

RPG REVIEW

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The Wilderness and The Wilds

***Jeff Barber Interview ... Star Frontiers ... Dungeons
& Dragons ... Tunnels & Trolls ... GURPS ... Outdoor
Survival ... Eclipse Phase ... Eternal Castle
Computer Game .. Captain Marvel Movie ... and
more!***

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ADMINISTRIVIA

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EDITORIAL AND COOPERATIVE NEWS

Editorial

It's been a busy few months for the Cooperative and a difficult few months getting together a sufficient quantity of material for this late issue of RPG Review which has a nominal release date of March. As the great Douglas Adams once wrote in *The Salmon of Doubt* (2002), "*I love deadlines. I love the whooshing noise they make as they go by*". Well, there are some deadlines that really can't be avoided and when your humble (or at least self-deprecating) editor decides that this is the year to start *three* postgraduate degrees simultaneously whilst also working full-time, and managing three small community groups, it is obvious that some deadlines become very hard and fast, and some, indeed, whoosh by. Sorry RPG Review issue 42. You just weren't quite as important as sitting that Public Economics exam from LSE.

This said, it was a difficult issue in many ways as well. "Wilderness and The Wilds" was the main subject for consideration, and whilst we have a good idea of what a wilderness is, "the wilds" was deliberately included as to include the vast reaches of space as a nod to our science fiction RPGs. I still remember with great fondness my own first exposure to wilderness in RPGs, through the famous Isle of Dread scenario that came with the Expert rules of Dungeons & Dragons. I'd already had the scenario for roughly the same period of time as the Basic Set, so I was aware of the vast expanses that made up that corner of Mystara, but prior to that our group had played almost entirely in "dungeons", where it was The Keep on the Borderlands, In Search of the Unknown, the Palace of the Silver Princess, and a couple of homebrew scenarios. In most cases the "wilderness" didn't really exist, except in the sense of a

backstory of the journey from A to B. The Keep on the Borderlands had a bit of an outdoors focus, but it really wasn't the vast travels in the Isle of Dread that I think we understood what "the wilderness" adventure implied. Months later, it would be Traveller games that would give wilderness an even further elaboration.

Appropriately then, we've ended up with two very distinct sets of articles in this issue. Firstly, there is a collection of fantasy-related wilderness articles, including Karl Brown's "Wilderness Monsters for D&D 5e", and there's a pretty hefty collection of wilderness creatures in his ongoing fantasy bestiary series for T&T. My own contributions in this setting have been reviews of two Wilderness Survival Guides for D&D, dating from the first for AD&D and the latest fan publication for D&D 5e. . Sitting between the fantastic and SF is of course the realistic, and I take the opportunity to have a look the famous (and some will say notorious) boardgame Outdoor Survival in this light. In contrast, J. Scott Pitmann has done an incredible job with fantasy characters, realistic creature templates, and a SF vehicle collection all for GURPS 3e. In the past we've often encouraged a sample NPC of the issue, well Scott's taken it to another level and provided an entire outdoors party.

From the science fiction perspective, our interview subject is Jeff Barber designer of the acclaimed environmentalist SF RPG "Blue Planet". The blue planet in question is a waterworld, and very much a wilderness. Until humans turn up of course. One of the realities is that non-human life tends to do very well in wilderness environments, which certainly says a great deal about the behaviour of our species. Anyway, Jeff talks about Blue Planet (as expected) and his latest project, "Upwind". Also for a science fiction setting is Richard Rose's Star Frontiers adventure, "Dark Shadow's Revenge", which follows the events in SFKH-0 module, "Warriors of White Light." To finish the set I've returned with my own work in the 11th hour for two Eclipse Phase reviews, X-Risks and Sunward.

Not every item in every issue has to be directed towards the dominant subject matter of course, and in this issue Andrew Moshos' movie review, "Captain Marvel", is the item that stands as little incongruent (if you are desperate for something that is on-topic, go back to issue 38 for Andrew's review of "Annihilation"). After some absence we now have a new computer game reviewer, with Dorchadas coming on the scene with a review of the decidedly outdoors remastered game, "The Eternal Castle"

I've already hinted at it, so I may as well continue with a reminder to step outside our exploration of hypothetical wilderness and wilds, and think about that which is present here and now. The basic problem we have is that the mechanisms for economic growth provide for a worldwide increase in production and population, and that these increases have two physical limitations which are not a matter of negotiation. Firstly, we have a finite supply of resources, and secondly, the capacity of the ecosystem to absorb pollutants. The lack of respect that is given to the reality of these basic facts from governments to consumers is resulting in a tragic destruction of our wilderness and of the rest of our environment.

There has been a 50% decline in freshwater resources per capita since 1992, an ever-declining marine catch, massive loss of forest area and habitat, and over-hunting. All contributing to a collapse of global vertebrate wildlife populations to 58% of 1970 figures. This is a change so dramatic that it is being described by scientists as a "biological annihilation", the sixth mass extinction event on the planet. There is no single issue that confronts us that is more important, and no greater example of the failure of our political and economic system, our leadership, and indeed, ourselves as a species. It is the single greatest technological, political, and moral challenge of our time, and in my quiet moments I have doubts, serious doubts, whether we as a species are capable of stepping up to this challenge.

Lev Lafayette, still editor, lev@rpgreview.net

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Cooperative News

Annual General Meeting, Arcanacon, ARPIA

The Cooperative held its Annual General Meeting during Arcanacon, an experiment which we will sensible enough in future not to repeat! Arcanacon was crazy busy and whilst we did get through our meeting business it would a little less than as calm as what it should have been. In any case we have a committee with new faces and old, including Lev Lafayette (President), Michael Cole (Vice-President), Andrew Daborn (Secretary), Liz Bowman (Treasurer), and



Andrew McPherson, Karl Brown, and Shaun Hately (anything-but-ordinary committee members). There was one absolutely stunning typing error in our financial report, where we incorrectly valued our library at \$740 rather than \$7400 – given that this was passed at the AGM and therefore submitted as our official report to the Department of Consumer Affairs, it is something that we'll have to update at the next AGM.

Arcanacon itself was a spectacular affair of around five hundred or so RPGers descending into Melbourne for a massive variety of mainstream and independent games. The Cooperative had three major features at the convention, the first being our second-hand RPG games stall which was enormously popular (some people even said in post-event surveys that it was one of their favourite parts of the con). In addition sessions of *Papers & Paychecks* were held, with all participants thoroughly enjoying the game. Finally, Diversity Officer, Karl Brown, was a panel

presenter with a focus on new comers to the art and science of the game.

A follow-up event from Arcanacon was the launch of the Australian Role-Playing Industry Awards (ARPIA), which Cooperative game designers were invited to. ENnie award winning game designer Sarah Newton was in attendance as a guest of honour and formally launched the event.

Further, members of the Cooperative attended and presented games at CONquest, Melbourne's Easter gaming convention, and we even had a member travel as the Cooperative's representative to Swancon, the Perth science fiction and fantasy convention. Expect a write-up of one or both of those in the next issue of RPG Review.

Fruit Bat Picnic

A month after Arcanacon we held our second Fruit Bat Picnic at Bell Bird Park, off Yarra Blvd, in Kew (and the third summer picnic of the Cooperative). It was quite a scorcher of a day with bat rescue rangers on patrol, but despite it all

the proximity to the river reduced the local temperature a little bit and all had a great day out in the sun and shade - and a big hello to the three visitors from Ballarat who came down to visit as well, including game designer and member Nic Moll! Dr. Nic also gets a special mention for the incredible collection of almost 50 D&D 4th edition books that he provided for our library. Thank you!

Movie Madness

The Cooperative has engaged in its usual activities during the quarter as well. Our regular Astor Cinema movie nights had a particularly memorable evening with “Forbidden Planet” and “The Green Slime” for a wild retrospective and we had several members attend a special screening of “The Call of Cthulhu” by the H.P. Lovecraft Historical Society at the Sun Theatre, which included not only the movie itself, but also the making of the movie and related discussion.

Papers & Paychecks, The Tinker’s Toolkit

(Sarah Newton receiving a copy of “Papers & Paychecks” from Lev Lafayette)

Our two major publications, “Papers & Paychecks” and “The Tinker’s Toolkit” remain available for sale, and we continue to run more than a dozen games by members, and our library – now at some 850 items – is seeing good use. Tim Rice’s “Eclipse Phase” man pages are a popular git repository and of course we still have some ISBNs for members who want to see their work officially in print. And of course, we have our monthly newsletter.

Dice

Tim Rice is proving to be quite a contributor of useful products.

First was his exceptional mathematical exploration of skill advancement in RuneQuest 3rd edition, then he came out with man pages for Eclipse Phase, and most recently he’s developed a dice program in good ol’ C, for those who prefer to do their calculations in the cool glow of the command-line interface rather than the visceral pieces of plastic.

You can get a copy of Tim’s dice program from the following github repository.

<https://github.com/rpgreview/dice>



INTERVIEW WITH JEFF BARBER

with Jeff Barber

Our interview subject this issue is Jeff Barber of Biohazard Games who has produced two RPGs with notable wilderness environments, Blue Planet and Upwind. Interviewer Karl David Brown. Disclaimer: I have a bias, Blue Planet is one of my favourite RPG settings ever.

RPG Review: This is our Wilderness Issue so I'd like to talk about the intriguing environments in Blue Planet and your new game Upwind. First though our standard opening question, how did you get started playing RPGs?

Jeff: It was 1980. I'd never heard of RPGs. I had just moved to Boston from a tiny town in Alaska, and started high school. I was kind of a weird kid who was into sci fi and I met another weird kid in homeroom who was into D&D. He kept trying to get me to come over to his house and play and I kept resisting because I'd recently had a bad experience playing a "fantasy game" called Magic Realms (by Avalon Hill). The year before I'd gotten really sick with the flu while trying to teach myself the game and had thrown up a bunch during the process, and so every time I even thought about the game after that I felt sick. Forty years later I still have a psychosomatic response when I think about that game. In fact, I'm actually feeling a little queasy as I type this. Crazy right? The human brain is so strange. Anyway, I finally gave in, went over to his house one day after school and made a character - some kind of elf assassin with wings and a magic sword. I was hooked instantly and have never looked back.

RPG Review: We'll start with Blue Planet before talking about your newer project Upwind. Can you briefly give an "elevator pitch" Blue Planet for our readers without giving away the big secrets of the setting?

Jeff: I never had a good pitch, but I saw one a couple years ago in a review that I thought was both apt and funny, so I cribbed it. "Space Marshal Cowboy and his cybernetic sidekick dolphin, fight eco-terrorists in alien Hawaii." BP is a hard sci fi game set on Earth's first extra-solar colony planet; a water world with a complex and dangerous ecology - called Poseidon. The game takes place after recontact with the previous colony effort abandoned because of a global agricultural plague back on Earth. Scientists discover a xenosilicate called Longevity Matrix Ore (Long John) in the planet's crust which has valuable applications in genetic engineering, including indefinitely prolonging life. A new "gold rush" is underway as corporate interests and desperate colonists flood the planet to exploit this priceless resource, and the original "native" colonists fight for their adopted home. The game focuses on the array of high stakes adventures you can have in the midst of the social, economical and political upheaval on a lawless, high tech, interstellar frontier.

RPG Review: In 1997 I was just starting a biotechnology degree after a stint working with wild dolphins. I was an immigrant who had grown up on the coast of an isolated ex-colony, Western Australia. Naturally, your game set in a future dominated by biotechnology, with dolphin PCs, set on a water-world colony spoke to me. What was it about your own experiences that led you to write such a game at a time when our visions of the future were dominated by urban cyberpunk?

Jeff: Wow! We should make you the literal poster child for Blue Planet! Basically it was that old author's adage - "write what you know." I was a marine ecology major in college and then an oceanography teacher. I have always been fascinated by Earth's oceans and been a huge sci fi fan. It was the 90's - the golden age of cyberpunk - and I loved so

many elements of the genre, but I wanted to do something a little different. I guess in hindsight, given I had decided to write a roleplaying game, Blue Planet was inevitable.



RPG Review: As someone with a background in biotechnology I remain impressed with the level of plausibility in the science of the setting compared to most science fiction RPGs and media. Did you have a method for fact-checking your creation as you built it, or are you just a really knowledgeable guy?

Jeff: Definitely not knowledgeable, and if you can call it a process, it was pretty basic. We just asked a series of simple questions and if the answers were all yes - or at least strong maybes - we included the technology.

1. Is it possible within our projections regarding technological advancements (materials science, power sources, programming, etc)?
2. Does it have practical application?
3. Is it economically viable?

RPG Review: This is a wilderness issue so we should talk about that. The technology and extractive civilisation of the second wave of human colonists struggles with the environment of the planet. You could have played that conflict out on any kind of world, why a water world?

Jeff: That goes back to your previous question and my comment about "writing what you know." I wanted to do a game with a super rich, detailed and realistic setting and I was a marine biologist. When I came up with the core concept I was playing a lot of an old Micro Prose video game called Sub War 2050. That got me thinking about underwater conflicts over limited resources, and the rest grew from there.

RPG Review: Unless there is something else you would like to say about Blue Planet perhaps we should start talking about your new game Upwind.

Jeff: Well, folks might be interested to know that we are currently working on a new edition of Blue Planet and will be making an announcement about it soon. We will be doing a lot of demos of the new system through the summer con season and running a Kickstarter in the fall.

(Editor: that's winter and spring here in the Antipodes)

RPG Review: Upwind is another unusual setting. Can you give an "elevator pitch" telling our audience about this world?

Jeff: It only works if you know the movie references. I usually say, "Disney's Treasure Planet had a head-on collision with Bakshi's "Wizards" and we put out the resulting fire with a whole lot of Studio Ghibli's "Castle in the Sky." The game is my love letter to Studio Ghibli adventure films like Castle in the Sky and Nausicaa: Valley of the Wind. The setting is a endless sky filled with floating islands, flying skyships, a magical Wind, a cadre of Explorer Knights, lost technology and an ancient enemy. The characters play Explorer Knights, duty bound to protect the Kingdoms in the Light from the Children of the Dark, while exploring the mysterious ruins of the Twilight Frontier.

RPG Review: looking at the promotional material for Upwind I can't decide if it is fantasy, retro science fiction, or something else entirely, probably because of the films you mentioned I've only seen Wizards. What do you think it is and what tropes from what genres have you blended and why.



Jeff: I half-jokingly call it Tesla-punk, but it's definitely Ghibli inspired with lots of influence from anime series like Avatar and Full Metal Alchemist. It is a post-apocalypse sci-fi world with fantastical elements rooted in an "alternate science" called Potential. The subtitle is: A Roleplaying Fable of Lost Science, Elemental Magic and Uncharted Skies. I combined these tropes in part because I wanted to create a fantastical setting in which I was not bound by the familiar world. We worked hard to make Blue Planet scientifically accurate, but with Upwind I wanted to be able to create without that restriction.

RPG Review: Upwind looks like it will be a very different beast to the rather simulationist Blue Planet. Can you tell us about your goals when designing the mechanics and game-play of Upwind?

Jeff: I have gained an strong appreciation for more narrative mechanics over the past decade and was inspired to work on my own. I wanted to mechanically complement the sense of over-the-top powers, actions and challenges that are inherent in the Upwind setting. I wanted a mechanic that provided a functional framework but that at least felt like it put no limits on what characters could do. Finally, I wanted a mechanic that provided significant and lasting story and character consequences. The Q System supports all these elements, and in addition plays much faster than more traditional systems.

RPG Review: Upwind is barely out of the gate and you already have a campaign sourcebook supplement. What do you have planned for 2019?

Jeff: As I mentioned, we have turned our attention to a new edition of Blue Planet. We are calling it Blue Planet: Recontact, after the eponymous moment when Earth reestablished contact with the colony on Poseidon. We will be debuting the new system it cons all summer and making a big push at GenCon. We plan to run a Kickstart in the fall and publish next year. Recontact will have all new, evolved mechanics, full color art, updated setting material and technologies, and the plan is to finally publish the remainder of the titles we originally had planned for the line back in 1997.

RPG Review: Wow, now I'm excited. There are a fair number of new game designers in our audience. With that in mind I thought I'd ask you about your experiences releasing your own games. A lot has changed since Biohazard released it's first book in 1997 and the recent release of Upwind can you tell us about how things have changed and the pitfalls for small publishers and designers?



Jeff: It's a totally different, almost unrecognizable business. There are a 100 times more people and games in the industry and dozens of new genres and styles. For the majority of publishers it's all about collaboration, social media and Kickstarter. My best advice is to do the work to make a game that you can start to share and then build a platform through your own various online channels and through working with other publishers, gaming bloggers and podcasters to amplify that signal.

RPG Review: Thank you for taking the time to talk with us. Good luck with your projects

Jeff: Thank you for the opportunity and interest.

(Promotional image of Jeff Barber from GauntletCon 2018)

TUNNELS & TROLLS SOLO BESTIARY P-T

by Karl Brown

This is yet another article in a series of materials for the classic T&T 5.5 Edition. Previous articles appeared in issues: 12, 15, 18, 19, 20, 22, 31, and 39. A pirate PC is also described in issue 26-27. Trolls were included in an earlier issue and so have not been reprinted here. This selection contains mostly fairy creatures and animals suitable for wilderness encounters.

The 7th and Deluxe editions of T&T has different solutions for some of the situations covered by the house rules in this series of articles. Though written for edition 5.5, this series of articles is largely compatible with the later editions.

‘*’ Monsters are ones I might consider as PCs. As a guideline add up all the attribute modifiers (yes negative CHR subtracts) and if under 8 the kin may be suitable for use as a player character. An average IQ of at least 5 is also recommended unless you want to play a beast. Guidelines for role-playing monsters appeared in issue 15.

indicates a creature suitable for use as a PC wereform. As a guideline add up all the attribute modifiers (yes negative CHR subtracts) of the animal form (not the animal it is based on, IQ is x1) and if under 13 the kin may be suitable for use as a player character. Intelligent animal forms (such as giant eagles as per Tolkien) may not be chosen by any were PC or NPC.

Creatures marked # could also be used as awakened beasts (issue 15) if that rule is in use. All awakened beasts have IQx1 rather than the value listed.

Dexterity: monsters without hands, tentacles or other manipulators have dexterity of zero. Agility has been subsumed into Luck and reaction time is covered by Speed.

Pech

MR 110 Dice 12 Adds 55

Natural Weapons: pechs attack unarmed usually by grabbing and crushing, or slapping with their hands. Each hand does 6d.

Natural Armour 2 tough hide Special Attacks nil Special Defences nil

ST 65 (x6.5) IQ 7 (0.5) LK 12 (x1) CON 110 (x11) DEX 15 (x1.5) CHR 7 (x0.5) SP 12 (x1)

Height x0.5 Weight x0.5 Starting Age: 3d+50 Old at: 150

Pronounced ‘pekh’ the ‘ch’ is as in loch. Pechs are short black haired leather skinned humanoids with huge black eyes and oversized hands and feet. Pechs see as well as a human in daylight by the dimmest light but are blinded by daylight, their eyes recover in the dark. Pech are the fairy builders. Typically, their method is to cut all the stone to

shape in the quarry then carry and erect the building in what seems like a miraculously short time. Their great strength aids them in this work since each pech can lift a half tonne of stone. Most Pech live within tunnels and windowless towers within fairy mounds. They speak the language of elves but aren't good conversationalists since their minds are largely preoccupied with stone and building. In fact they seem to be like idiot savants of architecture, socially inept, not too bright, but able build fairy castles of astounding beauty.

***Pixie**

MR 9 Dice 1 Adds 5

Natural Weapons: unarmed 1d Natural Armour 0

Special Attacks nil Special Defences nil

ST 4 (x0.5) IQ 13 (x1.5) LK 17 (x1.5) CON 9 (x1) DEX 17 (x1.5) CHR 12 (x1) SP 12 (x1)

Size x1/3 Weight x3.5% Starting Age: 3d+40 Old at: 180

By virtue of a bitter civil war centuries ago the rebellious pixies had their own country before the coming of the dwarves. They still expect the old treaties to be respected and no elves or winged fairies to enter the land the pixies once owned outright. (see Briggs). Pixies are often rogues but rarely wizards since the Guild is viewed as an elf institution. Pixie wizards are outcasts among their own kind. Traditionally pixies wear green as camouflage in woods and verdant country but if out socially they consider it polite to wear a bright red hat. They are red headed with pointy ears and noses. Pixies are nocturnal and can see twice as far as humans from any source of light. They squint in sunlight but are otherwise unaffected. Pixies are experts at magical guerrilla warfare and typical pixie rogue tactics is to employ mirage and conceal to way-lay enemies and ambush them. Since these spells are so common in pixie society a pixie rogue in her homeland can buy these as if a wizard.

