

RPG REVIEW

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Cats! (popular on the Internet)

***Secrets of Cats/Kids on Bikes Campaign ... Feline
NPCs ... Cats of the Green Isles ... One Bad Cat :
D&D B/X ... Sapient Cats in T&T ... Cats Movie***

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ADMINISTRIVIA

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EDITORIAL AND COOPERATIVE NEWS

Despite the extraordinary lateness of this issue of RPG Review (hey, we've done it before), we're now able to release a special issue on Cats. It did start as a bit of a joke suggestion, and we really wondered whether there would be enough cat-related articles and, as a result, the initial intention was to expand it to a variety of sapient animals. That would have allowed us to include games like Bunnies & Burrows, or Fox Magic, and so forth. However, as it turned out there is enough cat-related content. The main article must be, of course, Simon Stainsby's excellent set of campaign notes for a Secrets of Cats/Kids on Bikes combination set in a fictional version of the Australian-Victorian town of Wonthaggi. With a hat-tip to the recent television series Stranger Things (we were playing this before said programme was released) the fictional Wonthaggi is firmly set in the early 1980s and includes a dual-campaign approach where games can be run as a Secrets of Cats campaign (with strong influences from Cats Of Catthulhu) or a Kids on Bikes campaign, or a combination thereof. Note there is still an intention to turn this fictional Wonthaggi into a fully fledged publication.

There is also an wonderful collection of articles from the Karl Brown who, it must be said, as an absolute machine when it comes to producing material. I am not sure whether RPG Review could even exist without his constant ability to put finger to keyboard and produce high-quality material. In this issue there is an article on "Cats of the Green Isles", one of his long-running campaign settings, "Talking Cats for Tunnels & Trolls", a majority contribution of "Cat Characters" for various game systems, and a decidedly non-cat article (we have to have one, right?) on "Illusory Adventurers". One of the non-Karl contributions to the cat NPCs was one that I cobbled together for RuneQuest which technically is not a cat, but a cat worshiper. That resulted in a rather epic poem by Adam Karlovsky. To illustrate our further commitment to cats art and not just via RPGs, new contributor Anne O'Mouse has provided a movie review of that rather strange movie from 2019, "Cats". It could be worse, trust me. Of course, there is our usual (and somewhat truncated) compilation of current RPG Review Cooperative gaming sessions, specifically for the Alien RPG (hey, the movie had a cat in it) and GURPS Dark Sun (which doesn't). There are, of course, plenty other games being run through the Cooperative, but space and time is insufficiently bent to include them all. One may mention however,

MERP Palantir Quest, HeroQuest Glorantha, the aforementioned Green Isles, and more.

As can be seen the RPG Review Cooperative is well on its way to recovery after a couple of pretty difficult years. All incorporated associations that had at least some emphasis on face-to-face interactions have had a difficult time and there is, of course, not reason to simply say "well, we're all vaccinated and that's the end of it". Viruses, one must regretfully acknowledge, mutate, and this one is going to be a constant battle until it hopefully mutates into something that we can largely live with. The year in fact started with an extraordinary spike in the number of daily cases at one point reaching over 3.5 million per day, until settling to a mere 750K+, itself a number greater than what has been witnessed in any regularity over the previous two years. Daily death counts spiked at over 12000 in January, but at least that was lower than the previous spikes in January and May 2021. In fact, the current level of around 1000 per day (yes I'm writing all this in June, 2020) is the lowest seen since the early months of the pandemic. One notable exception to all this is Australia where we're facing our highest daily case and mortality numbers; go us.

Then there's war; specifically the invasion of Ukraine. OK, that's not exactly a lot of fun by any stretch of the imagination. Nevertheless, when crisis strike an opportunity arises to illustrate what is really important in life. Despite the love I have for the RPG hobby, its flexibility, its imagination, its shared socialisation, its cooperation, what are effectively open-source codes in the rules - the really important thing in life is doing our best to make life less miserable for others. With that in mind, rather like the grand sell-off two years ago for Medicine Sans Frontiers, a similar sale was hosted to raise money for Australians for UNHCR for Ukraine. Approximately \$8.5K AUD was raised for Australians for UNHCR. Two sets of very high-quality dice have also been donated by Anthony Christou which have been "raffled" to those who have made a purchase for the fundraising appeal; special thanks to Janie Gale for organising this. A video on Youtube provides background to the refugee crisis, Anthony's Kickstarter, and the actual draw.

