domain spells at each spell level and may prepare one or the other each day in his domain spell slot. A servant of the shadow must spend one hour each night in quiet contemplation or supplication in honour of his deity to gain his daily allotment of spells.

### Servant of the shadow Spell List:

1<sup>st</sup> - *bane, cause fear, divine favour, inflict light wounds, magic weapon, pass without trace, protection from good*; 2<sup>nd</sup> - *bear's endurance, bull's strength, cat's grace, darkness, inflict moderate wounds, invisibility, scare*; 3<sup>rd</sup> - *blindness/deafness, deeper darkness, haste, helping hand, inflict serious wounds, keen edge, speak with dead*; 4<sup>th</sup> - *divine power, greater invisibility, greater magic weapon, inflict critical wounds, poison*.

**Hide in Plain Sight (Su):** A servant of the shadow can use the Hide skill even while being observed as long as he is within 10 feet of some sort of shadow. When he is, he can hide from view without the need of actually hiding behind anything. Hide in plain sight is a supernatural ability.

**Shadowy Aura (Su):** Starting at 2<sup>nd</sup> level, a servant of the shadow can manipulate his own shadow as well as the illumination immediately surrounding his body. This is an unconscious ability that is always in effect. Although those around him cannot perceive the servant of the shadow's supernatural aura, they can certainly feel it. While using the Hide and Intimidate skills, the character may add half his servant of

the shadow's level (round down) to his check.

**Darkvision (Su):** At 3<sup>rd</sup> level, the servant of the shadow gains the supernatural ability to see in the dark as if he were permanently under the effect of a *darkvision* spell.

**Intimidating Aura (Su):** When attaining 4<sup>th</sup> level, the servant of the shadow's ability to manipulate his shadowy aura is so honed that his mere presence can unnerve living creatures within a 30-foot radius of him. He may trigger this ability at anytime as a move action, once per day at 4<sup>th</sup> level, twice each day at 7<sup>th</sup> level and three times every day at 10<sup>th</sup> level.

When activated, every living creature within the intimidating aura's range must succeed at a Will saving throw (DC 10 + servant of the shadow's level + character's Charisma modifier) or become unnerved. Unnerved creatures suffer a -2 morale penalty to their attack rolls as well as a -4 morale penalty to all saving throws against enchantment and fear spells and effects. Intimidating aura is a supernatural ability.

**Bonus Feat:** The servant of the shadow continues to hone his fighting skills as he gains experience in this prestige class. At 5<sup>th</sup> level, he gains one bonus feat. This extra feat must be chosen among the lists of feats available to fighters, as explained in *Core Rulebook I*. The servant of the shadow must also meet all the prerequisites for the feat in order to take it.

**Shadow Meld (Sp):** At 6<sup>th</sup> level, the servant of the shadow can literally meld into shadows. This spell-like ability, which can be used once per day, functions as the *meld into stone* spell, but the servant must meld into a shadowy surface. This ability lasts for 10 minutes per servant of the shadow level or until the character steps out of the shadow or it disappears (through either normal or magical means).



## The Servant of the Shadow

-- Spells per Day --

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
1	+0	0	+2	0	Hide in Plain Sight	0+1	—	—	—
2	+1	0	+3	0	Shadowy Aura	1+1	—	—	—
3	+2	+1	+3	+1	Darkvision	1+1	0+1	—	—
4	+3	+1	+4	+1	Intimidating Aura 1/day	1+1	1+1	—	—
5	+3	+1	+4	+1	Bonus Feat	1+1	1+1	0+1	—
6	+4	+2	+5	+2	Shadow Meld	1+1	1+1	1+1	—
7	+5	+2	+5	+2	Intimidating Aura 2/day	2+1	1+1	1+1	0+1
8	+6	+2	+6	+2	Shadow Blend	2+1	1+1	1+1	1+1
9	+6	+3	+6	+3	Enhanced Darkvision	2+1	2+1	1+1	1+1
10	+7	+3	+7	+3	Intimidating Aura 3/day, Shadow Walk	2+1	2+1	2+1	1+1

**Shadow Blend (Su):** Upon reaching 8<sup>th</sup> level, the servant's ability to control shadow is so great that during any condition other than full daylight, he can disappear into shadows, giving him total concealment. This supernatural ability can be used once per day and lasts for a number of minutes equal to his servant of the shadow class level. Artificial illumination, even from a *light* or *continual flame* spell, does not negate this ability, but a *daylight* spell does.

**Enhanced Darkvision (Su):** At 9<sup>th</sup> level, the servant of the shadow's *darkvision* ability allows him to see up to 30 feet in magical darkness, just as if it was natural darkness. This supernatural ability is always in effect.

**Shadow Walk (Sp):** This ability, gained at 10<sup>th</sup> level, functions as the *tree stride* spell with the exception that the servant must walk into a shadow and then step out of another shadow some distance away. This spell-like ability may be used a number of times per day equalling one plus the character's Wisdom modifier.



## Master Trickster

The master trickster is a charismatic swindler, a conniving charmer, a convincing salesman, a cunning prestidigitator and a deceitful thief. Although he is master of none of the tricks hidden under his hat, this jack-of-all-trades is a resourceful individual whose quick thinking, natural charms and relentless ambition drive him to greatness. Sometimes called 'silver tongue' or 'minor prestidigitator' the master trickster is an expert deceiver who relies on a number of special abilities as well as his aptitude with low-level enchantment and illusion magic to achieve his goal.

Like most rogues, each master trickster has his own agenda, but most are motivated by a need to acquire wealth - whether it comes from their own greed, their religious beliefs, the need to feed friends or family, or because they enjoy robbing from the rich and giving to the poor. One thing these deceitful characters have in common, however, is that they enjoy tricking and provoking people. Whether they use their charms to trade a useless piece of junk for a potent artefact or they infuriate an enemy into a blind rage, most would agree that it is best to have a master trickster on his side rather than one working against you.

**Hit Die:** d6

## Requirements

To qualify to become a master trickster, a character must fulfil all the following criteria:

**Alignment:** Any non lawful.

**Base Attack Bonus:** +4

**Feats:** Skill Focus (bluff).

**Skills:** Bluff 10 ranks and any three of the following skills at 4 ranks: Disguise, Forgery, Perform, Sense Motive and Sleight of Hand.

**Special:** Charisma score of 13 or higher.

## Class Skills

The master trickster's class skill (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Decipher Script (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Hide (Dex), Knowledge (Arcana) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Perform (Cha), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spellcraft (Int), Spot (Wis) and Use Magic Device (Cha).

**Skill Points at Each Level:** 4 + Int modifier



## The Master Trickster

Level	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	0	+2	+2	Distracting Presence
2	+1	0	+3	+3	Taunt 1/day
3	+2	+1	+3	+3	Minor Tricks ( <i>daze</i> and <i>prestidigitation</i> )
4	+3	+1	+4	+4	Taunt 2/day
5	+3	+1	+4	+4	Minor Tricks ( <i>flare</i> and <i>ghost sound</i> )
6	+4	+2	+5	+5	Taunt 3/day
7	+5	+2	+5	+5	Minor Tricks (2/day each)
8	+6	+2	+6	+6	Deceiver's Luck, Taunt 4/day
9	+6	+3	+6	+6	Improved Taunt
10	+7	+3	+7	+7	Deception, Taunt 5/day

### Class Features

All the following are class features of the master trickster prestige class.

#### Weapons and Armour Proficiency:

A master trickster is proficient with all simple weapons and in the use of either the rapier or short sword (character's choice). The character gains no new armour or shield proficiency. Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Hide, Move Silently and Sleight of Hand. A master trickster suffers the normal arcane spell failure chance when casting spells while armoured.

**Spells per Day:** Beginning at 1<sup>st</sup> level, a master trickster can cast arcane spells just as a sorcerer does. To cast a particular spell, the master trickster must have a Charisma score of at least 10 + the spell's level. The character gains bonus spells based on his Charisma score, and the DC for the saving throws against his spells is 10 + the spell's level + the master trickster's Charisma modifier. Like a bard or sorcerer, a master trickster does not need to prepare his spells ahead of time.

For every level a master trickster attains, he gains new arcane spells

per day as shown in the 'Master Trickster Spells Per Day' table. At 1<sup>st</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> levels, a master trickster learns more spells as indicated in the 'Master Trickster Known Spells' table. These new spells must be master trickster spells the character can cast.

#### Master trickster Spell List: 1<sup>st</sup>

- *charm person*, *detect secret doors*, *grease*, *hypnotism*, *magic aura*, *silent image*, *ventriloquism*; 2<sup>nd</sup>  
- *blur*, *hideous laughter*, *hypnotic pattern*, *minor image*, *mirror image*, *misdirection*, *touch of idiocy*; 3<sup>rd</sup>  
- *blink*, *displacement*, *illusory*

### The Master Trickster Known Spells

Level	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
1	2	—	—	—
2	2	—	—	—
3	3	1	—	—
4	3	2	—	—
5	4	2	1	—
6	4	3	2	—
7	5	3	2	1
8	5	4	3	2
9	5	5	4	2
10	5	5	4	3

### The Master Trickster Spells per Day

Level	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
1	0	—	—	—
2	1	—	—	—
3	1	0	—	—
4	1	1	—	—
5	1	1	0	—
6	2	1	1	—
7	2	1	1	0
8	2	2	1	1
9	2	2	2	1
10	3	2	2	2



*script, major image, nondetection, suggestion, tongues; 4<sup>th</sup>- charm monster, confusion, illusory wall, lesser geas, and rainbow pattern.*

**Distracting Presence (Ex):** The master trickster is so charismatic that his mere presence distracts his opponents in combat. This extraordinary ability is always in effect and the master trickster does not need to concentrate or take special actions to trigger it, but he must be visible to his opponents. If the master trickster is hiding in the shadows, under the effect of an *invisibility* spell, or his enemies are otherwise blinded or unable to see him, his distracting presence ability is cancelled. The master trickster gains a dodge bonus to AC equal to his Charisma modifier at 1<sup>st</sup> level.

**Taunt (Ex):** Starting at 2<sup>nd</sup> level, the master trickster can target a single foe and, using every insult imaginable, provoke him into a blind rage. In order to use this extraordinary ability, the master trickster must take a full-round action and the targeted creature must be able to hear his voice and understand his words (so deafened opponents or those unable to comprehend his language cannot be affected).

Taunt may be used once per day at 2<sup>nd</sup> level, but more victims can be taunted as the master trickster gains experience. At 4<sup>th</sup> level and every even-numbered level thereafter (6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> level), the master trickster may use this ability one additional time each day. Only a single victim can be targeted by taunt with every attempt.

Starting at 8<sup>th</sup> level, the master trickster becomes so used to taunting that he may affect a creature that does not understand him if he succeeds at a DC 20 Bluff check. The target must still be able to see the master trickster. A creature targeted by the taunt ability must succeed at a Will save (DC 10 + master trickster's level + master trickster's Charisma modifier) or lose his temper and become totally



obsessed with the master trickster. Taunted victims are unable to do anything else than attack the master trickster for a number of rounds equalling to the master trickster's level plus his Charisma modifier. Affected creatures suffer a -2 insight penalty to attack rolls, AC, and saving throws as well as a -4 insight penalty to all skill checks for as long as the taunt remains in effect.

**Minor Tricks (Sp):** A 3<sup>rd</sup> level master trickster gains the ability to cast the following 0<sup>th</sup> level spell-like abilities: *daze* and *prestidigitation*. At 5<sup>th</sup> level, he gains two more spell-like abilities: *flare* and *ghost sound*. He may cast each of these spells once per day at first, but when he attains 7<sup>th</sup> level he may use each twice every day.

**Deceiver's Luck (Su):** When reaching 8<sup>th</sup> level, the master trickster gains a +2 luck bonus to all saving throws. Deceiver's luck is a supernatural ability.

**Improved Taunt (Ex):** When he attains 9<sup>th</sup> level, the master trickster can use his taunt on a greater number of people. Each time he triggers this extraordinary ability, he can target a number of living victims equalling 1 plus his Charisma modifier.

**Deception (Su):** At 10<sup>th</sup> level, the master trickster has become so conniving that he may re-roll any failed attempt to bluff, convince, trick or otherwise deceive another character, such as with the use of the following skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Hide, Intimidate, Move Silently and Sleight of Hand. The re-roll must be announced immediately after the failed attempt and the master trickster must accept the result of the second roll. This supernatural ability may be used a number of times every day equalling 1 plus the master trickster's Charisma modifier.





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# A FIELD GUIDE TO CREATURES OF THE HYBORIAN AGE

## A DETAILED STUDY OF MAN-APES FOR CONAN THE ROLEPLAYING GAME, PART I

**JOSH KAPPER**

*It was covered with black hair, from which small pig-like eyes glared redly; its nose was flat, with great flaring nostrils; its loose lips writhed back, disclosing huge yellow fangs, like the teeth of a dog.*

*- Rogues In the House, Robert E. Howard*

### II OVERVIEW

Deep in the steamy jungles of the south live beasts that are spoken of only in whispers by civilised people. Among the jagged mountains of eastern Zamora and Hyrkania lurk the hunched forms of creatures so terrible that travellers do not dare traverse the crags alone. They are the man-apes: the degenerate reminders to present-day Hyborians of their primitive relatives. Modern observers would call them the 'missing link', the stepping-stone between true apes and humans. The truth about their past, however, is far more disturbing. Whatever their origins, they are fearless and ferocious, possessing Herculean strength and posing a constant threat to any adventurer travelling in their shadow.

#### General Physical Appearance:

From a distance, or from behind, man-apes might be mistaken for muscular, squat humans. The stance of all man-apes is somewhat hunched, but, unlike true apes, only rarely do they walk upon their knuckles. Instead, with their strong and nearly straight legs, they are able to walk mostly upright, as well as leap and even run with ease (albeit using a somewhat awkward gait). Generally, man-apes have broad shoulders, long, brawny arms and proportionally shorter legs than humans. The

muscle structure of their massive chest is so pronounced that they are said to look almost as if they have been chiselled from stone. In all man-ape species, a distinct layer of hair covers the body in thick coarse mats, which are especially dense along the back, arms and legs. The colour of this hair depends on the type of man-ape being discussed; but is generally brownish, black or grey.

Like true apes, man-apes have flat noses, pronounced brow ridges and sloping foreheads. Generally speaking, their eyes are small, often described as 'pig-like.' Their jaws are prominent, with large, thick lips used primarily to manipulate food while eating. They are described as having yellow teeth, with enlarged canines that can rip flesh from bone. Finally, the physical characteristic that most distinguishes man-apes from true apes or humans are their thick, sharp claws that resemble

the talons of eagles. Although they make no weapons of steel, these large claws can be utilised as such with equally devastating results.

#### Black Man-Apes of Zamora:

Although reported to exist throughout the southern lands, these beasts are considered to be of Zamora as that is where they seem to be most common. Although called black man-apes because their hair and skin is generally dark charcoal or black in colour, there are reports of dark brown and rust-coloured individuals in the lands of Kush and the Black Kingdoms. They are found most commonly in mountainous regions, where they are reported to live in







groups. Yet, it is not known if the beasts prefer these habitats, or if they are merely forced to live there due to persecution by humans. This notion stems from the fact that the few individuals encountered in the far south all inhabit dense jungles. Black man-apes are the most hairless species existing in Hyboria, not surprising based on their preference for warm climes. They are also the most upright in their stance among man-apes, and have longer legs than their grey relatives (although not quite proportionally as long as humans). Because of this, it is somewhat understandable that black man-apes are mistaken for humans at first glance. Furthermore, it is believed that they are slightly less powerful than the species that exist in the east. They are reported to reach average heights of over seven foot six inches and weigh over 400 pounds.

Black man-apes are territorial and violent by nature. They are also regarded as the man-ape species with the most advanced intellect. In addition, it seems they have little fear of humans, and occasionally venture too close to civilisation. These traits make them incredibly dangerous to mankind. The Zamorians have taken

great pains to eradicate black man-apes from their lands, and will kill them on sight. This fact, coupled with the man-apes' predilection for wandering near human civilisation, has taken a toll on their number. Consequently, the beasts are much less common than their grey cousins. It has been reported that efforts have been made by the foolhardy to train these creatures as one would a dog. It is beyond doubt that black man-apes are smart enough to be trained; yet their base animal instincts, coupled with the simple human emotions that they retain from their ancestors, make them unpredictable.

Therefore, it is not unexpected that all attempts to habituate these creatures to domestication have ended badly.

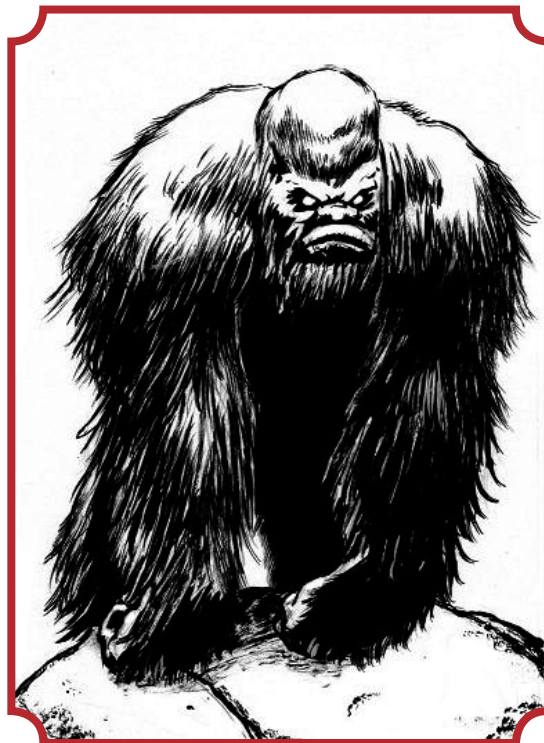
## Grey Man-apes of the East and Yahtis:

Grey man-apes are often regarded as true apes, similar to gorillas. Their evolutionary record shows that this is untrue, and their physiognomy is much closer to black man-apes than gorillas (the explanation for which will be given shortly). Most grey man-apes seem concentrated to the dense forests or jungles east and south of the Vilayet Sea, although there are reports of them inhabiting nearby mountain ranges as well.

As their name suggests, these creatures have hair and skin that is grey in colour and much lighter than that of the black man-apes. Furthermore, their fur appears to be much thicker than that of their western cousins, especially in the Yahti

sub-species. Grey man-apes have a much more hunched posture than do black man-apes, with shorter, more crooked legs, which forces them to walk on their knuckles occasionally. They also have broader shoulders and are considered more powerful than their cousins to the west. Their features, which include large tusk-like teeth protruding from their mouths, are less like humans and more like true apes, making them appear bestial and savage to some. It is unlikely that a grey man-ape could be mistaken for a human, even from behind. These beasts reach an average height of six and a half feet and weigh over 550 pounds.

Although they are much more similar to animals in their appearance and habits, grey man-apes are much more common than their black-haired relatives. Their territory is distributed over a much wider area and they seem to exist in greater numbers. The mechanisms behind their relative commonness are not fully understood. Some scholars believe that, because they are more bestial and do their best to shun human civilisation, they do not receive the level of persecution that black man-apes do.





*Among the forest-covered hills of the northwest exist wandering bands of ape-men, without human speech, or the knowledge of fire or the use of implements. They are the descendants of the Atlanteans, sunk back into the squalling chaos of the jungle-bestiality from which ages ago their ancestors so laboriously crawled.*

*Far to the east, the Lemurians, leveled almost to a bestial plane themselves by the brutishness of their slavery, have risen and destroyed their masters. They are savages stalking among the ruins of a strange civilisation.*

*-The Hyborian Age, Robert E. Howard*

Interestingly, there is at least one sub-species of grey man-ape in existence during the Hyborian Age. These are the shaggy ape-men, also called Yahtis by local inhabitants, found in the snow-covered Himelian Mountains. Although as bestial and grey as their contemporaries, Yahtis have hair that is significantly longer and thicker. They also tend to walk slightly more upright than other grey ape-men, an adaptation that some believe makes them better suited for travelling through deep snow.

**History and Position in the Animal Kingdom:** Recently, archaeological documents have been discovered that help scholars place these beasts, taxonomically, in the Animal Kingdom. While these documents are only summarised here, the importance of their findings to current beliefs regarding archaeology, anthropology and evolution will be evident. Ancient races of humans, such as the Atlanteans, dominated the Pre-Cataclysmic Age. Although slightly different in appearance from current humans of the Hyborian Age, the Atlanteans were fundamentally very similar, and even as technologically advanced. Yet this was before the great cataclysm rocked the face of the earth, changing it forever. The races of men, as they had evolved to be during the Pre-Cataclysmic times, were likewise altered by the upheaval, forever changing their evolutionary path. The turmoil caused most human races of the time, in particular the Atlanteans, to regress back into a

primordial state, degenerating into 'lesser-humans'. The resulting degenerates, it appears, eventually evolved into, what are today known as the black man-apes of Zamora.

As the downfall of Atlantis was occurring, the cataclysm was also forever altering the Atlanteans' contemporaries to the east: The Lemurians. The changing of the world forced the Lemurians to travel even further east, until reaching the very coast of their ancient Thurian continent. Yet, instead of finding peace here, the Lemurians were enslaved by a race of ancient humanoids whose history was lost in ages past. All that is known of these humanoids is that, although they had enslaved the Lemurians, their slaves eventually overthrew them and seized their freedom. Unfortunately, the many years of brutish slavery had degenerated the Lemurians into a semi-human, bestial state. While some of these primordial humans traveled west, evolved and eventually established the present-day land of Stygia, the rest remained in the east, continuing their boorish existence. Those who remained behind became the grey man-apes of the Hyborian Age that exist to the east and south of the Vilayet Sea, including the shaggy sub-species that roam the Himelian Mountains.

Although the subject is hotly debated in academic circles, most scholars consider man-apes a close relative of humans. Among vertebrate animals, they have been

placed within the taxonomic Class Mammalia, being warm-blooded animals with female individuals possessing mammary glands. Much like others of their kind, they are in the taxonomic Order Primates, which also includes prosimians (such as lemurs and tarsiers), monkeys (such as mandrills and baboons), apes (such as chimpanzees and gorillas) and humans. It is their placement within this Order that leads to the greatest disagreement among those that study Taxonomy. While a small group of individuals consider man-apes to be a type of primate completely separate from humans, most believe that they should actually be placed, taxonomically, within the same group, as it appears they evolved from primitive humans. Although it may never be proved which is true, much evidence has been accumulated in favour of the latter hypothesis, including profound skeletal and anatomical similarities between the man-apes and humans. Furthermore, while monkeys and apes are reported to be gentle unless provoked or threatened, man-apes are always ferocious. Most scholars agree that this disposition was acquired from human ancestors, from whom they retain shadows of emotions, such as hate and resentment. Finally, the historic records that have been summarised in the previous paragraph, give evidence that man-apes are more closely related to, and in fact evolved from, men (rather than true monkeys or apes).