Quintessential (Magic Storm)

MR spell level squared see below.

Dice determine from MR Adds determine from MR

Natural Weapons: Nil Natural Armour 0

Special Attacks no physical attacks, spells

Special Defences cannot be harmed by physical weapons or attacks. This includes physical and normal energy (eg. flame) created by spells) Mana bolt and other pure magical energy attacks add damage to MR. Only curses and other direct magical attacks work.

ST 0 IQ 10 see below LK equal to half MR CON equal to MR DEX 0 CHR 0 (x0.25)

SP equal to MR Size 1 cubic yard per MR Weight 0

There is much debate among arcane scholars whether the untamed magical energies released sometimes in magical accidents are an entity or merely a phenomena. Those that favour the theory of an entity call these beings quintessentials, theorising they elementals comprised of the fifth element; quintessence the very stuff of being. Those favouring the 'storm' theory claim the effects are due to a leak of raw magic discharging and dissipating. A few have

claimed to have detected a tormented confused mind in a magic storm using wizards speech but telepathic evidence is subjective at best. Quintessentials are invisible but if a detect magic is cast they appear as a 'blob' of insubstantial magic that can extend thick pseudo pods (1 yard diameter) and pass through ordinary matter. A referee using miniatures can represent this with a 1 yard square piece of paper for every 1MR. A quintessential is always hostile and concentrates its attacks on the most magical character present; first wizards, then magical creatures including winged fairies, then rogues that know spells. Those that hold the quintessential is an entity say this is because the physical world is painful for a creature of pure quintessence and it lashes out against those most likely to be responsible for its predicament. Those who don't believe there is any intelligence have complex laws showing basically that like attracts like and the magic discharge is attracted to magic users. The quintessential casts spells to attack. Ranges are calculated from the nearest edge of the cloud. The highest level spell a quintessential can use is equal to square root of MR. Magic spell cost is taken from the CON and MR but does not recuperated with time. A quintessential eventually burns all of its own mana in a frenzy of destruction. Since not all magical accidents summon a magic storm and it is invisible to normal senses the first attack is often a surprise. It may take some time for characters to figure out what is attacking them, wizards should be allowed a first level IQ roll each round to represent them recalling the debate over quintessentials from their formal training.

The magical accident that created the quintessential could have been a miss-cast spell (rarely), a failed magical experiment to create a new spell or item, destruction of a magic item or any other magically charged event. The MR of the quintessential created is determined from the highest spell level involved (assign spell level equivalents to magic items etc.).

#Rat

MR 4 Dice 1 Adds 2

Natural Weapons: bite 1d Natural Armour 0

Special Attacks nil Special Defences nil

ST 2 (x0.25) IQ 3 (x0.5) LK 24 (x2.5) CON

4 (x1/2) DEX 2 (x0.25) CHR 2 (x0.25) SP

15 (x1.5)

Length x0.1 Weight x1/190

#Rat, Huge

MR 8 Dice 1 Adds 4

Natural Weapons: bite 1d Natural Armour 0

Special Attacks nil Special Defences nil

ST 4 (x0.5) IQ 3 (x0.5) LK 22 (x2) CON 8

(x1) DEX 2 (x0.25) CHR 3 (x0.25) SP 15

(x1.5)



Length x0.25 Weight x0.016

#Raven

MR 4 Dice 1 Adds 2

Natural Weapons: peck 1d Natural Armour 4 feathers

Special Attacks may use a called shot to attack eyes. Special Defences nil

ST 2 (x0.25) IQ 3 (x0.5) LK 26 (x2.5) CON 4 (x0.5) DEX 0 (x0) CHR 5 (x0.5) SP 20 (x2) half this on land

Length x1/4 Weight x1/100

*Satyr

MR 12 Dice 2 Adds 6

Natural Weapons: normal unarmed attack 1d and a butt for 1d Natural Armour 0

Special Attacks nil Special Defences nil

ST 15 (x1.5) IQ 9 (x1) LK 15 (x1.5) CON 12 (x1) DEX 10 (x1) CHR 8 (x1) SP 12 (x1)

Height x2/3 Weight x1/3 Starting Age: 3d+8 Old at: 40

Also known as korreds and fawns, satyrs are the natural mates of nymphs. The offspring of such unions are nymphs if female and satyrs if male. All satyrs are male. Satyrs often take lovers from the other good kin any offspring of such unions are full satyrs if male and sterile half breeds if female. Satyrs may be used as player characters in some campaigns. Satyrs lack the necessary discipline for serious magical studies in the crucial years of youth and so may not be wizards. Satyrs may be rogues or warriors.



Skeleton, Animated

MR 9 Dice 3 Adds 10

Natural Weapons: normal unarmed attack for 1d, but usually armed. Natural

Armour: hard bone 5

Special Attacks nil Special Defences nil

ST 15 (x1.5) IQ 1 (x0.1) LK 15 (x1.5)

CON 9 (x1) DEX 15 (x1.5) CHR 0 (x0)

SP 10 (x1)

Height x1 Weight x Starting Age: na Old

at: na

Human skeletons given movement by sorcery who unthinkingly obey the wizard who raised them.

#Stag

MR 46 Dice 5 Adds 23

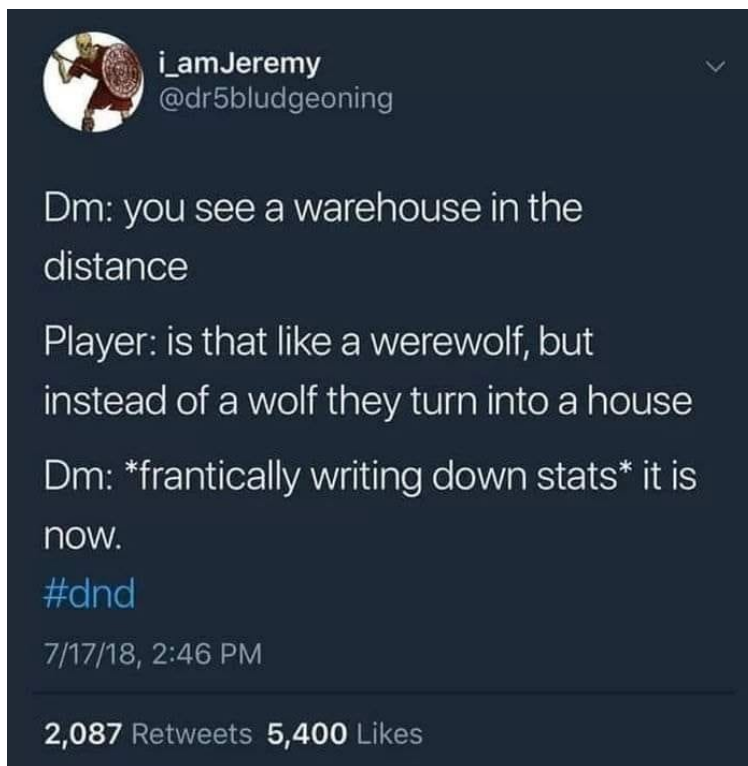
Natural Weapons: antlers 3d and two kicks 1d each Natural Armour 0

Special Attacks nil Special Defences nil

ST 36 (x3.5) IQ 3 (x ½) LK 20 (x2) CON 30 (x3) DEX 0 (x0) CHR 6 (x0.5) SP 20 (x2)

Length x 1.25 (including neck, 2/3 this at shoulder) Weight x3

A large male deer (such as a red deer, wapiti or shou) during the antlered season. Without antlers a male deer is called a hummel and attacks only with its two kicks. Were stags always have their antlers when in deer form. Female deers generally have no antlers (kicks only) MR26, ST26, CON26, length x2/3 and weight x1 but are otherwise rated as per the males. Some species of were stags can roar like lion, others make a call like a deep horn. Regarding the CHR value, a social animal but aggressive toward other males and perceived threats; impressive to look on.



(Worth mentioning Issue 9 of RPG Review, 2010 *Usher, A Warehouse*.

http://rpgreview.net/files/rpgreview_9.pdf)

*Therianthrope

MR 10 Dice 2 Adds 5

Natural Weapons: bite/peck/etc. 2d. Natural Armour: Nil

In an action a therianthrope can make regular unarmed attacks as a human (1d) or use a weapon instead of a bite.

Special Attacks: Nil Special Defences: Nil
ST 10* (x1) IQ 10 (x1) LK 10* (x1) CON 10 (x1) DEX 8 (x 8/10) CHR 10 (x1) SP 10 (x1)

Height x1 Weight x1 Starting Age: 3d+5 Old at: 50

* Either ST or LK is 18 (x2) pick one based

on the physical characteristics of the animal whose head the therianthrope has. Alternatively, both ST and LK could be 15 (x1.5). Therianthropes are as diverse as humans major NPCs should be detailed with attributes reminiscent of the animal whose head they have.

Therianthropes are presented in some detail because they would make an excellent player character kin in most non-European settings. A therianthrope is a human with the head and neck of an animal. Such beings have been depicted the world over since humans painted the earliest rock art, though they seemed to have vanished from Europe in ancient times. In my campaign world therianthropes are rare in most parts of the world, extinct in the 'West' and fairly

common in the South (Africa). The animal head and neck is always as large as a human head and neck combined, so an ibis therianthrope has a larger head than an actual ibis i.e. a child sized head and a proportional ibis neck. An elephant therianthrope has a smaller head than an elephant and hardly any neck. The head of a therianthrope provides a compromise between animal and human senses including colour vision and perhaps a single acute sense. The body of the therianthrope while totally human has a build and appearance reminiscent of the animal, an elephant therianthrope will be large and heavy set while a cat therianthrope will be smaller, lithe and graceful. However, the capabilities of their bodies and limbs are always within the human range, non-human abilities are limited to those few provided by the head.

Therianthrope diets contain a mix of human and animal foods. Despite bestial heads flexible tongues and larynxes allow them to speak human languages but with a 'accent'. In personality such creatures are basically human but tend to have personality traits reminiscent of the animal whose head they have. So human are they in personality that they fit in well in human societies accustomed to their odd looks and they are attracted to humans (when a human and therianthrope, or two therianthropes of different heads, or a therianthrope and a were, breed the offspring has an even chance of being either kin).

Therianthropes generally get on well with weres of the same animal, sometimes forming mixed communities. As magical creatures therianthropes are often rogues or wizards and have their fair share of warrior-wizards also. However, their partially animal nature has less aptitude for tools and weapons so few are pure warriors or artisan civilians (though no character type is actually banned). The standard rules to prevent a therianthrope from making a bite and a weapon attack together in one action it is noted here again for clarity.

Each breed of therianthrope also has one minor special ability determined by the head. Typical abilities include:

- Smell/taste saves at one level lower.
- Vision saves at one level lower.
- Hearing saves at one level lower.
- Night vision like a cat, able to see double usual distance in dim light but still blinded by total darkness.
- Poisonous bite, the venom adds 1d damage if the attack hits and gets past armour.
- Elephant's trunk, treat as an arm of DX x1/2, ST x1/3.
- Echolocation like a bat. You use sound to 'see' even in total darkness (treat as colour blind) but enough of the squeaks or clicks you need to make to 'see' in this way are audible by humans and others to give your own location away, sneaking saves are impossible in quiet areas and two levels harder if there is background noise.
- Sense of direction like a migratory bird. An internal 'compass' so you always know which way is north and never get 'turned around'. This is useful in mazes but does not allow a character to automatically retrace their steps.

WILDERNESS MONSTERS FOR D&D 5e

by Karl Brown

The 5th edition of D&D does not have many monsters capable of challenging a high level party of adventurers. This became a problem for me as I converted the adventures for the AD&D boxed set Council of Wryms (Bill Slavicsek, TSR 1994) to D&D 5th edition. I found that I needed new monsters to challenge a party of dragon PCs and that many monsters from AD&D did not have official 5th edition versions. My gargantua have already appeared in issue 39. From the monsters generated for my Council of Wryms conversion I have curated choke vines to challenge high-level PCs and an assortment of other wilderness monsters and NPCs that should provide interesting encounters. Furthermore, players who enjoy the Firbolg race will find new feats I developed for my Green Isles campaign making 5th edition Firbolgs more like those seen in the folklore of Scotland and Ireland.

My fan conversions for Council of Wryms are discussed on The Piazza on the board for that setting. I thank The Piazza community for their input and encouragement.

Choke Vine, Sprout

Huge Plant, unaligned

Armour Class. 14.

Hit points. 104 (11d12+33).

Speed. 5 feet.

STR 18 (+4) DEX 11 (+0) CON 17 (+3), INT 1 (-5), WIS 10 (+0), CHA 1 (-5)

Senses. Blindsight 45 feet. Passive perception 10

Languages. -

Challenge. 5 (1800xp)

Damage Resistance Any cold damage and non-magical fire damage.

Damage Immunity. Lightning

False Appearance. The choke vine looks like normal vegetation until it moves. A DC20 nature check can identify the vine but you need to be within reach of the vines to be able to make this observation.

Multiple vines. The plant has 8 vines. Whenever the plant takes 16 or more damage in a single turn, one of its vines dies.

Reactive vines. For each vine the plant has beyond one, it has an extra reaction that can only be used for opportunity attacks.

Actions

Multiattack. The gargantuan size choke vine can make numerous attacks limited by its number of vines. On the plant's turn it can attack each opponent once. If possible each attack uses multiple vines. However, the number of vines per opponent is limited by the opponent's size as follows: Tiny 1 doing 5 bludgeoning damage, Small larger 4 doing 20 bludgeoning damage.

Vines. Melee weapon attack. +7 to attack roll. One opponent. Reach 20 feet. Hit damage 5 (1+4) bludgeoning per vine used for the attack as given above. If the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape DC 15). On a critical hit as well as the usual effects of a critical hit the target is also choked or compressed in such a way that they cannot breath and must begin holding their breath. Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the plant can't use those tentacles on another target. While a creature is grappled at the start of its turns the plant can inflict 1d4+4 bludgeoning damage by squeezing its victim. If a victim is choked and unable to breath breaking the grapple also ends the choking effect.

Choke vines begin life as ordinary plants germinated from wind-blown seeds and nourished by sunlight. However, once they reach about 20 feet long they uproot themselves and begin to hunt. The plant is attracted to light and heat. Choke vines are solitary defending their territory from others of their own kind.

Design notes.

I made the largest possible choke vine first, a Challenge 29 creature then paired this back to create this smaller version.

Choke Vine, Young

Gargantuan Plant, unaligned

Armour Class. 14.

Hit points. 216 (16d20+48).

Speed. 5 feet.

STR 18 (+4) DEX 11 (+0) CON 17 (+3), INT 1 (-5), WIS 10 (+0), CHA 1 (-5)

Senses. Blindsight 45 feet. Passive perception 10

Languages. -

Challenge. 11 (7200)

Damage Resistance Any cold damage and non-magical fire damage.

False Appearance. The choke vine looks like normal vegetation until it moves. A DC20 nature check can identify the vine but you need to be within reach of the vines to be able to make this observation.

Multiple vines. The plant has 16 vines. Whenever the plant takes 16 or more damage in a single turn, one of its vines dies.

Reactive vines. For each vine the plant has beyond one, it has an extra reaction that can only be used for opportunity attacks.

Actions

Multiattack. The gargantuan size choke vine can make numerous attacks limited by its number of vines. On the plant's turn it can attack each opponent once. If possible each attack uses multiple vines. However, the number of vines per opponent is limited by the opponent's size as follows: Tiny 1 doing 5 bludgeoning damage, Small or Medium 4 doing 20 bludgeoning damage, Large or larger 16 doing 80 bludgeoning.

Vines. Melee weapon attack. +8 to attack roll. One opponent. Reach 40 feet. Hit damage 5 (1+4) bludgeoning per vine used for the attack as given above. If the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape DC 16). On a critical hit as well as

the usual effects of a critical hit the target is also choked or compressed in such a way that they cannot breath and must begin holding their breath. Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the plant can't use those tentacles on another target. While a creature is grappled at the start of its turns the plant can inflict 1d4+4 bludgeoning damage by squeezing its victim. If a victim is choked and unable to breath breaking the grapple also ends the choking effect.

The drab olive green vines of the young choke vine look like an ordinary plant. The plant is attracted to light and heat. Sensing animals the vine lashes out revealing itself to be a 40ft long carnivorous plant. Choke vines are solitary defending their territory from others of their own kind.

Design notes.

I made the largest possible choke vine first, a Challenge 29 creature then paired this back to create this smaller version.

Choke Vine, Adult

Gargantuan Plant, unaligned

Armour Class. 14.

Hit points. 324 (24d20+72).

Speed. 5 feet.

STR 18 (+4) DEX 11 (+0) CON 17 (+3), INT 1 (-5), WIS 10 (+0), CHA 1 (-5)

Senses. Blindsight 45 feet. Passive perception 10

Languages. -

Challenge. 17 (18 000)

Damage Resistance Any cold damage and non-magical fire damage.

False Appearance. The choke vine looks like normal vegetation until it moves. A DC20 nature check can identify the vine but you need to be within reach of the vines to be able to make this observation.

Multiple vines. The plant has 24 vines. Whenever the plant takes 16 or more damage in a single turn, one of its vines dies.

Reactive vines. For each vine the plant has beyond one, it has an extra reaction that can only be used for opportunity attacks.

Actions

Multiattack. The gargantuan size choke vine can make numerous attacks limited by its number of vines. On the plant's turn it can attack each opponent once. If possible each attack uses multiple vines. However, the number of vines per opponent is limited by the opponents size as follows: Tiny 1 doing 5 bludgeoning damage, Small or Medium 4 doing 20 bludgeoning damage, Large or larger 16 doing 80 bludgeoning.

Vines. Melee weapon attack. +10 to attack roll. One opponent. Reach 50 feet. Hit damage 5 (1+4) bludgeoning per vine used for the attack as given above. If the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape DC 20). On a critical hit as well as the usual effects of a critical hit the target is also choked or compressed in such a way that they cannot breath and must begin holding their breath. Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the plant can't use those tentacles on

another target. While a creature is grappled at the start of its turns the plant can inflict 1d4+4 bludgeoning damage by squeezing its victim. If a victim is choked and unable to breath breaking the grapple also ends the choking effect.

When a vine reached 60 feet long it produces small non-descript white flowers in the spring. The plant is attracted to light and heat. Choke vines are solitary defending their territory from others of their own kind.

Choke Vine, Ancient

Gargantuan Plant, unaligned

Armour Class. 14.

Hit points. 837 (62d20+186).

Speed. 5 feet.

STR 18 (+4) DEX 11 (+0) CON 17 (+3), INT 1 (-5), WIS 10 (+0), CHA 1 (-5)

Senses. Blindsight 45 feet. Passive perception 10

Languages. -

Challenge. 29 (135 000)

Damage Resistance Any cold damage and non-magical fire damage.

False Appearance. The choke vine looks like normal vegetation until it moves. A DC20 nature check can identify the vine but you need to be within reach of the vines to be able to make this observation.

Multiple vines. The plant has 64 vines. Whenever the plant takes 16 or more damage in a single turn, one of its vines dies.

Reactive vines. For each vine the plant has beyond one, it has an extra reaction which can only be used for opportunity attacks.

Actions

Multiattack. The gargantuan size choke vine can make numerous attacks limited by its number of vines. On the plant's turn it can attack each opponent once. If possible each attack uses multiple vines. However, the number of vines per opponent is limited by the opponent's size as follows: Tiny 1 doing 5 bludgeoning damage, Small or Medium 4 doing 20 bludgeoning damage, Large 16 doing 80 bludgeoning damage, Huge 32 doing 160 bludgeoning damage, Gargantuan 64 doing 320 bludgeoning damage.