Fundraising for Ukraine: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i2HU66uzYRU>

Australians for UNHCR: <https://www.unrefugees.org.au>

Anthony Christou: <http://www.achristouart.com/store>

That should be enough explanation of the current activities and publications of the RPG Review Cooperative. The next issue of RPG Review will be [EDIT]. As usual, we request any potential articles to be sent through to the editor. Until then, good gaming!

Lev Lafayette
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GAMING 'BLOGS

By Tim Rice, Andrew Daborn

Alien RPG

by Tim Rice with Jay Patterson, Michael Cole, Andrew McPherson, Lev Lafayette



You got a job from Weyland-Yutani representative Ryan Middlebrook to go check out what Seegson has been up to in Ross 627. As cover, you decided that you should also visit a couple of other unexplored systems near Ross 627. That way, if Seegson intercepts you, you can just say that you were prospecting for new colony sites.

The Harpocrates suffered a hull puncture two-thirds of the way to an orange sub-giant star system which Billy-Sue helpfully dubbed "Sphygmonomonometeerland."

Fortunately Salamander fixed the breach without too many issues. As a point of interest in the captain's log, Shygmomonometeerland looks remarkably similar to how Earth's solar system will probably look in about 5 or 6 billion years from now.

You landed on a habitable planet, really a prime colony site, and captured a "rat-oid" and a scorpion. Hiram established that the scorpion's venom contained interesting compounds which might be of interest to medical researchers.

Hiram realized more interesting lifeforms might be nearer the water, so you got on motorbikes and navigated the rough terrain through 10 miles of semi-arid scrub to the small ocean. At the ocean there were much larger scorpionoids which seemed to live an amphibious existence. They seemed semi-intelligent, with high-pitched staccato vocalizations. Harry tried feeding one, but it merely ignored the food and summoned some companions while watching him warily. Hiram tried communicating with them, but his attempt to emulate their alien chirping simply made them more agitated, drawing the attention of another dozen. They began to arrange themselves into a circle around the travellers. While Hiram tried drawing star maps in the dirt in another communication attempt, Billy-Sue noticed the scorpionoids getting ready to attack, and backed up to start getting the motorbikes ready. Finally one lunged at Hiram, but fortunately its tripartite claws merely hit a tough place in his body armor. At this point, hope for intelligent communication was abandoned and you head back to your ship (aka *The Harpocrates*, or *Harpo*.)

Next stop, a red dwarf. Upon entering the system, you noticed a distress beacon: abandoned ship, request evac. It was the USCMC Otago, on record as MIA. Boarding Otago revealed logs from 20 years ago indicating they had serious component failures beyond repair. They used the dropship to try moving to the planet before shipside food and water ran out, and they left coordinates of the intended landing site. A final log warned to stay away; the planet is survivable

but a hellhole. Billy-Sue did a flyover of the site and pointed out a ruined camp, no survivors. You then hooked the Otago up to Harpo's tractor hitch. You dubbed the planet Spes Stultorum, "The Hope of Fools."

You set a course for your next stop: the white dwarf system of Ross 627.

Once the humans bedded down for cryosleep, the captain noted likely values for each piece of intel so far:

* Sphygmonomonometeerland is an excellent colony site. However, the semi-intelligent native species will probably require a generation of heavy bug hunts. \$10,000

* The local fauna on Sphygmonomonometeerland has toxic compounds which could be interesting for further bioweapons or medical research. \$3,000

* Discovering what happened to the USCMC Otago, its crew, and their resting place, including bringing the ship back as salvage. \$10,000

* Spes Stultorum is a possible colony site, but it is a hellhole. Perhaps suitable for prisoners or weirdos, but not *real* colonists. \$5,000

* Reports indicate Spes Stultorum may have lifeforms and diseases of possible interest to bioweapons. However, Harpo crew declined to ratify these claims, so now another research team must be sent. \$0

At Ross 627 you found just a pair of small icy planets orbiting each other, reminiscent of Pluto and Charon, except this moon looked less spherical and more spiky. You put Otago in parking orbit around "New Pluto" (NP) and approached "New Charon" (NC). NC turned out to have a highly unusual fractal structure, like giant Christmas trees 10km wide and 100km tall, made out of other smaller Christmas trees only 1km wide and 10km tall, and so on; the smallest leaves were like great redwoods. NC's fractal geometry was expected to present a difficult approach, but Billie-Sue soon landed next to a tree only 1km across.