## II. ANATOMY AND PHYSIOGNOMY

Man-apes have been a source of fascination for scholars over the ages. Thus, it should come as no surprise that certain scholars have gone to great lengths to be able to dissect these animals and thoroughly catalogue their internal anatomy. From these diagrams and notes, inferences regarding their physiognomy have also been made over the years. The findings reported here represent a summary of the most up-to-date and commonly accepted views regarding the subject.

## UNIQUE MORPHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

**The Fur:** As mentioned earlier, man-apes are mostly covered in coarse hair or fur. This hair, a structure comprised mostly of protein, is slightly different from that found in other types of mammals. Most mammals have two coats of hair, or fur: an outer thick coat for protection, called the guard hair, and an under coat that is soft and dense for insulation, called the under hair. Surprisingly, man-apes, much like true apes and humans, have very little along the lines of under hair. Compared to other mammals, their hair is actually somewhat sparse, especially in the face, chest and belly regions. The exception to this rule is found in the shaggy variety of man-ape inhabiting the Himelian Mountains south of the Vilayet Sea. These creatures do possess long, thick hair (including both guard hair and under hair), which is not surprising considering the frigid regions in which they exist.

**The Feet and Hands:** The feet and hands are incredibly important features in the every day lives of man-apes. As in true monkeys, apes and humans, these appendages are designed, specifically, to allow manipulation of objects and superior locomotion. Their uses are incredibly diverse, allowing the hands, for example, to be wielded in combat to batter objects, or for tasks requiring the fine motor skill necessary to peel fruit and crack nutshells (if necessity deems it). The hands of both black and grey man-apes have opposable thumbs, which can be used to securely grasp and hold most objects, and improve climbing ability. The largest difference among black and grey man-apes in regards to these

*'The black talons of the monster and the awful grasp of those misshapen hands ripped and tore at him.'*

*-Rogues in the House, Robert E. Howard*

appendages lies in the feet. Grey man-apes, being more prone to dense forests and jungles, where they climb frequently, also have a large inner-toe that is opposable. Thus, the feet can be used to grasp items as efficiently as the hands, making these beasts superior climbers to their western relatives.

**The Claws:** The presence of enlarged nails, or claws, is a feature ubiquitous among man-apes (be they black or grey). In fact, their claws are reported to be so long and sharp that they are often referred to as appearing 'talon-like'. Despite this, however, it is likely that a variation exists in the length and sharpness of these claws among individuals, and they range in length from 3 to 4 inches (7.5 to 10 cm). Like most fingernails and claws found in vertebrate animals, they are made primarily from keratin (a protein-based substance similar to that used found in the horns of bull cattle). However, what is most interesting about these claws is that their upper surface (for example, the surface on the same side as the knuckle) has an extra layer of protective enamel compared to the bottom surface. This added enamel better protects the nail from breaking off at the base during daily use, limiting breakage to the most distal points of the nail. This effectively keeps the nails long and sharp, which is important for man-ape survival. After all, a man-ape with many broken claws cannot as adequately defend or feed itself.

The claws evolved their shape primarily for hunting prey, rather than

protection. Although a formidable hunting adaptation, there is little doubt that man-apes employ these claws as offensive weapons as well, should the need suit them. In nearly all reports of attacks on humans, the man-apes in question used their claws frequently: both to help secure their grip on the victim, while inflicting significant amounts of damage through lacerations or disembowelment.

## UNIQUE SKELETAL STRUCTURES

**The Skeleton:** Because they are related to modern humans, there should be little surprise that man-ape skeletons are very similar in appearance to those of most Hyborians (this is especially true in the case of the black man-apes of Zamora). However, unlike the relatively delicate skeletons of humans, those of man-apes are remarkably dense. There are several advantages to this enhancement: firstly, it makes the beasts more robust to damage from falling or being attacked by prey. The skull, for example, is so thick that it is very resilient to attacks from bludgeoning-type weapons. The downside to this quality is that such thickness in the brain case leaves less room for the brain itself. Many scholars believe that the evolution of thick skulls in these creatures is inversely related to the size of the brain, and probably the size of their intellectual capacity. Secondly, having dense bones is an adaptation that helps support the great weight that these animals possess. The orientation of these bones is also believed to be for supporting the added stress and weight associated with a bipedal (in other words, walking upright) stance.

**The Teeth:** Most vertebrate animals have teeth that are unique from the rest of the Animal Kingdom. This

*'Its feet and hands were more manlike than those of a gorilla, the great toes and thumbs being more like those of a man than an anthropoid.'*

*-The Flame Knife, R. E. Howard and L. S. de Camp*





other words, the mouth is filled with teeth of different shapes and sizes that represent their specific functions. For example, canines and incisors are sharp and used to tear off bits of food, while premolars are multi-cusped and used to shear bits of food into more manageable sizes, and so on. Man-apes, and primates in general, are no exception in this regard. However, the teeth of man-apes are unique enough that they are probably the skeletal feature that most separates them from other primates. The majority of primates are omnivorous (in other words, consuming both plant and animal material), which is reflected in the shape of their teeth: relatively large canines and sharp incisors for tearing off bits of flesh, yet relatively flat and broad molars for grinding vegetation. Man-apes, in contrast, are strict carnivores. They eat no vegetation and their dentition

reflects that. In fact, the shape of their teeth more closely resembles that found in other strict carnivores that are of no relation to primates (for example, dogs, wolves, lions and tigers). Man-apes have sharp, pointed incisors and very large, yellowish canines designed for tearing large chunks of flesh from their prey. They have uniquely shaped premolars and molars in both the upper and lower jaw that, when brought together while chewing, creates a shearing action (like that of a meat scissors). This helps these beasts chew their usually tough food to the point that it can be easily swallowed. Only the last set of molars in each jaw vaguely resemble those found in omnivorous primates. Although it is believed that they are residual (their shape coming from human ancestors) the function of these teeth is no longer for grinding vegetation, as is the case in humans. Instead, in man-apes these molars are shaped as such to crack open bones for acquiring the nutrient-rich marrow within.

### UNIQUE INTERNAL ANATOMICAL ELEMENTS

In many ways, the organ systems of man-apes are similar to other mammals, especially humans. For example, the respiratory system, while very complex and efficient, is very similar to that found in many mammals, especially primates. The glands, including sweat, scent and sebaceous glands, in their morphology are also not largely unique among mammals. Thus, these organs will receive little attention in the following paragraphs.

**The Digestive System:** The digestive system of man-apes is somewhat unique compared to that of other large primates, such as gorillas. This is because gorillas eat large amounts of vegetation, which requires a unique digestive system. For example, properly digesting vegetation usually requires a large or even multi-chambered stomach that is specialised for breaking down the tough cellulose found in plant material. Creatures with diets consisting mostly of

*'At any rate, he struck when I least expected it. Last night he appeared to go suddenly mad. His actions had all the appearance of bestial insanity, yet I know that they must have been the result of long and careful planning.'*

*'Apparently, his semi-brain retained impressions of hate, resentment, and some sort of bestial ambition of its own.'*  
-Rogues in the House, Robert E. Howard

animal material, such as man-apes, have digestive systems that are comparatively simple, as animal-based foods are mostly soft and easier to break down. Thus, carnivorous digestive systems usually have a single-chambered, bag-like stomach, with intestines that have many twists and bends.

**The Brain:** This is believed to be the man-ape's most extraordinary organ. Compared to their simian cousins, such as gorillas, these beasts have exceptional intelligence, which is especially true of the black man-apes of Zamora, with an amazing memory and the ability to learn from past occurrences. Yet, in relation to humans, most scholars consider their intelligence to be as humans are compared to Gods. These scholars cite the fact that man-apes create neither tools nor weapons, and have no knowledge of fire. They also do not build shelter, aside from the most rudimentary types made from gathered leaves and grasses. Despite this, there is little denying that these creatures possess cunning beyond mere animal instinct. Those who have run afoul of them know that their ability to stalk their prey through observation and learning of the prey's habits is uncanny. The man-ape's aptitude to perform in such a fashion, most scholars believe, is the result of a brain that has evolved from those of humans (albeit in a degenerating fashion). Thus, the capacity of their brain is far superior to any other animals', and may even rival the brain of humans who have been stricken dumb through illness or misfortune. Not only does this large brain offer man-apes incredible

cunning, it also makes complex coordination, behavior and even rudimentary language possible. The specific portions of the brain that are of greatest interest in man-apes are the cerebrum and cerebellum. Both are large and convoluted, similar to humans. This results in man-apes:

- # Having the ability to learn by remembering
- # Being able to possess simple emotions
- # Being capable of fine motor function

This combination of abilities is surpassed only by humans. The downside to having a brain that supposedly evolved from those of humans is that man-apes are believed to retain shadows of certain human emotions (such as anger and hate). It is believed that these 'pseudo-emotions', coupled with raw animal instinct, are what make man-apes incredibly dangerous and unpredictable.

### The Sensory Organs:

The eyes of man-apes are particularly interesting in many regards. Although they have little ability to see great distances, their eyes are on the front of their skulls (rather than the sides), creating superior depth perception. Within the eyes of most vertebrates

are two types of photoreceptors: rods (which function better at low light) and cones (which function better under intense light). Man-apes, being fonder of incredibly dark habitats, have a much higher number of rods than cones. Furthermore, man-apes have very acute colour vision. All of these adaptations are thought to have evolved as a means of aiding these beasts in climbing and hunting. There is, however, an aspect of these beast's eyes that is perplexing to many scholars: they are very light sensitive (possibly due to the low number of cone photoreceptors in their eyes). In general, this means that man-apes shun the bright sun and moon, preferring very shrouded and dark habitats. What advantage man-apes gain from being physically uncomfortable in bright light is not wholly understood. It should be noted that Yahtis are occasionally seen out in the open during the day, and it is believed that these creatures feel no negative effects from light.

The senses of hearing and smell in man-apes are acute, but no more so than in true apes or humans. Although these senses are used





incidentally while hunting, they do not seem to be of great importance. It is believed that the advanced nature of their brains compensates for these relatively deficient senses. Thus, they receive no penalty for not being able to smell as acutely as wolves, another carnivorous hunter, because their intellect makes up for this shortcoming.

### UNIQUE PHYSIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS

**The Metabolism:** As has been stated previously, man-apes are mammals and, thus, endothermic (in other words, warm-blooded). This means that their body produces its own heat internally, through the use of physiological processes. This is in contrast to ectothermic (cold-blooded) animals, such as reptiles, which must rely on an outside heat source to warm their body temperatures to an acceptable level. Often, this outside heat source is the sun, or a warm substrate of some form. There are many advantages to endothermy. Endothermic animals are not restricted in their geographic distribution by the annual air temperature of the region. They also generally have higher levels of activity, resulting in more complex behaviors and extended periods of sustained action. For example, man-apes can run for much longer amounts of time than a crocodile. Although the crocodile is capable of quick, explosive movements, it cannot sustain them. The downside to endothermic metabolisms, however,

is that any animal possessing them must fuel that constantly working metabolism with a steady supply of food. Thus, endotherms must eat constantly, and man-apes are no exception. Therefore, food is a limiting resource for these beasts, and often leads to territorial bouts among man-ape tribes living in close quarters.

## III. THE ECOLOGY OF MAN-APES

**Geographical Distribution-** As was mentioned previously, man-apes, as a group, have a much wider distribution than they are given credit. Although rarely common in the lands where they exist, man-apes can be found throughout most of the regions south of Stygia, from Zamora east to the coast, and are even reported in the far north and northwest. The only areas where they have not been reported to exist during the Hyborian Age are the mid-latitudes from the Western Sea to Brythunia, Corinthia, Koth, and only rarely in Shem. As was also hinted at earlier, there are some interspecific differences in where types of man-apes will be found, however.

**Black Man-Apes:** Black man-apes are reported to prefer the

mountainous regions along the eastern border of Zamora (not far from Shadizar) and into Turan. They are also reported sporadically in the Pyrrhenian Mountains east of Khoraja and the Taiaian Mountains near Sygia's northeastern border. Reports are plentiful of isolated black man-ape populations in the lands of Kush, Darfar and Keshan, as well as the Black Kingdoms. However, because a qualified individual has never witnessed one in this region, most scholars refuse to acknowledge that black man-apes are common in the south. Nevertheless, any traveler who has visited these lands frequently reports witnessing them as commonly as birds in some regions and will, without hesitation, call such scholars fools.

**Grey Man-Apes and Yahtis:** The idea is generally supported that grey man-apes exist in much greater abundance than their relatives to the west. They also have a larger geographic distribution, being found throughout Hyrkania, Iranistan, Vendhya, Khitai and eastern Hyperborea. Though rumors exist of them being found as far to the northeast as Nordheim and even Cimmeria, these reports are unsubstantiated. It should here be noted once more that grey man-apes come in two varieties: the shorthaired and the longhaired (also called Yahtis). While the shorthaired variety is found both in the plains and forest of Hyrkania and Khitai and Veldhya, the Yahti is found strictly in mountains (preferably in colder climes or snow-capped peaks). Thus, the Yahti is often encountered among the Ilbar and Himelian mountains south of the Vilayet Sea, and in the Mountains of the Grey Apes north of the Vilayet sea. They are also reported in the mountains surrounding Panthenia.

*'His people dwell far to the east, in the mountains that fringe the eastern frontiers of Zamora.'*

*-Rogues in the House, Robert E. Howard*

*'A gray man-ape,' he grunted. 'Dumb, and man-eating. They dwell in the hills that border the eastern shore of this (the Vilayet) sea.'*

*-Iron Shadows in the Moon, Robert E. Howard*

*'Conan knew it for what it was: the monster named in myth and legend of the north - the snow ape, the desert man of forbidden Panthenia. He had heard rumours of its existence in wild tales drifting down from the lost, bleak plateau country of Loulan.'*

*-The Flame Knife, R. E. Howard and L. S. de Camp*



*It was no tree dweller but a beast bred on great plains and gaunt mountains.*

*-The Flame Knife, R. E. Howard and L. S. de Camp*

*'These creatures always lurk in the deepest woods they can find, and seldom emerge...I'd have had no chance with him among the trees.'*

*-Iron Shadows in the Moon, Robert E. Howard*

**Habitat Preferences:** Man-apes are highly variable in their preferred habitats, ranging from semi-open plains to dense forest to snow-capped mountains. It is believed that the adaptability of man-apes as a whole stems from their large brains and fine motor skills.

**Black Man-Apes:** The traditional description of black man-ape habitat includes open steppe, grassland and mountainous crags. While there is little doubt that this species does indeed exist in these habitats, they are also reported in dense southern jungles as well. In mountainous regions, they are more common on westward- and southward-facing slopes. This is probably because

these slopes receive more direct sunlight and are usually warmer, which is particularly important during colder months. Most black man-ape family groups have a large home range that they continuously patrol. Within these home ranges, several different habitat types may be found. Although variation exists among family groups, the majority of the territory in question will almost always consist of protected craggy slopes among high mountain passes. These areas are nearly impossible to traverse for other vertebrates, including humans, making them very secluded spots. Such slopes are usually moderately to heavily vegetated with mostly evergreen trees and scrubby shrubs (such as mountain heath) that prefer higher elevations and rocky soil. Although not known to be as adept at climbing as their eastern relatives, the man-apes of the region are known to use evergreen trees to ambush prey and those who would do them harm. A much smaller portion of the territory usually consists of rolling

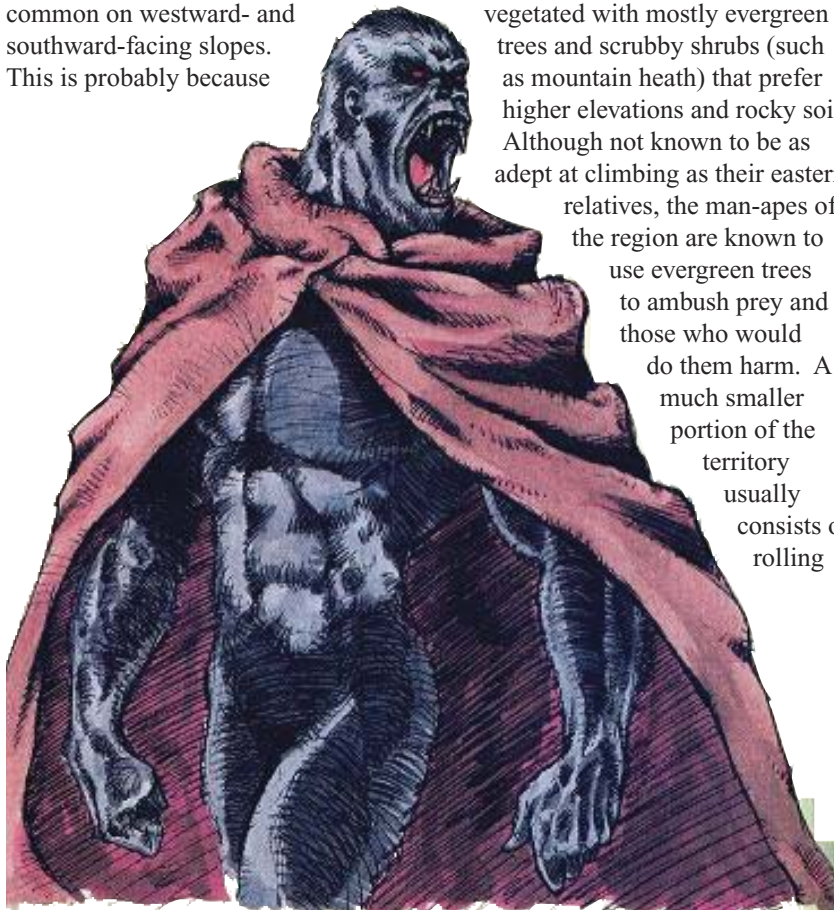
mountain foothills and some sparsely vegetated grassland.

Furthermore, several areas used as refuges by the beasts will also be placed sporadically throughout the territory. These refuges usually consist of a cave that is either hidden or difficult to access that offers the beasts protection. A water source is always nearby, and may even run out from the mouth of the cave itself. Furthermore, these caves are almost always strategically placed in hidden areas near game trails. Thus, both food and water are readily available.

Although not substantiated by qualified scholars, there are reports of southern black man-apes from extremely dense jungles along rivers and tributaries in Kush and the Black Kingdoms. These habitats are said to contain mostly large, old growth trees with massive trunks. The canopies of such regions are usually choked with branches and thick vines, all of which can be used to aid in climbing. Surprisingly, a fair number of reported attacks from these beasts occur on the ground, and not from treetops.

Because a fairly substantial difference exists between the habitats where black man-apes are seen in the south and where they are encountered in the north, there is some speculation if the individuals existing in each region are not separate species in their own right. This notion is further supported by individuals who claim to have witnessed man-apes in these southern regions whose hair is more reddish, or rust-colored, than black.

**Grey Man-Apes and Yahtis:** Grey man apes are almost always classified as a forest species. However, along the eastern shores of the Vilayet Sea, and some distance inland, they are almost exclusively found on semi-open plains and at the craggy bases of mountains and their associated foothills. Yet, in most of Turan, Hyrkania, and the like, grey man-apes seem to prefer





dense forest with large old-growth trees. Although spending much time on the ground, this type of man-ape is probably more at ease in trees than their western and longhaired cousins. The home ranges of these beasts in the far east contain almost exclusively dense forest or jungle, with thick canopies and ample branches for climbing. In the regions closer to the Vilayet Sea, the home ranges of grey man-apes include a nearly 50:50 ratio of plains and mountain foothill or hills, with less than 10% of the habitat consisting of forest. As in black man-apes, they have multiple refuges located sporadically throughout their home ranges for shelter.

Yahtis are found almost exclusively in the high snowy crags of mountains. They never venture into grassland or dense lowland forest. Their home ranges include almost homogenous habitat, consisting of very sparse vegetation, open plateaus, and cold mountain streams. In very rare occasions, they are found among stands of evergreen trees found along mountainsides. Yet, it is obvious that they prefer open habitats. Their refuges are always along high cliff faces that are very difficult to reach by conventional means.

**Territories:** Home range sizes are large due to the fact that acquiring sufficient food for family groups can be difficult. These territories can be, on average, anywhere from one to 11 square miles (2.6 to 28.5 square km). As one would imagine, defense of this territory (and its limiting resource: food) from conspecifics and other large carnivorous predators is aggressive. Gray and black man-ape groups will travel throughout their home ranges during the evening, watching for intruders and feeding until reaching one of the many secure refuges positioned sporadically within. Here they will rest during the daylight hours, returning to their nomadic habits once evening comes once more. Despite the type of man-ape being discussed, man-ape refugia

are almost always a cave consisting of a single chamber large enough to house the entire family group. The entrance to the chamber is almost always somewhat concealed by vegetation, or is at such a height as to make it difficult to reach by creatures that are not man-apes. Furthermore, the chamber may be lined with vegetation of some sort, and a refuse pile will always be present, either in or near the chamber. Refuse piles will contain both excrement and remains of food. No attempt is made to hide these and the scent from them can often be overpowering. Territorial boundaries are marked by the pheromones present in urine. Many man-apes are also known to smear excrement on the trunks of trees along the edge of their territories to warn potential intruders.

Although no rigorous data has been collected on the subject, black man-apes of the south would appear to have significantly smaller home ranges than those of their northern counterparts. The sporadic and isolated existences of these southern man-apes may be a possible reason for the comparatively low number of encounters that humans have with them. Small home ranges may also be a result of the incredibly dense vegetation in the habitats where they reportedly make their homes. Such density of plant material could inhibit quick and broad dispersal of this creature. From what reports that have been made, it would seem that this southern cousin spends most of its time on the forest floor, or in the lower limbs of trees. It is believed that they have none of the sporadically placed refuges in their home ranges that their counterparts do, but supposedly traverse the borders of their territory at night, then sleep off of the ground, in whichever tree bough is closest during the day.

Yahtis, it is believed, also differ slightly in their territorial requirements from other man-apes. They are reported to live in smaller social groups than do other types of

man-apes, thus needing less food to sustain them as a unit. Although this might lead one to believe that a smaller home range is required, this is not the case. Yahtis, in fact, have no defined home ranges, but instead live nomadic-type lifestyles (with no refuges) in which they follow herds of game animals for great distances. It is also believed that the need to constantly roam has made Yahtis grow accustomed to being active in daylight, thus they are not negatively affected by light sources as other man-apes are. There has been little evidence to support the occurrence of territorial disputes among Yahtis.