Vines. Melee weapon attack. +13 to attack roll. One opponent. Reach 50 feet. Hit damage 5 (1+4) bludgeoning per vine used for the attack as given above. If the target is a creature, it is grappled (escape DC 21). On a critical hit as well as the usual effects of a critical hit the target is also choked or compressed in such a way that they cannot breath and must begin holding their breath. Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, and the plant can't use those tentacles on another target. While a creature is grappled at the start of its turns the plant can inflict 1d4+4 bludgeoning damage by squeezing its victim. If a victim is choked and unable to breath breaking the grapple also ends the choking effect.

The oldest of this carnivorous plant species have a slowly writhing main trunk about 2 feet thick but up to 160ft long.

From this comes a mass of smaller olive-green vines. The plant is attracted to light and heat. Choke vines are solitary defending their territory from others of their own kind.

Massive old choke vines are extremely rare and only found in the deepest wild forests.

Design notes. The idea here was for the vine to still have 64 vines but avoid making 64 attack rolls each turn which would really slow down game play.

Firbolg Warriors

Medium Humanoid (Firbolg), Neutral Evil in the Io's Blood. Neutral Good on other Worlds

Armour Class. 13 (Hide armour)

Hit points. 65 (10d8+20)

Speed. 30 feet

STR 19 (+4) DEX 12 (+1) CON 14 (+2) INT 10 (+0) WIS 14 (+2) CHA 10 (+0)

Saving Throws. STR +6 CON +4

Skills. Perception +4

Senses. Passive perception 14

Languages. Common, Elvish, and Giant. Can communicate to Beasts and Plants who understand the meaning of the firbolg's words but the firbolg cannot understand the creature in return. The firbolg has advantage on Charisma checks to influence beasts and plants.

Challenge. 1 (200xp)

Innate Spellcasting. The firbolg's innate spellcasting ability is Wisdom (spell save DC 12, spell attack bonus +4).

Spells usable once recharged by a short or long rest: Detect magic, Disguise Self (a Firbolg casting this spell can appear up to 3 feet shorter), Invisibility (self only).

Each spell usable once per long rest: Additional: Enlarge/Reduce (self only), Alter Self.

Actions

Great Sword. Melee weapon attack. +5 to attack roll. One opponent. Hit 11 (2d6+4) Slashing damage

Design Notes: More closely emulates the Firbolgs of traditional legends and AD&D than the new D&D 5e race. I have also designed feats that enable 5e Firbolg PCs to emulate Firbolgs as they appear in folklore and AD&D.

In my Green Isles setting Firbolgs are native to the North and West Islands

Firbolg Feats

These feats restore some of the abilities described for Firbolgs in the AD&D era. In these earlier editions Firbolgs were large-sized giantkin with shapeshifting and illusion powers who were secretive warrior-protectors of the wilds. These feats give PC firbolgs in D&D 5e greater ability to emulate the Firbolgs of earlier editions and in Celtic legends.

Firbolg Heritage I

Requirement. Firbolg Race

You add Alter Self to your racial spells. You may cast this spell only once and only on yourself. The spell is restored by a long rest.

Firbolg Heritage II

Requirement. Firbolg Heritage I.

You add Enlarge/Reduce to your racial spells. You may cast this spell only once and only on yourself. The spell is restored by a long rest. You also learn the Minor Illusion Cantrip. Wisdom is your spellcasting ability score for this cantrip.

Ogre Wyvern Rider

Large Giant, chaotic evil

Armour class 12 (Hide armour)

Hit points 66 (7d10+28)

Speed 40 feet.

STR 20 (+5), DEX 10 (0), CON 18 (+4), INT 8 (-1), WIS 8 (-1) CHA 7 (-2)

Saving throws CON+6

Skills Animal handling +1.

Damage Resistance Poison

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive perception 9.

Languages Common, Giant.

Challenge 2 (450xp)

Actions

Large Lance. Melee weapon attack +7 to hit, on a hit 12 (2d12+5) piercing damage, reach 10. Disadvantage on attacks if the opponent is within 5ft. Requires two hands if not mounted.

Large Longbow. Missile weapon attack +2 to hit, on a hit 9 (2d8) piercing damage, range 150/600 ft.

The ferocity and unpredictability of half-tamed wyverns with poisonous stingers acts to weed out all but the quickest, toughest, and most cunning ogres.

Marine Scrag

Large giant, chaotic evil

Armour class. 17 (natural armour)

Hit points. 92 (8d10+48)

Speed. 10 feet, swim 30 feet

STR 18 (+4), DEX 13 (+1), CON 22 (+6), INT 7 (-2), WIS 9 (-1) CHA 7 (-2)

Skills. Perception +2 check

Senses. Darkvision 60 ft. Passive perception 11

Languages. Giant

Challenge. 5 (1800xp)

Amphibious. The scrag can breathe both air and water.

Keen Smell. The troll has advantage on smell based Perception checks.

Regeneration. The scrag regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn. If the troll takes acid or fire damage, it does not regenerate at the start of its next turn. The scrag only dies when it starts its turn with 0 hit points and does not regenerate.

Actions

Multiattack. As one action the scrag can attack with both claws and its bite.

Claw. Melee attack: +7 to hit, reach 5ft, one target, 1d4+4 slashing damage.

Bite. Melee attack: +7 to hit, reach 5ft, one target, 2d6+4 piercing damage.

Scrag are trolls adapted to life in the water. Scrag are slow on land because they are legless with long tails like merfolk and merrows. Marine scrag are more adapted to the water than their freshwater cousins; the arms of the marine scrag have atrophied like a seal but their shark-like maw delivers a devastating bite.

Nymph

Medium Neutral Fey

Armour Class 11

Hit points 22 (5d8)

Speed 30 feet

STR 8 (-1), DEX 12 (+1), CON 10 (0), INT 16 (+3), WIS 16 (+3), CHA 28 (+9)

Saving Throws. DEX +3 WIS +5 CHA +11

Skills. Insight +5, Persuasion +11, Performance +11.

Senses. Passive perception 11.

Languages. Common, Sylvan.

Challenge. 1 (200xp)

Blinding Beauty. Unless she is thoroughly covered such as by a volumous robe and hood or incapacitated, all creatures who begin their turn within 30 feet of the nymph and can see her must make a DC 19 Wisdom save or be Blinded. If the nymph is naked a failed save results in instant death as well. A creature that isn't surprised can avert its eyes to avoid the saving throw at the start of its turn. If it does so, it can't see the nymph until the start of its next turn, when it can avert its eyes again. If it looks at the nymph in the meantime, it must immediately make the save.

Blissful kiss. The nymph kisses a creature charmed by it or a willing creature. The target must make a DC 19 Wisdom saving throw against this magic, on a fail becoming Charmed and forgetting all troubling or upsetting memories for 24

hours. The charmed target obeys the nymph's verbal commands. If the target suffers any harm or receives a suicidal command, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on a success. If the target successfully saves against the effect, or if the effect on it ends, the target is immune to this nymph's kiss for the next 24 hours.

Calm beasts. All creatures with the Beast type within 100 feet of nymph who can see her must make a DC 19 Wisdom save against her magic, on a fail becoming charmed by her while within 100 feet of the nymph. The charmed creature cannot take hostile actions against any creature. If the target suffers any harm, it can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on a success. If the target successfully saves against the effect, or if the effect on it ends, the target is immune to this nymph's Calm Beasts power for the next 24 hours.

Enchanted Pool. If the nymph's lair includes a small pond or pool then bathing in the pool grants a creature Advantage on all Charisma ability checks and saves for 24 hours.

Magic Resistance. The nymph has advantage on saving throws against magical effects including spells.

Innate Spellcasting. The nymph can innately cast Dimension Door once per day, requiring no material components.

Druidic tradition. Young nymphs are taught to revere nature and use this faith to cast spells similar to those of a druid. The adult nymph is a 7th level spellcaster. Wisdom is her spellcasting ability for these spells and her save DC is 13 and spell attack bonus is +5.

Spells prepared

Cantrips known: Guidance, mending poison spray.

4 first level slots. Spells prepared: Animal friendship, charm person, cure wounds

3 second level slots. Spells prepared: Hold person, moonbeam, pass without trace.

3 third level slots. Call lightning, Water breathing, meld into stone.

1 fourth level slot. Confusion

Actions.

Graceful Unarmed strike. Melee weapon attack. +3 to attack roll. One opponent. Hit 2 (1+1 points DEX-based unarmed strike) bludgeoning damage.

Nymphs prefer to stay separated from the affairs of other beings and generally avoid being seen. If seen and any creature behaves in a hostile manner the nymph immediately uses Dimension Door to get away. If she cannot lose the attackers or they lay siege to her home then she will use her Blinding Beauty and ranged spells to try to drive them off. Normal camping is tolerated but if the PCs wantonly vandalize the glade then she won't hold back using her blinding beauty and Call Lightning to kill the intruders.

Design notes. The kiss was modified a lot to run more smoothly and make use of the 5e conditions rules rather than just roleplaying selective memory loss.

Wood Elf Scout

Medium humanoid (Wood elf), Chaotic Good

Armor Class 13 (leather armor)

Hit Points 16 (3d8 + 3)

Speed 35 feet.

STR 11 (+0) DEX 16 (+3) CON 12 (+1) INT 11 (+0) WIS 14 (+2) CHA 11 (+0)

Skills Nature +4, Perception +7, Stealth +7, Survival +6

Senses passive Perception 15. Darkvision 60 feet.

Languages Common and Elvish

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Keen Hearing and Sight. The scout has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks using hearing or sight.

Fey Ancestry. Advantage on saves against being charmed and magic cannot put the scout to sleep.

Trance. As described in the Player's Handbook.

Mask of the Wild. You can attempt to hide even when only lightly obscured by foliage, fog, precipitation or other natural phenomena.

Actions

Multiattack. The scout makes two sword attacks or two bow attacks.

Shortsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage.

Longbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +4 to hit, ranged 150/600 feet, one target. Hit: 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

Wood elf scouts range around the villages of their people watching those who enter the forest and conducting patient guerilla warfare against those who might threaten their people or despoil the woodlands.



GURPS 3e OUTDOOR CHARACTERS, CREATURES, AND VEHICLES

by J. Scott Pittman

Merrime

“Give it up, no reason for you to get hurt.”

GURPS 3rd Edition Character

204 Character Points

Beautiful and charismatic human woman with dark skin and features.

Attributes (100 points)

Strength 10, Intelligence 12, Dexterity 16, Health 10 [100 points]

Thrust/Kick 1d-2 (punch 1D-4), Swing 1d; Spd: 6.5; Move/Dodge 6 (7 with combat reflexes); Hit Pts 10; Fatigue 10; Lift 250, Fright 13, Active defenses +1 (combat reflexes)

Advantages (110 points)

Reputation (+1 as a local hero) [5], Legal Enforcement Powers [5], Very Beautiful (+2 reaction, +4 to opposite sex) [25], Cool (+1 to fright checks) [1], Fearlessness +2 [4], Charisma +2 [10], Combat Reflexes (+1 active defenses, +1 to fast-draw skills, +2 fright, never freeze. Your side gets +1 initiative, +2 if you are the leader, +6 to recover from mental stun) [15], Luck (re-roll once/hour) [15], Daredevil [15], patron (Local Village) [10], Status 1 (local hero) [5]

Disadvantages (-35)

Duty (often to dangerous job) [-10], Cannot Harm Innocents [-10], Stubbornness [-5], Selfless [-10]

Quirks (-5)

Good sense of humor, confident, honorable, always has a wry smile, fidgets with hair

Skills (34 points)

Acrobatics (DX-1), Area Knowledge, Local (IQ+1), Armory (Bows and Arrows) (IQ) Bow (DX-1), Brawling (DX+1, add 1/10 of final score to damage), Climbing (DX), Fast-Draw, Shortsword (DX+1) Fencing (DX), Intimidation (IQ), Judo: Throws (DX-1), Jumping (DX+1), Karate: Punching & Kicking (DX-1, add 1/5 of final score to damage), Language (Average) (IQ: Goblin), Running (HT-1), Shortsword (DX), Swimming (DX+1), Wrestling (DX)

Weapons and Equipment

Bow, Long: Bow skill, imp THR+2, Acc 3, 3 lbs., max damage 1d+4;

Shortsword (x2): Shortsword skill, cut SW, 2 pounds;



Armor, Leather (PD 2, DR 2, 10 lbs.)

Always carries under 20 pounds.

Background

Merrime (a nickname chosen by her as a play on the words “marry me”) came to the town of Highhill a few years ago and immediately was well liked. She is kind and caring, although she can be stubborn at times. She gives any treasure and earnings to the poor, only requiring a room and a little food, which the local lord is happy to pay for.

This local lady has earned a name for herself as a hero, although her history is still a mystery and something she will not talk about.

Characters may run into Merrime as they come into Highhill, or if they cause trouble in that town. The GM is free to place her in whatever city he likes.

Written by J. Scott Pittman

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Graka “Thieves of Mt. Thunder”

“Issss our mountain now.”

GURPS 3rd Edition Character

96 Character Points (adjust for Status and Wealth)

Attributes (55 points)

Strength 14 [45], Intelligence 9 [-10], Dexterity 10 [0], Health 12 [20]

Thrust 1d, Swing 2d; Spd: 5.5; Move/Dodge 5; Hit Pts 12; Fatigue 14; Lift: 350

Advantages (48 points)

Claws [15]; DR +1 [3]; Longevity [5]; Peripheral Vision

[15]; Sharp Teeth [5]; Temperature Tolerance (55 degrees to 115 degrees) [5]

Disadvantages (-36)

Callous [-6], Intolerance (humans, elves and dwarves) [-10]; Reputation -3 (as inhuman savages) [-15]; Shyness [-5]

Quirks (-1)

Hisses when speaking

Traits and Features

Aggressive demeanor, ordinary tail, females lay eggs, favorite food is still-living rodents and insects

Skills (30)

Area Knowledge, Local (IQ+1), Axe/Mace (DX), Brawling (DX+1, add 1/10 of final score to damage), Camouflage (IQ)*, Intimidation (IQ), Knife (DX+1) Poisons (IQ-1), Shield (DX+1), Shortsword (DX) Spear (DX), Spear Throwing (DX), Survival, Desert* (IQ), Swimming (DX+1), Thrown Weapon (Axe) (DX+1) Tracking/Hunting (IQ), Wrestling (DX)

Note that most of this race do not speak English, but some scouts do, as is needed by their profession.

(*)Racial Skills

Weapons and Equipment

Shortsword: Shortsword skill, cut SW, 2 pounds

Plate Mail (PD 4, DR 5, 20 lbs.)

Medium Shield (PD3, 15 lbs.)

Generic Helmet (8 lbs.)

Encumbrance: 45 lbs.

Background

The dreaded Graka are a race of reptile men that once were scattered in small tribes, but were brought together by Graka the Spotted and united to march against the dwarves of Mt. thunder, and successfully conquered that land and

made it their own. Graka now wears the crown that once belonged to The King of Burning Stones, and is said to have that dwarves' skull as a footrest at his taken throne.

The general troops of the Graka have taken the hundreds of suits of dwarven armor and have trained in the use of swords and shields. Unknown to the humans, now have turned their sights to the nearby lands of Highhill, Durmen and Nearcastle.

Written by J. Scott Pittman

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Charder

Attributes: Strength 9, Intelligence 12, Dexterity 13, Health 10

Senses: 14, Willpower 10, Fright 10, Charisma 12

Hit Points: 10

Speed 5.75, Move 5

Basic Damage: Thrust 1d-2, Swing 1d-1

Parry: Shortsword 6 (7), Dodge: 5 (6)

Advantages: Alertness +4, Charisma +2, Fit, 10 Favors, Magery 1

Disadvantages: Secret (member of the Alley Cats), Code of Honor (Finders Keepers, don't snitch, don't betray your friends), Greed, Curious, Skinny [-5] (at -2 to resist slam or to use the disguise and shadowing skills), Sense of Duty (Alley Cats)

Quirks: Loves pretty ladies, seemingly always hungry, uses humor to handle almost any situation

Skills: Acrobatics DX-1 [2], Area Knowledge IQ-1, Bow DX, Brawling DX+1, Carousing 12 (not including a +2 from Charisma and often providing drinks and entertainment for a bonus of +1-3), Climbing DX+2, Escape DX-1, Fast-Draw (dagger) DX, Fast-Talk IQ-1, Gambling IQ, Jumping DX+1, Knife DX+1, Law IQ-1, Lockpicking IQ, Poisons IQ, Scrounging IQ, Shortsword DX, Sleight of Hand DX-1, Stealth DX, Streetwise IQ, Swimming DX, Occultism IQ, Musical Instrument (lyre) 17

Spells Known:

Detect Magic 14, Wizard Mark 14, Cantrip 14, Hypnotism 14, Comprehend Languages 14

Weapons and Equipment:

Dagger: use Knife skill; Damage: 1d-3 (impaling), if thrown, damage is 1d-3 (impaling)

Short Sword: Skill 13; Damage: 1d-1 (cutting)

Short Bow: Skill DX (13), Acc 1; Damage: 1d-2 (impaling)

Quiver cost \$10 and weighs ½ pound, holds 10 arrows; Requires 2 turns to ready and 1 to fire

Armor: Padded Armor (PD1, DR1, 5 lbs. \$30),

Background:

Charder has been with the adventuring group since nearly its beginning. He keeps his past a secret, but seem to have contacts everywhere. He's loyal enough, but defiantly in the business of saving people for the gold. He has been called a bard by some, but he simply says he is someone who can solve problems – for a price.

Galane, Mistress of Loviatar

Strength 11, Intelligence 13, Dexterity 13, Health 12

Senses: 10, Willpower 14, Fright +0, Reaction Rolls +2

Hit Points: 12

Speed 6.25, Move 6

Basic Damage: Thrust 1d-1, Swing 1d+1

Parry: Iron Bar 11, Dodge: 10, Block n/a

Status: 1 (Minor Priestess)

Advantages: Charisma +1, Strong Will +3, High Pain Threshold, Patron (her church), Attractive, Strong Will +4,

Clerical Investment, Blessed (10-point version), Clerical Magic, Extra Fatigue (spellcasting only) +15
Disadvantages: Sense of Duty (to all people), Social Stigma (as a follower of a god most people see as evil), Duty (to her church), Religious Fanaticism, Selfless, Callous, Disciplines of Faith (Asceticism)
Quirks: Talks about pain and suffering enough that it can be annoying, bites her nails, is amazed at the world now that she is in it, likes cold weather, confident, has no use for romance
Skills: Artist (Charcoal Drawing), Theology 13, Occultism 12, Rituals and Ceremonies 11, Herbalism 12, Whip 14, Dagger 13, Baton 14
Occupation: Adventurer (sometimes healer or sooth-sayer)
Wealth: Varies, but usually Average
Weapons:
Whip: Skill 14, Damage 1d+1 (cr)
Maneuver: Crack Whip +4 (rolls normal skill)
Specials: Take Weapon, Entangle (see Whip skill description)
Dagger: Skill 13; Damage 1d-2 (imp)
Iron Bar (Baton): Skill 14; Damage 1d+1 (cr)
Armor: Half Plate: PD4, Damage Resistance 5
Equipment: Gelane carries about 2 days of rations, water for a few days, a medical pouch, personal basics and a small blanket.
Background: Gelane is from the Temple of Healing in the mountains near Silverymoon, devoted to the goddess Loviatar. That deity normally is seen as evil, they reject the dark teachings of the normal church and instead devote themselves to healing ailments such as madness and possession through treatments of pain. The villages nearby can't deny the good the cult has done, but are wary of the priestesses there nonetheless, and are still somewhat frightened of them. Still, villagers struck with mental illness are often brought to the church, who gladly help those poor souls when they can, and care for them if they cannot.
Gelane has given up everything to the church to serve others, but has seen much and can be callous to people she doesn't see as really suffering. The church has recently sent her on quests with her new friends, and she is currently happy to see the world, but misses the church. She thinks romance is a waste of time and does not pursue relationships and chastises those that act foolishly while they are in love.
Spells Known:
1st Level: Detect Evil, Command, Cure Light Wounds, Detect Magic, Detect Poison
2nd Level: Aid, Find Traps, Heat Metal, Slow Poison, Lightning Whip

Vrome

Strength 12, Intelligence 11, Dexterity 11, Health 13
Senses: 10, Willpower 12, Fright +4
Hit Points: 13
Speed 6, Move 6 (4 due to encumbrance)
Basic Damage: Thrust 1d-1, Swing 1d+2
Parry: 14 (Broadsword, Armor, Shield), Dodge: 6 (13), Block 6 (13)
Status: 0 (Adventurer)
Advantages: Charisma +3, Strong Will +2, Fearless +4
Disadvantages: Cannot Harm Innocents, Sense of Duty (to friends)
Quirks: Feels responsible for Irom being turned into a vampire and then destroyed; Follows Helm, but not a fanatic; Tries to stay clean; Serious, but does not seem to mind jokers; Leads the adventuring group called The Wanderers of Ice
Skills: Bow 13, Brawling 14, Broadsword 14, Knife 13, Riding (horse) 12, Shortsword 12, Shield 12, Area Knowledge (the North, around Silverymoon) 11, First Aid 11, Gambling 10, Leadership 14, Survival (Mountains) 13, Tracking/Hunting 13, Animal Handling (dog sled) 12
Occupation: Adventurer (sometimes bodyguard)
Wealth: Varies, but usually Average

Weapons: Broadsword: Skill 14, Damage 1d+5 (Very Fine)
This is a Blade of Rashemen, very rare in the North, worth \$12,000!
Dagger: Skill 13; Damage 1d (imp)
Short Bow: Skill 13 (Accuracy 1), Damage 1d-1 (imp)
Armor: Half Plate: PD4, Damage Resistance 5
Shield: Medium, PD 3

Equipment: Vrome often carries About 5 days of rations, water for a few days, a medical pouch, personal basics, a rope, a small tent and a large blanket. If knowing he will be in deep wilderness he will be much more prepared.
Background: Vrome was encountered in Silverymoon and offered to help approach an old fortress from the mountains. In reality, he was trying to destroy the vampire there because his friend, Irom, has replaced the dark lord there after Vrome had destroyed that master – but not in time to save his friend. When victorious, Vrome became an ally.