The trees appeared to be made out of some kind of black ceramic, polished and hard, protruding nodules like cactuses covered in long hard needles; Hiram broke a long black stiletto off a "cactus" and pocketed it for later analysis. Despite the blackness and hardness of the materials, everything *looked* biological: sinewy, supple and visceral.

You noticed viney cables (or cabley vines?) like braids radiating outwards from the nearest tree. They vanished into low-lying fog, like someone had been running a smoke machine nearby. The tree had hollows in the side, some big enough to hold the Harpo, some providing ingress to capillary-like networks of tunnels, like a nest.

Doc said that he was feeling strange and wondered if it was similar to *deja vu*. Then he started walking towards the tunnels. After some debate, you decided to follow rather than restrain him. On the way, Hiram tried scanning him but found nothing conclusive, which itself seemed a little strange.

Doc led you upwards and inwards. At no point did he seem distressed. Just a calm stroll through an alien Christmas tree ant-hive. Eventually, you found yourselves in a chamber with a device like a biomechanical cryotube. The receptacle was filled with hair, and Doc stepped into it. He was soon enveloped by the hair-like stuff, which began to pulse rhythmically.

Hiram tried hard to do another scan, knowing a lot could be riding on it, but results were inconclusive again. The other members of the crew looked at each fearfully. If the genius Hiram couldn't figure this shit out, what hope did anyone else have?

After a few minutes, Doc emerged, bleeding white robot blood from hundreds of small pinpricks in his skin. He said he needs to get some information back to Weyland-Yutani. You followed him back to the Harpo.

Fearing that Doc had become some kind of trojan, Hiram took command and told Doc to stand down. Doc complied, and Hiram performed a procedure to prevent re-awakening. He also instructed MUTHUR to revoke Doc's clearance pending an investigation.

Before heading back to Anchorpoint, you re-attached Otago. With this extra weight in tow, the return voyage was almost six months.

Back at Anchorpoint, you met with Ryan and were paid \$15,000 each for all your intel so far, and the return of the Otago. Doc was taken away for analysis by WY. While waiting for results from Doc to come back, you spent a week on R&R and shopping. Hiram in particular went on a notable bender, burning hundreds of dollars on who knows what. It's probably better not to ask.

Results came back that Doc had been contacted by a vast artificial intelligence engaged in an arms race with similar AIs in other galaxies. While humans are irrelevant, we have been noticed, and our technology is being scrutinized.

WY cleared Doc to return to captaining the Harpo. When it came to deciding how he should react to Hiram's removing him from command, Doc decided that grudges, being rather un-robotly, did not weigh on him. As far as Doc was concerned, being disabled by a cautious human should be considered Business As Usual (BAU).

With everything clear and ready to go, Doc presented another mission: collect intel on the Arceons, a cult of "Space Amish" who lived in a wooden space station and recently blew up a WY terraforming plant. Arceons believe that humanity should stop interfering with other worlds. The mission already had a perfect cover lined up: fulfill a WY contract to take arms and armaments to the Ishimura, a Kelland Mining Company planet-cracker at Aegis VII. Kelland feared a possible Arceon operation, possibly terrorism or sabotage.

WY already paid for the shipment, so once Harpo crew agreed to carry it, the usual terms applied: retainer based on expected time, plus commission for intel would apply. The shipment delivered into the Harpo's cargo hold, you departed.

Six months of cryo-sleep later, you wake up on approach to the Ishimura. The first thing you noticed was that all running lights and hailing frequencies were dead.

On approach to Ishimura, gravitational instability knocked the Harpo, which was forced to make a crash landing. It could have been worse. Billie-Sue saved the day with some fancy piloting. The Harpo can leave at any time. FTL speed will be halved until the drive can be repaired.

The Ishimura hangar bay appeared deserted. In Flight Control above the hangar bay, you learned of a shipwide executive lockdown. From Flight Control, it was possible to lift the local lockdown for the Flight Deck facility.

It was decided to head to the bridge, to find the captain and/or lift the shipwide lockdown. In the Flight Lounge, you learned that at least some of the Ishimura crew had been transformed into horrifying "necromorphs".

Although they are generally tough, necromorphs have vulnerabilities, such as instantly dying if their arms are cut off. Taking time to aim shots at weak spots proved to be an effective tactic. Despite it going against his training, even Harry ended up adopting this technique.

To help with limb severance, you appropriated some industrial plasma cutters. Billie-Sue's experiments established that plasma cutters are highly effective vs necromorphs: even more effective than military weapons such as plasma rifles.