### Communication and Social

**Interactions:** Most communication among man-apes is expressed vocally in the form of grunts, deep scream-like calls, and clicks. Along with the use of urine and feces to mark territory, dominant male man-apes will frequently release a long, resonant bawl while patrolling their territories as a warning to rivals to stay clear. This call is said to be incredibly unnerving and many a traveler has had his blood run cold at its sound. Man-apes also communicate vocally among each other using clicks and soft grunting. Although it is likely that these types of communications are common, man-apes are very secretive when interacting within their groups and humans have seen these behaviors only sparingly.

Aside from vocal cues, man-apes use a significant amount of facial expressions and gestures to express their mood to one another as well as potential threats. To assert dominance or in response to a threat, man-apes will bear their teeth and beat their chests. If this does not work, they will raise their arms above their heads and scream. Finally, as a last resort, man-apes will fly into a violent fit. This fit usually includes screaming, leaping up and down while tearing up vegetation and flinging it at the threat, and also mock charges towards the threat. Generally

such displays are only for show and rarely end in violence (especially when among conspecifics), because the result of injuries acquired during such bouts would surely end in the eventual death of the creature harmed. Yet, for reasons unknown by scholars, man-apes rarely back down from humans and almost always attack them on sight. This is perhaps because man-apes view their simian relatives as either: (1) food, or (2) a threat so substantial that outright attack is always deemed necessary.

There are also physical forms of communication that are used to reinforce social bonds within family groups. This physical communication usually consists of grooming. Among juveniles, 'play fighting' occurs. Play fighting not only strengthens social bonds and establishes a hierarchy among juveniles; it also helps them work on their dexterity and strength from an early age.

## Reproduction and Development:

Among groups, reproductive privileges are available first and foremost to dominant males, who sire most of the juveniles in a given family group. Subordinate males and females do reproduce and sire some of the offspring in family groups, but these juveniles are not common.

Reproductive cycles vary depending on the type of man-ape in question. Black man-apes of the south are believed to time reproduction so that the birth of their offspring corresponds with the increased food available after the rainy season. In the north, black man-apes generally breed in late winter/early spring and offspring arrive by late summer. Grey man-apes follow a similar pattern as northern Black man-apes. This pattern is largely unknown in Yahtis; however, they have been witnessed with juveniles at several different times of the year. Thus, it is believed that breeding seasons among Yahtis follow no specific pattern and reproduction occurs when conditions are favourable.

*Then the rocky walls of the ravine echoed to the ape's high, penetrating scream as it charged, low-hanging arms swinging wide, yellow fangs bared and dripping.*

*-The Flame Knife, R. E. Howard and L. S. de Camp*

The breeding system of these creatures is largely polygynous (one male and many females), yet the alpha female is always first in line to breed with the alpha male during the breeding season. Subsequently, he will breed with one or two other females. The alpha male then jealously guards all of the females he has copulated with, not allowing them to re-mate with others. It is during the mating season that subordinate males most quickly are taught their place in the pecking order, as the alpha male tolerates no contact between them and his harem of females. Polygyny is not seen in Yahtis, who generally live with only one other female, and perhaps a single offspring.

All man-ape offspring grow quickly. Infants are dependant on their mothers for approximately six months only. After which, they are able to feed on their own, as well as keep up with the group during daily patrolling of home ranges. Male man-apes reach sexual maturity at four years of age. If strong enough, they will be able to contend for the position of dominant male in a group by age six. Females, on the other hand, do not become sexually active until they are at least five years of age.

Mother man-apes, it should be noted, vehemently defend their infants, fighting even to the death to save them from a potential threat. A threatened female man-ape with infant is one of the most terrible and spectacular sights that the natural world has to offer. Usually, a quick and decisive action is taken against any creature (aside from members of the female's family group) to enter her space. The end result usually includes dismemberment of the threat.

## PREY, HUNTING, FEEDING HABITS, AND COMBAT

Man-apes are strict carnivores. This curious fact about their eating habits is what separates them most from other primates. Strict carnivores (excluding piscivorous, or fish-eating, mammals) have evolved in only one other group of mammals: the taxonomic Order Carnivora, which includes dogs, cats, weasels and so on. The reason for this obvious example of convergent evolution between two vastly different groups of animals is unknown. However, as stated previously, the teeth of man-apes clearly reflect their carnivorous diet and more closely resemble the teeth of tigers and dogs than other primates. In the wild, man-apes will consume almost any warm-blooded animal that they can capture. While there is a preference for larger prey, they will consume animals as small as rodents, if necessary. Large prey is preferred as it is more likely to offer enough sustenance for an entire family group. Regardless of the region in which they exist, man-apes seem to spend the majority of their time hunting large grazing herbivores. In mountainous regions, these are primarily mountain goats and sheep, as well as deer. Hares, pikas and similar animals will also be consumed if need be. In open habitats, elk or caribou will be consumed by man-apes in northern climes, while animals like buffalo and antelope are taken in southern climes. In areas of dense vegetation, smaller deer-like animals, as well as wild peccary and tapirs, are consumed.

Male man-apes engage in all hunting activity for a family group. Male man-apes rarely hunt alone (the exception being found among Yahtis whose family groups are too small



to permit group hunting). Most man-ape hunting parties consist of two to four large adult males and four to six sub-adults. Generally, the younger males flush the selected quarry towards the older individuals who remain hidden, waiting. When the prey is close enough, the older males strike, often leaping down from tree branches or overhead rock ledges onto the backs of unsuspecting victims. It is during this ambush that the claws are most beneficial. Ambushing man-apes strike first and with deadly accuracy to the region at the base of the victim's skull. The hope is to immediately sever the spine, causing instantaneous death, or piercing the jugular vein/carotid artery, causing the animal to quickly bleed out.

Yahtis hunt alone or in groups of two. They will also ambush prey, but instead of using trees and coordinated attacks, they wait along game trails in the craggy mountain ranges for prey to come to them. Most often, they will hide in crevices or on ledges above game trails, remaining upwind, with large boulders that they throw down at the prey, aiming for the head.

If man-apes are not successful in an overhead ambush attack to the neck, they may then attempt a frontal attack. In this situation, the claws are employed in the hopes of making a swift strike to the throat, or a disemboweling strike to the mid-section. Man-apes rarely grapple one on one with prey items, preferring to use their claws to bring down quarry. Man-apes are, however, incredibly adept grapplers, if the need arises. If ambush attacks are unsuccessful, they will not hesitate to confront human opponents in close-quarter combat. Anyone unfortunate enough to be caught in a wrestling match with a man-ape will likely end up severely maimed, crushed or dead. If able to grab hold of an opponent, man-apes can rip limbs from sockets, slam victims into trees with incredible force or crush them to death in their powerful arms. Therefore, it is in

*But its manlike features merely increased the dreadfulness of its aspect, and the intelligence which gleamed from its small red eyes was wholly malignant.*

*-The Flame Knife, R. E. Howard and L. S. de Camp*

the best interest of those confronting man-apes in combat to keep the animal at sword's length from himself or herself. This can prove difficult, however, as man-apes will often use their incredible leaping ability to quickly come into grappling range with their opponents. These truths must all be considered carefully by anyone wishing to enter man-ape territory.

**Predators:** Adult man-apes are believed to have few natural predators. Although it is believed that they may be eaten by larger carnivores, no substantiated reports exist on the subject. Although very rare, dragons possess the size and power to consume man-apes (even adults) very easily, and it is probable that they do so. Juveniles and infants, should they be separated from their parents, are likely to be taken by predators more frequently. It can be imagined that animals such as the large constrictor-type snakes (such as pythons) in the south will eat them, as well as large felines (for example, lions, mountain lions, sabre-tooths) and perhaps boar-things.

**Longevity:** Compared to other vertebrates, man-apes are fairly long-lived. If they do not meet a premature and violent demise, man-apes can live into their 40's.

**Society and Allegiances:** Man-apes, whether of the black or grey varieties, usually live in family groups of five to 20 individuals. The only exception to this rule is found in Yahtis, which are generally solitary, or living in groups of three. Within the larger family groups of most black and grey man-apes, a hierarchy exists. There is always a dominant (or alpha) male who has one alpha female and several subordinate females that

he reproduces with. Beneath him live anywhere from three to seven subordinate males, who are either offspring or relatives that were not strong enough to leave their natal family group and found their own. The remainder of a man-ape's family group consists of subordinate females and newborns. Conversely, Yahtis that are not solitary usually exist in small groups consisting of one female, and occasionally their single offspring.

Once reaching sexual maturity, male man-apes are given a choice by the current dominant male: fall into line, or leave. Some young males select a third option: usurping the current alpha male and taking his place as leader of the group. Bouts for leadership of a man-ape family group are violent and rarely end with both contestants still living. For man-apes that do not wish to fight for the leadership of their current family group, they may elect to leave and found their own family group with other subordinate individuals, or attempt to enter a different family group. Existing family groups occasionally adopt new members as long as these outsiders take on a submissive posture when approaching the alpha male and female.

Female man-apes are generally not treated as roughly upon reaching sexual maturity as males. Often females will remain with a group as it can potentially increase the number of partners for the alpha male to mate with and spread his seed.

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So, you have chosen your game, but what do you actually write about? Scenarios are good. In fact, we love them. Give me a scenario to edit and I am a happy camper. Perhaps you want to discuss the philosophy of a game. That's good. We encourage intellectual thought process around here. If you have something meaningful to say, then try us out. If we don't like it, we *will* tell you. Think hard before you try humour though. With guys like Jonny Nexus about, you will need to be sharp if you want to break in. If you think you have what it takes, though, then feel free to try your hand. Just be prepared to be told you may not be as funny as you think you are.

If you want to write new rules for a game, with new uses for skills and maybe some new feats, then be our

guest. We cannot promise that we will like what you have done, but you will get constructive criticism in return, and not just a terse one-line rebuff.

## Editing

It is a painful fact that whatever you write, it will get edited. That is why editors exist, after all. Even this passage will have been edited. If you can get over this hurdle you are well on your way to attaining the mentality needed to be a writer. It will help if you can handle criticism as well. Take it from us – writing is a tough business. Just ask any author doing the rounds looking for a friendly publisher.

We have various house styles that we use and you do not need to know them. As long as your submission is literate and tidy, we will do the rest.

## Little Details

If you are not sure how long your article is, assume around 800 words fit on one page. Do not use the word processor's page counter as a guide. By the time it has been edited, laid out and had artwork added, it will look nothing like that screen of text in front of you.

Remember to run the article through a spell checker before you send it in. It will still get proofread, but it shows willing. Anything not spell checked will be rejected straight away.

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# Inside The Chainmail Bra

## Fey Boss

## Online vs Offline: What Gives?

**E**ver since the advent of the Internet as a regular means of communication, it's been getting used for purposes of roleplay. Why not? Geeks and roleplay seem to go together like bread and cheese, barring yeast and lactose intolerances. Geeks and computers go together like pepperoni and pizza, crisps and soda, gin and tonic. It is, in short, a nearly unbeatable combination.

With it, though, there has arisen different camps - different schools of belief. Some feel that online roleplay is of the devil. Some think that tabletop is truly tasteless and belongs in the past with the dinosaurs - useful for mining for source material and other fossil fuels, but otherwise to be scorned as outdated, outmoded and pointless. There is a certain validity to both points of view, and pros and cons to both arguments. Let's examine, just for the fun of it.

Here are the hallmarks of each in their turn, some of the known facts. We'll assign a point value or letter grade or other meaningless mark of worth to each pro and con.

### Tabletop

1. The players are all present in the same room.

**PRO:** The players are all present in the same room. This allows for more direct communication, including facial expressions, and true 'moments you just can't explain', such as the humour value in a (male) former rugby captain talking in a squeaky voice to represent his female half-elf mage.

**Rating:** 3 stars. It's cool, but even squeaky voices are only so exciting.

**CON:** The players are all present in the same room. That means Body Odour Bob, the boy who never bathes, is there in all his pungent glory.

**Rating:** 5 black holes. BO Bob's stink can ruin a game.

**Overall rating:** -2

2. There are snacks close to hand, usually provided by whoever's hosting the game.

**PRO:** Snacks! Who can find something wrong with snacks? It's food, it's free.

**Rating:** 5 stars. Food. Free. Yes, I said this before, but every formerly hungry university student and/or punk knows the value of this. It being snack food only increases it.

**CON:** You have to share, and if the host has a taste for avocado-flavoured ice cream and you don't, well, someone's out of luck and it's you.

Sorry.

**Rating:** 2 black holes. Free still overcomes sharing. And it's not always avocado ice cream.

**Overall rating :** +3

3. You get to deal with actual physical dice. This is only cool to gamers, but that's fine. DICE, people.

**PRO:** Dice. Lots of pretty shinies. It's the great gender unifier. I've seen more men gush over their dice than women, but the women gush, too.

**Rating:** 4 stars. Dice are cool, but free food is still cooler.

**CON:** Physical dice also means the risk of losing them - or other people stealing them. I lost an entire tackle box full of dice this way once, including dice I'd had since before I hit puberty. (Yes, somewhere out there are dice older than the children I haven't got.)

**Rating:** 4 black holes. Dice are replaceable, but it still isn't fair.

Or fun. Or free.

**Overall rating:** 0

Tabletop scores +3 in the first round. Rather appropriate, even if it's not a *sword of evil's bane* +3 against evil, +4 against undead.

Next up, of course, is:

### Online

1. Players are separated by monitors, which can range in distance to each other from being in the same room to being on different continents.

**PRO:** B.O. Bob's RP is pretty good when you can't smell him, and you can meet up with people all over the world. Suspension of disbelief for the male rugby player's female half-elf is much easier to maintain.

**Rating:** 5 stars. Bob's odour is that bad, and meeting people from all over is just cool.

CON: That difference in time zones can be a real pain, when you're in London... and so is your partner, but in London, Ontario. You also end up with less input over who's in the game with you.

Rating: 3 black holes. There's always other games out there, and time zones can be worked around.

Overall rating: +2

2. You have to provide your own snacks. And your own computer.

PRO: You don't have to share your snacks, and they can be whatever you want.

Rating: 3 stars. Sharing might be what they taught us in the nursery, but we all know it's nice when you haven't got to. And not having to admit to a sneaking fondness for chocolate on sardines without being pregnant goes a long way with some of us.

CON: Snacks cost money. Computers cost a lot more money.

Rating: 4 black holes. As in, into what your money gets sucked.

Overall rating: -1

3. You use code rather than actual dice.

PRO: It's much harder for players to cheat when the dice system is coded into the game and spits out the results for everyone to see. Plus which, it's on the game directly, so there's no fights over whose dice is whose, nor can anyone pick them up and walk away with them.

Rating: 5 stars. Who hasn't wanted to smack cheaters with something heavy? And you get to hold onto your real dice (we all know you have them) without fear of someone walking off with them someday.

CON: Code isn't very pretty, nor is it very shiny, not unless you're a programmer. If you turn dice code around, no matter how you look at it, you're getting a random number generator and quite a bit of what is gibberish to anyone who isn't a programmer.

Rating: 3 black holes. It sucks, but not terribly.

Overall rating : +2

Online scores +3 in the first round. So it's neck and neck for tabletop and online in the first race. Let's take a closer look.

Tabletop is more personal; online is more distancing. Tabletop is old school, giving us D&D (and all its variants, from original all the way through D20 today) and since then, literally hundreds if not thousands of other roleplaying systems. Online is shinier, giving us MMORPGs ranging from Everquest through to Worlds of Warcraft and dozens to hundreds of others. How, really, do these measure up?

Tabletop truly is 'old school'; it's where things got their start. There are more options than you can shake the proverbial stick at, if you're the stick-shaking sort; whether it's GURPS or Shadowrun or Bunnies & Burrows or Macho Women With Guns, someone's bound to have made a game to reflect what you'd like to play. Online gaming will have to take quite some time to come up to that level.

Unfortunately, many people will look at tabletop with its legion of varying sourcebooks and rules and shake their heads; if it's not the expense, it's the confusion, the difficulty in figuring things out or in finding a group with which they can regularly meet (or mesh). Sometimes they get lucky and find a group with which things just fall into place, but more often it's a matter of trial and error until things do click, or they drift away entirely.

Online, they say, is much more accessible to the common herd. This is particularly a complaint among people who've been doing tabletop gaming for a while, that it waters down the medium, particularly since in the newcomer's eyes, there is no real 'difference' between the two; both are gaming, after all.



That accessibility cuts both ways, being a plus in introducing those inclined to a whole new world of imagination and, well, fun. We wouldn't game if it weren't fun. It's a minus in that any number of people who go with online gaming are in it for the equivalent of a

'quick fix' - it takes powergaming to a whole new low, people who will backstab and kill monsters and other players while shouting rude slogans without any real thought to gameplay. In person, if players did this, they'd be shown to the door - or get a punch to the nose.

Offline is a little better organised in many ways towards helping people mesh into the environment. Whether it's a MMORPG or a freeform text-only game, there's usually people whose job is specifically that of helping new players become integrated, learn where things are and how to play the game. But that same helpfulness can lead to an elitist environment which turns into just as much of a sizing contest, based upon time played or stats bought as anything found in a tabletop game.

Really, what's a gamer to do? The only logical solution is the most extreme: play them all, pick and choose. With so many options out there, why limit ourselves? Instead of getting caught up in which is better, just realise that they're both about equal, just different. With so many other things worth arguing over, it seems silly to get caught up in what amounts to more options for RP. Just be careful - if it's dark, you might get eaten by a grue.





# GAMING SYMPOSIUM

## He Was Here a Moment Ago!

**GARETH  
HANRAHAN**

**H**ERE THERE ARE eight,' Celeborn said. 'Nine were to set out: so said the messages.'

The Fellowship shuffled in embarrassment. 'He's got to work a double shift' muttered the ranger. 'He's up for promotion right now. He won't be here tonight.'

**T**he best laid gaming sessions of mice and men oft go astray. No matter how much planning you do, no matter how many times you call the players to make sure they will all be there, people sometimes fail their Real Life saving throws and cannot make the game. The Games Master can choose to run the character of the missing player as an Non-Player Character (which creates more work for the already over-burdened Games Master), hand the character over to another player (and all too often, that leads to 'Grimbold sets off the trap') or make the character disappear for that game session.

This article presents forty quick ideas for ways to conveniently remove one or more characters from the party at the start of a game session. The entries are divided into four types – ones suitable for Urban sessions, for Rural, for Underground and a catchall set of Magical diversions which work anywhere. Each entry is then subdivided into *Setup*; how the character is split off from the party, *Sidetrack*; what happens to the character while they're away, and *Rejoin*, what happens at the start of the next game session to bring the character back. The Sidetrack can be expanded into a full solo session or just glossed over, depending on the needs of the game. In each entry, the character of the missing player is referred to as the target.

### URBAN

#### 1. KIDNAPPED!

**Setup:** As the party make their way down a narrow alley, a trio of thugs step out of the shadows and drag the target away through a hidden door. By the time the rest of the party open the door, the kidnappers have vanished into the sewers.

**Sidetrack:** The target is thrown into a prison cell along with other prisoners, all of whom belong to rich adventuring parties, noble families or influential guilds. The character is questioned to see how much of a ransom the party can muster.

**Rejoin:** Either the character escapes the cell, or a mysterious benefactor pays the ransom before the characters do.

#### 2. MISTAKEN IDENTITY

**Setup:** The town guard confront the Player Characters and tell them that one of their number is under arrest. Resisting arrest will be disastrous for both the Player Characters' reputation and health.

**Sidetrack:** A magic-using thief disguised herself as the target using *change self* and committed a series of robberies. The Player Character is accused of the crime until a divination spell points at the true thief.

**Rejoin:** The character is released by the guards – and is free to pursue vengeance against the thief.

#### 3. THE CARNIVAL

**Setup:** A jangle of music, a swirl of silks, a flash of colour – the town is in the middle of a raucous festival. As the characters push through the crowds, they lose sight of each other for a moment. As they reach a quieter area, they realise someone is missing...

**Sidetrack:** The target passes one tent; from which boils a cloud of pungent smoke. The character suddenly finds that the festival is filled with all manner of strange extraplanar beings. After any number of cryptic encounters and conversations, the character falls unconscious.

**Rejoin:** The character awakens in an alleyway the next morning, missing a small number of gold pieces. Was it all a hallucination brought on by intoxicating fumes, cover for a theft, or a divine revelation?

#### 4. MEETING SOMEONE YOU KNOW

**Setup:** The target bumps into a long-lost member of his or her family, who asks to speak privately.

**Sidetrack:** The relative explains that he or she has come into possession of part of a document describing an ancient misdeed committed by a mutual ancestor. The second part of the document is in a pile of ancient scrolls that have been donated to a library, but not yet sorted. If someone can discretely enter the library and remove the scroll, the good name of the family can be preserved...

**Rejoin:** The character returns to the party after deciding whether or not to commit the crime.



#### 5. JURY DUTY

**Setup:** A band of clerks and sages, all bearing legal documents and scrolls of great importance, descend on one of the characters and claim that the character's presence is urgently required in a court of law. Failure to comply will result in dire consequences.

**Sidetrack:** At the court, the character finds himself embroiled in a legal quagmire. The character may be acting as an arbiter, a witness, an expert – even the defendant in some minor legal suit. Perhaps the descendant of the inhabitant of some tomb the Player Characters looted is suing for damages, or a jealous rival is trying to make trouble for the Player Characters.

**Rejoin:** The court session finishes, and the character's presence will not be required again for several weeks.

#### 6. THE CURIOSITY SHOP

**Setup:** As the characters wander through the streets, one Player Character happens upon a small shop, little more than a tiny alcove bedecked with all manner of curios and strange wonders. As soon as the Player Character steps into the shop, it vanishes along with the character, leaving nothing but a small card bearing a date and a forwarding address.

**Sidetrack:** Inside the shop, the Player Character meets an odd gnomish shopkeeper who offers to sell cryptic little items, treasures maps, shards of broken amulets and other curios. The character, unaware that the shop has vanished from reality, spends what seem to be only a few minutes haggling with the shopkeeper, but many hours or even days pass in the real world.

**Rejoin:** At the date and place marked on the card, the shop reappears, allowing the Player Character to rejoin the rest of the party.

#### 7. LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

**Setup:** One Player Character glimpses a face through the crowds, a face the character has never seen before, but recognises instantly. It is the Player Character's true love. Driven by ecstatic desire, the character charges off into the crowd to pursue love, a quest the character must undertake alone.