Chimpanzee Template

Point Total: 58

Strength+10 [+110]; Intelligence -4 [-30]; Dexterity +4 [45]; Health +2 [20]

Advantages: Discriminatory Smell[15], Brachiator [5], Fur [4]

Disadvantages: Presentient[-20], Bestial [-10], Short Lifespan 1 [-10], Social Stigma (savage beast) [-15], Color Blindness [-10], Semi-Upright [-5]

Taboo Traits

Cannot Swim [0-point Taboo Trait]

Skills: Climbing +3 [4]

Racial Quirks: Loves Bananas, Aggressive (change to Friendly or Smug for cinematic characters), Beats Chest and/or screams when being aggressive, knuckle-walks, grooms others constantly

Background: This package can represent most primates that are about the size of a chimpanzee.

Dog, Large Template

Point Total: -47

This represents domesticated dog, so it lacks the Bestial disadvantage. Some creatures using this template may have Bestial [-10], bringing the template point total to -57

ST-1 (No Fine Manipulators -40%) [-14];

DX+2 [20]; IQ -5 [-40]; HT +1 [10]

Advantages: Acute Hearing+3 [6], Acute Taste and Smell +3 [6], Alertness +4 [20], Combat Reflexes [15], Discriminatory Smell (Works as Empathy within 2 hexes +50%) [23], Fearlessness +4 [8], Enhanced Dodge [15], Enhanced Move (Running) 1 [10], Four Legs [5], Sharp Teeth [5], Fur[4], Ultrahearing [25], 1 point of Temperature Tolerance (cold) [free with Thick Fur]

Disadvantages: No Fine Manipulators[-30], Color Blindness [-10], Horizontal [-10]; Chummy [-5], Dull [-1], Gluttony [-5], Innumerate [-5], Presentient[-20], Sleepy (50% of the time) [-10], Staid [-1]; Short Lifespan 5 [-50], Social Stigma (dangerous) [-15]

Racial Quirks: Pack Mentality [-1], Domesticated & Well-trained [-1], Territorial [-1]

Large Bird Template

Point Total: -14

ST -7 [-60]; DX +5 [60]; IQ -6 [-50]; HT +2/-5 [-15]

Advantages: Fur (thick feathers) [4], Ultrahearing [5], 1 points of Temperature Tolerance (cold) [free with thick feathers], Flight, Winged [30], Alertness +5 [25], Telescopic Vision x8 [18]; Reduced Hit Points -7 [-35], Decreased Life Support [10], Sharp Teeth (Beak) [5]

Disadvantages: Bestial [-10], Dull [-1], Innumerate [-5], Presentient [-20], Short Lifespan 1 [-10], Fragile [-20], Inconvenient Size [-15]

Skills: A beast uses its DX for attacks and for flying

Notes:

- Move when flying is x2 normal.
- DR 1 from Thick Fur/Feathers.
- Double damage from crushing attacks.

Bear, Grizzly Template

Point Total: 238

Strength+15 (No Fine Manipulators -40%) [90];

Intelligence -5 [-40]; Dexterity +3 [30]; Health +4 [45]

Advantages: Acute Hearing+4 [8], Acute Taste and Smell +4 [8], Alertness +5 [25], Sharp Claws [25], Discriminatory Smell (Works as Empathy within 2 hexes +50%) [23], Enhanced Move (Running) 1 [10], Four Legs[5], Sharp Teeth [5], Thick Fur [29], Ultrahearing [25], 2 points of Temperature Tolerance (cold) [free with Thick Fur], Extra Hit Points +8 [40], Fearlessness+5 [10], Unusual Background: Animal Hibernation: reduced cost for hibernation skill [10]

Disadvantages: No Fine Manipulators (-50%, -4 to very fine actions) [-15], Horizontal [-10], Bestial [-10], Loner [-5], Gluttony[-5], Innumerate [-5], Curious [-5]

Short Lifespan1 [-10], Social Stigma (savage beast) [-15], Increased Life Support(in the fall, up to 90 pounds of food per day) [-30], Inconvenient Size [-10]

Skills: Hibernation3 (skill 18*) [8], Brawling at DX [1], Running at HT [4]

Racial Quirks: Territorial [-1], Behavior is hard to understand [-1], Might ignore people that play dead [-1]

Background: Grizzly bears are one of the largest and most powerful bears. They are generally solitary. Attacks on humans are rare, but increase with lack of food and by area, and often if they think their young are threatened.

Olympus Class Transport Ship

Size and Weight:

Total Modified Cubic Feet: 421,908.79

Access Space: 34,080 cf

Empty Space: 63,977 71 cf

Cargo Space: 20,000 cf

Surface Area Total: 40,000

Size Modifier: +10

Total Weight: 723 tons

Streamlining: None

Frame Strength: Heavy

Weapons: Six TL10 X-Ray Laser Cannons located on open mounts and fully stabilized; Damage 60d6(2). Total weight of weapons: 9600 lbs.; Cost of weapons: \$720,000; Total Volume 192 cf; energy per second per cannon is 307,123, a full burst of all weapons is 1,842,738

Defenses: DR 35, PD 4 Standard Armor, Sealed (56,000 pounds, \$104,000)

PD 8 Deflector Screens (1000 pounds, \$2,500,000, Power 72,000)

DR 150 Force Screen (75 damage to cause “energy level” damage; 12,000 pounds, \$15 million)

Engines: Four TL10 Standard Reactionless Thrusters with 400,000 Pounds of Thrust each; total weight 800,000 pounds; cost 16 million; volume is 32,000 cf

Contragrav Generator (\$38,640)

Top Speed: 826 mph with an acceleration of 20 mph

Computers: Robotic Brain with self-destruct system

4 micro frame computers (complexity 10 “dumb” combat computers, \$8000)

20 computer terminals (1 captain, 2 pilots, 4 medical, 4 sciences, 6 combat, 3 engineering)

1 autopilot system

Power: Total Power Requirement: 688,603.14

Energy Bank: TL13 Power Cells providing 2,000,000,000 kw. This is back up power; it provides about 48 minutes worth of power, enough to reach a safe landing on the planet, to the main power fail – assuming no weapon use.

Other Accessories:

Neutrino communicator with the range of 40,000 miles (\$6,400,000)
10 searchlights
10 infrared searchlights
1 LADAR System (250 mile range, gives +2 to target if target is within range of weapons, \$156,250)
Two multi-scanners with a range of 250 miles
Flight recorder
6 vehicle cameras
2 global positioning systems
2 terrain-following radars
6 Laser Rangefinders (250 mile range, cost \$150,000)
10 Full fire suppression systems
1 extra computerized maneuver controls
Full Life System with an additional backup system, enough to last 800 days total
Artificial Gravity
TL 13 Radiation Shielding
TL13 Antimatter Reactor providing 800,000 kw per second with +3 Failsafe bonus
Stardrive: Power required 260,640,000, or about ¼ the ship's battery power in an emergency
Crew: 150 bunks; 4 cabins; 2 luxury cabins
Medical: 20 medical beds, small
2 operating rooms
1 diagnosis table
20 cyronic capsules
Science and Engineering:
2 science labs
2 complete workshops
Prisoner Area: 20 prisoner accommodations
Cost: Total Vehicle Cost: \$47,392,164
Game Stats:
Usual payload: 30,000 lbs.
Number of Passengers: 150
Body Area: 40,000
Hit Points: 60,000
Health: 13

With a bridge crew of 12 and 138 crew members consisting of soldiers, engineers and medical crew, the Olympus-Class Lander has enough room to also carry 20,000 cf of cargo, and often carries multiple land vehicles and supplies to build a small base. While not incredible when it comes to firepower, it can hold it's own against multiple fighters. It has enough medical facilities to be a rescue vehicle, enough firepower to be air support, enough scanners and science units to be an exploration ship, and could be used as a military transport. In addition, it has the ability for faster-than-light travel and two years of life support systems.

Engineered by Archon Shipyards, the ship has a very good record of service, and it used by various military groups and individuals.

The robotic brain, Mega-Intelligent Computer Control (MICC), seems friendly enough and often will not say much, unless the crew is in danger. The computer has a loyalty basic programming that remains "loyal" to the captain until codes are transferred by voice command to a new captain.

STAR FRONTIERS: DARK SHADOW'S REVENGE!

By Richard Rose "Shadowshack"

Note: Dark Shadow's Revenge is a follow adventure to events in SFKH-0 module, "Warriors of White Light."



ALPHA SUBSECTION 1: THE ASSIGNMENT

The SS Dark Shadow was utilized to undermine Clarion's government, her crew had been smuggling weapons that have undoubtedly fallen into the hands of the Clarion Liberation Party and the Planaron pirates, not to mention others seeking to usurp the Crown. During the capture it was discovered that her crew had been operating under a Streeel contract. The vessel is now safely in the hands of the Clarion Royal Marines and her crew is slated for what should be a short yet swift trial. However, the Crown has intentionally withheld information about

the capture to the public and for good reason: it is time to deal a crippling blow once and for all so that Streeel may finally understand just how sincere Clarion's government is concerning their Demilitarization Act that the mega-corp has so blatantly ignored.

To this end several undercover agents have been operating with holoscreens and voice modulators, having visited the Streeel office on Clarion Station in order to prolong this coup d'etat. These agents have learned the source of the Dark Shadow's supplier in Streeel's office aboard Triad Station in Cassidine. The players' mission will be to take the Dark Shadow back to Triad and put an end to this operation. Since this is an "off the books" mission, the implication here is assassination although capture is certainly preferred. If the party is captured the Crown will not admit to having any involvement in this act and will go so far as to claim the party went AWOL and broke the Shadow out of quarantine for their own motives.

The captured crew of the Dark Shadow was originally comprised of the following:

Captain Lucius Strewt (mH), pilot

1st Mate Maggar Broub (mY), engineer

Cereeze K'zoot (fV), astrogator

No'zan Z'keem (mV), gunner

Four male humans were also registered among the crew as "enforcers".

Ideally the CRM roster should echo this as closely as possible, at least with the four officers. Each of the four officer impersonators will be issued a holoscreen programmed for each corresponding officer and a power beltpack to help with their mission. The enforcers can always be replaced by what ever remaining members that make up the party. If there are no members matching the descriptions of the officers they can always be appointed from the CRM roster (such as the vruskan officers of the CMS Wasp for example). The Dark Shadow can accomodate up to ten beings with its life support. However the final roster is, the player impersonating Strewt will have to report the new crew to the Streel office (requiring the 80% chance for success with the holoscreen since it is a new user along with an LDR check, however if the initial agent is utilized for such reporting prior to launch he will gain an automatic success). The person portraying Strewt will also need to make arrangements for another meet with the supplier for a new cargo at this time, which sets the stage for this adventure.

ALPHA SUBSECTION 2: THE VOYAGE

The Dark Shadow will have to make two jumps, one from White Light to Timeon and the second from Timeon to Cassidine. The drives will require an overhaul once they are in Cassidine. Neither system has a planetary militia, although Cassidine is home port to one of the Spacefleet Task Forces so caution must be exercised there. After all, for all intents and purposes this is an illegal mission that the Crown is not publicly backing, the last thing the party wants is to be caught in possession of a craft that is not theirs under the guise of the former crew!

The specifications of the Dark Shadow follow (although they are not necessarily needed as the ship is not expected to fall into any combat map encounters unless the crew so opts):

HS: 5 HP: 25 Powerplant: 2 Streel "Big Bang" atomic class B ADF: 4 MR: 2 DCR: 35 Crew: 4

Armament: LB (concealed, takes one combat turn to deploy) Defenses: RH

Communication/Detection: SubSpace Radio, VideoCom, Radar, Intercom

Misc Equipment: Camera System, Skin Sensors

Computer (Lv-4, 134fp, 100SP)

Alarm(2), Analysis(4), Astrogation(4), Commerce(1), Computer Security(4), Damage Control(2), Drive(5), Industry(1), Laser Battery(1), Life Support(1, capacity:10), Maintenance(2)

Cargo Capacity: 4

Crew Accomodations: 2 convertible single/double cabins, one quad cabin

Passenger Accomodations: n/a

Ship's Vehicles: small launch

Use the small freighter deck plans from the WoWL module inside cover to represent the Shadow. The original owners upgraded the drives to "Big Bang" models (which is Strel's answer to PanGalactic's "Eureka" drives mentioned in Dramune Run that allow for additional acceleration) as the addition of a laser battery took a hit on performance. As such the ship is not as maneuverable as a standard class:5 freighter, but the extra acceleration certainly makes up for it. In a perfect world they would have added fore & stern Pod Lasers to retain stock maneuverability and cargo space, but that technology was not available when the Shadow was designed. The party would be wise to activate their holoscreens for any and all encounters, and the ship's power relay station (adjacent to the elevator on deck 3) has recharging equipment for powerpacks and parabatteries.

ALPHA SUBSECTION 3: ENCOUNTER #1

While in Timeon the Dark Shadow's radar lights up as the crew is preparing for the next jump. The ship is in deep space and a size:10 craft is approaching. The inbound craft is hailing the Dark Shadow, wishing to speak with Captain Strewt. They have identified themselves as the MalCo Ship "Nightshade" and wish to board for a friendly meet & greet, the Nightshade's captain Dablak states he has heard of the Dark Shadow crew's accomplishments and would like to discuss a business proposal.

If the party wishes to fight, the Nightshade's specifications are as follows:

HS: 10 HP: 50 Powerplant: 4 atomic class B ADF: 3 MR: 2 DCR: 50 Crew: 10

Armament: LB(x2) Defenses: RH, MS(x2)

It will be easy to outrun the Nightshade, however do not allow the craft to be captured or destroyed as it is needed in future module SF/KH:1 Dramune Run. If the Dark Shadow crew accepts the boarding, the following beings will enter with weapons slung and hands/pseudopods in plain sight:

Dablak the Enforcer (mD)

RW:70, M:60, PS:3, IM:3 RS:30, STA:70

Laser Rifle w/Power Backpack, Electric Sword, Skeinsuit w/Albedo Screen; black sable cloak

Four Yazirians (all male)

RW:60, M:60, PS:3, IM:5, RS:45, STA:45

two w/laser rifles & 4 powerclips, Skeinsuit & Albedo Screens

two w/gyrojet rifles & 4 jetclips, Albedo Suits w/Inertia Screens

If received Dablak will sit down with "Strewt" in the ship's recreation area (deck 3) and offer employment with MalCo Enterprises, stating that the Shadow's crew has gained a reputation for smuggling and that is just the niche that MalCo is looking to fill these days. Dablak will offer a boarding pass and one complimentary week of docking with no expiration date at Darkworld Station (Outer R,each Dramune) should the crew wish to proceed. If a fight breaks out, allow Dablak to escape as the four yazirians cover as he is also needed for the future module (Dramune Run). While

unknown to the party, none of the MalCo representatives have ever met the Dark Shadow crew so if they are not utilizing their holoscreens it will not matter...but most likely the party will wish to activate them anyways.

Note that this encounter is not necessary for any Clarion adventures as MalCo is not conducting any illicit trade with Clarion, but it does serve to establish the platform for the module that follows...should the players participate in the future module they will certainly recognize Dablak and the Nightshade when they are encountered during that adventure.

ALPHA SUBSECTION 4: ENCOUNTER #2

Once the Dark Shadow arrives in Cassidine it is to rendez-vous with the SCS (Streel Corporation Ship) Provisioner, a size:12 freight hauler currently under the command of Quintzee Thrum. Thrum is the Streel agent that has been supplying the Dark Shadow with contraband destined for Clarion. The Provisioner has been slated for one more meeting in what should be the final encounter, if all goes well...

Whether the party opts to perform the overhauls before or after the meeting with the Provisioner does not impact game play, however it should be noted that they arrive early and will have sufficient time to do so prior to the rendez-vous.

Thrum has agreed to meet the Dark Shadow in deep space where they are least likely to be interrupted while they transfer the next cargo: a generous supply of armored hover transports. The transports themselves are destined for Clarion's Liberation Party, and while not being illegal themselves there is also a cache of automatic rifles that have been concealed under each transport's array of hoverfans. As such these weapons should be difficult to discover by an inspection team since the craft will be grounded (unless in zero grav, they are too heavy to lift to view the undercarriages and without parabatteries they can not be activated into hover mode). Four cargo units worth of transports are ready for transfer to the Dark Shadow's hold.

Once the airlocks have been joined the two crews may mingle freely. The capture/killing of Thrum can occur at any point the party chooses, although it behooves them to allow the Provisioner crew to assist with loading the transports first as their ship has a cargo arm (equipment that the Dark Shadow lacks). It should be noted that Thrum has encountered the four officers from the Dark Shadow on numerous occasions so the party will have to pass their holoscreen checks as they meet him. Once they pass this check they can interact freely with Thrum. However, if Thrum finds anything odd about any of the four officers things can turn for the worse quickly.

Use the larger freighter deck plan from the WoWL module inner cover to represent the Provisioner. If for whatever reason a board game encounter breaks out (surviving crew members attempt to pursue the Shadow after Thrum is captured/killed, or if they simply have to retreat due to bad luck/planning, etc), the Provisioner's specifications are as follows:

HS: 12 HP: 60 Powerplant: 4 atomic class B ADF: 3 MR: 3 DCR: 56 Crew: up to 12

Armament: LB(x2) Defenses: RH

The Provisioner crew is as follows:

Quintzee Thrum (mY)

STR/STA 50/60 DEX/RS 60/60 INT/LOG 50/50 PER/LDR 40/50

Battle Rage:20%, projectile lv-5 melee lv-4 computer lv-3 technician lv-2

RW:80 M:70 IM:6 RS:60 STA:60

Dual barrel Automatic Pistol* w/2 bulletclips, four spare bulletclips, Sonic Sword w/powerclip, Skeinsuit w/Albedo Screen. Thrum keeps a machine gun and two belts of ammunition stowed in his cabin (A, shared with the two pilots below).

*3kg, double damage, double ammo capacity, all other stats as per AD rules

Cassy Harper (fH), pilot (lv-4)

RW:60 M:60 IM:5 RS:50 STA:50

Electroshooter w/powerclip, Albedosuit w/Inertia Screen. Cassy stows a sonic disruptor and power backpack in her cabin (A).