Hiram realized that the Ishimura's orbit is unstable, so speed is necessary. To ensure speedy movement throughout the Ishimura, a part to repair the tram system was acquired.

* TODO: Use the part to complete tram system repairs (Comtech). This will take time (just not as much time as walking everywhere ...)

* Optional: while bottlenecked on repairing the tram system, there would also be time to upgrade (via Heavy Machinery roll) the plasma cutters.

* Anyone not engaged in either of these activities can recover Health and relieve Acute Stress while waiting for the tram.

Although conscious of losing time, Sally sees how to upgrade the Plasma Cutters more quickly than expected to double their damage. Once that is done, everyone starts heading back to tram control. While traversing the tram tunnel a new type of necromorph ("leaper") bursts out of a grate in the floor and runs in to attack. It is quickly dispatched, as is another leaper and a slasher which follow it.

Hiram repairs the tram and everyone heads to the bridge. Arriving at the bridge, Hiram notices that something is foul about the air and speculates that something has contaminated life support.

Harry is assaulted by a tentacle thing in the bridge's security hall, but after slapping at him it disappears and makes no further moves. The bridge itself is huge, an atrium with giant windows looking out onto space, and a lift in its centre. Signage indicates the lift can access Administration, Communications, or an Asteroid Defense System (ADS).

Heading towards the captain's nest, Harry encounters a slasher trapped in an escape pod; it accidentally hits the eject

button and launches itself away from the Ishimura. Hopefully it will never be seen again.

The nest doesn't really have anything useful, but a system for locating the captain in emergencies advises that Captain Benjamin Mathius is currently in the medlab. You notice that the executive lockdown was initiated by *Acting* Captain Terrence Kyne, not the actual captain Ben Mathius.

You could have headed to medlab to retrieve the captain's key, but instead decided to find the ship's MU/TH/UR and try to lift the lockdown by hacking. Doc advised that MU/TH/UR was probably in the Administration section, accessible via elevator.

Heading to Administration, you fought some necromorphs in a gravitationally unstable area. Three of them were another new type of necromorph ("lurker") which looked like a baby crossed with a peacock with tentacles for feathers.

Despite their weak appearance, lurkers shoot high impact barbs from the ends of their tentacles. After observing them for a few seconds, Doc hypothesised that their tentacles were a weak spot for them. Making aimed shots at the tentacles proved to be much more effective than body shots.

Two slashers were also dispatched, although not before one charged around the gravitational instabilities and stabbed Harry with a blade-like forearm. The corridor opened into a data centre; a great gorilla-like necromorph ("brute") charged, but thanks to an observation by Doc it was soon killed by targeting bright yellow spots on its shoulders.

Further back into the data centre, two more lurkers and two slashers were killed. The slashers here seemed tougher, with darker chitinous skin.

Throughout these various adventures, Hiram was having trouble managing his stress levels. Everything he tried resulted in minor panics: trembling, twitching and dropping items. These signs of panic fed back on themselves, making Hiram and everyone around him even more stressed than they already were.

While Hiram tried a few minutes of meditation and Doc applied a medkit to fix Harry's wound, Sally successfully hacked into MU/TH/UR and lifted the lockdown.

MU/TH/UR issues a sitrep:

- * Orbit decaying due to fuel cut and gravitational inductor disabled.
- * An unidentified mass in food storage is contaminating life support.
- * The comms system is also offline, but it is less urgent.

As orbital decay seemed most urgent, the decision was made to head to engineering next. Life support in hydroponics could be repaired after that.

After dispatching a Brute on the way out of the Bridge, you catch the tram to Engineering. You find a control room with a couple of corpses in it. Doc uses the control room computers to determine that engineering is tripartite: restoring the Ishimura's orbit will require visiting fuel storage and the gravitational centrifuge before heading to the engine room for ignition.

You first go to the centrifuge, via a decontamination chamber where it was necessary to fight a few necromorphs. The centrifuge itself was a zero-G area. Your entry attracted a couple of leapers. Once the leapers were dead, Sally pushed the giant motors on rails back into the centrifuge axis. Thanks to quick thinking by Harry, Hiram was prevented from pressing the button to restart the centrifuge until Sally got out of the pit where the motors would soon start spinning around.