**Sidetrack:** The object of the Player Character's affections initially confuses the character with a member of a band of troublesome thugs. The character must defeat both this misapprehension and the thugs before true love can take its course.

**Rejoin:** The character's true love is en route to another city, and the most direct route goes by the current location of the rest of the party. The character accompanies his or her love for part of the distance, then is dropped off to rejoin the companions.

#### 8. PLAGUE

**Setup:** A district of the city is suffering from an incurable disease, and all victims are being quarantined – forcibly. One of the characters suddenly develops certain symptoms of the sickness, and the guard come to throw him or her into the quarantined quarter.

**Sidetrack:** The character is thrust through a gate in a hastily erected barricade by guards swaddled in thick, pungent facecloths. Inside the quarantined quarter are dozens of unfortunates suffering from a terrible disease.

**Rejoin:** Either the character escapes the quarantined zone, or else he proves immune to the disease and waits until the quarantine is lifted.





## RURAL

### 1. THE DUEL

**Setup:** Two feuding knights of high rank are about to fight a duel to resolve some point of honour, and demand that the target stay behind as judge.

**Sidetrack:** The elder of the knights accuses the younger of committing adultery with his wife. The younger certainly seems a less than honourable sort. When the two begin to fight, the younger knight is somewhat faster and stronger. Does the character call the duel fairly, or does he allow justice to prevail over mere force of arms?

**Rejoin:** The winning knight gives the character a lift on his horse to the rest of the party.

### 2. ABDUCTED BY ROCS

**Setup:** A hungry roc swoops down and seizes the target, bearing him off into the skies.

**Sidetrack:** The roc drops the character in its nest, to be devoured by the roc-chicks. Currently, the young rocs are busy devouring the corpse of a cow, but soon they will grow hungry again. The nest is atop unscalable cliffs, leaving no obvious route of escape.

**Rejoin:** The character must hide amid the broken carcasses of the nest until the largest of the young rocs takes its first flight, and leap onto its leg as it flies. The young bird uncertainly flies a short distance, leaving the Player Character close to the rest of the party.

### 3. DISASTER RELIEF

**Setup:** A calamity such as a flood, landslide, or fire strikes the region. The locals have the situation well in hand, but the particular talents of one character are required to help deal with the disaster. For example, a cleric's healing spells might be needed, or a barbarian's strength, or a rogue's ability to squeeze through the rubble to rescue trapped victims. The rest of the characters can continue onwards.

**Sidetrack:** The target aids the common folk in dealing with the disaster.

**Rejoin:** A band of paladins, returning from the scene of the disaster, return the character to the party.

### 4. TRAVEL DELAYS

**Setup:** As the characters travel through the wilderness, they cross a bridge or ford. The target is separated from the rest of the party when the river suddenly rises and the crossing becomes impassable.

High winds make flying impossible.

**Sidetrack:** The target must take a longer route upstream through the wilds to another crossing.

**Rejoin:** As the character travels, he or she encounters an elven boat heading downstream, allowing him to quickly rejoin the party by crossing the raging river.

### 5. THE SHRINE

**Setup:** The target happens upon a small shrine that is most sacred. He or she simply cannot pass without spending several hours alone in devotion and prayer.

**Sidetrack:** The character remains in the shrine, concentrating on the tenets and mysteries of his faith. He may experience visions or divine testing during this meditation.

**Rejoin:** The cleric who tends the shrine is impressed by the Player Character's devotion, and loans him a horse to catch up with the rest of the characters.

### 6. THE BOAR

**Setup:** As the characters are passing through a small thicket, a magnificent young boar suddenly crashes through the trees nearby. One Player Character charges off to hunt and quickly becomes lost in the forest.

**Sidetrack:** The Player Character pursues the boar through the trees, over hill and valley, and all the world seems to contract until there is just hunter and quarry. Eventually, in a hidden dell, the cornered boar turns and charges the Player Character.

**Rejoin:** By chance, the boar's flight was almost parallel to the course taken by the other Player Characters, so it is only a short distance from the dell to the rest of the characters.



## 7. THE PILGRIMS

**Setup:** The characters encounter a small band of pious pilgrims on the road. The pilgrims are of the same faith as one of the Player Characters, and beg that Player Character to accompany and protect them for a short distance until they reach a chapel.

**Sidetrack:** The Player Character travels with the pilgrims for a time, sharing stories and defending the band from dangers until they reach a friendly chapel, inn, or the object of the pilgrimage.

**Rejoin:** The grateful pilgrims pool their funds to purchase fast transport for their protector, getting him back to the rest of the party immediately.

## 8. THE JOUST

**Setup:** The characters pass a field where a tent is being erected. One workman informs the characters that a great fair is to be held there later that day. One of the events in the fair is a prestigious contest that one Player Character absolutely has to enter.

**Sidetrack:** The nature of the contest depends on the missing character – fighters or paladins joust, rangers engage in archery, rogues in sleight-of-hand and so on. Spellcasters participate in contests of magical power or lore. The contest is a famous and ancient one, and victory wins the Player Character great renown.

**Rejoin:** Other contestants in the contest accompany the Player Character back to the rest of the party.

# UNDERGROUND

## 1. CAVE-IN

**Setup:** A sudden earth tremor collapses part of the tunnel, blocking the target off from the rest of the party.

**Sidetrack:** The character must travel through other tunnels and caverns, filled with dangerous monsters, to reach the rest of the party.

**Rejoin:** A shaft in the roof of one cavern is too steep to climb up, but the target can descend on a rope to reach the rest of the party.

## 2. MITHRAL VEIN

**Setup:** A narrow band of mithral or another valuable mineral or gemstone crosses the party's path. Digging it out of the rock is not difficult, but will take a few hours of elbow grease.

**Sidetrack:** The target stays behind to dig 1d6x100 gps worth of minerals out of the rock.

**Rejoin:** The passage ahead is straight and relatively free of obstructions, so the character needs only march quickly to reach the rest of the party.

## 3. A MAZE OF TWISTY PASSAGES, ALL ALIKE

**Setup:** A wrong turning somewhere in a warren of small tunnels separates the target from the rest of the party. The Player Characters can still hear each other, but are divided

by a thin wall of rock.

**Sidetrack:** Water flows through both tunnels in the same direction, so it is certain that the tunnels link up at some point. The separated character must wander through the tunnels until the correct passageway is located.

**Rejoin:** The character emerges from the maze and catches up with the party.

## 4. TIDAL CHAMBERS

**Setup:** This section of the underdark is partially flooded. On the surface, the moon is rising, and drawing up the water. Rising tides leave one character stuck in a small air-filled cavern between two submerged tunnels.

**Sidetrack:** The character must wait until the tides subside before leaving the chamber. During this time, bizarre underdark fish and amphibians may attack.

**Rejoin:** By fashioning a crude raft out of mushroom stalks and rope, the character can sail down the tunnels ahead as the waters recede.

## 5. HALLUCINOGENIC FUMES

**Setup:** A gas jet suddenly shoots out of the stone, carrying spores of a strange underground fungus. These potent spores cause hallucinations in anyone who inhales them. All of the characters momentarily succumb to the spores. When they recover, one of their number is missing.







**Sidetrack:** The missing Player Character is still present – everyone is merely sharing the hallucination that he or she is gone. For the Player Character's part, he or she experiences a bizarre phantasmagoria fuelled by the spores. The character runs through the underdark tunnels, believing that twisted rocks are hideous monsters, that the tunnels are closing in, or that the nightmares of the underdark are nothing but cute pastel-coloured animals.

**Rejoin:** The fungal spores wear off, and the characters find each other in nearby tunnels.

## 6. ELEMENTAL POCKET

**Setup:** A small pocket of elemental air floats through the rock, creating a mobile hollow in the stone. It happens to float under a cavern or tunnel as one of the Player Character's is passing. The character falls through the suddenly forming hole into the elemental pocket. The pocket then moves off and the gap closes.

**Sidetrack:** In the pocket, the character meets a tiny air elemental sylph. The sylph is investigating the prime material plane, and created the air pocket as its vehicle. It gleefully interrogates the character, asking pointed questions about mammal lungs being prison chambers for innocent air spirits.

**Rejoin:** The sylph floats the air pocket back to the rest of the characters once it is finished questioning the character.

## 7. CHASM

**Setup:** The characters encounter a deep chasm or rift as they travel. An underground river flows through the base of the shaft. As the characters climb along the edge of the precipice, the rock crumbles beneath one Player Character, who falls down into the fast-flowing water below.

**Sidetrack:** The character sustains no serious injuries in the fall, but is carried away by the underground river, which flows through a twisting maze of half-flooded passages. The character is eventually deposited on the banks near a small underground village.

**Rejoin:** Friendly inhabitants of the village recently saw signs of the party's movement, and can guide the Player Character back to the rest of the characters.

## 8. PUZZLE DOOR

**Setup:** The characters encounter an ancient door, made of green

copper and granite, which appears to be the entrance to an ancient tomb or treasure vault. The door is warded against *knock* and similar spells, but can be opened if a complex puzzle lock is solved. The runic clues that would allow the puzzle to be solved quickly have been erased, so the only way to open the door is trial and error. One character stays behind to painstakingly try all the combinations of the puzzle.

**Sidetrack:** After a few hours of sliding plates and twisting dials, the ancient door creaks open, revealing a small, musty vault beyond. The contents – and guardians – of the vault are up to the Games Master.

**Rejoin:** One of the items in the vault is a one-use *teleportation* talisman that brings the Player Character to the rest of the party in an instant.

## MAGICAL

### 1. TELEPORTATION HICCUP

**Setup:** The character vanishes as the most recent *teleportation* effect he experienced refires.

**Sidetrack:** *Teleportation* effects imbue targets with a sort of spatial signature that determines where the spell takes the target. Sometimes, this signature spontaneously asserts itself, returning the character to wherever he was last sent to. This effect soon reverses itself, as the 'natural' location of the character regains ascendancy over the teleportation signature.

**Rejoin:** The character simply reappears with the rest of the party in a flare of *teleportation* energy.

## 2. RECALLED FOR TESTING

**Setup:** A sudden divine light envelops the target, freezing him in time. Anyone touching the light experiences a sudden understanding that the character cannot be disturbed.

**Sidetrack:** The character's deity wishes to test the character's moral standing, in preparation for challenges ahead. The Player Character must undergo a series of trials of moral character and faith.

**Rejoin:** The light fades, returning the character to normality and leaving only a hazy, uncertain recollection of the divine.

## 3. THE SHADOW OUT OF TIME

**Setup:** The character suddenly vanishes. Divination spells reveal no trace of the character anywhere in all the planes.

**Sidetrack:** The character arrives in a bizarre city in the far distant past, the dwelling place of a species of conical rugose beings. These entities are scholars, borrowing travellers from the future and interrogating them to learn of the future. The character is questioned and their knowledge recorded onto metallic scrolls. Once the conical beasts have learned all they wish to know, powerful temporal spells return the character to whence they came.

**Rejoin:** The character returns to whence they came. To the rest of the party, only a short time has passed; to the character, it may have been years.

## 4. SPELL FAILURE

**Setup:** One of the character's magical devices misfires, creating a powerful *levitation* effect that sends the character flying up high into the atmosphere.

**Sidetrack:** A simple Spellcraft check (DC 5) reveals that as the device returns to normal, the character will simply drift back to earth. All he needs to do is float and wait for a few hours.

**Rejoin:** The spell effect wears off and the character lands within a short march of the rest of the party.

## 5. THE DANCE OF THE FEY

**Setup:** A passing group of fey take a fancy to one of the characters, and spirits him or her away to dance for a few hours.

**Sidetrack:** The character finds himself in a woodland glade, surrounded by the eerily beautiful fey. A satyr musician lays bow to fiddle, and strange music behind to play. If the character can endure the long, exhausting dance (a Constitution check must be made each hour, at a DC equal to 5 plus the number of hours danced so far), he wins a boon from the fey.

**Rejoin:** Regardless of how well the character entertained the fey, they are gracious enough hosts to return the character to the party relatively unharmed and unchanged.



## 6. SUMMONING REVERSAL

**Setup:** In a flare of magical energy, one of the characters vanishes. Examination of the residual magical traces shows signs of a *plane shift*-like effect.

**Sidetrack:** The target has been summoned to one of the elemental planes by an elemental wizard. The plane is infected by a shard of foreign matter that is poisonous to beings of elementally purity. The elemental wizard needs the target – a creature composed of a muddy mix of elements and therefore immune to elemental poisoning – to enter the shard and detonate a magical explosive to dissipate it.

**Rejoin:** When the elemental blast goes off, the character is hurled back to the prime material plane as the summoning spell wears off.

## 7. HASTE BACKFIRE

**Setup:** The accumulated energies of too many *haste* spells suddenly catches up with one of the character. There is a debt to be paid to time, which freezes the character in place for several hours.

**Sidetrack:** The character is essentially out of normal causality while frozen – no time passes for his perspective. He cannot be affected or injured by anything while frozen. He will not even fall if the surface beneath him is removed.

**Rejoin:** When the temporal debt is paid, the character suddenly fast-forwards through time to rejoin the rest of the party, experiencing everything as if he had accompanied the party during the freeze time.

## 8. TEMPORAL FOLD

**Setup:** The target vanishes. Spells reveal no trace of the character.

**Sidetrack:** From the target's perspective, he is still in the same place, but the rest of the party has vanished. The land around him is more or less the same, but also different. He soon realises he has somehow slipped backwards (or forwards) in time.

**Rejoin:** After wandering in the alternate time, the character finds himself in the same physical location as the rest of the party. He then slips forward to the same *temporal* location.





# The Psyker's Guide to Brit-Cit

**Details of the supernatural fiends and those who battle against them in Brit-Cit for Judge Dredd the Roleplaying Game**

**Matt Sharp**

**T**he mutation that grants human beings the gift of psi-talent is as rare in Brit-Cit as it is in the rest of the world. In comparison to other Mega-Cities, the few with powerful psychic abilities can consider themselves fortunate as they suffer far fewer restrictions and interference from the government or Justice Department. There is no enforced registration or monitoring beyond the absolute minimum – the mutation falls within what the Star Chamber regards as an ‘acceptable’ level of genetic deviation and most psykers have nothing beyond a brief note on their Birth Certificate to indicate their incredible potential.

However, while the official line is unusually liberal, the attitude of the average citizen leaves a lot to be desired. Brit-citizens and judges alike regard mutants with contempt and horror, shunning the twisted, radiation warped creatures simply because they are different. Psykers are seen as even worse – most show no signs of deviation on the surface, but their abilities and powers mark them as abnormal, a mutant hiding under the skin of a respectable normal person. Fear of the unknown can easily fester into hatred. Even the most mild mannered office drone can turn into an unreasonable bigot at a moments notice if he discovers that his closest friend is a ‘mutie’. A psyker soon learns to keep his power a closely guarded secret if he wished to live a normal existence free of persecution, hatred and fear.

Others have no choice. It was a Brit-Cit based company that originally isolated the gene allowing the use of psychic powers. As part of an odious procedure known as ‘baby

farming’, the company created hundreds of psi-powered clones for use in experiments before the law was changed and the practice was driven underground. The clones were freed, another source of psi-talented individuals loosened onto the mean streets of Brit-Cit. Other types of psychic phenomenon have less technological origins.

Brit-Cit and the British Isles have a long history of battling supernatural threats. Ghosts and poltergeists are considerably more common than in Mega-City One – some blueblood households regard a ghost as an essential component before a house becomes a home. Lower class citizens are increasingly finding that they no longer have to rely on a friend of a friend for reports of supernatural occurrences – it is a rare citizen indeed who has never witnesses the manifestation of some paranormal force. Phantom hitchhikers haunt nearly every roadway, and one spectral double-decker bus is reported more often than sightings of genuine Public Transport vehicles. However, for every harmless or even beneficial paranormal event recorded, there seems to be ten horrific or murderous attacks by insubstantial psychic beings.

Demons and devils are becoming more and more of a problem every year. On the streets of the City in central Brit-Cit, malevolent humanoid imps called hobs prey on the innocent and the guilty alike, breathing fire and slashing at faces with razor sharp talons before hopping like a cricket over the rooftops, leaving nothing but the echoes of their terrible

laughter. In the highland wastes of Cal-Hab, mischievous pony-headed Kelpies make a nuisance of themselves while the bizarre looking Fachan acts with more spite, dragging off unsuspecting children to a terrible end. In the wasteland that forms the Allotment, the ancient nocturnal demon the Wendigore has reappeared, preying indiscriminately on both the Brit Company and the mutant settlements to sate its terrible hunger. Everywhere in the British Isles, sighting the fiery eyed hellhound Black Shuk is a warning of impending disaster.

*Brit-Cit: 419 sightings of the Black Dog in one week. Thanatonia up a thousand percent.*



With such a rise in paranormal activity, it is perhaps not surprising that a multitude of new cults has sprung into being; appearing alongside old and well established officially recognised religions. Although some are genuine attempts to find some meaning in life, many of these are headed by charismatic psykers, intent on dominating their followers with displays of their incredible 'magical' abilities. Ancient orders like the Wiccans, Neo-Druids and the Satanists must fight for space alongside newcomers such as the Crowleyists and the Children of the Stones to worship at ancient 'Places of Power' such as Stonehenge or Glastonbury Tor.

While some citizens worship supernatural powers and many choose to ignore them or even deny their very existence, others choose to devote their lives to attempting to destroy them. Despite its lack of resources, the Justice Department has been forced to recruit psi-talented individuals to counter the alarming rise in psi-crimes. Other more sinister areas of the government also employ powerful psykers to destroy the enemies of Brit-Cit. Others have more personal reasons for battling the supernatural.

## Justice Department Psykers

Unlike many other Justice Departments around the world, Brit-Cit's ability to battle psychic and supernatural threats is severely limited. In contrast to the judges of Mega-City One, the judges of Brit-Cit are employees who often regard working for the Justice Department as no better or worse than an ordinary job. Psi judges, on the other hand, are expected to risk not just their lives but also their sanity and their very souls for a meagre paycheque and the indifference or contempt of the citizens they protect. Naturally, an individual possessing the required dedication to duty was rarely to be found in the cynical Brit-Cit society – a psyker willing to 'go public' with his abilities could receive greater

rewards exploiting the far more lucrative civilian or criminal markets.

Until a recent reform, Brit-Cit possessed a Psi Division very similar to the Mega-City One model. Unfortunately, the psi judges themselves were less than effective, consisting entirely of a few oddballs and lunatics who were unable to obtain any form of employment elsewhere. A typical example of a Brit-Cit psi judge was Judge Mordecai, a powerful telepath but also an incoherent, ranting madman who refused to wear any form of clothing. The Brit-Cit Psi Division proved its lack of effectiveness when every single member was wiped out in the Gabriel attacks of 2114.

Left almost defenceless against psykers and supernatural threats, Brit-Cit was forced to begin a radical recruitment drive. By fair means or foul, psi-talented individuals were enrolled into the Hendon Judge Academy. However, it would be a few years before the new Paranormal Operations Judges were ready for action. For a brief period the only Brit-Cit psi defences consisted of a trio of very powerful clones forming a gestalt known as 'the Three'. However, they proved no match for Cal Hab's only psi judge, Schiehallion, when he turned rogue and threatened the city. Following a terrible and unprecedented psychic duel, the Three were separated and easily dispatched and again Brit-Cit was left without any psi-powered defenders.

The Justice Department was forced to take some extreme measures to deal with psi threats. Teams of freelance psychic investigators and trouble-shooters were recruited from the civilian market to deal with paranormal cases when they occurred. This proved to operate much more effectively than the old Psi Division had ever done, although naturally it was much more expensive.



## The Paranormal Operations Department

Also referred to as P/N Ops, the Paranormal Operations Department of the Brit-Cit Justice Department is based on the thirteenth floor of the New Old Bailey building in central Brit-Cit. Similar to the Mega-City One Psi Division, P/N Ops is charged with a broad range of responsibilities ranging from investigating suspected psi crimes to battling extra-dimensional monsters, but actual psi-talented operatives are few and far between – there are only a few dozen Paranormal Operations Judges in existence. The majority of the staff consists of researchers, archivists and back street judges with an interest in the supernatural or the paranormal. The scarcity of psi-talented judges has forced the Justice Department to rely on the expertise of exterior contractors to remain effective, regularly employing teams of psykers and specialists to bolster the inexperienced ranks of the Justice Department forces.



## New Character Class

### Paranormal Operations Judge

More commonly known as a 'para', the psi-talented Paranormal Operations judge is a member of the newest and smallest division of the Brit-Cit Justice Department. Like a regular beat judge, a para spends ten years at Hendon Judge Academy, learning how to master their abilities as well as the application and execution of Brit-Cit law. However, unlike the volunteers that form the rest of the Justice Department, paras are generally conscripted, compulsory inducted or even press-ganged into the Academy. Paranormal Operations judges form Brit-Cit's first line of defence against supernatural and psychic threats, but are few in number and lack experience – there are less than a hundred of these elite judges in existence, and most have only recently graduated from Hendon. Paras can become reasonably powerful, but are weak and lack discipline in comparison to the Psi Divisions of other Mega-Cities.

**Characteristics:** The Brit-Cit para is faced with even more pressure than his Mega-City One Psi Division counterpart – not only must he face up to the stress of coping with his unique talents, he must endure the contempt of his fellow judges and normal citizens alike, most of whom are brought up to fear and hate those who deviate from 'normal' behaviour and appearance. While a few are happy to serve their city, many are bitter or even hostile about the circumstances of their induction into the Justice Department. In the same way that a Mega-City One Psi judge tends to find relief from the pressure of their abilities by being flippant and light hearted, paras also tend to have maverick personalities – although, in keeping with the Brit-Cit mindset, this is often expressed as a foul temper and outbursts of biting sarcasm.

### Game Rule Information

The Paranormal Operations Judges have the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Like all psi-talented characters, Charisma is the primary ability for the Paranormal Operations judge, as it is required to fuel their psi powers. A para with a high Charisma score can possess incredible psychic abilities, but a low Charisma score means very poor psi-talent.

**Hit Dice:** d6.

**Class Skills:** Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Computer Use (Int), Concentration (Con), Drive (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (law) (Int), Knowledge (psi-talent) (Int), Listen (Wis), Pilot (Dex), Psi-Scan (Int), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Streetwise (Wis), Swim (Str), and Technical (Int).

**Skill Points at 1<sup>st</sup> Level:** (2 + Int Modifier) x4

**Skill Points at each additional Level:** 2 + Int Modifier

### Class Features

The following are all class features of the Paranormal Operations judge character class.