Oogli (mD), co-pilot (lv-3)

RW:50 M:70 IM:5 RS:50 STA:70

Gyrojet pistol w/jetclip, stunstick w/powerclip, skeinsuit w/inertia screen

K'armas (mV), astrogator (lv-3)

RW:55 M:58 IM:5 RS:50 STA:55

Laser Pistol w/powerclip, nightstick. Karmas has a lv-1 portable computer stowed in Cabin B (shared with the engineer and security officer F'sir below), it has the following programs loaded: Analysis(lv-3), Information Storage(lv-1), and Robot Management(lv-2). She can use it to independently coordinate the ship's combat robot outside of its normal programming.

Z'armas (mV), engineer (lv-4)

RW:55 M:58 IM:5 RS:50 STA:55

Laser Pistol w/powerclip, nightstick. Z'amas keeps a RobComKit and TechKit stowed in his cabin.

Mr. Mayer (mH), security director, engineer (lv-3)

Beam lv-5, gyrojet lv-4, melee lv-3, demolition lv-2, thrown lv-1

DEX:80(laser)/70(gyro), M:68 IM:6 RS:60 STA:75

Laser Rifle w/5 powerclips, gyrojet pistol w/2 jetclips, sonic sword, two tangler grenades. Mr. Mayer keeps a heavy

laser & power backpack in his cabin (C, shared with the two gunners below).

Gleep Wulp "Eyebiter" (mY), gunner (lv-3)

Battle Rage:25%

RW:90 M:90 IM:6 RS:60 STA:50

Laser Rifle w/PowerBeltPack, Skeinsuit w/Albedo Screen & separate beltback, electric sword w/powerclip

Gloop Wulp "Earbiter" (mY), gunner (lv-3)

Battle Rage:25%

RW:90 M:90 IM:6 RS:60 STA:50

Laser Rifle w/PowerBeltPack, Skeinsuit w/Albedo Screen & separate beltback, electric sword w/powerclip; each of the Wulp clan brothers keeps a silver plated laser pistol w/black suede holster in their cabin as part of their clan heritage, each pistol/holster combo is worth 1000Cr.

Cotis (mD), security

RW:60 M:60 IM:5 RS:50 STA:60

Gyrojet Rifle w/3 Jetclips, Skeinsuit & Albedo Screen, stunstick. COTis keeps a Grenade Rifle and two each of doze, tangler, & frag bullets in his cabin (D, shared with the human & yazirian security officers below).

Vincent Royce (mH), security

RW:50 M:50 IM:5 RS:5 STA:50

Laser Rifle w/3 powerclips, Albedosuit & Inertia Screen, stunstick.

F'sir (mV), security

RW:60 M:60 IM:6 RS:60 STA:50

2 Automatic Pistols w/3 bulletclips each, Skeinsuit & Albedo Screen, stunstick

Manik (mY), security

RW:60 M:60 IM:5 RS:50 STA:50

Gyrojet Rifle w/3 bulletclips, Skeinsuit & Albedo Screen, stunstick

LCD-2 "Elsie Dee" (lv-2 Combat Robot), stowed in Lower Bridge Deck sotrage area when not in use.

Anthropomorphic-vruskan body w/two additional arms, passive electromagnetic feet for zero-G work, two laser rifles each powered by a separate powerbackpack set at 5SEU; type 2 Parabattery.

Programs: Attack/Defense, Search & Destroy, Computer Link

Mission: Seek out and destroy non-Streel corporate beings

Functions: Use Search & Destroy and Attack/Defense programs to neutralize anyone not bearing the Streel logo on their uniform.

MV:150m/turn, STA:100, IM/RS:5/50, ATT:50 DMG: two 5d10 shots/rifle

The pilot, co-pilot, astrogator, engineer, and dralasite security officer all begin the encounter on the Upper Bridge deck (2). The two yazirian gunners, security director, and the yazirian security officer are on the Lower Bridge Deck (3) and any of them may dart into the storage area to activate the combat robot. Thrum meets the group at the airlock of the Crew Deck(4) along with the human and vrusk security officers, the human will stay near the elevator while the vrusk accompanies him and the party in the rec room for the business meeting.

All crew members have a separate power backpack to enable their defensive screens in addition to any ammunition listed. Naturally each crew member has the Streel logo emblazoned front & back on their uniforms and night shirts. If combat breaks out, crew members with items stowed in their cabins (save for the clan weapons of the yazirian gunners) will attempt to retrieve those items for use against the usurpers. Thrum will attempt to escape either in the launch or one of the two workpods while the security officers will do their best to cover this escape. It should be noted if the party obtains the astrogator's portable computer before she does, it can be used to activate, deactivate, override, and otherwise commandeer the combat robot as the sip's computer lacks a robot management program!

If Thrum escapes the party can easily recover the launch or workpod assuming the Provisioner has been disabled/destroyed. However, if the ship is destroyed they will have to force any information from Thrum once he is recovered, otherwise additional info about Streel can be obtained from the ship's computer. The Dark Shadow crew will have a 100% chance of locating Thrum's escape vehicle (moving at 1 hex/turn in a random direction from the rendezvous point, you may roll a d6 to determine which direction it travels) minus 5% for each combat turn after two turns that transpires prior to searching for him...so if five turns are spent fighting the Provisioner than the chance drops to 85%.

The Provisioner's computer (lv-5, 240fp, 300SP) has the following programs: Alarm(4), Analysis(4), Astrogation(4), Cargo Arm(2), Commerce(1), Computer Lock-Out(4), Computer Security(6), Damage Control(4), Drive(5), Industry(1), Installation Security (3), Laser Battery(1) x2, Life Support(1, capacity:12), Maintenance(4)

Note that the cargo arm program applies only if the cargo arm is operated at the terminal in the hold, it can be overridden by the Industry program and/or remotely operated at either bridge deck. The mainframe is located on the Upper Bridge deck (2), additional terminal panels are located at each of the three duty stations on the Lower Bridge deck (3) as well as one more on in the work shop of the Maintenance deck (5). If Thrum manages to escape and the party can overtake the Provisioner, then they can still discover the nature of the operation via the ship's computer.

The Dark Shadow crew will not be skilled enough to commandeer the Provisioner, they can leave it adrift or hulk it but they can certainly help themselves to anything of value within. Whether they obtain it by interrogation or via the ship's computer, it will be discerned that Thrum has been operating outside of Streel's interests when it comes to supplying weaponry to Clarion's enemies. Thrum's contact in Streel's Clarion Station office is also part of the operation. Capturing and/or eliminating him will put an end to all that have been involved in this usurpation. If pressed, higher operatives of Streel will deny knowledge of the operation and even claim they have been searching for the mole that caused their ban on Clarion. If this can be proven to be true, stopping this operation could have a positive effect on Clarion/Streel

relations.

ALPHA SUBSECTION 5: THE JOURNEY HOME

If it hasn't been performed yet, the Dark Shadow crew will have to overhaul her drives before returning home with the intel and contraband cargo (both of which the vehicles and weaponry can easily be appropriated for Clarion's ground forces). This operation will go off without a hitch. However, once the ship arrives in Timeon it will encounter a pair of pirate vessels that have happened upon the lone vessel. The ships are operating under the Star Devil's charter and will attack mercilessly, offering no quarter. Fortunately the ships aren't overly challenging to the Dark Shadow, specifications are as follows:

Armed Freighter

HS: 8 HP: 40 Powerplant: 3 atomic class B ADF: 3 MR: 3 DCR: 44 Crew: up to 16

Armament: LB(x2) Defenses: RH

Gunned Scout Ship

HS: 3 HP: 15 Powerplant: 2 atomic class A ADF: 4 MR: 4 DCR: 29 Crew: up to 12

Armament: PL*, LB Defenses: RH

* Pod Laser - as detailed in Polyhedron #19

While the pirate freighter can be easily evaded, the scout ship will have to be dispatched before the Shadow can escape. As long as they can avoid the punch from the scout's weaponry this should be relatively simple. Once free of the pirate menace, the rest of the journey home will be eventless.

ALPHA SUBSECTION 6: AWARDING EXPERIENCE POINTS

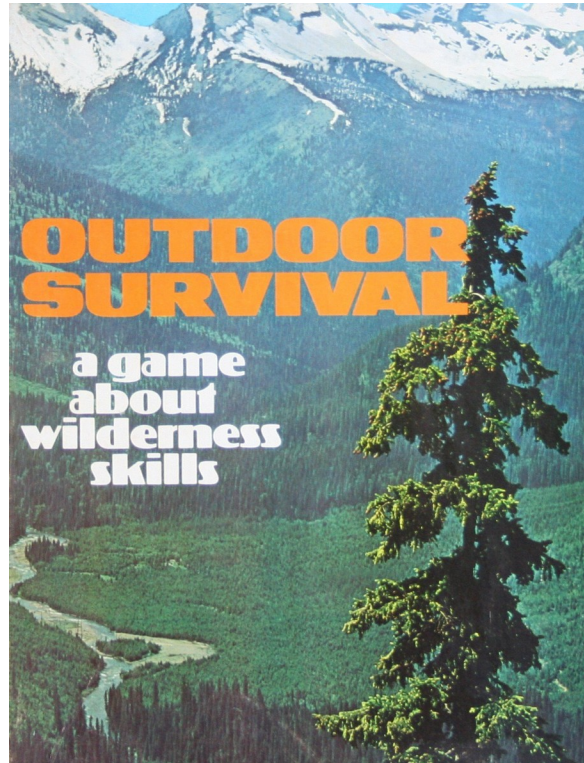
All characters that have successfully completed this mission are eligible for a base 2-4 experience points each depending on participation. This base will be doubled if the party captured Thrum alive. Award one bonus XP for each player if they gleaned info about MalCo Enterprises as this is an operation that the Crown can keep an eye out for, and one more XP per player if they discover that Thrum and the Clarion Station contact are the sole masterminds of the operation. Award one bonus point if the Strewt impersonator was a party member that went to the Strel office on Clarion Station to arrange the meeting with Thrum. If Thrum escapes then experience points are halved at 1-2 per player depending on participation (plus any applicable bonuses).

OUTDOOR SURVIVAL REVIEW

By Lev Lafayette

Introduction

Published in 1972 by Avalon Hill, *Outdoor Survival* is what it says on the lid; “a game about wilderness skills”. It comes in the standard solid AH box, with rather attractive North American scenery piece of snow-covered mountains. Inside is there is a very well-built and artistically pleasing map boards, a double-sided sheet of rules (folded to digest size), a glossy full-colour sheet for “Mapboard Movement Chart”, a quick-play card, four cardstock “character sheets”, five numbered cardstock scenario sheets, counters, and a 24 page digest booklet entitled “Wilderness Skills for players of the game *Outdoor Survival*”. The latter is not really part of the game, but is instead a rather practical manual for how to survive in the great outdoors, and curiously, apparently *Outdoor Survival* sold well outside the usual channels of game stores by extending its reaching into camping shops and the like. With two editions it was apparently quite a good seller.



Outdoor Survival also has a esoteric and special place in the RPG bobby. In original D&D, Book 1 (Men & Magic, p5) there is a list of recommended equipment. Top of the list is the Dungeons & Dragons rules themselves. Item number 2 is the Avalon Hill boardgame *Outdoor Survival*. After that is dice, a copy of Chainmail, paper etc. Curiously, “Imagination” is listed before a “Patient Referee” and “Players” - the spirit in the sky! In Book 3 (The Underworld and Wilderness Adventures, p15) the rules mention that “Off-hand adventures in the wilderness are made on the OUTDOOR SURVIVAL playing board... OUTDOOR SURVIVAL has a playing board perfect for general adventures. Catch basins are castles, buildings are towns, and the balance of the terrain is as indicated.” There is, it must be mentioned, no suggestion however that the rules of *Outdoor Survival* should be used with the rules of Dungeons & Dragons.

Rules and Play

Outdoor Survival describes itself with a thoroughly simulationist agenda, as a “simulation of the essential conditions for staying alive when unprotected man is beset by his environment. It recreates real world conditions of the wilderness, and places trained and untrained people in emergency situations”. Five scenarios are offered, including “Lost”, the basic game where one must be out of the wilderness before running out of food and water, “Survival” which is a race across a wilderness area between competitors, “Search”, where you have find someone lost before other search parties, “Rescue”, which elaborates the search scenario to getting the target out of the wilderness, and “Pursue” where

you either play characters being chased in a wilderness area or trying to capture an escapee, or as a multiplayer variant, one side each. These cover pretty much the range of generic scenario types that one is likely to encounter in travels to the great outdoors and it should be fairly easy to adapt these to similar scenarios.

According to the rules the mapboard represents some 13,000 square miles with a hex grid overlaid, with the helpful information: *We will refer to these "squares" hereafter as "hexes"*. Some clever biscuits have done the math and worked out that makes the area around 102 x 129 miles and each hex around 3 miles, or 1 league for those prefer the old-fashioned language. There is an impressive range of terrain types, although the relative proximity of some are a bit weird. The designer has no idea of how rivers flow, or how they are sourced, a distressingly common experience in hypothetical map-making (although fortunately rarer these days, perhaps my thirty years of complaining about this has had some second- and third-hand effect).

The counters are letters from A to O reflecting the "life level" of the character. One of the main differences that come with these levels is the character's movement rate which declines if they do not acquire enough food and water which the game points out on the movement chart can result in a character trapped in a single hex where they lack the strength to break out, due to terrain modifiers. That works out quite nicely in actual play. The "character sheets" include metrics for a "Life Level Index", a "Food Index" and a "Water Index". On the mapboard are "houses" which serve as locations where character's start play, along with "Outposts" which have an "unlimited supply". Both are helpfully described as immobile, although one is immediately tempted to introduce Baba Yaga's hut just to be contrary.

Movement is quasi-random, with a die roll reference to a scenario-based Direction Ability chart; one exception is if the character moves into a Trail they may ignore the Direction Ability result and follow the Trail instead. It is a little perplexing that one cannot follow a river. After movement characters determine the effects of Necessities, modifying food and water indexes as required and Life Levels if necessary. An optional rule allows for Wilderness Encounters as well (the player chooses Natural Hazards, Animal Encounters, Personal), which are expressed in the abstract results. For a game that is simulating wilderness experiences, the idea of player choice for what type of random encounter they have is a little odd.

The Primer Booklet

Significantly larger than the rules themselves in the booklet "A Primer about Wilderness skills for Players of the Game – Outdoor Survival". This covers a range of useful information such as Direction Finding, Water Purification, Obtaining Water, Catching Fish, Killing Game, Tracking Game, Butchering Game, Building a Fire, Obtaining Shelter, Distress Signals, First Aid, Dealing with Natural Hazards, and Equipment and Supplies. Each of these section headers has subsections that break down the broad category. For example, Direction Finding describes how to use a compass, compass improvisation, using the sun and stars etc. Annoyingly, the subheadings in the table of contents do not match the subheadings in the actual text, although each section is short enough to find it with relative ease.

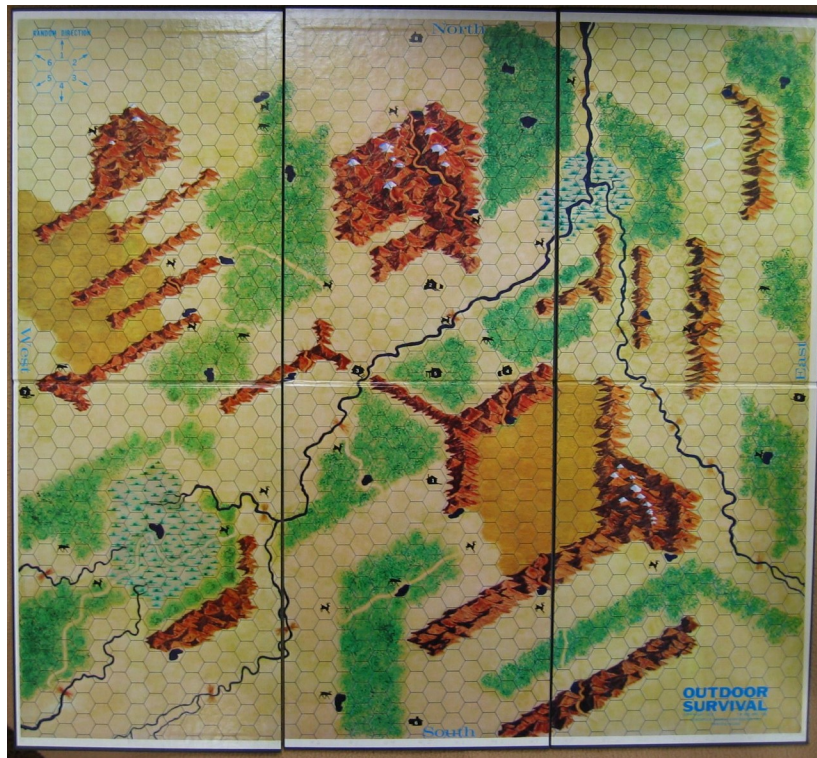
The information provided is fairly useful, albeit biased to a North American setting. There are some curious omissions, as a review of the table of contents will indicate. There are several pages on catching, tracking, killing and butchering game and fish, but absolutely nothing on the safe eating of plant and fungi. Given the relative ratio of plants to animals in the wilderness and the quantity that are actually edible if you know what they are, it is a surprising exclusion. For what it's worth, plants do get a mention as a means of acquiring water and warning about some contact poison plants. Probably the most useful "chapter" is the several pages dedicated to equipment and supplies. Mention must be made of the artwork in this booklet as well; the single-colour sketches are often less than useful, lacking the necessary detail.

Conclusions

Despite some excellent quality in the components, some fairly rough and justified comments can be made about Outdoor Survival, mainly because the design is fundamentally lazy and as a result is a far cry from it could be. The game plays out fine albeit the “Lost” scenario is pretty horrible (except if you’re as high as a kite and have the giggles), and works very nicely as a solo game, but there is a real lack of effort in making it lasting or in any way close to being the realistic simulation that it claims to be.

What could be done to improve things? Well, for starters some of the more bizarre rules could be quickly modified with little damage to the game as a whole. Letting characters follow rivers like they are trails seems to be a simple enough modification that is a common house-rule already. The requirement that movement must be as far as possible subject to the character’s movement allowance and terrain restrictions is another unjustified requirement that is often ignored. Finally, the idea that the player can choose what type of random encounter they experience is obviously unacceptable for the type of game that this professes.

Elaborating the game further would mean that the high-quality but static mapboard should be replaced with a much greater variety of lower-cost terrain boards with greater variation in environment. A sort of “wilderness geomorphs” if you will. After a few games the existing map board, as nice as it is, becomes pretty dull. As a further elaboration to this, the scope of the wildernesses could be expanded significantly as could the effects on the character. At the moment the character only has to worry about food and water on their life levels. As important as these are, heat exhaustion and hypothermia are more common risks to a person in the wilderness (there was a passing reference to heat exhaustion in the primer).