Since she could see that whoever pushed the button would then need to perform some quick athletics to get out of the centrifuge, Billie-Sue took over the button pushing. While running to the first alcove after pushing the button, a leaper ran in there ahead of her; however, it ran back out again and was dismembered by the spinning motors. She continued on while the rest of the Harpo crew protected her from a slasher in another alcove.

Arriving back in the control centre, a small batlike necromorph scuttled across the ground towards the corpses. Billie-Sue speculated that it might be about to make new necromorphs. It started trying to punch its beak through the skull of a corpse, but it was killed before it could finish the job. Billie-Sue took her shotgun to the corpses and disintegrated the heads to prevent them from being infected in future; everyone jumped at the sounds of the shots and felt sickened by the spattering of pink pulp.

Fuel storage was on the other side of the machine shop, where a slasher was playing possum. There was another plasma cutter and some ammo here; Hiram made room for these by dropping some pulse rifle ammo. Fuel storage was a dark maze of storerooms, grates and ramps. Inspecting the fuel lines required catching a gondola from the starboard side to port, which attracted the attention of some slashers. After a short battle in which Sally got stabbed, it was decided to spend some time on taking a rest and recovering from injuries. Harry pulled out a deck of cards and put everyone at ease by asking who wants to play poker.

Sally repaired the fuel lines, noticing that they had been severed rather than torn: sabotage? Was someone trying to deliberately crash the Ishimura? After Sally repaired the fuel lines, six lurkers appeared and started peppering the team with their barbs. Although they were soon killed by swiping automatic fire and plasma cutter rounds across their tentacles, they got in some good hits.

Due to the stress, Hiram started trembling uncontrollably; Sally made a joke about how everyone should form a line to slap Hiram's face, and this helped him calm down a bit. Back in the control centre, you decided to take another R&R session. At this point, Billie-Sue announced her decision to go repair the Harpo and prep for take-off. As Billie-Sue headed towards the tram, you felt the Ishimura begin to rock and shake, making all movement difficult. That engine better get turned on soon.

Billie-Sue repaired the Harpocrates faster than expected, and rejoined the others in time to head to the Engine Room. Entering the Engine Room, you encountered three casual-looking slashers who suddenly seemed less casual upon

becoming aware of you. The noise of fighting them attracted the attention of a new type of necromorph similar to a slasher, but with a distended torso; it came lumbering from out behind the engine control station.

Doc observed that the bloating might be a form of necromorphic pregnancy, so whatever you do you should avoid hitting the belly, lest whatever is in there come bursting out. Instead, he advised, go for the arms, like any slasher. Once the "pregnant" necromorph was dead, it was possible to notice its belly quivering, but it soon went still, as though whatever was in there had died.

Once the area seemed secure, Sally began priming the engines for ignition. However, the sound of the engines priming attracted a handful of slashers and lurkers. These were again easily disposed of. Then once Sally hit the final ignition, it was time to head to hydroponics.

The entrance to hydroponics was a refreshing corridor of relatively natural light and cleaner air, with windows looking upon seedlings and a variety of plump fruit and vegetables growing on bushes and vines. Tomatoes, pumpkins, watermelons, lettuce and so on; it felt like a relaxing trip to the country compared to a lot of places you'd seen lately.

In the atmospheric control at the heart of hydroponics, you accessed the computers. CCTV showed a growing menace in food storage, spores blowing in from the hydroponic towers to feed a kind of "anti-lung," pink membranes and yellow fungal growth gardenized by at least two dozen necromorphs, aimed at poisoning all of Ishimura.

While inspecting this footage, you received a video call from a Dr Terrence Kyne (whose name was familiar: an "Acting Captain" Terrence Kyne was the one who previously ordered an Ishimura-wide executive lockdown.) Kyne advised that all the problems on the Ishimura were due to removing an alien artifact called the Marker from the planet below. The Marker had been keeping things quiet, and once it was removed, it awoke an alien power, and that was when all hell broke loose.

Kyne admitted to deliberately sabotaging the Ishimura, to try and crash the Marker back into the planet below. Now that the engines were repaired, another plan was called for.

When questioned, Kyne suspected that another survivor could be aboard, but his rival Doctor Challus Mercer should be avoided at all costs. Kyne and Mercer both belonged to a cult called the Unitologists. The Unitologists funded this whole mission, but Kyne was sickened by all the madness which had unfolded once the Marker was brought onboard, whereas Mercer had embraced it.

Kyne indicated that forming another plan to return the Marker to the surface would require time, so in order to avoid choking to death first, the menace in food storage should be a priority. He said that using necromorph DNA samples and chemicals from the Medical Deck, it could be possible to formulate a poison which would greatly weaken the necromorph presence in Food Storage, simplifying any cleanup operation.