**Weapon Proficiencies:** The Paranormal Operations judge is proficient with all grenade, melee and pistol weapons.

**Specialist Equipment:** The Paranormal Operations judge carries all the same equipment as a regular beat judge (see p60 of *The Rookie's Guide to Brit-Cit*), although the regulation bootknife is replaced with

### The Paranormal Operations Judge

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+1	+1	+3	Prior Life, Bonus Feat
2	+1	+2	+2	+3	
3	+2	+2	+2	+4	
4	+3	+3	+3	+4	
5	+4	+3	+3	+5	Bonus Feat
6	+5	+4	+4	+5	
7	+6/+1	+4	+4	+6	
8	+7/+2	+5	+5	+6	
9	+8/+3	+5	+5	+7	
10	+9/+4	+6	+6	+7	Bonus Feat
11	+10/+5	+6	+6	+8	
12	+11/+6/+1	+7	+7	+8	
13	+12/+7/+2	+7	+7	+9	
14	+13/+8/+3	+8	+8	+9	
15	+14/+9/+4	+8	+8	+10	Bonus Feat
16	+15/+10/+5	+9	+9	+10	
17	+16/+11/+6/+1	+9	+9	+11	
18	+17/+12/+7/+2	+10	+10	+11	
19	+18/+13/+8/+3	+11	+11	+12	
20	+19/+14/+9/+4	+12	+12	+13	Bonus Feat

a silver one and he wears a special distinctive bodysuit uniform and helmet. A para uniform makes use of a silver unicorn motif rather than the usual golden lion of Brit-Cit.

**Prior Life:** The Paranormal Operations judge can select either the *Rogue Psyker* or *Lab Rat* prior life at the time of character creation, gaining powers and psi points as detailed under their respective descriptions. Only a rogue psyker can choose to become a specialist, as normal, providing he meets the minimum requirements. Lab rats and specialists are detailed in *The Rookie's Guide to Psi Talent*.

**Bonus Feat:** Paras are expected to devote much of their training and refresher time into honing their psychic abilities, but still receive support and additional training courses in practicing and developing their abilities on the streets. At 1<sup>st</sup> level and every fifth level thereafter (5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>) the para receives a bonus General or Judge feat of his choice, in addition to feats gained every three levels.

## Civilian Psykers

Unlike many Mega-Cities, Brit-Cit has few laws and regulations relating to the use of psi-talent. As long as a psyker causes no harm (either to an individual or property) he will be reasonably safe from interference from the judges. The psyker is even able to profit from his talents – if he can get away with it. This is not as easy as it often appears - many businesses, especially organised crime, are cautious to the point of paranoia when it comes to psi-talents, sometimes even employing the latest technology or even other psykers (known as 'psi-trappers') in order to prevent rivals from gaining a paranormal advantage. Many of the top businesses have established informal but unbreakable 'gentlemen's agreements' preventing either side from using psi-talents when involved in business deals. Anyone caught 'cheating' can expect severe consequences.

Others trade their abilities on the open market. An individual that can read other peoples minds, speak with the dead or glance into the future will always find someone with a need for their unique skills. Many psykers are able to join or set up detective agencies, although they will be forced to cope with the prejudice of the common Brit-Citter for openly displaying their mutation. Many of these 'psi-detectives' have been employed by the Justice Department during their regular manpower shortages.

Others try to make their fortune by displaying their abilities to the public. A few become popular tri-D personalities – the citizens seem quite tolerant of these celebrity psykers, and as long as they do not have to live next door to them their abilities are quite entertaining in a non-threatening way. Others use their talents to form cults or religions, performing 'miracles' to impress the weak willed pleb classes.

## Criminal Psykers

Like Mega-City One, Brit-Cit criminal gangs and organisations often find it useful to have a psyker on the payroll. Not only are their abilities valuable for striking against unsuspecting rivals and opponents, they can also counter enemy psykers. Most of the larger organised crime firms employ at least one psi-talented enforcer to keep the paranormal peace on their manor.

A few psykers are more ambitious, forming their own crime syndicates. Most operate a variation of the classic 'protection' scam, demanding insurance money in return for ensuring that a series of predicted dire events do not come to pass. Failure to take up the generous offer results in a series of 'warning' psychic attacks directed against the unfortunate victim's person or property. This is usually enough to convince them that protection is



needed, but those who still refuse to take the hint will continue to suffer until they either die or are driven mad. Psychic attacks are difficult to prove in the best of circumstances, and with the Paranormal Operations Department operating with a skeleton staff many of these organised psi-crime operations consider themselves to be untouchable. Psi-talented blitzers and assassins have also begun to appear.

The lack of any sort of registration or official controls can also make psykers into criminals unintentionally. Many psykers find their abilities uncontrollable, particularly during puberty. A few are not even aware that they possess psi-talent, instead convinced that they are the victims of poltergeists or ghosts. Such a psyker is a very dangerous and unpredictable individual, but the authorities can do very little to contain them unless they end up causing some major damage or even killing someone.

With the rise in psi-crime and paranormal activity, many 'anti-psi' organisations have arisen. These are generally associated with the anti-mutant leagues, intent on removing all signs of abnormality and deviation from the sight of 'decent, normal folk'. Most of these organisations are little more than extreme pressure groups – advocating anything from the reasonably sensible idea of registration and regulation of psi-powers to the reinstatement of the old witchcraft laws, including



traditional execution methods such as ducking or burning at the stake. Others form groups of vigilantes intent on eradicating all signs of mutation, such as the paramilitary terrorist organisation the League of Extraordinarily Ordinary Gentlemen, who are not above wiping out entire families if they suspect one of them may be 'tainted'. Less extreme individuals concentrate on battling the supernatural. It is not unheard of for the Justice Department to employ these 'ghost-hunters' in covert operations when psi-talented manpower is in short supply.

### Sentencing and Punishment

Brit-Cit does not possess a specific criminal code to deal with psi-powered lawbreakers, instead preferring to charge criminals by the end result of their actions rather than their methods. A psyker using his abilities to cause injury or death (a Code 16/Section 1 violation in Mega-City One) would be charged with murder or assault, for example. However, Brit-Cit justice prefers to impose severe sentences to serve as a deterrent to other lawbreakers, and the punishment doled out to a renegade psyker is characteristically harsh. A psyker found to have used his powers in an anti-social way (from 'mischief making' to murder) would be forced to suffer the undignified procedure of 'mental castration', known colloquially as 'the snip'.

Many Mega-Cities, including Mega-City One, have experimented in removing psi-talents from an individual by cutting out pieces of their brain. However, most have found that other areas of the brain somehow remembered psi-abilities 'hologramatically' – invasive brain surgery would rarely have the desired effect. Sometimes an individual would find their abilities boosted instead of curtailed. Callous experiments at baby farms found that some 'specimens' were able to retain their psi-abilities when 93% of their brain had been removed – although they were unable to maintain simple

autonomic responses, such as breathing. While it was found that a reliable method of permanently removing psi-powers did not exist, a way of limiting their use was discovered. The human 'psychic battery' was found to reside in the pineal gland. Removing it would make it impossible for a human to retain any reserves of psychic energy, making their psi-talents all but useless. A character sentenced to mental castration will have his pineal gland surgically removed. The character immediately loses 2 points from his Intelligence and Wisdom scores, and is no longer able to recover any Power Points by natural means. The character must make use of a Psi Battery or Psi Booster Drugs (see *The Rookie's Guide to Psi Talent*) if he wishes to use any psi power.

### Psykers in Brit-Cit

The following prestige classes, detailed in *The Rookie's Guide to Psi-Talent*, can be used in Brit-Cit without modification. Any prestige class followed by a name in parentheses is known by the latter in Brit-Cit: *Celebrity Psi (Degsy)*, *Conduit (Flux Channel)*, *Faith Healer*, *Psychic Master*, *Snake Head (Mental Vandal* – in Brit-Cit, a 'Snake Head' is a perp runner) and *Trans-Dime*. The following prestige classes are unique to Brit-Cit.

### New Prestige Classes The Ghost Hunter

In previous ages, a ghost hunter was usually little more than an amateur investigator who concentrated on attempting to prove the existence of the paranormal by staking out old houses or ruins, desperate to find some small shred of evidence of the supernatural. However, by 2125, the existence of ghosts and demons is an undeniable fact and the nature of ghost hunting has changed dramatically. Today, ghost hunters are well prepared vigilantes intent on battling supernatural horrors with the latest technology.

A ghost hunter dedicates his life to hunting down and destroying supernatural and paranormal threats, regularly putting his life and sanity on the line in order to keep the unknown at bay. Not possessing psi-talents himself, the ghost hunter often finds it highly advantageous to work in conjunction with psykers in order to achieve his goals, although his unique abilities makes him a powerful foe when facing renegade psi-talented opponents.

**Hit Dice:** d6.

### Requirements

To qualify to become a ghost hunter, a citizen must fulfil all the following criteria.

**Skills:** Concentration 8 ranks, Knowledge (psi talent) 8 ranks, Listen 4 ranks, Search 4 ranks, Spot 4 ranks.

**Feats:** Iron Will.

### Class Skills

The ghost hunter's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Computer Use (Int), Concentration (Con), Drive (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (psi talent) (Int), Listen (Wis), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Streetwise (Wis) and Technical (Int).

**Skill Points at each Level:** 4 + Int modifier.

### Class Features

The following are all class features of the ghost hunter prestige class.

**Fearless:** At 1<sup>st</sup> level, the ghost hunter is already familiar with many forms of supernatural and paranormal creatures and effects. Nothing shocks or surprises him anymore – he gains a +6 bonus to all saving throws made against fear effects.

**Power Resistance:** Used to facing powerful paranormal foes, the ghost hunter gradually develops the ability to resist psychic powers. Undergoing



## The Shadow Moderator

Like the elite shadow ministers, the elusive individuals known as shadow moderators are operatives of the Shadow Ministry, dispatched to deal with supernatural or paranormal threats that are judged to be a major danger to the safety or security of Brit-Cit as a whole. Also known as 'men in grey', moderators receive extensive bionic and genetic modification intended to boost their psi powers, allowing them to deal with all but the most powerful of psychic threats unaided. As well as battling demons, ghosts and powerful psi criminals, it is not unknown for a moderator to be employed as an assassin when all other methods have failed – conventional defences are often useless against their mysterious abilities.

Moderators are regularly dispatched to some psychic hotspot at a moments notice, alerted by the Ministry's extensive network of spies. Unfortunately, the ultra secretive nature of the Shadow Ministry often extends to the information given to its own agents – briefings are kept to an absolute minimum and moderators are often sent to some remote location with little or no idea of what dangers they might be facing, or what task they are supposed to perform!

**Hit Dice:** d8.

### Requirements

To qualify to become a shadow moderator, a citizen must fulfil all the following criteria.

**Manifester Level:** 10<sup>th</sup>.

**Skills:** Concentration 8 ranks, Intimidate 5 ranks, Knowledge (psi-talent) 5 ranks.

**Feats:** Iron Will.

**Special:** Must be recruited by the Shadow Ministry.

### Class Skills

The shadow moderators class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Computer Use (Int), Concentration

a series of harsh training methods, he gradually hardens his resolve against all psychic attacks. At 3<sup>rd</sup> level, the ghost hunter gains a Power Resistance of 2. By the time he reaches 4<sup>th</sup> level, this improves to Power Resistance 4.

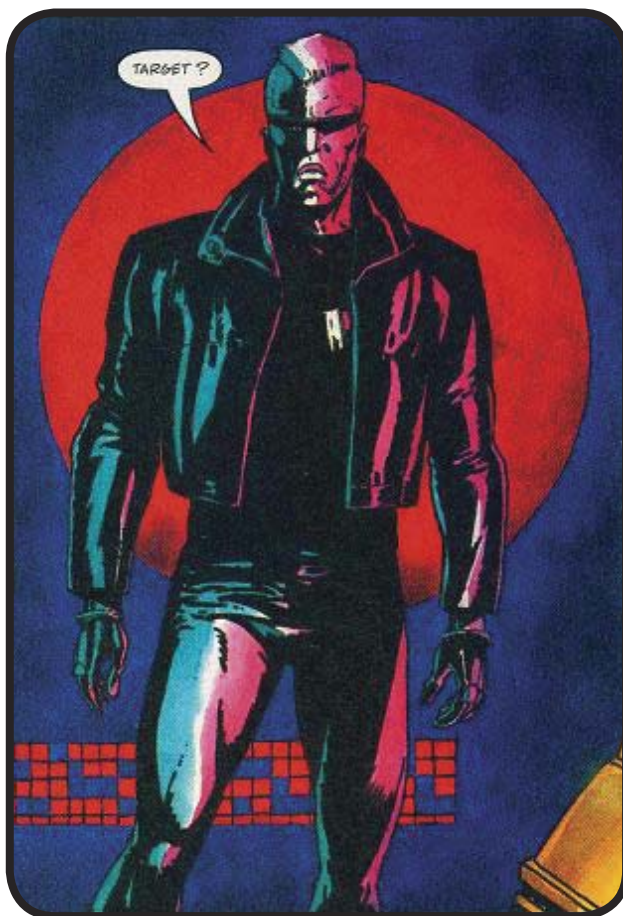
**Sixth Sense:** By the time he reaches 3<sup>rd</sup> level, the ghost hunter has been so long exposed to paranormal phenomena that he has learned to take notice of his instincts and subconscious. He gains the Judge feat Sixth Sense as a bonus feat, even if he does not fulfil the prerequisites.

**Banish:** When a ghost hunter reaches 5<sup>th</sup> level, he has become one of the top experts in battling psychic entities and has learned ancient rituals that can hurl them back to their own reality. Once per day, he is able to invoke a ritual that is the equivalent to the *Banish* psi-power (see p15 of *The Rookie's Guide to Psi-Talent*). The ghost hunter uses his class level as a manifesters level when determining the amount of Hit Dice he is able to banish. The ghost hunter still requires a psi-focus, but gains no advantage when using it.

### The Ghost Hunter

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Fearless
2	+1	+1	+1	+3	Power Resistance 2
3	+2	+2	+2	+4	Sixth Sense
4	+3	+3	+3	+5	Power Resistance 4
5	+4	+4	+4	+6	Banish





(Con), Drive (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (psi-talent) (Int), Listen (Wis), Pilot (Dex), Psi Scan (Int), Read Lips (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Streetwise (Wis) and Technical (Int).

**Skill Points at each Level:** 2 + Int Modifier.

### Class Features

The following are all class features of the shadow moderator prestige class.

**Specialist Equipment:** All shadow moderators wear a grey biz-suit as a kind of uniform. This is functional but still snappy, although many who encounter the men in grey find their clothing strangely old-fashioned. The shadow moderator has access to any piece of equipment available to Brit-Cit as long as he remains in the British Isles, delivered to him within 1d4 hours.

**Psi-Talent:** At every level gained in the shadow moderator prestige class,

the character gains new powers and power points as if he had gained a level in a psi talented class (such as Citizen – rogue psyker) he belonged to before adding the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of the original class would have gained (such as bonus feats or hit points, beyond those gained with the prestige class), except for the increased level of psi-talent.

#### License to Kill:

The shadow moderator is granted a license to kill at 1<sup>st</sup> level,

empowering him to execute others within parameters set by the license without interference from the Brit-Cit judges.

**Psi Focus Implant:** At 2<sup>nd</sup> level, the shadow moderator is implanted with the first of many cybernetic implants to improve their psi abilities. A psi focus (see p69 of *The Rookie's Guide to Psi Talent*) is implanted directly

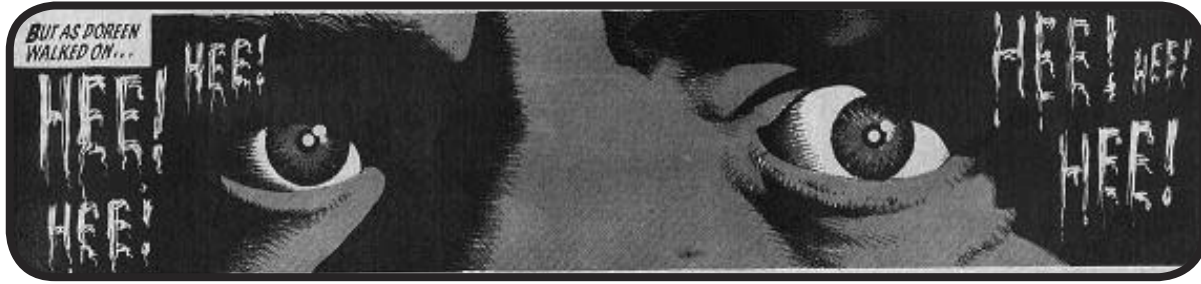
into the temporal lobe of the brain, granting the moderator the innate ability to concentrate the use of any psi talent and amplify their force. The moderator immediately gains a +1 bonus to all manifester checks to beat Power Resistance and to the DC of any saving throws required to resist the power. The implant improves to a +2 bonus when the character reaches 4<sup>th</sup> level. This bonus does not stack should the character make use of another psi focus.

**Pineal Booster Graft:** At 3<sup>rd</sup> level, the shadow moderator undergoes genetic modification surgery to the pineal gland in his brain, enlarging it and grafting on non-human DNA to greatly improve the character's reserves of psychic energy. The moderator immediately increases his maximum power points by 20. The pineal booster graft creates a visible lump at the base of the moderator's neck.

**Cyberpsyche Implant:** At 5<sup>th</sup> level, the moderator has a tiny computer system implanted directly into his brain to monitor his other cybernetic enhancements and control many of the characters autonomic functions, freeing up vital mental energy. The moderator gradually gains the ability to use more and more of the potential of his brain. The character immediately gains a +3 bonus to his Intelligence and Charisma scores and a +6 bonus to Concentration skill checks.

### The Shadow Moderator

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+1	+1	+2	License to Kill
2	+1	+2	+2	+4	Psi Focus Implant +1
3	+2	+3	+3	+5	Pineal Booster Graft
4	+3	+4	+4	+6	Psi Focus Implant +2
5	+4	+5	+5	+7	Cyberpsyche Implant



## Brit-Cit Psychic Entities

### Hob

**Medium Psychic Entity**

**Hit Dice:** 3d12+9 (30 hp)

**Initiative:** +3 (+3 Dex)

**Speed:** 40 ft.

**DV:** 16 (+6 Reflex)

**Damage Reduction:** 4 (natural armour)

**Attacks:** Claw +4 melee

**Damage:** Claw 1d8+1/4

**Face/Reach:** 5ft. by 5 ft./5ft.

**Special Attacks:** Aura of terror, leap, sulphurous breath

**Special Qualities:** Psychic entity

**Saves:** Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +3

**Abilities:** Str 12, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 7

**Skills:** Balance +10, Climb +7, Intimidate +5, Jump +8

**Feats:** Toughness, Weapon Focus (claw)

**Climate/Terrain:** Brit-Cit, any urban

**Organisation:** Solitary

**Advancement:** 4 – 5 HD (Medium)

Under one name or another (such as 'Old Tanglebones' or 'Spring Heeled Jack'), these malevolent demons have plagued the streets of Brit-Cit for centuries, but recently sightings or attacks have been reported on an almost daily basis. Seen in the distance or spotted out of the corner of the eye, a hob appears to be a normal, rather formally dressed businessman or blueblood clad in an old-fashioned black frock coat and tall top hat. Closer examination reveals the truth – hobs are tall (well over six foot) and skeletally thin. Their limbs seem tangled and dislocated beneath their clothes, with joints in unlikely positions. Impossibly long fingers end with lethal, razor sharp talons, which are often encrusted with the dried blood

of their previous victims. Their faces are recognisably humanoid, but bestial and twisted into a rictus grin, revealing jagged yellow teeth and a darting, pointed black tongue. Their skin is a pale, bloodless hue and covered in a network of tiny cracks, like dried up mud. The eyes are large and jet-black, but blaze like fanned embers when the hob is angry or excited. They move impossibly quickly for their size, in a motion that can best be described as 'scuttling', or hopping and jumping in enormous, insect-like leaps. A hob does not appear to possess the ability to speak, but giggles uncontrollably when pursuing a victim and shrieks with mad laughter whenever it manages to catch someone.

### Combat

Hobs feed on fear, and are therefore more concerned with terrifying their victims than killing them. They choose their prey with care, usually selecting a woman or child walking alone, stalking them for some time before they make their presence and true nature known. They usually leap onto victims, intimidating them with their sulphurous breath attack and slashing at their faces or clothing with their razor sharp claws before making their escape, hopping over walls or scuttling down a nearby manhole, screaming with lunatic laughter. A victim that provides a particularly satisfying meal may be stalked for months, trailing them whenever they leave their home, peering through windows at them or even entering their abode to watch over them as they sleep, sometimes even stalking and murdering their friends and family in order to terrify them more. If attacked, a hob takes a great joy in combat, but fights to win.

**Aura of Terror:** In addition to their horrific natural form, hobs are surrounded by a supernatural aura of terror, often more than enough to send even the boldest individual fleeing in fear. Any living creature meeting a hob face to face for the first time must make a Will save (DC 15) or immediately flee the area in fear, at the greatest possible speed, for 2d4 rounds. If the save is successful, the creature will never suffer from the effects of the hob's aura of terror again.

**Leap:** A hob can hop like a grasshopper, moving an incredible distance at an impossible speed, apparently 'fitting' from one place to another, or bounding effortlessly over walls. A hob can jump 50 feet in any direction as a move equivalent action.

**Psychic Entity:** Hobs are psychic entities and so are immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, paralysis, stunning and disease. They are not subject to Arrest checks, critical hits, called shots, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage. In addition, they suffer double damage from silver weapons.

**Sulphurous Breath:** A hob can vomit a blast of red-hot sulphur, burning and choking their unfortunate victims. This attack has a maximum range of 10 feet and has a 5-foot burst area. Each victim suffers 2d6 fire damage; although a successful Reflex save will half the damage. Those that fail the Reflex save must make an immediate Fortitude save or they will be Stunned for the next 1d6 rounds as they choke on the toxic sulphur fumes. A hob can use its sulphurous breath attack once every ten minutes.







## Alternate Magical Items

**I**t's a constant moan of mine that magic items in D20 are too often treated as mundane and ubiquitous, relegated to the status of mere useful tools. So I thought I'd try and come up with a few items that can add some humour and fun to your game's story.