D&D WILDERNESS SURVIVAL GUIDE REVIEWS

By Lev Lafayette

AD&D Wilderness Survival Guide (1986)

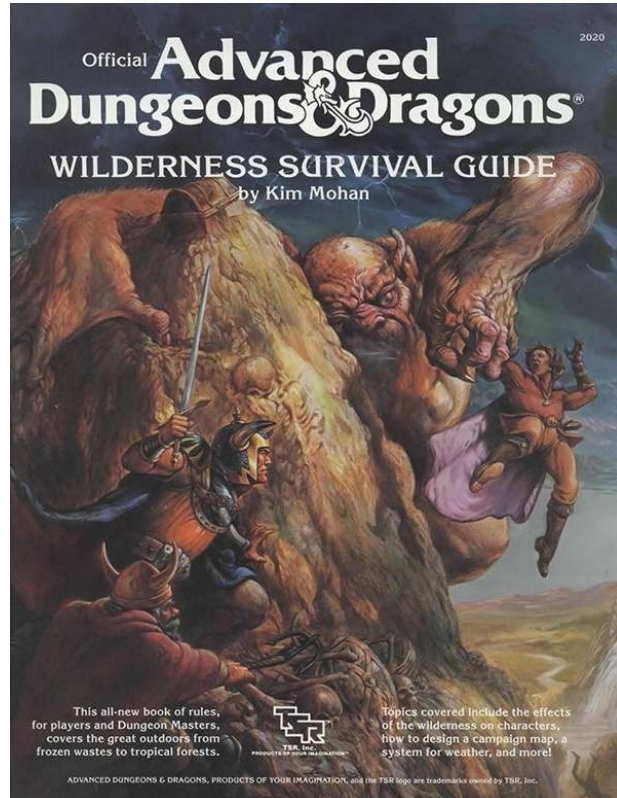
Introduction and Physical Product

Published in 1986 and describing itself as “The sourcebook for AD&D game adventures in the great outdoors!” the *Wilderness Survival Guide* is 128 page hardback book with some rather loose binding on the spine but with good binding on the pages. The cover art, of adventurers being interrupted stealing some poor giant’s treasure on a mountain top is quite well done, and the interior black-and-white artwork, whilst often in the 1980s style of fantastic realism (which I personally am not overly fond of), is usually done with consideration of context and shows some skill at both technique and creative flair. There is some comic art as well that can bring a smile, but also an appalling sparse example of the changing of the seasons that is so bereft of detail that one has to look at it a second time to work out what it represents. The text is presented with a two-column serif font throughout. In comparison the writing style is formal and clear throughout but hardly makes for an exciting read and is prone to verbosity.

There is a two-page table of contents and a two-page index, with chapter and subchapters clearly marked. There are some sixteen chapters and a combined tables section in the book in all, although the ordering of the book outside of the first chapter is quite haphazard. These provide a general overview, skill proficiencies, environment effects, encumbrance and movement (with many subsections), food and water, camping and campfires, medicine and first aid, visibility, natural hazards, combat in the wilderness, fatigue, mounts and other beasts, and magic in the wilderness.

The Outdoor Environment and Skills

The first chapters define the outdoor environment and skill proficiencies, with the author suggesting that the environment is, in effect, treated like a “monster” which must be “defeated” in order for the characters to complete their mission. Several types of terrain provide a foundation for exploration of the environment; desert, forest, hills, mountains, plains, seacoast, and swamp. This terrain classification is, of course, a combination of terrain, foliage, and



rainfall. Each is described with a degree of accuracy. It is noted, for example, that icy wastes constitutes deserts as they lack precipitation and have very little in terms of vegetation. Forests are given a number of descriptive sub-classifications including taiga, temperate forests, and rainforest. Hills are defined by topology rather than ecology, whereas mountains are described as areas devoid of vegetation and a high elevation (4000 ft or more), which obviously isn't what constitutes a mountain, but is shoe-horned into the game system. In addition to this there is a hierarchy of terrain, which is the general description provided when multiple terrains belong in the same region which largely matches elevation (seacoast highest, mountains lowest). There is also mention of bodies of water, but this is fairly sparse, as is the following discussion on climate.

The proficiency system added a sort of skill system to AD&D with a d20 roll-under mechanic, with Barbarians doing quite well (6 weapon and 3 non-weapon initially, 1/1 every two levels after that), and Magic Users and Illusionists doing quite badly (1/3 initially, 1/2 every six levels after that), and, curiously, so do Druids. Some 25 wilderness proficiencies are offered, adding to the existing proficiencies in the companion Dungeoneer's Survival Guide, although three of these are variations on riding (charioteering, riding airborne, riding land-based) and three are versions of survival (survival cold, survival desert, survival heat). Most are associated with the Wisdom or Intelligence characteristic although a fair number are N/A – you either have the skill or you don't. Some are less skills than they are abilities; such as Alertness, Blind-Fighting, and Direction Sense. The Survival proficiencies also fit into this category as they essentially allow the character to treat the temperature as something other than what it is really, a personal temperature rather than an actual temperature. Characters with desert Survival have the uncanny ability to find water and food in such an environment.

Characters who don't have these skills may make use of the "dressing for the weather" chapter, a rather verbose description on how four different clothing types (very cold, cold, moderate, hot) combined with different types of armour, and the possibility of hit-point damage due to exposure. Exertion when combined with armour can lead to additional personal temperature increases, but with the additional side effect that some types of cold and very cold clothing can act like armour, which means that it can be worn by magic-user and illusionist characters but with the possibility of spell-failure where somatic components are required. It is a brave attempt to bring some sense to an otherwise arbitrary game rule.

Environmental Effects and Movement

The Wilderness Survival Guide recommends that personal temperature effects Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, movement, and attack rolls with varies values cross-referenced, with a band of no effect between 21 and 79 degrees F. Wind velocity further effects movement, missile fire, and, to a lesser extent, melee combat. Rainfall can also increase the effects of Wind velocity for the same. A short description of the effects of additional weather conditions (Cyclone, Drought, Gale, Sandstorm, etc) is also provided. Hurricanes and Tornadoes do damage toe structures, depending on intensity. One of the most amusing charts in the book is the damage from hailstones, with small hailstones (up to 1/2") causing 1d4 points of damage per round to unarmoured characters – the fields would be littered with the bodies of dead peasants if this was applied. There is an extensive discussion on protection oneself in a lightning storm, and with damage if struck causing death in a "2 in 6 chance", otherwise losing 10-60% of current hit points. There is also damage ranging from 1 to 8 points from exposure to extremes of heat and cold, modified by exposure. A modified Constitution check is required every three turns to prevent such damage, with a variety of modifiers, including character level. Characters can also suffer the effects of frostbite to extremities (hands, ears, feet). Equipment too can be damaged through precipitation and immersion, including waterlogging and rust. Dust and sand effects are mostly cosmetic in game-terms, but may modify the chance of being surprised due to discomfort, a pretty weird exception.

The Encumbrance limits and categories (light, moderate, heavy, severe) are compiled and expanded from material in the *Players Handbook* and the *Dungeon Masters Guide*, continuing the crunchy measurement in “coin” weight. Terrain is classified as normal, rugged, or very rugged for determining overland movement rates. The combination of encumbrance plus terrain determines daily movement in miles (normal and accelerated), assuming eight hours of walking and with additional penalties if greater than eight hours is attempted. Various land-based animal movements are also provided, although their encumbrance is measured as either normal load or maximum load. Draft horses are notably strong in this world with a carrying capacity that is on par with the elephant.

Climbing movement rates are differentiated by slope (thirteen different values) and slipperiness of surface, and those who climb have a chance to fall, based on 100 minus their climbing ability as a percentage, with modifiers as per the climbing movement rate table (slope and slipperiness) and encumbrance. Falling damage occurs from a vertical drop, tumbling damage from sloped surfaces, with a chance of stopping a tumble or fall. There are additional rules for roping multiple characters together (curiously with falls based on a simple modifier rather than an encumbrance based modifier), rappelling, belaying, use of grappling hooks, etc. Values are also provided for a character’s jumping proficiency, modified by encumbrance, visibility with modifiers according to time of day and general visibility conditions, swimming speed modified by encumbrance and action, Strength, and current, and naturally enough the issue of drowning.

There are a few pages dedicated to waterborne vehicles with a number of characteristics (capacity, movement, hull value etc), possibility of capsizing and damage according to wind and vehicle type, use of the boating proficiency, portaging, and the use of capsized vehicles. A few pages are also spent on flying mounts, with dragons of course receiving special attention. As per the DMG, flying mounts have a movement class to represent general maneuverability, and an encumbrance value for what they can carry, plus with the addition of a stamina value to track how long the creature fly under normal load and rest time. Where one is on a flying mount there is a potential of falling, and an extensive table of modifiers contributing to such a chance is provided. Proficiency in airborne riding is particularly important.

Survival, Camping, First Aid

Tolerance levels are provided for time without food, based on combined Strength and Constitution scores, with failure on a check leading the character to be weakened, distressed, and incapacitated with successive failures, and with each value described terms of a range of modifiers to actions. A different set of criteria is offered for lack of water, but with similar levels of effects. Minimum levels of food and water are based on character race. Fortunately foraging is relatively simple, with variations in the percentage chance depending on climatic region and season, albeit with a chance that the foraged vegetable matter is actually inedible. Hunting is somewhat less in availability but with the same comparison with climatic region and season, with the hunting proficiency aiding. Fishing is differentiated between time and area type. Food is also subject to spoilage and the effects of eating spoiled food. The same breakdown for foraging and hunting is also provided for finding water and, like food, may have impurities, although curiously various forms of parasites are not mentioned.

Camping is a big deal in the Wilderness Survival Guide, starting with an availability of natural shelters according to terrain type and season. Natural shelter here is defined as sufficient natural materials to make a shelter. As for portable shelters, i.e., tents, four different grades are provided with three size values per grade, and with characteristics on encumbrance, cost, set-up time, moisture resistance, lifespan (tent hit points) etc., provided. Modifiers to various abilities are provided for lack of sleep, including characteristics, climbing, combat, carrying capacity, and movement, with variation between “good” and “bad” sleep. Campfires too are differentiated by size, fuel etc, and the warmth

provided, with a fuel availability chart. The possibility of out-of-control fires is examined and, as can be expected, character damage. Which leads into the chapter on medicine and first aid. A sort of foraging table for medicinal plants is offered, with proficiency in plant lore aiding. Various specific injuries and treatments are described, in a very non-AD&D fashion; broken bones, burns, wounds, skin ailments etc. A variety of first aid equipment is described.

Vision, Natural Hazards, Combat

A little out-of-order is a chapter on vision, which covers range based on illumination and conditions, which seems to be another implementation from earlier in the book. Distances are provided for size M creatures, with simple modifications of double for L and halved for S. Infravision is described by colour (dark to bright) depending on temperature, and ultravision based on lack of illumination but with clear skies. Artificial illumination from torches, lanterns, magic weapons, and campfires are also described.

Natural hazards include volcanoes with lava eruptions, ash eruptions, and explosive eruptions all explored in quite a bit of detail. Earthquakes too are given space, with differentiation between light, moderate, and severe quakes, with a variety of earthquake-induced modifiers. Tidal waves are given roughly a half-page of description, with the final game effect remark that if a character is in the path of a tidal wave they are dead. Floods and flash floods are described with at least some game mechanic descriptions of the difficulties involved in swimming and being buffeted in such circumstances. Avalanches, rockfalls, and mudslides are given a combined description, with impact damage provided, along with the difficulty involved in digging oneself out and the prospect of “drowning” under such a deluge. Finally there is the famous issue of quicksand, described as being similar in effect as a mudslide.

There’s also a chapter on combat rules for the wilderness. There’s been plenty about various modifiers for conditional states, but this also adds conditions for fighting whilst climbing (which could have been under the climbing section), whilst precariously balanced (ditto), fighting in water (under water movement, perhaps?), in poor visibility (you know where), from a mount, and extensive description on how to force opponents to dismount. This is followed by fatigue and exhaustion, much of which has been already described but now is expressed in a general situation when engaged in strenuous activity for four turns in succession, and with different rules for mounts and pack animals, which are fatigued after two consecutive days without food or water, with variant rules for flying mounts.

Animals and Magic

Mounts and beasts of burden receive their own chapter, with the usual suspects of camels, horses, donkeys, elephants, mules etc receiving brief descriptions, but also dogs (they pull sleds, you know) and oddly creatures such as gorillas and bears. Animal friendship can be a pretty handy spell, one supposes, and beware the bear cavalry. Even sheep are included as a potential pack animal, each carrying a small load and guided by a shepherd. The various animals are given a reaction table to determine behaviour when encountering fire, weather, noise, or odours,

From the mundane to the magical, a potted description of various AD&D spells, scrolls, rings, potions etc in a wilderness setting are provided with nothing terribly unexpected provided, but with some slight elaborations (e.g., Barkskin to provide a bonus to damage acquired from abrasion, Earthquake to increase the chance of a natural earthquake occurring etc). Most of the descriptions, which run over several pages, provide a hints and elaborations.

Design

The final chapter is entitled “Starting from Scratch” and is basically advice about designing wilderness settings. The chapter starts with “realistic” (as opposed to fantastic) assumptions, but provides a foundation for fantastic elements to be introduced. Determining scale is considered to be of first priority, starting from low-lying regions, and then building up to mountains, and placing wilderness regions in the general planetary climatic areas, and filling in the gaps (awful puns here; “just add water”, “what’s for desert”, “may the forest be with you”), the addition of large-scale details, and points of interest. This is followed by sketches of population centres and how countries behave towards each other, and adding detail by drilling down in scale. Notably, nary a word is provided on any sort of realistic provision according to the principles of geography, let alone sociology.

The first appendix should also be mentioned here, “The World of Weather”. This differentiates climatic regions (arctic, subarctic, temperate, subtropical, and tropical cross-referenced with seasons, providing a look-up value for high and low temperature, supplemented with a day-to-day change table, and an additional table for precipitation, and an additional table for “special weather”, which includes drought, fog, tornado, and the like, all of which is provided a summary description with mechanics. Plus there’s humidity, hours of daylight, local winds, tides, It’s an overly lengthy chapter, but provides a pretty thorough going of core weather possibilities.

Conclusion

Apart from the aforementioned positive remarks about the physical product, it must be said there is a wealth of descriptive material contained in the *Wilderness Survival Guide* with an impressive scope of mainly land-based concerns. However, the supplement does suffer a great deal from some of the standard issues that comes up in AD&D time-and-time again. Firstly, there is an unresolved and continuing tension between the game trying to retain some of realism, whilst at the same time also being a class-and-level based game, where level provides a character near superhuman abilities, due to sheer grit. The ability of high levels characters to gain impressive bonuses against extremes of weather, for example, is juxtaposed by the inevitable doom of characters in the path of a tidal wave. Likewise the game suffers from a burden of complexity. Every situation is an opportunity to develop a new rule sub-system to deal with that particular problem, resulting in an increasingly complex game, when more abstract and universal methods could be applied instead.

As a result of this considerations, the overall assessment of the *Wilderness Survival Guide* is unfortunately negative. Most DMs will be able to use it an item for source material to give themselves a particular sense of the issues and flavour of wilderness adventures, but then they are best off developing their own simplified and internally consistent rules for dealing with the various circumstances depending on their style of play. The *Wilderness Survival Guide* is more of a sourcebook than a rulebook.

Style: 1 + .5 (layout) + .4 (art) + .6 (coolness) + .4 (readability) + .7 (product) = 3.6

Substance: 1 + .6 (content) + .4 (text) + .2 (fun) + .4 (workmanship) + .3 (system) = 2.9

D&D 5e Wilderness Survival Guide

The D&D 5th edition “Wilderness Survival Guide” is a DM’s Guild publication by by “Aeron Drake” and comes as a 22 page PDF. The colour publications is attractive, with a well organised table of contents, clear use of font and white-

space (parchment yellow space), and presented as double-column serif text, with a organised into chapters of “Material Sources”, “Alchemy”, “Crafting”, “Expanded Equipment”, “Customizing Options”, “Dangers of the Wild” and an appendix. The writing style is formal and quite dense, although the D&D5e content presentation reduces this effect.

If the section headings seem a little odd for something entitled “Wilderness Survival Guide”, that’s because they are. The sort booklet is not so much about “wilderness survival”, but rather adjunct activities that just happen to be in the wilderness. This is evident from the start where “Collecting Materials” is just that – a set of “harvest checks” for creatures, minerals, plants and herbs etc, which the core difficulty based on weather conditions and travel speed. Probably the closest thing to being related to wilderness survival is the “getting meat” table. The plants and herbs collection has symbolic values to represent alchemical properties (earth, wind, fire, water, positive negative), which is associated to the second chapter, “Alchemy”, which *really* has absolutely nothing to do with wilderness survival, but rather is a chart of creating alchemical brews (bombs and potions) by mixing essences.

The theme continues in the third chapter, “Crafting”, which is an elaboration and modification of the craft rules in the *Player’s Handbook*. The relationship to the wilderness? “During your adventures and travels, you can collect a series of elements and materials to craft special equipment”. Relationship to wilderness survival? Very little indeed. There is a nice collection of rare and unusual fantastic material and its effects. For example, if you have a weapon made from the blue glass, “aerocrystal”, “[y]ou can use your Dexterity modifier for attacks and damage made with an aerocrystal weapon.”. An optional rule is provided for “Material Resistance” a simple equipment breakage system, followed by a chapter on “Expanded Equipment”, which basically several new items of weapons, armour, and adventuring gear. One cannot help but be amused by the paltry benefits of a tower shield (+3 AC), The impression is also given that the author thinks that darts are like pub darts. A small number of magic items is provided as well, include bottles of mana potion with a blue liquid, which reminds me of a certain computer game.

Character “Customization Options” makes the penultimate chapter, which provides extra feats for alchemist, crafting expertise, forager, herbalist, master (hunting) extractor, and survivalist. The final chapter is “Dangers of the Wild” and here the booklet comes closest to the title, outlining various hazards, their DCs, and damage caused. The “dangers” include avalanches, blizzard, earthquake, elemental cloud, hailstorm, insect swarm, lava, etc. Dangerous terrains are also described with summary game values for arctic, cave, desert, forest and jungle, etc. with particular environment hazards that a prominent. It’s a good conclusion to an otherwise fairly mediocre product.

It is true of course that over various editions D&D has improved significantly in its treatment of the wilderness and this supplement does provide to the fourteen pages of the *Dungeon Master’s Guide* which provides relevant information in the latest edition. However, with the exception of the one chapter dealing with “Dangers of the Wild”, and arguably some minor information in the first and fifth chapter, there is really not much to go in terms of “wilderness survival”. The quality content does not up to the quality of the layout and imagery, and for that reason one will have to go elsewhere if they want a genuine “wilderness survival guide” for D&D 5e.

Style: 1 + .7 (layout) + .7 (art) + .2 (coolness) + .5 (readability) + .5 (product) = 3.6

Substance: 1 + .1 (content) + .4 (text) + .2 (fun) + .4 (workmanship) + .3 (system) = 2.4

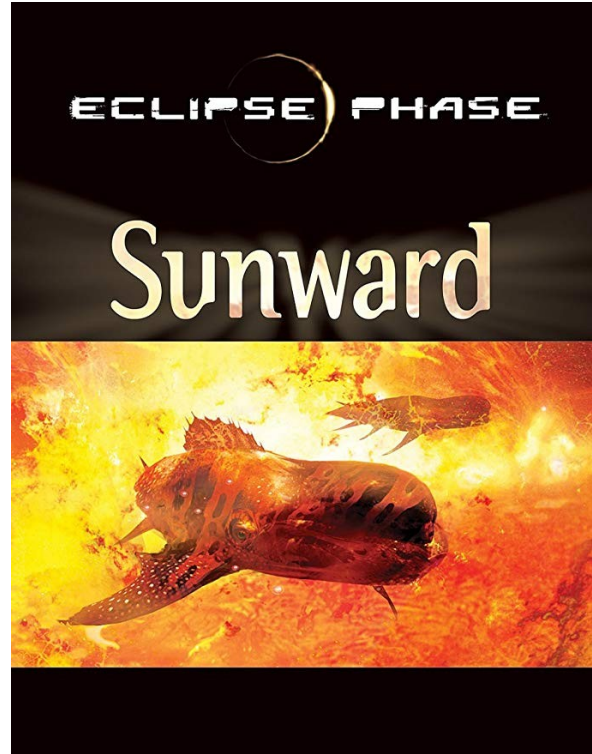
ECLIPSE PHASE REVIEWS: X-RISKS AND SUNWARD

by Lev Lafayette

Sunward (2010)

Introduction and Product

As always the main books for *Eclipse Phase* comes with two main comments concerning the product. Firstly, it is a work of absolute beauty, hard-back, gloss-paper, full-colour throughout, and pretty well bound. Secondly, the PDFs are released under a Creative Commons Share Alike license. The combination of these two features is worth repeating on each and every review, so one will excuse what is an inevitable repetition of the statement. Sunward, concentrating on the inner systems, from the Sun to Mars, is sort of the companion to Rimward, which takes one into the distance and dark reaches of the solar system. Featuring an impressive pair of sun whales (surya morph) on the cover, the artwork throughout is contextual and evocative, although it does seem to less detailed than that in other publications, which curiously (and perhaps accidentally) adds to the notion of a heat haze to the viewer.