To buy time before all that, you resolved to first cleanse the hydroponics towers, so at least not so many spores would be blowing into Food Storage. Fiddling with CCTV settings showed that the spores were being generated by a new type of necromorph called a wheezer, which had giant lungs growing out of its back, through which it sucked in clean air

before coughing up spores out of its mouth.

However, despite your good intentions, upon heading to the first hydroponics tower, an attack by necromorphs left you weakened, so you paused for rest. To add insult to injury, while taking time to recover, your presence attracted the attention of more necromorphs than you had ever seen before. They overwhelmingly swamped the location.

In the battle, Billie-Sue and Harry were badly injured and rendered disabled for the remainder of the combat. The android Doc struggled to continue fighting despite sustaining multiple critical injuries which would have destroyed any human, but he too could only sustain so much damage before being rendered immobile. Meanwhile, a necromorph suddenly lunged forward and impaled the heart of the scientist Hiram, who dropped stone dead, with no chance of revival this side of becoming a necromorph in turn.

Ultimately, it was Sally who won the day, slowly but steadily dismembering the necromorphs, one shot of her bolt gun at a time. Bang ... Bang ... Bang ... Bang ... Bang. The odds could have easily swung against her at any time, but at the end it was Sally still standing, slightly scratched and breathing heavily, spattered with all kinds of unthinkable ichor, necromorph body parts strewn in disarray all around her.

Sally's first priority was to bring Doc back online; he was then able to help with getting Billie-Sue and Harry back on their feet. Mournful looks and respectful words were said over the corpse of Hiram, for not even Doc could repair such a savagely impaled heart. Doc took up Hiram's medal to place on the Harpo, a memento to honor the fallen scientist's memory.

Still licking their wounds, and eyeing Hiram's corpse with despair, the crew of the Harpo decided that this was all a fool's errand after all. Kyne's original plan was really rather sound, and no one from the Harpo had been promised some great fortune to carry through on any suicide mission, and with the Harpo in full working order it's not like anyone was really trapped here. Which is to say, this was no time for a sunk cost fallacy: despite the effort that had gone into repairing the Ishimura, it was time to cut losses and run. Let the Ishimura simply crash into the planet below without further ado.

A quick trip back to engineering was sufficient to quickly power off and re-sabotage the engine; once that was done, the Harpo along with all surviving crew on board took off and adopted an observational orbit. And so it came to pass that, while taking R&R in orbit over Aegis VII, you sat with your feet up on the deck of the Harpo, sipping your beverage of choice, spectating as the Ishimura broke apart in the atmosphere and crashed into the planet below, presumably taking Kyne, Mercer, the Marker, and all the other horrors in this small portion of the galaxy down with it.

On approach to Anchorpoint, emerging from cryosleep, perhaps you vaguely remembered a dream about a certain necromorph which jettisoned itself in an escape pod, hours before you crashed the Ishimura. But what of it? Surely no one would ever find it ...

You headed to Yesod Dam. En route, you spoke to the foreman over the radio. He admitted that the report of the engineers doing "maintenance" was a bit of a euphemism. They had been off in the Claypots region SE of the dam bughunting skreavers.

Skreavers are a native species of Alexandria: relatively intelligent and industrious crayfish with some beaverlike behaviours (eg dam building.) Their dam building ethology puts them in conflict with the human requirements of hydroelectric power, and so they are routinely culled off in bughunts.

The foreman said that to go looking for the missing engineers, you should pick up Grisha Yortan, a tough technician who had been working at the dam for the last 15 or 20 years, and knew the area well. Harry stayed behind at the dam to keep tabs on radio reports and dam activity, while Grisha and the two Weyland-Yutani marines Gary and Breanne accompanied Billie-Sue, Sally and Doc in the Bearcat.

Grisha directed Billie-Sue towards the gorge where the bughunt team last reported from, and she landed the bearcat on the clifftop. Everyone slid down into the gorge to find an old skreaver dam with tunnels branching off. In front of one of the tunnels was a dropped AK-4047 identical to Grisha's, and there were signs it had recently been fired.

Heading into the caves, you found a chamber with hexagonal alien writing on the walls. The writing was accompanied by rough pictures of skreavers beside a sea with snakes or tentacles rising out of it. This was possibly a depiction of the illeyatans, a creature rather like a sea serpent which used to terrorize the waters of the Hah Sea before humans put a stop to such shenanigans. The pictures did not explain whether the skreavers were worshipping, hunting or avoiding the illeyatans.