### The Deck of Deception

*Haakon laid his hand down with a flourish and looked Jarra square in the face. 'Read 'em and weep son, that's four aces and you ain't gonna beat that!'*

*His opponent considered the situation for a moment, then stood up and drew his sword. Haakon stood up to face him, and looked him square in the eye. 'What's the matter? Can't take losing?'*

*His opponent smiled, drew a card from his as yet unrevealed hand and flipped it face up onto the table. 'Oh I can take losing. It's cheating I can't abide.'*

*Haakon looked at the card.*

*It was an ace.*

The Deck of Deception is a highly unusual item in that its singular intelligence and consciousness is spread across many separate physical items: 52 of them in fact. Each takes the form of a playing card, the designs which lay upon each face being changeable at will by the deck itself.

*'Okay, let's see what fate has in store for you. Your first card is the sunrise. That indicates something that will happen shortly. Your second card is the daughter. That indicates something that will happen to someone close to you. Your third card is... Hmmm.'*

*'What's the third card?'*

*'Let's not talk about the third card.'*

The deck can appear to be a standard deck of playing cards; or it can appear to be a deck of divination cards. It can appear to be a correct standard set, or it can appear to be fifty-two aces. It has no purpose in live save to anger, divide and torment those who encounter it.

When found, it will usually paint the visible faces of the cards so as to appear to be face down (i.e. it will paint an abstract design or picture on the visible face). It will then usually wait for the finder to reveal what they assume it to be – either by saying 'It's a deck of playing cards!' or by saying 'It's a fortune telling deck!' – and then paint the front sides accordingly.

It will then proceed to have fun.

If its finders have assumed that it's a deck of cards, it will paint its faces as a standard set of cards, and initially allow them to play it as a standard deck. Once they've got into the game, it will start to play, beginning by simply disappointing people, giving one person an extremely good hand but someone else an even better one. Eventually it will move onto provoking fights and conflict by manufacturing accusations of cheating. There's nothing it likes better than an evening that ends with it lying scattered by a dying camp-fire surrounded by bodies, waiting for the next set of victims to find it.

If its finders have assumed that it's a fortune telling deck then a whole different set of opportunities for torment open up for it, based on telling people what it has deduced that they most fear and giving people advice that its guesses will prove catastrophic if followed.

### History

Little is known of the origin of the Deck. It might have been created by a cheating gambler or a crooked fortune-teller. By rights it should by now have been destroyed many times over by an angry victim, but the fury it arouses is generally aimed elsewhere (at other card players or the 'fortune teller') with the deck itself being forgotten. Where people do work out what it's doing, they're invariably seduced by the thought of the havoc they can wield with it.

Either way, it always seems to survive to claim new victims.

**The Deck of Deception:** *deck of playing cards*; AL CE; Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 13; Empathy, 60 ft. vision and hearing; Ego score 8.

**Lesser Powers:** Item has 10 ranks in Bluff (total modifier +13) and 10 ranks in Sense Motive (total modifier +13).

**Greater Powers:** Item consists of multiple separate items, Item can redraw faces.

**Personality:** The deck is extremely malicious and exists only to spread discord and pain.

## Cheeves

*The sands around him were coming alive but Woosen the Barbarian was not scared, for he lacked the intellect to comprehend most dangers and those that he could were swiftly dispatched by his trusty sword. He watched as the chaotically swirling sands coalesced into distinct spirals, a score of more of sandy whirlpools from each of which arose a column of bones that formed, took shape and came alive.*

*He grasped the hilt of his longsword firmly, and was preparing to send the abominations back to the sands from which they had just emerged when a soundless something coughed from somewhere inside his skull.*

*'Those are skeletons, sir,' it said, in a voice both smooth and calming. 'So perhaps the war-mace might be a better choice?'*

To a player, Cheeves is a magical item: an intelligent shield offering advice and defence bonuses. But to a GM, it is many other, creative things: a plot device, a 'life jacket' and an insult.

As a plot device, Cheeves allows the GM to give advice to the party in character, which can be very handy when his or her players are a) morons; b) prone to getting themselves stuck in seemingly inescapable situations; or c) both of the above. It also allows the GM to subtly guide the course of scenarios, ensuring that the PCs follow the plot you wanted them to, and not the red herring you didn't even realise was a red herring until they put two and two together and came up with nine point seven five.

As a 'life jacket', Cheeves can radically increase the survivability of the characters of the one player that every group has – the one who manages to die every other week.

And as an insult, well you just have to explain the 'life jacket' bit to him.

## History

The shield Cheeves (the precise origin of the name is undetermined) was created more than a millennia ago by the court wizards of an ailing king in an ultimately futile attempt to keep his idiotic first-born alive long enough to inherit the throne. It was endowed not only with intelligence and wisdom, but with the accumulated knowledge of a mighty civilisation – a stock of knowledge that it has added to during more than a millennia of existence.

Since then it has had many owners, many of whom have been unaware of the full range of Cheeves' abilities, since it only reveals itself to those who it believes are deserving of its aid.



**Cheeves:** +4 medium shield; AL NG; Int 19, Wis 19, Cha 10; Speech, telepathy, 120 ft. darkvision, blindsense, and hearing; Ego score 23.

**Lesser Powers:** Item has 10 ranks (total modifier +14) in each of Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (geography), Knowledge (history), Knowledge (local), Knowledge (nature), Knowledge (nobility & royalty), Knowledge (religion).

**Personality:** Cheeves' purpose and role in life, from which it derives all satisfaction and pleasure, is to protect and advise its owner. Cheeves is always on hand to offer advice, whether it be related to matters sartorial ('I believe that blue is this season's fashion, sir'), matters of the heart ('I believe the young lady might be waiting for you to contact her, sir'), or matters of surviving the next thirty-five seconds ('I believe there is a hidden door on the wall opposite, sir, just below the portrait of the late Duke of Cannondane').

If Cheeves has one failing, it's that its desire to aid its owner, combined with its usual certainty that its opinion is the correct one, can cause it to fail to accept a master's decision to follow an alternate course of action to that which it suggested. In cases such as these it's prone to sulk (in a very polite, formal, 'working to rule' kind of way), and refuse to offer any further advice until its owner agrees to follow the course of action that it recommended.

Most owners find Cheeves's advice so useful that they feel submitting to its decision is a price well worth paying to regain the benefits of that advice.



## The Broken Sundial

At first glance, the Broken Sundial appears to be an amusing, but useless, novelty. It is exactly what the name suggests: a sundial that displays an incorrect time. When placed on a level surface, a shadow appears on its face. But it is not the shadow cast by the sun. Instead, the shadow is at a different angle, showing a different time.

Intelligent observers may realise that the ‘incorrect shadow’ moves at the correct rate, and will also be offset the same amount from the actual time (as long as it isn’t moved a significant geographical distance). At this point, the sundial’s owners have a moderately useful item: a clock that can work indoors and out, and that is highly accurate once you’ve calculated the time offset.

But the sundial’s real power comes when they realise that it’s actually showing the time at a particular point of longitude on the world’s surface. At that point it shows the correct time; move away to the east or west and the offset from actual local time appears. This makes it incredibly useful for navigation (see sidebar) provided you know the longitude whose time it shows.

The sundial could drive a number of different scenario storylines.

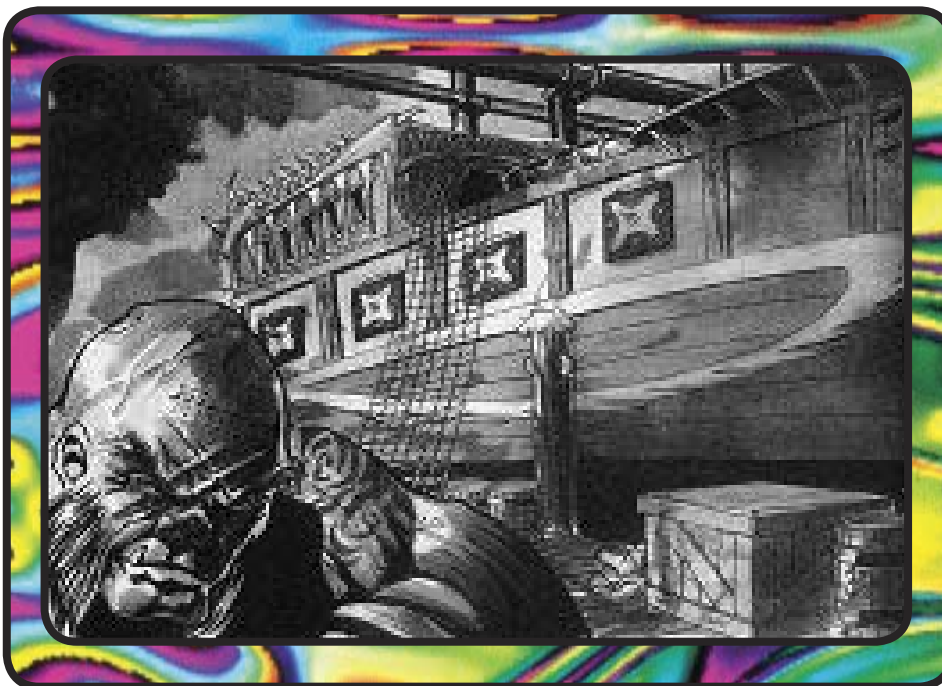
It could be the ‘McGuffin’ behind an epic ‘journey across the continent’ campaign, in which the PCs are tasked by the sun-dial’s owner with travelling east (or west) into the heart of the continent until they find the point at which it shows the correct time (in other words, ‘calibrating’ it for actual navigational use).

## The Deal With Time & Longitude

In a world that works like our own, your latitude (your north-south position) can be easily obtained using only a astrolabe and the stars. But establishing a method of obtaining longitude proved much harder, and it wasn’t until 1764 when John Harrison invented the first accurate and portable clock that navigation moved out of the ‘Oh look! We appeared to have discovered America!’ stage.

An accurate clock allows you to calculate your longitude by comparing the time of the place you sailed from with the time of the place you’re currently in, and then using the rotation of the Earth to convert that to a distance. If it’s noon where you currently are (i.e. the sun is at its highest position), but your clock – which you set when you left port – is showing eleven am, then you are one hour, or 15 degrees, west of wherever it was you sailed from.

Or alternatively, an unsuspecting group who possess the item, but think it’s merely a moderately useful, but slow (or fast) clock, might find themselves set upon by various assailants (perhaps under the pay of rival merchants’ guilds) intent on stealing the sundial.



## History

The history of the sundial can be tailored to your campaign world, but it will most likely have been created many hundreds of years ago in a port city of a large trading empire, from which ships set out to explore the world. Its rare nature indicates that far from being a mass-produced item, it was one of a limited set (or perhaps even a one-off), which then implies that it wasn’t for general merchant use but for some special purpose: perhaps the ship of an explorer/cartographer, or perhaps of an important person, such as the Emperor.



# The Red Credit Crew

A CRIMINAL ORGANISATION FOR THE  
BABYLON 5 ROLEPLAYING GAME

Bryan Steele

'Your bet, Ashra,' the scarred Earther tapped his fingers on the poker table in pace with the rhythmic music pouring out of nearby speakers. 'Six hundred and forty credits... you in?'

'Well, Vic, 'Ashra - a muscled Drazzi with one cloudy eye - rubbed his chin. His scales made a grinding sound in his hand. 'I'll call, and I'll raise another hundred creds.' He tossed a handful of chits onto the growing pile in the centre of the table.

'Too rich for me, I've got pouchlings to feed. I'm out,' the heavyset Narn sitting across from Ashra laughed. 'I'll see you around.' He flopped his cards down onto the table, showing only the chromatic skin of their backs, and stood up.

'Me too,' a scruffy human sighed and gently laid his cards down too, as if it were his last gesture. 'But I wan' see just how bad the lizard is bluffin'.' He kicked back and folded his arms over his chest, showing long discoloured stains under his arms from the long nerve-wracking game.

'It's just you and me, Vic,' Ashra leaned forward, letting the stage lights reflect eerily off the tabled card backs and chits onto his face, 'you in?'

Even with the booming music, flashing lights and half-dressed dancers parading around the room, the table had gathered quite a crowd. Games like this were commonplace in the Underground, a moving pleasure-club that frequented parts of Red Sector and Downbelow year round on Babylon 5. Gamblers came and went,



with little more than a glance. But something about tonight's game was different. The Drazzi, Ashra Drabhar, was a well-known member of the Red Credit Crew - a criminal band of high-rollers that have their sticky fingers in a great many pies around the station. His opponent, Victor Colt, was a retired security officer with friends in very high, and very low, places. They agreed to sit down to a good game of Gamut, Llor rules version three of course, some six hours ago. Now it was very late in the day, and over ten thousand credits lay in a messy pile between the two gamblers.

'Well?' Ashra smirked.

'Okay, I'll pay just to see your cards,' Vic shoved his remaining chits into the centre, 'all in.'

'Gutsy, Earther. Very gutsy.' A murmur passed through the crowd

around the table as the Drazzi flicked the last of his chits in as well. 'Let's see yours first.'

Vic turned over his six oval-shaped plastic cards one at a time. Each card clacked onto the one before it, showing one of the best Gamut hands ever dealt - three novas backing three silver moons. He raised one eyebrow, and waived his up turned palm over the table like presenting a game show award.

'Helluva hand, Earther,' Ashra hissed with a hint of disappointment, 'you got me.'

A wide smile split Vic's face, and a cheer erupted around the crowd. He began to shovel the chits into his untucked shirt when Ashra cleared his throat and silenced the crowd.

'Oh,' he said as he reached inside his vest pocket - which gave everyone



a start, 'you forgot one.' With his forefinger and thumb, he tossed a peculiar looking credit chip onto the landslide of Gamut chits. It was a smaller, round red chip like the ones used in New Vegas casinos.

It was also the calling card for the Red Credit Crew. Getting one of those telltale credits meant that the Crew was planning to have a 'meeting' with you - one that normally ended up with you in a box or a crate somewhere in Downbelow. Vic immediately started to sweat, and paused in gathering his winnings to stare at the odd chip lying on top.

'Hey... Ashra... Mister Drabhar,' Vic stammered, 'I didn't mean to... I mean...'

'Come by Red 9 tomorrow night, Vic,' the Drazi stood up and straightened his leather vest, 'we have a lot to talk about.'

With that, he turned and walked away from the table, leaving a very nervous Vic to collect his suddenly less-than-gratifying winnings. As the crowd began to disperse, leaving the area around the table as a void in the otherwise busy bar, Vic let out a heavy sigh.

'What the frag have I done?'



Victor stepped out of the tube onto the corridor of Red 9. He was wearing his finest business suit, and had even dropped the extra credits for a synthetic tulip on his lapel. His left hand was sunk deeply in his front trouser pocket; his other was a white-knuckled fist that hung by his side. As he drew closer to the Black Hole gambling den - the Red Credit Crew's local hangout - two rough looking human thugs stepped up to 'greet' him.

'You lost?' one said, placing one hand inside his torn flight jacket.

'I... I was invited?' Vic said nervously.

'You don't sound very sure,' the other thug chuckled.

'Well,' Vic opened his shaking fist to reveal the small round red chip, 'does this help?'

'Let him through,' a raspy voice from behind the door shouted. The thugs stepped aside.

'Thank you,' Vic sighed as he entered the room beyond. It was a small cramped office, like the ones found all over red sector, with a metallic oval table in the centre and a soft-glow hydroplastic lamp swaying overhead. Sitting on the opposite end of the small table, spinning a long knife on the table lazily with his finger, was Ashra.

'Come in, Mister Colt.'

'About the other day,' Vic stumbled over the gravity of the situation, 'about the game...'

'Don't worry about that,' Ashra stopped playing with the blade and pointed it at the empty chair opposite him, 'have a seat.' Once the human obliged, Ashra placed his hands together and tapped his steepled fingers against his chin. 'You beat me fair and square, Vic. So don't worry about the money - it's yours.'

'Oh, thank heavens,' Vic sighed aloud.

'But your masterful playing did give me an idea,' Ashra smirked. 'I have a high-stakes Gamut game set up for next week. Two ambassadors, a privateer captain and a not-to-be-named businessman will be meeting me in Downbelow. The prize pot, however, has gotten large enough that I question my own ability to win. We have only ever spoken over the links, which is why I want *you* to play my hand.'

'But,' Vic raised an eyebrow, 'won't they wonder why I'm not a Drazi?'

'We have arranged for that,' Ashra produced a small device and pressed the button on its surface. In response, a side door - one that Vic had not spotted before - slid open and a wiry Brakiri strode in carrying a large stretch of grey fabric. After folding the fabric onto the table, Vic's eyes grew wide.

'A Changeling net?' Vic scoffed. 'But they are illegal anywhere in Earthspace!'

'So is non-casino gambling for sums over a million credits,' Ashra shrugged. 'But who's counting?'

'Aren't they dangerous, too?'

'A little,' the Drazi laughed, 'but ten percent of your winnings will pay for a good doctor, won't it?'

'How much are we talking?'

'Well,' Ashra counted on his fingers as he spoke, 'each player is to bring one million credits with them to the table. And there are five of us. No one can cash out until all players are ousted - so, one tenth of five million credits. That's what... five hundred thousand for a few hours work?'

'Since you put it that way...'

'I thought you'd be interested,' Ashra rasped and stood up, offering a hand across the table.

'Where do I sign?'

'No signature necessary, just hang on to that chip.'

'Why?' Vic took the offered hand and shook it, the last vestiges of nervousness fading into dreams of fortune.

'Because as of right now,' Ashra grinned, 'you are one of us.'

'I am?'

'Welcome to the Red Credit Crew.'

**T**he Red Credit Crew is one of Babylon 5's largest cohesive criminal organisations that lurk between sectors on the station. Numbering nearly a hundred known members, the Crew specialises in extortion of Red Sector businesses and illegal smuggling and gambling rings. They originally formed in 2258, when a pair of retired dockworkers - Arthur Groves and Oswald Macauley - decided to start smuggling rare items through customs. By 2260, the pair had acquired a great deal of wealth and more than a few underlings.

As with anything, the Red Credit Crew ran into a few growing pains as they began to dabble in other shady circles. On Christmas Eve 2260, Arthur Groves and Oswald Macauley went into a private room during a financial argument - only Groves came out alive. From that night on, the Crew's members demanded a better leadership structure. Reluctantly, Groves created the Tier of Collars.

At the height of the Tier, unsurprisingly, is Groves himself. Directly beneath him are three *Royals*, who oversee the majority of the Crew's affairs. Each Royal chooses a pair of subordinate *Benchmarks*. The Benchmark's job is to make sure the everyday issues of the Crew's individual members are taken care of, financially as well

as legally. Benchmark's come and go, but the Royals have remained the same since 2264 (the last time one was arrested, sentenced, and therefore replaced).

Lower members refer to themselves as *Chips* and are recruited from all walks of station life. Gamblers and numbers-men are normally recruited from the numerous underground casinos - especially those run by the Red Credit Crew. Muscle is hired from retired security and mercenary groups, with a leaning on Drazi and Narn members preferred over humans (who might still have some loyalties to Babylon 5 staff or personnel). Due to the corporate connections of one of the current Royals, nearly all money lending and inside accounting is conducted by a team of Vree and Brakiri loan sharks - who are lethally efficient in their financial dealings.

Common Red Credit Crew hangouts include; the Casino, the Dark Star and several smaller clubs and bars. A great number of merchants and services get regular visits from Red Credit Chips and one member can usually be found within eyeshot of the Post Office. Ever since the arrival of Captain Sheridan, the Red Credit Crew has kept clear of the Zocalo completely, choosing to deal outside of the public eye.

Arthur Groves himself lives in a very stately quarters in Green Sector

(which, rumour has it, he won in a bet from the now-deceased Markab ambassador) that include a working water shower and a full bar (which Arthur keeps fully stocked with an assortment of interstellar beverages). He rarely leaves his quarters except to travel back and forth to Mars, where Groves' son and daughter live out their lives in relative peace. Arthur's estranged wife Marguerette, having divorced him the year after their daughter was born, lives happily on Earth with her new family. She has no contact with Groves in fear of being connected to his lifestyle.

Overall, the Red Credit Crew comes off as any other thug-filled group of roughnecks looking to make a dishonest cred. In actuality, however, Groves does his best to stay as non-violent as he can in his dealings. Staying involved in non-lethal contraband, smuggling of personal effects and hard-to-get exotics and running several illegal gambling circuits is 90% of the Crew's business. When conflict - either with debtors or opposing criminals - does arise, Arthur will arrange for the person to 'go missing'. When all else fails, the Red Credit Crew has several hard-case mercenaries in their employ to make such problems vanish without a trace.

All members of the Crew can be recognised by their calling card credit chips, which they are instructed to

## Note for Campaigns that take place after Mars' Declaration of Independence

When Mars declared its secession from Earth in 2260, Arthur Groves used his organisation to smuggler goods and equipment to Mars for the Resistance to utilise against Earth rule. By early 2261, the Red Credit Crew had all but moved from Babylon 5 to Mars - becoming an influential force of guerrilla warfare and corporate sabotage in the fight to come. In fact, one of Number One's right hand lieutenants is actually Frederick Groves, Arthur's sixteen year-old grandson.





wear or flaunt openly - so long as Babylon 5 Security is nowhere in sight, of course. The exception to this rule is for the Royals and Arthur himself, who are expected to dress in a much higher regard. They are supposed to be the example to which every member wants to aspire, even if not in practice. Only the most rough-and-tumble members carry weaponry on them, with a leaning toward civilian PPGs and stun batons.

## Well-Known Crew Members

### ARTHUR GROVES, BOSS OF THE RED CREDIT CREW

*'Send the ambassador a little message. Diplomatic immunity doesn't beat the spread. Ever.'*

**5<sup>th</sup> Level Human Worker (blue collar)/2<sup>nd</sup> Level Smuggler**

**Hit Points:** 19

**Initiative:** +2 (+2 Dex)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**DV:** 12 (+2 Dex)

**Attacks:** +3 melee or +5 ranged

**Special Qualities:** Cargo Disguise, Holdout

**Saves:** Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +3

**Abilities:** Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 16

**Skills:** Appraise +10, Bluff +14, Computer Use +8, Disguise +11, Drive +8, Escape Artist +6, Forgery +12, Hide +8, Intimidate +10, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Pilot +2, Profession (dock worker) +6, Profession (gambler) +6, Profession (crimelord) +8, Search +6, Sense Motive +8, Speak Language (English, Russian, Drazi, Brakiri, Narn, Centauri), Spot +6, and Technical (labour equipment) +6

**Feats:** Streetwise, Skill Focus (Bluff), Contact (Mars Resistance), Independently Wealthy

Born and raised on Mars, growing up as a dockworker's kid throwing dice in the back alleys and downed tubes, Arthur

Groves is a self-made success story. Coming up from the streets, he paid his way into the dockworker's union and eventually ended up on Babylon 4. Luckily, he was visiting his family on Mars when the station disappeared - and was one of the first in line to be sent to the new station years later.