The content itself is presented in a two-column serif font with “sidebars” for explanatory information and contextual out-takes, which often serve as a plot feed in themselves. The writing is often informal, but is clear and incorporates a great deal of content. As with other similar publications its starts with a short story, “Melt”, before moving into the main content of chapters separated by regions; Sol-Mercury, Venus, Earth, Earth Orbit, Luna, Mars, the Inner Fringe, and then an organisational chapter for The Planetary Consortium (which gives you an idea of how important they are), before a concluding chapter on game information. The opening short-story provides an insight into a combination of literally hellish working conditions and effective corporate control of one’s consciousness for the indentured, slavery by any other name.

From Sol to Venus

Sol and Mercury are combined into one chapter with three sections; the Solar Corona, the Vulcanoids (in the real world, a hypothetical family of asteroids near the sun), and Mercury. The area is particularly interesting to Firewall agents because of the quantity of extremely dangerous X-Risks present, including the production of antimatter on Mercury, a TITAN contained exsurgent production reminiscent of “The Human Centipede”, and the possibility of using the Sun as a weapon. As is often the case with Eclipse Phase books, there’s some ambiguity as well, most prominently in this case a Factor artifact orbiting over Mercury in the shape of a giant egg. It’s not explained what it is, but in my

own game it made a lot of sense the Factors have made it into a bomb; you know how the transhumans never to listen to them anyway.

It's not all doom-and-gloom however. There is much of interest in the inner, inner system independent of this, not the least being the Solarian surya culture, which are pretty alien even by posthuman standards as most are descended from uplifted whales and-dolphins. Plus there is a exsolar gate located in one of the Vulcanoids which also provides opportunities for adventure. In addition, on Venus, there is its own unique political identity with the Morningstar Constellation having broken away and it's own style of floating cities. One of the cities on Venus, Parvarti has a strong ban on surveillance, making it an unusual refuge for privacy and an opportunity for clandestine activities. Add to this a terraforming group, the discovery of non-sapient alien life in the clouds, Cognite's main research and development orbital satellite, and specialist mining morphs for the inhospitable Venusian surface, there is plenty of interest outside of terrifying X-risks.



Earth and Surrounds

In the Eclipse Phase setting, a massive proportion of the transhuman population were killed in a war on Earth known as The Fall. This has resulted in some rather spectacular climatic shifts on the planet and the presence of a *cordon sanitaire* around the planet, known as The Interdict. Annoyingly, the book doesn't describe who runs The Interdict, claiming that is unknown, which is frankly pretty implausible and unnecessary as a plot device. In any case, it is possible, *sometimes*, to get past it and on planet-side, apart from all sort of rogue remains of TITAN machines and exsurgents, there is also a handful of transhuman survivors and sleepers in a pretty miserable existence. The descriptions of Earth are pretty evocative; blighted wastelands of former forest and field, dust-filled skies, and wrecked cities with millions of skeletal remains.

Close to Earth is a number of habitats around various Lagrange points. Many of these have a functioning society and are part of the Luna-Lagrange Alliance or The Planetary Consortium, others are derelict and may contain TITAN threats, and others still have various scum and squatters making what they can from the remains. The Reclaimers are a particularly interesting faction that has its headquarters in these parts with a desire to reclaim Earth as the original home of transhumanity. Which, of course, necessitates breaking The Interdict. As well-intentioned as they may sound, they are therefore considered an threat by Firewall as they would allow for the possibility of releasing TITAN forces. This said, they are also the very people who have some expertise in by-passing The Interdict. Which makes them doubly an interesting plot device.

Then there's Luna, a significant population centre in the Eclipse Phase setting, home to some forty million transhumans. In addition to several significant Lunar stations, there is also Luna-orbital stations. Of note is the very significant Fall refugee population in cheap synthmorphs, such as Cases, which is generating social tensions. There is an apparent contradiction in the text which talks about dire need for water management with only forty years of supplies, and then also includes "green and verdant Lunar cities" with zoological

gardens and public parks; pick one. A notable threat is continuing outbreaks of exsurgent viruses, which did lead to the nuclear destruction of one Lunar colony base.

Mars and the Inner Fringe

Mars is the great new world for much of Eclipse Phase's transhuman population, with efforts at terraforming, substantial infrastructure (including a space elevator from Olympus), substantial crime-ridden cities, and significant research and development centres. As an organisation, the Planetary Consortium is dominant here, however they face some stiff resistance in the "countryside" by the Barsoomian rednecks, poor and honest folk who have been taken for a ride by the corporations once too often and have suffered badly for it. Beyond the edge of Mars' civilization are nomads who live outside of the domed infrastructure, and where a TITAN Quarantine Zone is also present, where wild robots and exsurgents are abound. The forces of law and order are represented in these outskirts by the Martian Rangers. All in all, it's rather like a Firefly and Mad Max mash-up.



Then there's the inner system asteroids and the Martian trojans, clusters of asteroids that lead and trail Mars itself. The asteroids are plentiful and relatively small, thus giving many opportunities for hiding away as long as one has a good supply of air, water, and food, and there's several examples of such uses. Mostly however they're used for mining concerns, although some have been converted into more exotic uses, such as Condor-2 which has become a large antenna. In general however this section, whilst still with plenty of interesting locations in its own right, does not have anything of extraordinary importance.

Supplementary Information

The supplementary information consists of a chapter on the Planetary Consortium and game system information. Although there are several governing groups in the Sunward supplement of note, such as the Morningstar Constellation, the Lunar-Lagrange Alliance, and a host of independents, it's the Consortium that is the big power in town. With a democratic veneer (the real power is in the Hypercorp Council), the Consortium provides for a blend of corporate freedom and individual security with heavy-handed authoritarianism when the former is threatened. As a chapter this is probably the one that comes across as the weakest; it's a little on the verbose side, and doesn't really emphasise the most probably form that such a body would take after such a calamity as The Fall; still it takes little effort to tweak it into an authoritarian cartel. Of note in this regard is Oversight, the policing body, which provides the iron fist in the velvet glove.

The game system information, in stark juxtaposition, is packed full of information. A section on environment hazards describes the myriad of ways that a morph can come to an untidy end just by being "outside". Several new morphs are provided (including the surya, which seem a little on the small side statistically), new traits, along with various enhancements and equipment, a couple of smart animals (a baboon and a dog), and various 'bots and vehicles. And as if the books itself didn't already provide an enormous quantity of searingly obvious plot hooks, there's even two dozen more along with GM "secrets", and several sample character sheets.

Concluding Comments

Like so many other Eclipse Phase products Sunward is a great work of physical beauty with high grade production throughout. It is well-organised, well-written in the main, evocative, and with plenty of material to excite the imagination, covering a impressive ground with very good density. In actual play there is great utility in what is provided with the new elaborations (even the sun whales) fitting well into the system as a whole.

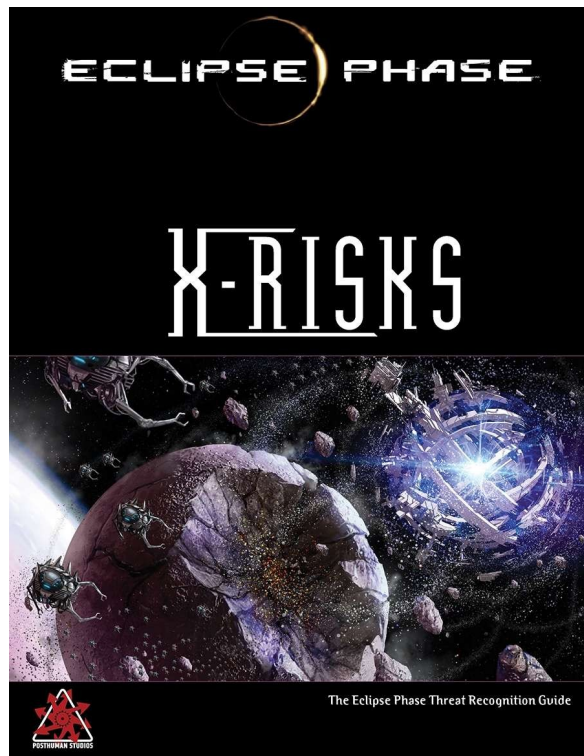
Style: 1 + .7 (layout) + .7 (art) + .8 (coolness) + .8 (readability) + .8 (product) = 4.8

Substance: 1 + .9 (content) + .7 (text) + .7 (fun) + .7 (workmanship) + .8 (system) = 4.8

X-Risks (2016)

Introduction and Product

X-Risks is a catalogue of things that can go *very* wrong for transhumanity in the *Eclipse Phase* setting, and the cover art of a swarm in space dismantling an asteroid to build *something* is rather business as usual compared to what is found within. There's some three-score dangerous beings (machines and creatures), the traditional threats of TITANS, exsurgant viruses and the like, and how to respond to such risks. As always one has to mention the wonder and glorious decision to release these publications under a Creative Commons license.



As with other *Eclipse Phase* books, *X-Risks* is quite a work of art. It's a solid physical product, hardback, well-bound, gloss pages, full-colour art that is creative, competent, and usually contextual, two-column font plus supplementary boxed text, etc. The chapters are clear, the writing style is often verbose and switches between informal and formal both in the game, and in the additional supplementary text. As with other major publications it begins with a short story, "Termites in the Framework", this time completing a plot from previous publications (*Panopticon* and *Firewall*). Personally, I am not a fan of fiction in game-books, although these are evocative.

Risk Assessment and Response

The opening chapter deals with risk assessment to transhumanity, and is pretty verbose in its approach. It uses the a fairly standard business approach of multiplying risk by impact, which does have an enormous variety of issues with such an approach (subjectivity, ambiguity, imprecision, and inability to refer to mitigation), but then again I'm arguing

this with the perspective of multiple graduate degrees in this area. For purposes of the game, they use a "Bostrom-Gallows Threat Topology" (Nick Bostrom is a real world Oxford University Professor interested in existential threats, 'Gallows' is an in-game pun). The topology has four metrics; what kind of x-threat it is, how many people it's likely to impact, how likely it is to happen, and how likely it is to reach its worst projected impact. The Impact Levels range from IL-0 (small habitat) to IL-6 (galactic) with risk percentage weighted on the most likely and most threatening level.

Surviving an X-Risk emphasises the importance of backups (even beginning Sentinels know that), and the importance of using a reputable backup provider. There is consideration of how to deal with the extreme X-Risks where mere backups are by no means useful – retreating behind gates and closing off the solar system for example. A detailed case study of The Fall is provided, along with a listing of what is considered the major X-Risks; Alien Contact (Exoplanet Assault, Gate Breach), Artificial Super Intelligences, Asteroid Impacts, etc. More than a dozen major X-Risks are listed each with around a half-page of description, including Transhumanity threats to itself in the form of cross-factional warfare and totalitarian systems.

Exhumans, Exsurgers, TITANS, and Factors, Oh My

"Active Threat Reports" include exhumans, exsurgers, TITANS, and Factors, as justifiably this receives its own chapter. Exhumans are identified by individuals and small clusters, although what the difference is between a transhuman and an exhuman is a little difficult to discern, with the possible exception that exhumans consider themselves as replacements for transhumanity, and sometimes consider transhumans as a food source. Now if this psychological and cognitive feature was emphasized over the physical differences it would have been more convincing. Exsurgers are a little more clear, coming from viruses released by the TITANS during the Fall, and with different strains for biomorphs and synthmorphs. Several exsurgent virus strains are described, from those that modify language

processing centres, those than force growth of insectoid and crustacean appendages etc. One interesting exception is Watts-MacLeod, the “psychic virus” of the game, which seems benign, potentially positive, and probably from alien rather than TITAN origins. Various locations in are identified where particular exsurgent viruses can be found, along with contamination and containment protocols.

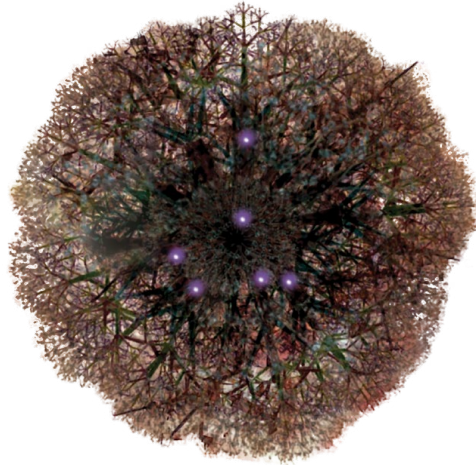
The Factors constitute an X-Risk on the grounds of being an “unknown unknown”. Treating transhumanity as something like a smart pet, the Factors have revealed almost nothing about themselves. There is some information of their metabolism, transformational abilities, the colony-as-organism, and all that is detailed here. A good portion of the discussion is more about Factor psychology, sense of aesthetic taste, trade, and the like rather than being an X-Risk, but that too is not neglected. They are more technologically advanced than Transhumanity, albeit only between 4 and 20 years (which is remarkable coincidence, really). The source-book doesn’t give too much away; Factors are meant to be mysterious and the game keeps them as such, although all sorts of speculations are offered.

Then there’s the TITANs, the big bad wolf of the Eclipse Phase setting, the military computers of the old Earth alliances that turned on transhumanity rather than fighting each other, and caused the destruction of Earth and 90% of the transhuman population. The ascension of the TITANs is described based on the codebase of X-1, Cronus, the first TITAN, and in particular its ability to roll-back patches that security teams applied to it. As per the main setting rules, the disappearance of active TITAN behaviour is emphasized, although TITAN vs TITAN conflict was observed during the Fall. Like other Egos, TITANs can be forked and a description of alpha, beta, delta, and gamma forks is provided, with the note that beta and lower grades are not uncommon in transhuman space. In addition to Cronus, several individual TITANs are described, although it is more in terms of their capabilities and actions. Ongoing TITAN activity, especially on Earth, but even to exoplanets, is described with “hotspots” of automated activity. The organic sub-sea body of Jehovah’s Corpse is a personal favourite, crossing the novel “Towing Jehovah” and “Mass Effect 2”. To conclude the chapter there’s a short description of “Other Threats”, including religious cults, neo-primitivists, other aliens and all sorts of groups within transhumanity itself who consider the rest of transhumanity to be a problem – and for Firewall, there’s special speculations on the Planetary Consortium’s equivalent arm, Ozma.

Threats and Creature Catalogue

A good portion of the book is the “Threat Recognition Guide”, and it’s the closest thing there is to a *Monster Manual* for *Eclipse Phase*. Threats are catalogued as Type (AI, alien, async, exhuman, exsurgent etc), Niche (where it is found), Threat Level (yellow, orange, red, ultraviolet), Numbers encountered, Treasure Type (joking), various game system information, and Firewall Comments, a chat by agents who have encountered each of the beasts. Sentinel knowledge when encountering such beasts can be derived from various Knowledge skills and Networking tests. As mentioned, these are threats. Even exotic exoplanet creatures which are relatively harmless are not included here; alien apex predators and the like, however, are.

Approximately sixty threats are described at one page per threat. It’s enough to keep any GM busy for a quite a while. A couple of years of actual play and even a score of these threats is more than enough for most groups. The TITAN-based machines are, of course, a favourite for any Earth-bound scenario with Headhunters (what they do is in the name), Think Tanks (oh, clever pun), Warbots and the like making standard fare, Stalkers and Shifters to play the role of Terminator-like assassins, and Creepers, Fractals, and Self-Replicating Nanoswarms to disassemble teams that have gotten too cocky.



There is a good number of aliens, of which the Factor Gestalt is a particularly nice and dangerous “thing”. Former Sentinel Teams that have gone exsurgent in the form of Chrysaids should provide a bit of an “ick” factor. The alien species are, alas, not nearly as alien as they could be and one gets the sense that the designers were more orientated towards making the creatures look like something out of a 1980s horror film than providing the deeper simulationist perspective that the game has some reputation for. Despite this, there is plenty of opportunity for using the Threats are interesting source material to keep Sentinel teams on their toes. The “Creature Catalog” is “various neogenetics, smart animals, xenofauna, and other minor threats”. These are briefly described, a few to a page, but includes some interesting neogenetics and smart animals, such as a living fur coat (which must be fed), smart guat dogs, smart rats, and police baboons. Almost forty such creatures and provided to add colour and tangents to play.

Game Information

The "Game Information" chapter has plenty of GMs advice on using X-Risks, and with the special inclusion of swarm rules, necessary given the behaviour of a number of the beings so described. If nanoswarms aren't bad enough, there's also rules for femtoswarms, which can penetrate almost any armour. In addition there are new and much more elaborate rules for exsurgent infections, and new exsurgent strains which will make life difficult for Sentinels who think that they have the most advanced medichines to protect themselves from such infections. The new rules are quite good in actual play, giving a graduated approach to exsurgent infection which increases the horror value. Ten new additional Psi-Sleights are provided specifically for alien species, because why should transhumans have all the fun? There's a short discussion on Factor technology, a lengthy one on traps with several examples, and a few secrets for the “other threats” examined in the game, including an elaborate discussion of an async who studies TITAN technology – a sufficiently strange and dangerous individual that they warrant their own section. Also receiving attention is the matter of xenofungal infection, a personal favourite of the *Eclipse Phase* setting, with several specific strains described. The fungi, rather like various types of exsurgent infections, have a wonderful way of modifying the behaviour of their hosts.

Concluding Remarks

As always these main supplements of *Eclipse Phase* are a work of beauty and if the joy and utility of having the PDFs available for free, the additional visceral experience of the physical item is strongly encouraged. Certainly the artwork in *X-Risks* is something that one would expect with some rather impressive pieces of alien and TITAN horrors, however, as mentioned, many of these seem to be developed more for their shock value rather than evolutionary probability. Overall however, there is much that is positive about this supplement. It will generate plenty of use in actual play and the game system elaborations will add a great deal to an existing *Eclipse Phase* campaign.

Style: 1 + .7 (layout) + .7 (art) + .8 (coolness) + .8 (readability) + .8 (product) = 4.8

Substance: 1 + .9 (content) + .7 (text) + .7 (fun) + .8 (workmanship) + .8 (system) = 4.9

COMPUTER GAME REVIEW : THE ETERNAL CASTLE

by Dorchadas

The Eternal Castle first came to my attention at the end of last year when the developers posted a trailer. I watched and thought it was rad as hell with a bitchin' synthwave soundtrack, so I immediately put it up on Facebook with a comment about how excited I was for it. [facebook.com profile] shane.suydam watched it and had a similar opinion, and he immediately bought it. And then he bought a copy for me as well, so full disclosure, I received a copy of this game for free from a friend for the purpose of bathing in the cyan and magenta glow.



The game claims to be a remastered version of an old 1987 game the devs played and half-remember from their childhoods, but that's all marketing copy. The game is supposedly from 1987, but that's the year that VGA was introduced and CGA was long out of fashion by then. I mean, the EGA version of Quest for Glory I is from 1989. So is Prince of Persia, which is clearly one of the major inspirations for The Eternal Castle's gameplay. The opening faked-up "boot screen" is stylized as a DOS sequence but occasionally uses a Linux command. None of that backstory matters to the gameplay, but some people got lost chasing down a bit of cheeky humor from the devs, so I thought I should bring it up.

The Eternal Castle is like if an old IBM CGA game was somehow made today, with fluid 60 fps animations and in 1080p. The color palette is never more than four colors, but the game does an amazing job of using contrast to highlight important areas and set the mood. From the opening movie where the main character takes a shuttle down from a space

station(?) to the planet's surface, and the surroundings turn from the black of space to the slowly-growing heat of atmospheric re-entry, to the point where the shuttle almost touches down before being shot out of the sky in a burst of magenta flames, the use of color is top-notch. Patches of shadow in an abandoned laboratory, the brilliant explosions from the walking mines in the castle itself, the flickering light around the protagonist as they crawl through an abandoned sewer...it looks gorgeous. Each stage generally has its own set color palette, the better to differentiate the challenges and requirements of each area, but there's a sequence in the Unholy Lab involving mad science that uses a shifting palette to excellent effect.

CGA is before my time, but I've played a CGA game (Wizard's Crown) and plenty of Apple II games before. I appreciate what the developers were able to do with a few colors and simple shapes that could evoke the player's imagination. Limitations breed creativity.