Grisha led you down to an underground lake, which had once been a skreaver farm and nursery. You found a large piece of flesh beside the shore, about 20 feet long and fairly fresh, with signs something had been chewing on it. It was unclear where it had come from, but it must have been big and sinuous. Freshwater illeyatan?

Gary (one of the WY marines) found an underwater entrance to an extra section of cave; he led most of the crew there, leaving behind Breanne and Doc to keep watch on the lake.

Doc noticed his motion detector beeping and spotted something moving very rapidly through the water. Then a xenomorph lunged out of the water and Doc had a chance to sear it with his flamethrower before it threw him to the ground and crushed his skull with a punch of its inner jaws.

Breanne got off a shot with her assault rifle, but that just made it angry. It grabbed her and dragged her off into the water before disappearing. Although stunned and a bit winded, Breanne was fairly tough and the air supply in her APESuit protected her from drowning, so she soon regrouped with the others in the secondary cave, updating them that Doc would require some serious repair work.

The cave was humid and had an odd punky sweet aroma, and all surfaces were coated with some kind of slimey biofilm. You soon found a chamber containing the missing dam engineers, cemented to the walls by some kind of organic substance; they appeared groggy as though drugged. For each of the three engineers, there was a large leathery egg close by; the eggs looked like melted-down humans, and you realized that here lie the missing joggers.

Due to her familiarity with the forbidden book "Space Beast", Sally guessed that the eggs carried a parasite which would soon come out and plant itself on the faces of the three engineers. But until that happened, the engineers were probably still uninfected.

Thus, Deborah Aidez's earlier uncertainty about parthenogenesis was now settled: it seemed like the creature could indeed breed asexually by converting humans to eggs and then using those eggs to infect other humans. Having a queen to lay eggs would be more efficient, but was not strictly required for a lone xenomorph to set in motion the destruction of a whole world.

Sally tried gingerly stepping up to start freeing the engineers, but as she got close to the eggs, the closest one flowered open, so she stepped back away from it. This led to the consensus to just start shooting the eggs.

It turned out they were full of acid, which it was kind of unsafe to go splashing everywhere. Fortunately, it only got on one engineer, who would end up with a mild burn equivalent to a bad sunburn.

Although the engineers were rescued, you realized that there was no further sign of the xenomorph; it completely vanished after its assault on Breanne and Doc. Sally guessed that since this location was blown, the xeno would go off looking for a new place to nest. Who knows where it will end up?

In the meantime, Doc will need significant repair work back at the Caro Nova lab. He won't be operational again until tomorrow.

GURPS Dark Sun

by Andrew Daborn with Michael Cole, Lev Lafayette, Rodney Brown, Gene Korolew

Dark Sun Interlude 1

It's dusk. Scraggly bush gives way to a salt plain. Twelve horse sized beetles scuttle across the shimmering earth. The riders dressed in the gold disk on black of the Inika trade company, far from their lush home of Gulg.

With a burst of salt a dorsal fin slices out of the earth 20 meters to one side, two similar fins on the other. There is a shout of alarm from Shist, a thin man in healers robes. The kanks scuttle faster, led by the hulking form of Shom Captain Sand Squirrel, towards a large outcrop of dark volcanic stone. A haven?

Muttering under his breath the short and wiry Gorm untangles a rope net from his pack. With Shist's assistance it is released on one sand shark as it crests the salt to leap at Gorm's mount. They race on, a writhing bundle of ropes and confused fish behind.

The caravan guards look for an opportunity. Shist lands a sling bullet on the nearest shark, followed by a hail of obsidian tipped spears. The wounded shark dives. With careful management Sand Squirrel gathers the train of kanks in the safety of the outcrop.

As the caravan rests, the night is broken by three huge mantis creatures as they glide into the camp. They silently leave the carcass of a sand shark. The words: "Eat. We will scout ahead." form in everyone's minds, and then they disappear into the night.

We are introduced to the stout guard sergeant, Tufa, and her opposite the lanky and spoilt Lord Azcal, as around a small fire, they advise Sand Squirrel on whether to stay the night or press on to the mountains ahead and their goal, Salt View.