Growing from dockworker to smuggler to crimelord, Arthur has a certain air about him that makes those in his presence feel a sort of awe. His employees think of him as a father figure and his enemies tend to stay out of his direct path. Even so, he tends to be soft spoken and eloquent, using credits and subtle threats instead of a raised voice. He relies on the inherent nature of his clientele to avoid trouble, and with the backing he has in his current three Royals - he has little to fear if trouble arises.

### ASHRA DRAB-AR, RED CREDIT ROYAL

*'Let's play a game. I call it, bleed until you die.'*

**7<sup>th</sup> Level Drazi Agent**

**Hit Points:** 26

**Initiative:** +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**DV:** 12 (+2 Dex)

**Attacks:** +8 melee or +7 ranged

**Special Qualities:** DR 2 Scales, Security Systems, Sneak Attack +1d6, Skill Mastery (Intimidate, Profession: Gambler)

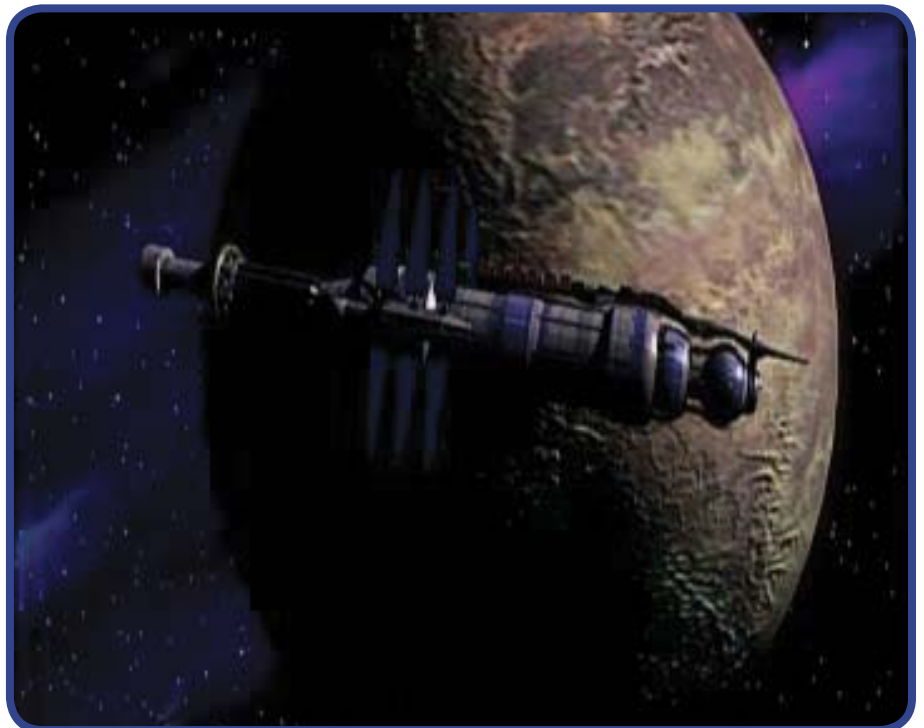
**Saves:** Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +2

**Abilities:** Str 17, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 12

**Skills:** Balance +6, Bluff +10, Climb +12, Computer Use +6, Concentration +8, Disguise +2, Drive +5, Escape Artist +8, Gather Information +10, Hide +10, Intimidate +14, Jump +8, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Pick Pocket +6, Profession (gambler) +5, Search +6, Sense Motive +6, Speak Language (Drazi, English, Narn), Spot +8, and Technical (surveillance equipment) +6

**Feats:** Dense Scales, Skill Focus (intimidate), Improved Unarmed Strike, Toughness

Originally hailing from the dark city streets of Zagros 3, Ashra came to Babylon 5 to carve out a life for himself in the mercenary/bodyguard profession - but found serving ambassadorial toadies and foppish socialites boring and fruitless. So, he gave it up for a life of better-paying kneecapping jobs Downbelow.



It did not take long for the Red Credit Crew to pick him up, and with Ashra's eagerness and drive, to raise him to the rank of Benchmark. As a Benchmark, Ashra oversaw three separate casinos and over a dozen Red Credit Chips. When the Royal before him died in an unforeseen airlock 'accident', Ashra was the first in line to pick up where he left off.

Ashra carries himself like a true criminal. Through fear, intimidation and liberal use of pugilism he forces his foes to avoid him and his friends to cling to him. He dresses like a millionaire - which he is only slightly shy of, due to his extended loan sharking duties - and carries a rare Drazzi punch dagger engraved with the signature of Shalla Voire (the finest Drazzi knife-fighter in pit fight history) with him always. It was actually during a debt collection on the knife-fighter that Ashra had his left eye blinded; a trophy he wears with pride.

## DOPHAK URKANIR, RED CREDIT ROYAL

*'I know what you're thinking pal. Don't do it. Don't you even dare.'*

### 6<sup>th</sup> Level Brakiri Telepath

**Hit Points:** 17

**Initiative:** +1 (+1 Dex)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**DV:** 11 (+1 Dex)

**Attacks:** +4 melee or +5 ranged

**Special Qualities:** Rating P8, Darkvision 60 ft., Maintain Concentration

**Telepathic Abilities:** Accidental Scan, Danger Sense, Locate Mind, Mind Shield, Sense Telepathy, Surface Scan, Warning

**Saves:** Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +6

**Abilities:** Str 10, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 17, Wis 13, Cha 14

**Skills:** Appraise +9, Bluff +4, Climb +3, Computer Use +6, Concentration +12, Diplomacy +6, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (telepathy) +8, Listen +7, Sense Motive +8, Speak Language (English, Brakiri, comprehend Vree), Spot +6 and Telepathy +11

**Feats:** Ability Focus (surface scan), Adaptive Mind, Defensive

Block, Hobby (speak language), Skill Focus (appraise)

Knowing about his powers since early childhood, Dophak soared through corporate accounting schooling and on through the graduate programs. Using his powerful telepathic abilities to cheat on exams, learn from unknowing students and alter professors' perceptions of him he breezed into the corporate world with ease. Once there, he actually learned a great deal about the profession - becoming a financier of the highest calibre.

Eventually his employers requested his office be moved to Babylon 5 for use abroad, and Dophak went along willingly. He was eager to experience the famous station's multitudes for himself. When reaching Babylon 5, the sheer tumult of telepathic static on the station nearly overwhelmed him. He has described it as 'trying to focus on a single tone or note in a symphony'. In the chaos his mind was dealing with, he made several mistakes and miscalculations that cost him his cushy corporate contracts. Dophak spiralled into drink and gambling, and found himself engaging in high-risk games - until his telepathic cheating caught up with him while playing Saturnian Sunspot with one of the Red Credit Benchmarks.

Rather than killing the telepath for his cheating, Groves offered him a job as his own personal accountant. Three years, and a five million credit profit margin later, Dophak assumed his place as one of Groves' Royals. Several Benchmarks have it in for him because of this unexpected rise in station - some even claiming that



Dophak used his powers of the mind to *influence* Groves. Whatever the cause Dophak now oversees a team of twenty Brakiri, Human and Vree financiers that keep nearly all of the Red Credit Crew's accounts in the green.

## ERK 'THE DANE' OLIN, RED CREDIT ROYAL

*'You could do that. And I could tell your wife... I mean wives... about that pleasure club on Red 10 you like so much.'*

### 5<sup>th</sup> Level Human Lurker/2<sup>nd</sup> Level Fence

**Hit Points:** 22

**Initiative:** +2 (+2 Dex)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**DV:** 12 (+2 Dex)

**Attacks:** +5 melee or +6 ranged

**Special Qualities:** Lurker's Knowledge, Survivor's Luck, Income, Web of Contacts, Finger on the Pulse  
**Saves:** Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +1  
**Abilities:** Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 11, Cha 12

**Skills:** Appraise +11, Bluff +10, Computer Use +8, Diplomacy +7, Forgery +11, Gather Information +10, Hide +6, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (pharmaceuticals) +5, Listen +10,



Medical +4, Sense Motive +7, Speak Language (English, Danish, Russian, Draz, Narn), Spot +12 and Survival +6

**Feats:** Forward Thinking, Alertness, Toughness, Great Fortitude, Improved Recovery

Erik arrived aboard the station by falling, literally, out of a transport from the Scandinavian League to Babylon 5 during docking. As a stowaway, he found himself in the brig when he awoke from the hypothermic shock. Seventeen days later he was one of the countless nobodies in Downbelow.

From there he became part of the Red Credit Crew's intelligence and smuggling network in short order, and used his role to slowly become *the* man to go to if you needed something - from contraband to bad gossip. Using a host of blackmail

and diligently placed rumour, Erik 'the Dane' formed a network of informants and acquirers around him. There was - and is - nothing he cannot get his stubby fingers on.

Groves recruited Erik for a lengthy mudslinging campaign against a former enemy, and was so pleased with the results that Erik was drafted into the Crew at the young age of 18. Today the blonde-haired lad has dozens of spies and agents working beneath him. Almost thoroughly untrustworthy and one of the youngest members of the Crew, Erik is quick to temper and holds heavy grudges. Rumour has it that one man who welched on a bet with the Dane found over a pound of dust in his quarters and divorce paperwork already in transit before the night was out. Raised in the gutter, you learn the only way to the top is by stepping on your neighbours.

Shot, Improved Critical (PPG rifle), Marksman, Point Blank Shot, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (PPG Rifle, PPG), Weapon Specialisation (PPG Rifle)

Cracier served as an EarthForce sharpshooter during the Earth-Minbari War with a tremendous track record for exemplary service. After a mishap with a ranking officer, and the resulting court martial, he retired to Proxima. His skills called to him in his dreams and he sank back into old patterns. A leader in the dark-humoured race of anti-corporate kills on Proxima 3, Cracier Hartigan is one of the most lethal men in the revolution for independence.

It only makes sense that he makes his way to Babylon 5 for 'work' now and again. Many of these trips are due to his high-paying contracts from his former friend and ally, Arthur Groves. His average salary is 250,000 credits a head - a worthwhile sum that he often directs to various anti-Earthforce organisations around the galaxy.

He is a gruff man with years of wear on his face, but a keen eye. He never makes a deal he cannot back up, and he never takes a job from someone he does not know. A real professional - and a real deadly enemy to have. He can be found in the Dark Star more often than not - unless he is working. Then you will not find him at all.

## CRACIER 'THE ERASER' HARTIGAN FAVOURER RED CREDIT CREW THE MAN

*'No Vorlons. No kids.'*

**8<sup>th</sup> Level Human Soldier/3<sup>rd</sup> Level Sniper**

**Hit Points:** 42

**Initiative:** +4 (+4 Dex)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**DV:** 14 (+4 Dex)

**Attacks:** +13/+8/+3 melee or +15/+10/+5 ranged

**Special Qualities:** Covering Fire, Gun Readiness, Aim Mastery

**Saves:** Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +4

**Abilities:** Str 14, Dex 19, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 9

**Skills:** Balance +12, Climb +10, Concentration +12, Disguise +8, Drive +9, Hide +16, Jump +10, Listen +7, Move Silently +10, Spot +6, Survival +6, and Technical (weapons) +10

**Feats:** Guerrilla Fighter, Far



## GEOFF KENSINGTON, CASINO OWNER

*'Place your bets.'*

**4<sup>th</sup> Level Human Worker (white collar)**

**Hit Points:** 13

**Initiative:** +1 (+1 Dex)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**DV:** 11 (+1 Dex)

**Attacks:** +2 melee or +3 ranged

**Special Qualities:** Contacts (Londo Mollari)

**Saves:** Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +4

**Abilities:** Str 10, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 19, Wis 16, Cha 17



**Skills:** Appraise +6, Bluff +11, Computer Use +6, Concentration +4, Drive +3, Knowledge (gambling) +7, Knowledge (underworld) +7, Listen +6, Profession (gambler) +5, Profession (casino owner) +9, Sleight of Hand +8, Speak Language (English, Italian, Centauri, Narn, Drazi) and Spot +6

**Feats:** Contacts, Jack of All Trades, Skill Focus (sleight of hand)

A talented card player and dashing good-looking gentleman, Geoff inherited a large sum of money from his uncle at the age of nineteen. Having squandered a great deal of it on fancy playthings and women, he turned to gambling to try and make the most out of the rest of it. After a spectacular showing at 31 (a Martian version of Blackjack with three facedown cards), he won the deed to one of the many smaller casinos in Red Sector - the *Nova Angel*.

But his luck was not eternal, and Geoff found himself in debt trying to run the establishment. In a last ditch effort to better his situation; he sponsored a very high-stakes dice game for Ashra Drabhar - for a small cut. In treating the known criminal so well all night long, Kensington unwillingly made a friend out of the

Drazi Royal. From that night on, Ashra would use the *Nova Angel* to meet and greet other 'businessmen' on Babylon 5.

While it has increased his business - and therefore his income - drastically, Geoff worries that someday his luck might run out and his patronage's common denominator will get him into deep trouble or worse. For just that possibility, he keeps a charged PPG under his pillow and in his vest at all times. Even so, business is booming. Crime may not pay, but criminals sure do.

## Scenarios and Campaign Hooks

The characters could rack up a sizable debt in one of the many gambling casinos run by the Red Credit Crew, or buy off a close friend's debt instead. In doing so, they garner the attention of a particularly nasty Benchmark who wants to collect on those debts. Turning the Benchmark in to security they risk bringing light to their or their friend's illegal gambling, but paying the debtor off may not be an option either depending on the sum owed. Instead, they may choose to look for a Royal

or Groves himself to negotiate other forms of payment - services, perhaps?

In dealings with a loose-lipped security officer, the characters might learn of a Red Credit loan shark skimming off the top in order to make extra money to fund a dust habit. This thief is squeezing his clientele harder than normal, making it very difficult to go unnoticed. The loan shark will be worth a great deal to the Benchmarks, who have noticed the missing funds and have been looking for the leak. But by turning the thief in, the characters have most certainly doomed him. Unless they can figure a way to make everyone involved happy.

The Psi Corps has planted a spy somewhere in the Red Credit Crew, and Dophak knows who it is. He has requested something be done about it internally, but even Groves is unsure about going against the Corps. So, Dophak must look outside the organisation to deal with the mole, and finds the characters just the right type to do so. He will pay very handsomely, but not until after the problem has been taken care of. Nothing can be tied back to the Crew, of course - even if the target is a telepath!

A mangled body turned up in the docking bay stuffed in a vac-crate marked 'disposable'. Security is sure this unknown biomass is a result of a string of Red Credit related murders in Red Sector. They are short-staffed and looking for information - for a hefty reward, of course - that could lead to arrests. If the characters are willing, they can trade immunity from anything they do in pursuit of this knowledge in return for good intel on the organisation. But in doing so they risk making an enemy of one of the largest criminal organisations on Babylon 5!





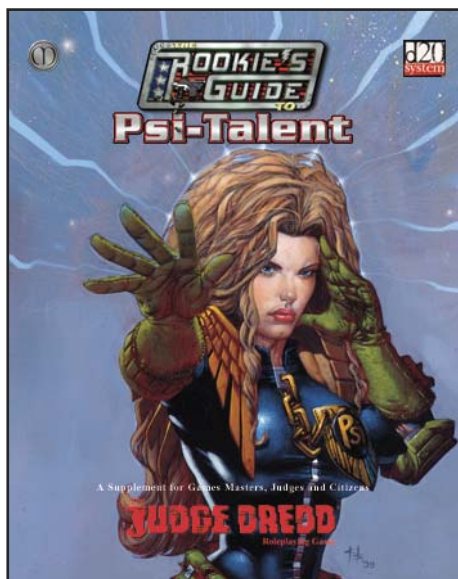
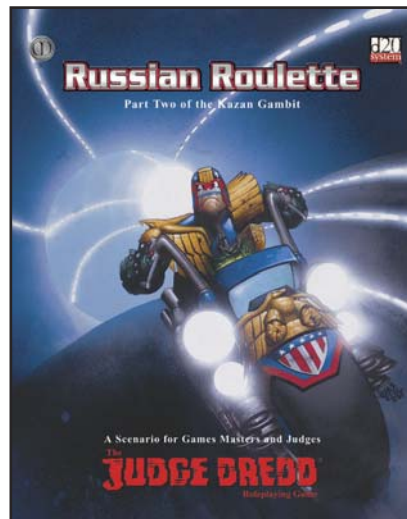
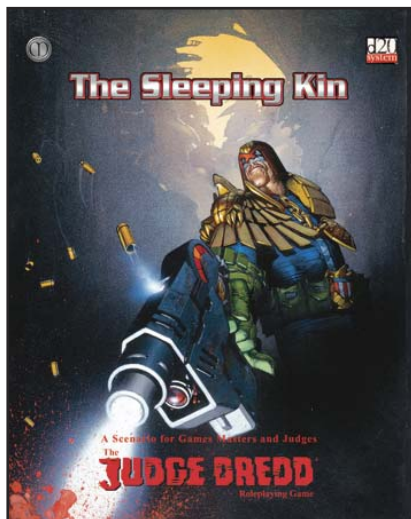
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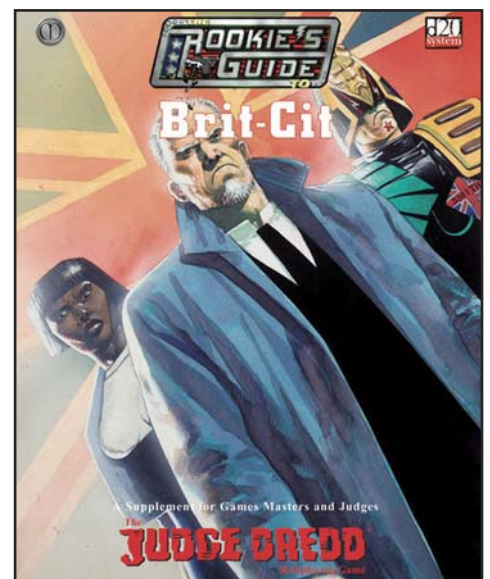
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# Ice Station Zebra 24

A scenario for the Starship Troopers Roleplaying Game

Sam Vail

This adventure is ideal for six 1<sup>st</sup> level characters.

If the Games Master is well organised and confident enough, the adventure can accommodate up to nine players. The Player Characters are on board the SICON heavy transport, *TFHT City of Krakow*, en-route to the Cincinnati system. Upon arrival, the Player Characters are to be assigned to their new unit, the 161<sup>st</sup> Tactical Assault Battalion. However, before they arrive, they are selected to deliver some supplies to the ice planet K-1138. The purpose of the adventure is to allow players to get to grips with the concepts of *Starship Troopers: The Roleplaying Game*, using a few skills and feats, enjoy a little roleplay and kill some bugs! When the Player Characters arrive at K-1138's station, they will discover that Arachnids have already visited the remote outpost and killed everybody there. Their mission is



effectively over before it begins; however, the troopers must attempt to survive long enough to get home. Whether they decide to abandon the station's supplies or attempt to return with them is up to the Player Characters, they will not face a court martial for leaving them behind. If the Games Master wishes to extend this adventure, it is possible to have one or two of the scientists escape the bugs that attacked the station on a snow mobile. The troopers must track them down and defend them from bugs until all of the survivors can be rescued.

## The Ice Station

The Ice Station is a geological research base and has no military hardware whatsoever. The neglected power unit has tripped into standby mode and is operating on emergency levels. Therefore, the entire complex is dark. Powered doors, such as the main airlock, are agonisingly slow to open and close using manual methods. The main computer systems have shutdown and any attempt to restart them requires the station administrator's password. The system can be hacked with a Computer Use check (DC 25),

but the only information the system contains is the scientists' highly complicated geological reports. As bugs have already torn through the station, most of the interior is a complete mess. Tables and chairs lie overturned, papers and tools are scattered across the floors and freezing water has begun to leak into the station from the bugs' entrance point. There is currently a one-inch layer of gelid, freezing water throughout much of the station. Fortunately, the heat exchangers in the station's air conditioning system are still working, although their reduced power levels mean that the interior of the station is only a few degrees above freezing. At the Games Master's discretion, any of the station's internal doors can be locked. Opening an internal door lock requires a Sabotage (open lock) check (DC 25). Worsening environmental conditions across the surface of K-1138 mean that the station's frost-rimed communications relay is not working. At no point in this scenario will the station be able to transmit or receive any form of signal.

## Mission Briefing

This briefing is delivered by Sergeant Major Rafe Van Pursey, a Mobile Infantry quartermaster assigned to the *TFHT City of Krakow*.

'Attention, you Apes! Before we arrive at our final destination of the Cincinnati system, Fleet captain Matheson, the captain of this bag of bolts Fleet so lovingly call City of Krakow must first drop some supplies as we pass through the Kruger 60 system, specifically, the ice planet of K-1138. It is here



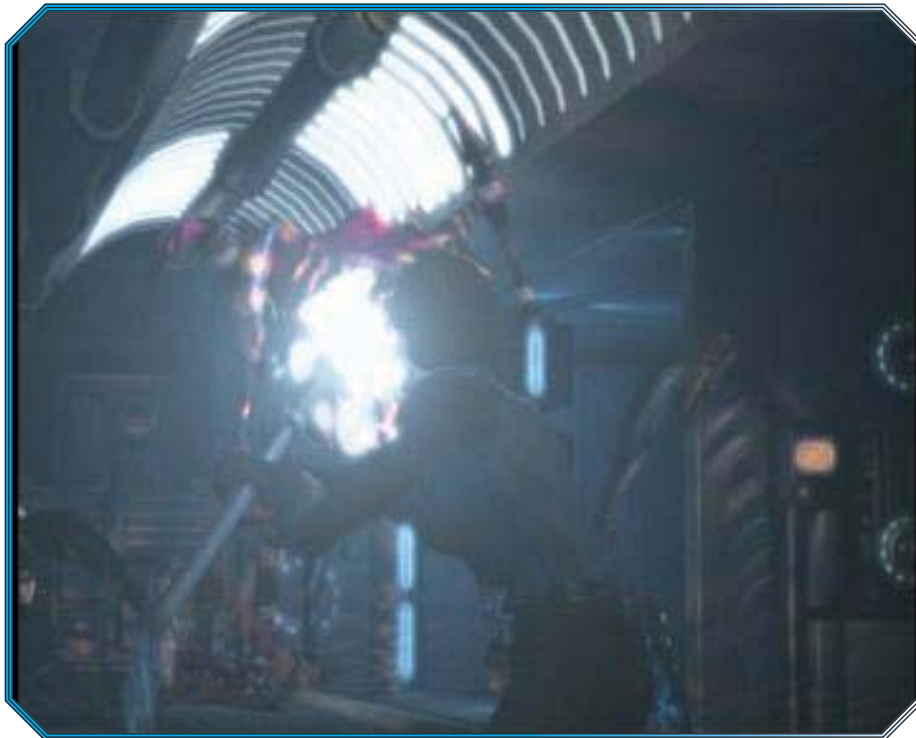
that a scientific team, working out of the Zebra-24 outpost, have been taking deep core samples of the planet's crust. Increasingly hostile environmental conditions on the planet's surface means the station requires an immediate resupply of food and spare parts for the oxygen generators. However, recent seismic scans reveal that the ice raft on which the station is sitting is degrading, becoming unstable. This means that a fully loaded dropship would probably fall straight through the thinning ice platform.