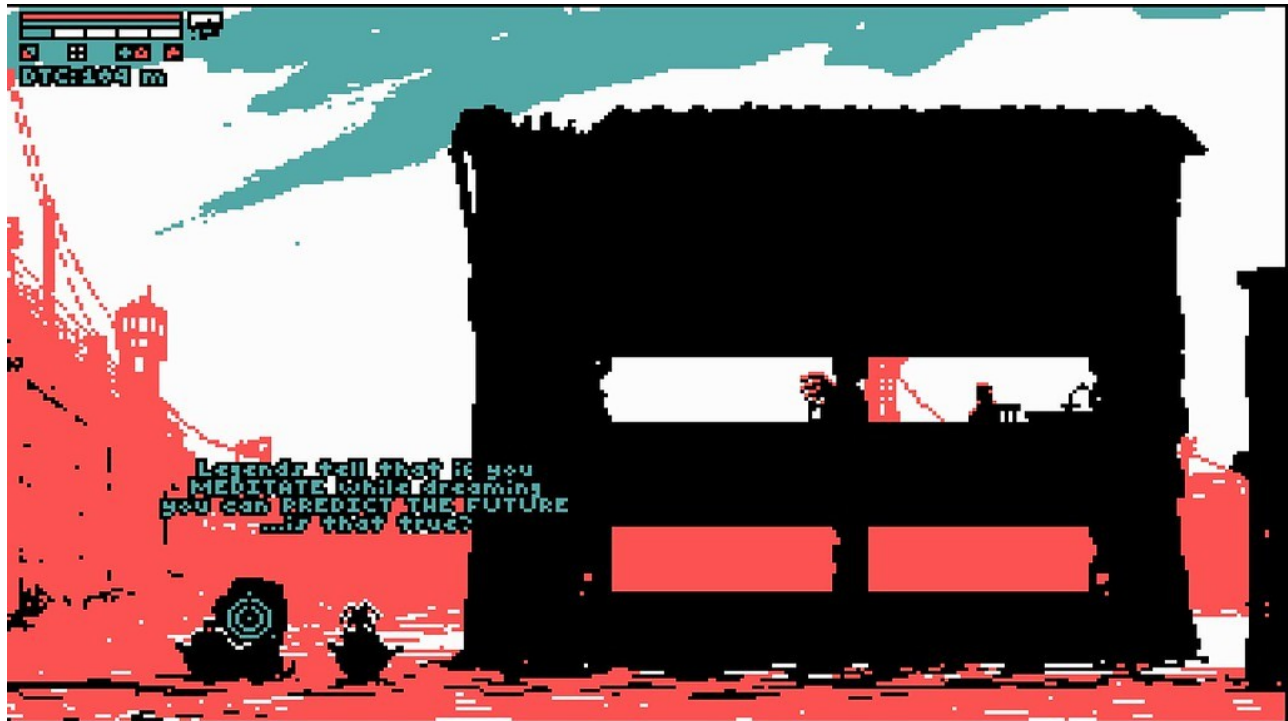
That said, there's one thing that I'm decidedly not nostalgic for and that's the control scheme. In the credits, the developers' give special thanks to Jordan Mechner (Prince of Persia) and Eric Chahi (Another World), and The Eternal Castle's controls and gameplay are clearly based on those kind of momentum platformers. People who played those games will probably be far more used to the timing of jumps and the way the protagonist takes a moment to start running, hits walls and falls over, and slows to a stop before spinning around and moving in the other direction. I'm not one of those people, though, since I grew up on games like Super Mario Bros 3, so the controls seemed extremely muddy to me. I was constantly frustrated by missing jumps, slamming into walls, taking one step too far and being eviscerated by a trap, and otherwise not having my character exactly where I wanted them. These are part of the intended play experience, but for me it felt like bad design.

Then again, a lot of that was because I played three-quarters of the game with the keyboard before I tried using a controller. Emoji Byoo dood I supposed in some ways I got the true experience, authentic to the inspirations, but really it just means I'm probably never going to play Prince of Persia now.



Beyond the basics, the gameplay involves searching through four areas for pieces of the shuttle that crashes at the beginning of the game in order to retrieve four GLIDER[sic] parts and fix the shuttle, so that the protagonist can reach the eponymous Eternal Castle. Each stage is a different environment with different art and color choices. The first place I went after making my way through the opening stage was the Unholy Lab, with a graveyard outside patrolled by ghouls and wild dogs and where I had to sneak past a lot of the enemies by hiding in the pools of shadow left by the sparse lighting. This was a definite contrast to the Forgotten City, where two armies fought each other among the ruins and I mowed down enemy soldiers with an assault rifle. Descriptions and context were as minimalist as the graphics, so I approached every situation cautiously, unsure if it was dangerous. After spending time in the Unholy Lab, the trap-filled Ancient City was a shocking change of pace because I wasn't used to the environment killing me. Previously it was the ghouls that were the threat.

While it's possible to beat the game using solely kung-fu, weapons are a major part of the game since the primary way of interacting with other people is by killing them. There's a variety of weapons from guns to axes to grenades to an electro-sword, it's possible to hold two weapons at once--thanks to the order I did the stages, I didn't learn this until almost the end of the game--and weapons are discarded when out of ammo. Obviously axes don't run out of ammo but throwing them at a distant enemy with a gun is a viable strategy, so melee weapons are just as disposable as guns. Combat is mostly button mashing, though stamina management is important. Running out of stamina means the protagonist wearily swings in the same predictable pattern, whereas going into a fight fresh creates a flurry of blows that knock enemies around like bowling pins. That said, I rarely needed to care about stamina in the moment and I can't think of any fight where running out of stamina meant I lost. Even in the one sequence where stamina should be vital, where the protagonist is chasing a man holding a GLIDER fragment across a series of rooftops while an attack helicopter fires on both them, I never had to care about the stamina gauge. I'm honestly not sure why it's even in the game.



The plot is deliberately vague, not helped by all the text in the game being very low-rez. There's an initial screen filled with text that I thought was just a pretty design for a moment until I noticed a word or two and then settled down to

decipher it. A networked, globalized civilization collapses and some portion of humanity flees to space, leaving everyone else to devolve into warring bands. The space colonies make raids for supplies to the surface, but one of those raids didn't return and the protagonist goes after her.

NO MATTER WHAT

I'M GOING TO SAVE HER_

It's unclear how much of the game is actually happening and how much of it is a cyberspace hallucination. The save points are meditation stones, and dying and respawning is conceived as diving into the remnants of full-immersion internet and predicting the future using VR simulation, such that the protagonist has never actually died at the end of the game, they've merely simulated dozens of deaths. And due to the corrupted internet, maybe their victory never happened either. The game's New Game+ mode is framed as being played entirely "awake," which in practice means permadeath. Even though the game is only a couple hours long, I had enough trouble with the controls that I'm never going to do that, but I appreciate that there's a narrative explanation for saving and loading and why New Game+ exists.

There's also a secret ending, found by collecting a bunch of additional GLIDER fragments throughout the game, but I didn't get it. The very first fragment is to the left of the crash site at the very beginning and by the time I even knew what the fragments were, I had missed it with no ability to backtrack. That said, the secret ending doesn't really explain anything more than the standard ending does. The standard ending has no explosion and no sudden VGA enhancement, but the protagonist and the AI still go back into space. End of line.

Eternal Castle had a fantastic aesthetic, but I didn't actually have that much fun playing it. I bought the soundtrack months ago, and tracks like Chase on the Roofs or The Mortal Scientist stuck in my head and really got me hyped for the game. I watched the trailer at least a dozen times. The game looks and sounds great, it looks even better in motion than it does in still images, and the developers should be proud of what they accomplished in terms of creating an old DOS game with modern sensibilities. But I feel like most of what's interesting about it can be found by watching a longplay like this one.

But I'm not sure how much of that is on me. I have very little attachment to games like Prince of Persia or Another World, or to their successor games like the Oddworld games. I'm used to stopping on a dime, changing directions in midair, and otherwise obeying video game physics. If I had played more momentum platformers I might have had more fun playing and I can't blame the game for that. The developers created the game they wanted, and it's an...

Well, an excellent example of the genre.

MOVIE REVIEW: CAPTAIN MARVEL

by Andrew Moshos

dir: Anna Boden & Ryan Fleck 2019

It was always going to be this great. I don't know how I knew it, but there was always going to be something glorious about bringing this character to the big screen. She might not be as well-known as many other prominent female superheroes that all seem to be coming to the fore these days, now that Marvel and DC feel like the human cinema-going population of the world is suitably obedient and docile such that female or African-American leads aren't seen as too much of a financial risk at the box office, but she's definitely the one that gives the least fucks (being exactly zero, by film's end), and that's got to count for something.

Wonder Woman, for all her virtues as a character and as great as the film was, is still a problematic character, to some extent. The truly visionary and strange William Moulton Marston who, along with his wife Elizabeth and their girlfriend (!) Olive created Wonder Woman, very much wanted a character that was immensely strong, immensely powerful, but also an object of masturbatory bondage fetishism at the same time. It's sort of like the idea that's plagued a lot of movies over the last 100 years that, whether a woman in a role is 'empowered' or completely downtrodden, the important thing is whether women wish they looked like her and men jerked off at the Betty Page-like cheesecake imagery.

Well, we've come too far for that bullshit now. None of Captain Marvel's story arc, or representation, or purpose in this film has anything to do with achieving any of her desires while simultaneously conforming to the needs of her passive but needy hierarchy. She doesn't have anything to prove to us. She is powerful, and she just has to accept it, and do what she needs to do without being hobbled and hampered by the controlling shitbirds in her life.

Like most women. I'm sure many of them can relate, I think, or at least close to 4 billion of them, considering how much this has earned thus far.

In that, this is something unique in terms of these here Marvel flicks, in that while it ties in effectively with the overall superstructure (leading, inevitably, into the position of being an explanation as to how and why she is going to turn up in Avengers: Endgame even though she's not been mentioned in all of the other 2,021 Marvel movies). I care not about any of that. I love, utterly love Black Panther, and could not care less what eventually comes down the Disney pipe because I really, really enjoyed that film. Captain Marvel, I can honestly say, I loved (despite the 90s setting) regardless of what role she plays in Endgame, because it's plenty good enough on its own.



As such, this is the unique Marvel superhero flick where the villain isn't an alien, or a god, or a robot, or a titan, or a tyrant, or a greedy industrialist, or hubris or a shady group of white supremacists; the villain is patriarchy. Right at the beginning, Kree hero Vers is shown training with Jude Law, or at least a character Jude Law is pretending to play instead of just being a stand in for that soft-spoken, measured kind of misogyny which tut tuts at the excesses of the open misogynists and sexists, but still votes against women's reproductive health in government or undermines them in the guise of supporting them, which is truly highest quality gaslighting, no question.

He's like the physical embodiment of the entirety of the lyrics of the great Camp Cope song The Opener, but especially, for me –

“You worked so hard but we were just lucky

To ride those coat-tails into infinity

And all my success has got nothing to do with me”

A woman, being constantly told that her power is not her own, that it is owed to someone else (being Yon-Rogg, who says it literally to her, multiple times), and that she herself isn't really capable enough to control this power, and as such just do what we say and everything else will be right, there there condescending pat on the head.

Vers is told all this crap not only by her alleged mentor, but by the Supreme Intelligence, an AI that runs Kree society, whatever Kree society is, as if we're supposed to know. I am an absolute nerd and I have no idea what they're talking about. Whenever Vers has to spend time being criticised and gaslit by this AI, it appears in the form of Annette Benning.

Now, I love Annette Benning, and am now, as I've always been, in awe of her talent and a little bit afraid of her, so if she appeared to me, I'd probably do what she says. She appears to Vers because the Supreme Intelligence picks the form of a person the individual respects the most, but Vers doesn't remember who she is, and why she would respect her.

Like so many people with amnesia, Vers has great powers but virtually no responsibility, and a gaping wound in her memory and sense of self. Something happened to her a bunch of years ago, but she doesn't know what or why, or how it gave her some nifty powers that she can use a bit until an implant on her neck gives her, I dunno, an electric shock or a negative set of comments about her appearance, whatever.

Maybe every time she wants to use her powers it tells her that she should smile more *grinds teeth*.

The Kree, as far as I can tell, look pretty much like humans, except they have green blood. Other kinds of races from presumably other planets (some with blue skin, some with bright pink skin) live with them, but there's pretty much meant to be Americans. Intergalactic Americans. Can you imagine anything more terrifying?

Their mortal enemy, apparently, are the Skrulls, who kinda look like goblins in their natural state, but have the terrifying ability to replicate people's DNA and mimic their appearance down to even being able to absorb their short

term memories and pass tests that would otherwise prove they ain't who they appear to be. They infiltrate various planets, mimic their, I dunno, rulers or ice cream salespeople and then, boom, destroy everything. Or at least that's what Vers has been told, that there is no greater threat than an Other who you can't even detect until it's too late.

Skrulls may be terrible, they may be wonderful, we have no idea. We only ever get to meet one of them. And it's unlikely we're ever going to meet any others that we get, not to spoil anything, but the thing is, even if we do, it's unlikely we're ever going to meet any that are as menacing and memorable as the leader played by Ben Mendelsohn.

I love our Ben Mendelsohn. I've watched virtually everything he's ever been in, both the exclusively Aussie stuff he did decades ago, and all the recent villainy he keeps being called upon to deliver. Like when Hugo Weaving was appearing in a whole bunch of movies as a villain back when the world was peak Matrixing, Ben has played the or at least a villain in everything from Dark Knight Rises to Rogue One: the Star Wars movie about the architects and plumbers that put together the Death Star, to a sexually ambiguous governor in biblical epic Exodus: Gods and Kings, to the Sheriff of Nottingham in the most recent Robin fucking Hood movie by Guy Ritchie and I honestly don't care: I'll watch him in anything and everything. Ben is compelling and compulsive / compulsory viewing in anything he's in, with menace, malice and mirth enough for any role that anyone thus far has ever written. Is this the best role for his talents? Possibly not, but he does great both in and out of make-up, convincing us both as a villain and as a potential ally in the same breath. I have to admit that his character becomes somewhat less compelling after a certain point, but we can't all get what we want all the time.

The funniest thing for me is that when Ben plays Talos, the leader of the Skrulls whilst he's pretending to be someone human, he puts on an American accent. When he's in his 'natural' state, with the goblin make-up / mask on, he uses his natural Aussie accent, and I think that's hilarious. If the Kree are Americans in space, the Asgardians are Brits, and the Skrulls must be Aussies, shapeshifting their way across the universe.

Vers is forced to come to a lowly, backward planet in order to search for the Skrulls and for a thing that they're after, and, as far as she knows, it's the first time she's ever been to this place, upon which there are Blockbuster Video stores and dial-up modems. Yet it's obvious to us as it isn't to her that she's obviously from this planet and specifically from America. The clues are: She speaks American, she knows how to use their technology and such, from phones to motorbikes, and everything is familiar even if she doesn't remember it.

A much younger Nick Fury (Samuel L.) initially pursues her because she's a crazy person, then because he thinks she's an alien, then they're somehow best buddies on a road trip and chatting like old friends. He helps her out as best he can, but, you know and I know, she doesn't really need him that much, but it's good to have someone to chat with when you're on the road of self-discovery.

Meanwhile, Vers's old crew of Kree psychopaths led by Yonn-Rogg (Jude Law) are on their way to Earth in order to... I honestly can't remember what the reason was but it's meant to increase the tension – Vers has to discover who she really is and what she can really do before Yonn-Rogg comes and mansplains her back into her docile state.

So Vers, whose real name is Carol Danvers, finds out she has friends (Maria 'Monica' Rambeau and her daughter Lieutenant Trouble), finds out who Annette Benning really is, and why she glows occasionally and can shoot stuff with her hands. But what she can't find out through being told something or reading a file, is why she always stands up despite being told eternally, by every man in her life whether she remembers them or not, to stay down.

After every fall, after every crash, she stands up. Beyond the tech explanation for her gifts, beyond the backstory / origin story that we probably understand is there less for its own sake and more to explain why she's going to be in Avengers: Endgame, her essence is that she always wanted to do more than the people around her would allow, and that her very essence is the motto: Higher, Further, Faster, Better. And she's all those things and more.

I cannot begin to say how much I love the performance and the character that she brings to the screen here. I love the fact that, by film's end, she gives zero fucks what any man or female-appearing AI says she should or shouldn't do, and no longer allows for any limitations on herself or anything else. I love the fact that she, as Carol Danvers, doesn't have to do any of the pandering that made Wonder Women somewhat problematic. There is no concession to a love interest or defining the character in relation to another male character, beyond the obvious camaraderie she has with Fury or the deep friendship with Maria (Lashana Lynch), and they do none of the tedious handholding of reassuring us that she's still super feminine by having her wear revealing clothing or profess a love of babies and chocolate.

Whether the rest of the plot really hangs together or makes that much sense, I really don't care. Frankly I would have been happy enough if the entire film was just her deadpan responses to dumb questions, montages of her standing up, and her destroying her enemies with her cosmic scale powers. Plots are overrated. Oh yeah, and her beating up Skrulls who look like old women, that never gets old.

As for the 1990s as depicted, in terms of this being like a period piece, well, it was to depicting the 1990s what The Simpsons was to depicting Australia in its infamous episode which was all Fosters beer and people talking about knives and spoons – embarrassing in its obviousness and clicheness. I guess it was cheaper to do it this way, because I guess there are large swathes of America that haven't really changed that much in 30 years, but, honestly, there was barely any real sense of time or place. No that it matters.

Be that as it may, I very much enjoyed this flick. I love stories about women standing up and not having to spend their time explaining why it's okay or necessary for them to stand up. I don't want to have to watch them explaining patiently why they should be allowed to stand up, or why you, yes, you, shouldn't feel too threatened and be okay with them standing up, I just want them to stand, and the people around them to be able to stand up as well, and not have to listen to fuckheads telling us that it's all well and good for women to maybe stand up, but that it shouldn't be at the expense of the people already standing, like the prime minister of a goddamn country recently said/vomited in public.

It's kind of a simple thing. Being thrilled about women discovering their power enlivens and enriches all of us, not just Captain Marvel or Wonder Woman or whatever fictional creation we need to watch to allow us to entertain the prospect in our personal lives. It helps us all. Captain Marvel's not just here to save herself; she rises, we all get to rise.,

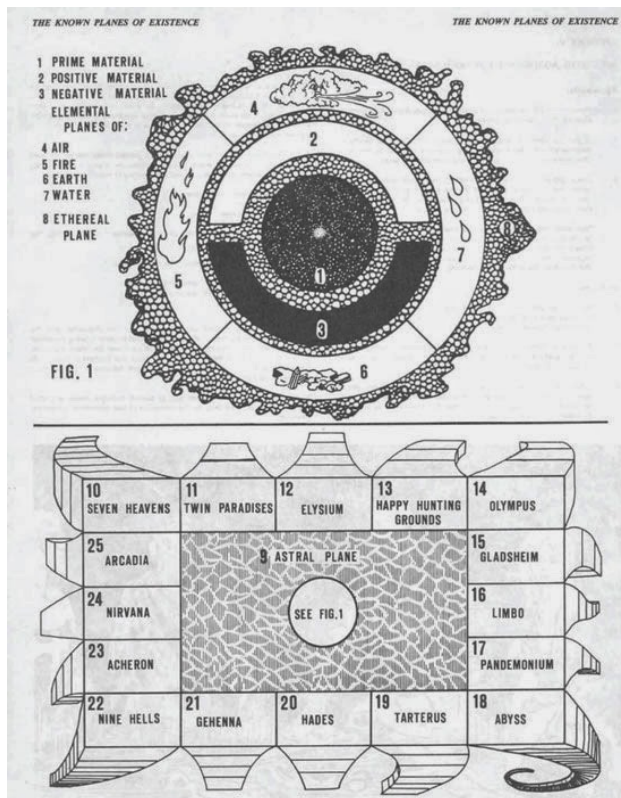
9 times I'm kind of glad they resisted the impulse to play Two Princes or Tubthumpin' on the soundtrack, but I gotta say, the actual choices were pretty lame out of 10 (though No Doubt's Just a Girl was kinda brilliant)

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"I have nothing to prove to you." - I can't say why, but this is, from now on, one of the single greatest rejoinders in human and Kree history - Captain Marvel

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