Therefore, we are sending you apes to drive in the supplies to the station in a MAC Hauler. The

loaded hauler will be a little over the recommended operational limits of a Slingshot's cargo capacity, but I'm sure that Fleet will do their part in delivering you safely to the planet's surface. You will be set down at a safe distance of 10,000 feet from the station, and you lucky troopers will drive those supplies the rest of the way. Unfortunately, Lieutenant Ferraday is suffering from a ruptured eardrum and Sergeant Raynes is still recovering from the broken leg. This means that your squad leader will be in command.'

Games Masters should give the players two minutes to choose a squad leader from their number.





Morita TW-203-a rifle (this equipment is listed on page 85 of *Starship Troopers: The Roleplaying Game*). Any additional equipment can be requisitioned using the standard rules (detailed on pages 85 and 86 of *Starship Troopers: The Roleplaying Game*). Games Masters should note that while heavy weapons can be requisitioned their effectiveness will be limited, as all of the action in this adventure takes place inside the station. The most useful item the Player Characters could requisition would be a

Wyman Arms shock stick. If used as an area affect weapon by thrusting it into the standing water throughout the station, all creatures touching the water, including other troopers, will take 2d8 (4d8 on a critical)

Sergeant Major Van Pursey will attempt to answer any questions the players ask of him. Van Pursey cannot lead the mission as he is awaiting the repair of his cybernetic legs. He is currently moving around in a motorised chair.

The Scientists last report was received six days ago in the usual coded transmission. Nothing unusual was reported, apart from the worsening of the planet's environmental conditions, already deemed hostile. The station's report also requested some supplies and spare parts for the oxygen generator as a priority. There are a total of 12 scientists and technicians working at the station, all led by Dr Evan Milton, a geologist of some repute.

## The Drop

The MAC Hauler is loaded with the supplies for the Zebra-24 station. The Player Characters should be outfitted with the standard equipment including the M-1A4 power suit and the





damage in a 30-foot radius. Damage reduction does not count against this damage. A Fortitude saving throw (DC 10 + the damage dealt) is required by all creatures affected by this area attack, failing this save will render the creature unconscious for 3d10 rounds. Thereafter, the shock stick will have completely drained its power cell and will be useless unless replacements can be found or were requisitioned.

The players are also given a communications set with which to contact their dropship for retrieval. Contacting the orbiting dropship requires a Computer Use check (DC 20) as atmospheric conditions on K-1138 have made transmitting a clear signal much harder than normal. If the comms set can be linked to the ice station's antenna, requiring a Technical (electrical) check (DC 10) and half an hour's work, the antennae array has just enough

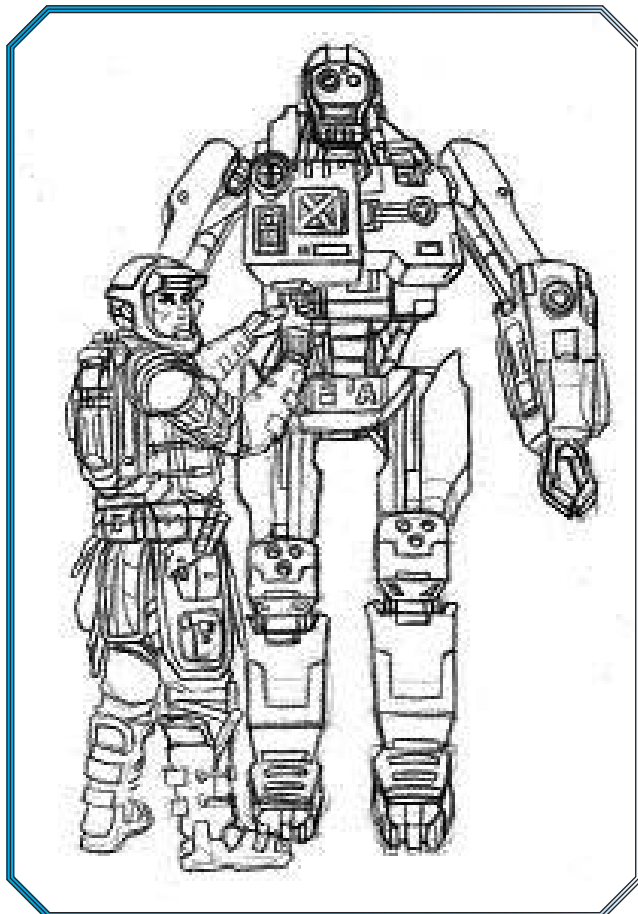
power to boost the comms set's signal, thus lowering the Computer Use check required to contact the dropship to DC 10.

The Player Characters and the MAC Hauler are loaded onto a Slingshot dropship, which is

piloted by Wing Commander Anna Swann. The ride to K-1138's surface takes 14 minutes, during which time the players can interact and try a little roleplay.

The ride into atmosphere is extremely rough, driving snow and high winds buffet the Slingshot as Wing Commander Swann searches the station's floating ice shelf for a safe place to set the hauler and its passengers down. The players should have already

decided who is going to be driving the MAC Hauler; but if they still have yet to decide by the time the ship lands, the Games Master should take the opportunity to prompt the troopers before they set off. The vehicle must be driven down the cargo ramp and onto the ice shelf. Because of the high winds, driving snow and the fact the driver must manoeuvre the hauler from a hovering dropship, a Drive check (DC 15) will be required; failing this check may send a worrying screech of metal-on-metal, but otherwise causes no major damage to either the hauler or the dropship. Standard manoeuvres performed by the MAC Hauler on the planet's surface will require a Drive check (DC 10).





## The Journey

The MAC Hauler can carry four troopers within its cab. Any other Player Characters can sit on the back of the hauler in relative comfort. The trip to the station starts with the troopers 10,000 feet from the Zebra-24 station. The trip could be totally uneventful, or if the Games Master prefers, could become extremely tough. To expand the trip to the station, have the hauler's driver contend with crevasses and sink holes. The sudden appearance of a crevasse requires a Perception check (DC 15) to spot. The Games Master is reminded of the -4 penalty to Perception checks incurred by the M-1A4 power suit. This penalty can be ignored if the driver is using the suit's visor. A Drive

check (DC 20) will allow the hauler to completely avoid the hazard. Should the roll fail, the MAC Hauler will become stuck, its wheels buried in the snow. The only way to free the vehicles massive wheels is one hour of digging away the snow, followed by one hour of dragging the laden MAC Hauler out of the obstacle. Things could start to get



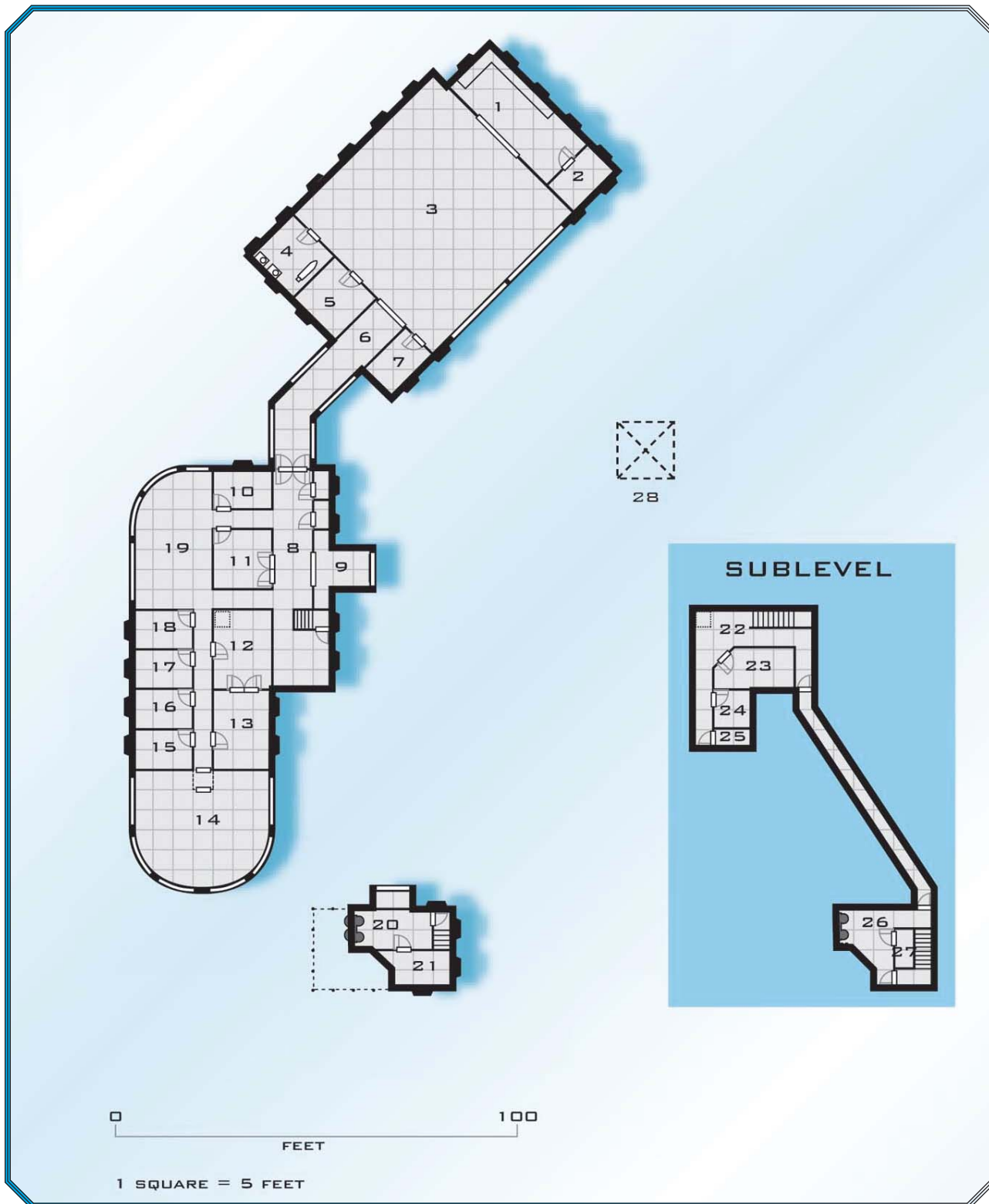
## The Station

When the Player Characters arrive at Zebra-24 station, they discover there is still no communication available. The best option is to park the MAC Hauler in the station garage. A Sabotage (open lock) check (DC 20) is required to run a security bypass on the main door controls and gain access to the garage. Failing this roll fuses the door's lock, forcing troopers to make a physical entry if they wish to enter the station's garage. These doors can be pried open with a combined Strength score of 40. However, an entry achieved by brute force will mean that the doors cannot be re-sealed against the planet's hostile environment.

Inside the station, it looks like a storm has blown through the place. The interior temperature of the station is barely above freezing, due mostly to the bug hole that has been created in the mess hall and recreation area (19). Exploring the station reveals the lifeless bodies of 12 technician/



interesting for the Player Characters should they fall foul of several of these obstacles, as the troopers only have eight hours worth of air available in their M-1A4 power suits. To reduce the time taken to free the hauler by half (reducing the total time taken to free the hauler to one hour), the troopers could use a flamer weapon to melt the snow around the wheels of the vehicle.



scientists, including the bloody remains of Dr Evan Milton in his private offices (24). As the Player Characters move through the powerless station, they are attacked by a swarm of ten cliff mites.

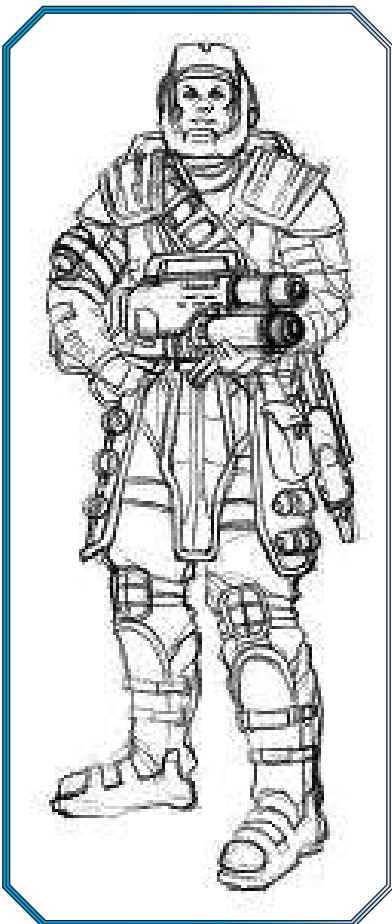
Once the majority of the Player Characters are inside the station, the cliff mites will swarm towards them from the station's many dark corners, nooks and crannies. Two cliff mites per Player Character should be enough to shake the troopers up a bit. Games Masters

are reminded of Fear checks and Action Points. Once this attack is underway, a tanker bug emerges from a tunnel directly outside the main garage doors, thus blocking them. If the players decided not to park the MAC Hauler inside the garage, Games Masters should



directly underneath the vehicle, turning it over. The objective of the tanker bug is to stop the players simply driving away from the station.

Ten minutes after the last cliff mite has been dealt with warrior bugs who will begin to emerge from the bug hole in the mess hall (19): one warrior for every three Player Characters. If the Player Characters discover the bug hole in the mess hall and decide to collapse it with explosives, have the warrior bugs attack sooner. The Games Master may wish to remind the players that the station is situated on an increasingly unstable ice shelf that may not last long once the troopers start to use explosives. The station will begin to shake violently as any explosion sends shock waves through the fragile ice platform. Warrior bugs are always available,



so if the Player Characters look to be having an easy time of it, add another warrior into the mix.

To conclude the scenario, the surviving troopers must contact their dropship and escape to the TFHT City of Krakow. The dropship can attempt to hover over the station whilst the Player Characters attach lizard lines to it and zip to safety. This can be accomplished either from outside the station or even from the station's roof. Roof access is simply a matter of blowing a hole in the ceiling with explosives. This sort of explosion will not affect the unstable ice shelf. The only concern as the troopers attempt to affect their escape comes from the tanker bug, which will continue to block the garage doors and use its caustic flame on anything within range.

### Cliff Mite

#### Tiny Alien Beast

**Hit Dice:** 1d10 (6 hp)

**Initiative:** +5

**Speed:** 20 ft. (4 squares), burrow 10 ft. (2 squares)

**Defence:** 19 (+2 size, +5 Dex, +2 natural)

**Base Attack/Grapple:** +1/+8

**Attack:** Bite +6 melee (1d2)

**Full Attack:** Bite +6 melee (1d2)

**Space/Reach:** 2 ½ ft. (1 x 1 square)/0 ft. (0 squares)



**Special Attacks:** Crunch, Dextrous Attack

**Special Qualities:** Blindsight 30 ft., Fear (8), Wall Crawler

**Saves:** Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +2

**Abilities:** Str 8, Dex 20, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 15, Cha 15

**Skills:** Perception +9, Stealth +9

**Feats:** Improved Initiative

**Crunch:** When attacking an inanimate object as a full round action, it ignores half the object's hardness.

**Dextrous Attack:** A cliff mite uses its Dexterity bonus to attack rolls, rather than Strength. This has already been taken into account in the attacks listed on this page.

**Wall Crawler:** A cliff mite can traverse vertical surfaces and ceilings at its base speed without requiring an Athletics check. It retains its Dexterity bonus to Defence while doing this.

## Tanker Bug

### Gargantuan Alien Beast

**Hit Dice:** 14d10 + 84

(163 hp)

**Initiative:** +2

**Speed:** 40 ft. (8 squares),

burrow 50 ft. (10 squares)

**Defence:** 12 (−4 size, +6 natural)

**Base Attack/Grapple:**

+12/+16

**Attack:** Bite +20 melee

(2d6+10)

**Full Attack:** Bite

+20/+15/+10 melee

(2d6+10)

**Space/Reach:** 20 ft. (4x8 squares)/20 ft. (4 squares)

**Special Attacks:** Caustic Flame

**Special Qualities:**

Blindsight 30 ft., Damage

Reduction 6, Fear (18)

**Saves:** Fort +19, Ref +8, Will

+6

**Abilities:** Str 22, Dex 10, Con

22, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 2

**Skills:** Perception +25

**Feats:** Endurance, Improved Hibernation, Iron Will, Power Attack, Protected Systems, Toughness

**Caustic Flame:** As a full-round action, a tanker bug may breathe a stream of caustic flame, 5 feet (1 square) wide and 40 feet (8 squares) long. All targets within the area will suffer 4d6 points of damage, though a Reflex save (DC 18) will halve this. This attack will ignore all cover except full cover.





**Warrior Bug****Large Alien Beast****Hit Dice:** 4d10 + 8 (30 hp)**Initiative:** +3**Speed:** 50 ft. (10 squares), burrow 10 ft. (2 squares)**Defence:** 18 (-1 Size, +3 Dex, +6 natural)**Base Attack/Grapple:** +4/+14**Attack:** Claw +9 melee (1d6+6/19–20)**Full Attack:** Two claws +9 melee (1d6+3/19–20) and bite +4 (1d8+6)**Space/Reach:** 10 ft. (2 x 2 squares)/5 ft. (1 square) and 10 ft. (2 squares) with claws**Special Attacks:** Lethal Grapple**Special Qualities:** Blindsight 30 ft., Damage Reduction 4, Fear (16), Sensitive Antenna, Wall Crawler**Saves:** Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +4**Abilities:** Str 22, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 2**Skills:** Athletics +10, Acrobatics +9, Perception +5**Feats:** Cleave, Iron Will, Power Attack**Lethal Grapple:** If the warrior bug attacks only with its bite weapon during a full attack action, it may choose to start a grapple as a free action. It may only do this to targets that are medium-size or smaller.

While the target remains

grappled, the warrior bug is not considered grappled itself and will automatically deal its bite damage every round. The target will be pulled into the warrior bug's space for the duration of this attack.

**Wall Crawler:** A warrior bug can traverse vertical surfaces and ceilings at its base speed without requiring an Athletics check. It retains its Dexterity bonus to Defence while doing this.

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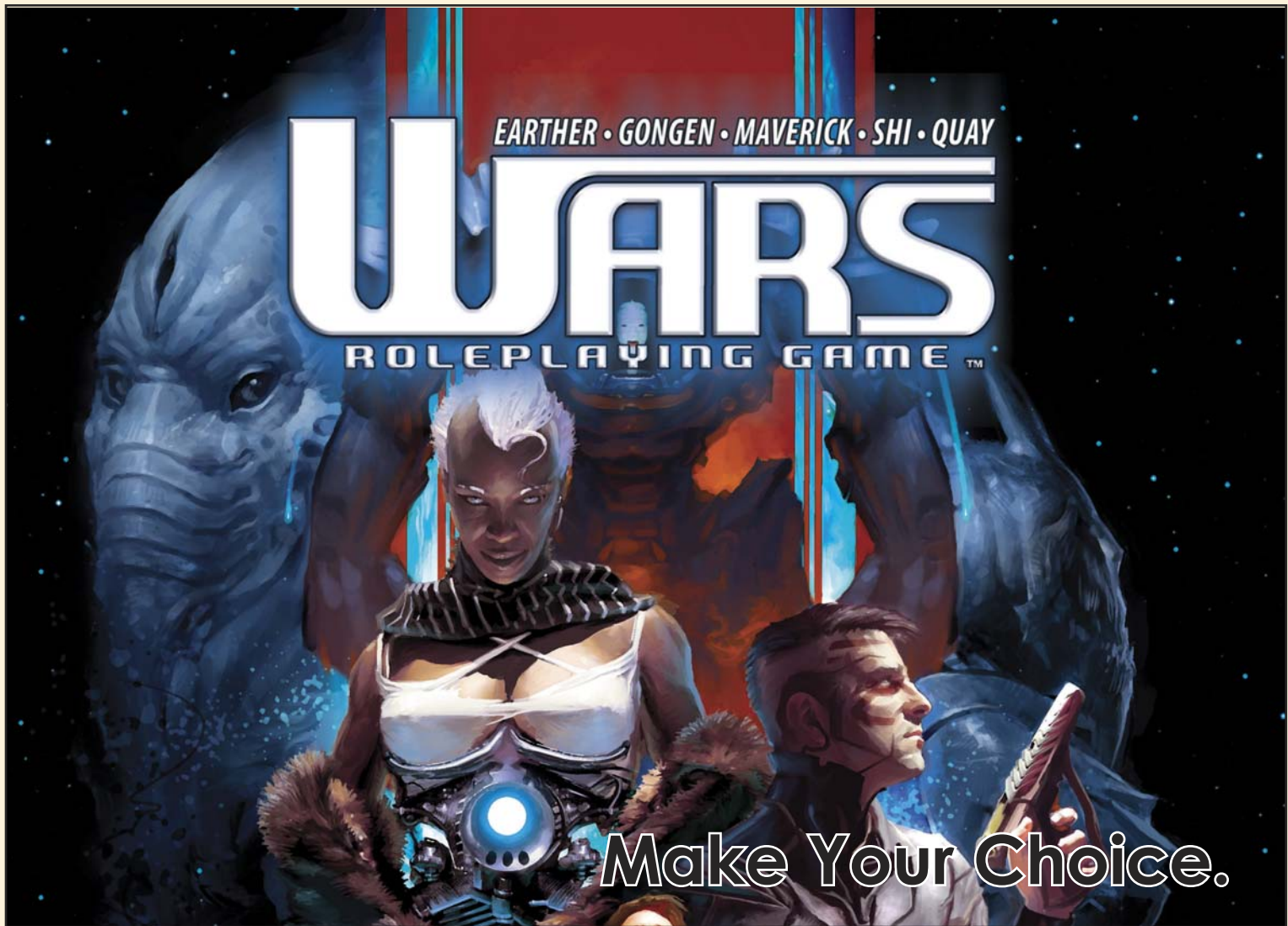
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