After a quick break the camp moves out, scurrying across the cooling salt. They head on east as plains give way to broken badlands and eventually the steep slopes of the Merkillot Mountains. Azcal, crystal ball in hand directs the caravan up steep paths. Gripping desperately on the riders make it to a pass. West, from where they came, over the salt desert they see the glowing ember of lights from the city Nibinay, filled with rivals and foes. Ahead is a mass of treacherous peaks and secrete filled valleys.

Azcal presses on, muttering constantly as he seeks a path through the night. Eventually the exhausted caravan rounds a heap of boulders, stumbling into a large cavern bustling with the lights and sounds of a town. With a whispered conversation Sand Squirrel and the caravan are beckoned pass a palisade into Salt View...

What brings them through such dangers to here?

Dark Sun Interlude 2

Inside the smoky interior of The Marked Raider bar there is a surprising lack of entertainment. The glum bartender gestures towards a sign above him with three juggling balls crudely crossed out.

Rough, scarred warriors and raiders fill the large shack with their laughter, songs and occasional scuffles.

The Shom Captain Sand Squirrel, in his element, soon finds two old comrades of the Gulg gladiatorial arenas, Leatherfoot and Bonefall. There is soon much gossip about Salt View, the bartender Korsk's hatred of jugglers, and the nature of gladiators.

A local inn provides some gated protection for the caravan with the kanks, guards and merchants settled down in an open courtyard.

Sand Squirrel, Azcal and his nanny, Tenoch, sleep in the inn to protect the 'talent'. Azcal is marginally more valuable than the rest of the caravan to Inika, being the boss's nephew...

Meanwhile Shist looks for an earth shrine to pay his respects at. As he passes an air shrine on his way to the back to the cavern there is a shriek from the shadows. The very dead body of the caravan guard, Marl, is found strewn around the air shrine.

Shist runs to investigate, with Tufa, guard sergeant, soon behind him. Two terrified witnesses, already at the shrine tell of Marl being lifted into the air and torn apart by a whirlwind.

Shist completes a quick autopsy, confirming the eyewitnesses accounts. He also notices scuffed symbols in a circle around the body, and two recent sets of foot prints near the body. Carefully noting them down he comforts the witnesses.

Tufa covers the body of her friend and takes a feather token.

Shist returns to the group with Tufa, bringing Marl's body, which is cared for with much reverence by the dwarves. The Shom Captain reviews the security of the caravan, setting fresh guards.

Shist and Gorm recall a recent death of a dwarf, chased from the market place to outside Shist's temple. Stoned to death down an alley by angry mob.

The rest of the night passes - Acotto sets watch. Tufa and Breccia clean the air shrine. Nothing else happens.

Morning comes and a precession of guards, along with the Shom Captain and Shist climb with Marl's body to the summit of a nearby mountain. On top of a large pile of stones they leave the corpse for the birds to take away.

The wake starts as soon as the guards return to Salt View. Sand Squirrel guards the caravan letting everyone else celebrate Marl's live and commemorate his death.

Dark Sun Interlude 3

Making their way back to the inn Gorm and Shist pass through the market area, rugs strew across the floor of the cavern and a trader on each. A small caged winged reptile spots Gorm's eye. The trader eventually parts with it for a bag of freshly produced obsidian spear and axe heads. "Guc!" it introduces itself as, the word appearing in Gorm's head. The creature wraps itself around his neck and settles down. "It'll tell you when danger is nearby." the trader calls as she rushes off.

Shist's makeshift clinic is a success, several wounds and sore heads are repaired. People begin smiling in recognition as they see him in the settlement.

Korsk, landlord of the tavern, whispers a request Gorm. Can he deliver this crystal to someone in Nibenay?

Who? Just Templar Coatzin, the most feared general in the Nibenay army. It would be worth his while...

Gorm takes the crystal.

Azcal, finished with his own trading, approaches Shist. He needs to find an entrance to a fabled silver mine of

unimaginable wealth! He believes a local hermit, called Yaya, knows a nearby way in. Azcal, misreading the room, indicates it will make everyone very rich. Shist is not sold on this at all but agrees to assist.

Returning to the Inn Gorm queries the actions of the grieving dwarven guards. Marl was a determined and focused individual, full of intense dwarven ambition. The other guards celebrated as if he had died completing his mission, but what was that? Surely not simply being a caravan guard?

Gorm chats with the other dwarves at the wake, getting some answers and more questions. Tufa seems to be holding something back from him. Amongst the laughter and song, he spots her asking the heavily robed Chart if they are ready. The other guard nods seriously. What is the significance of that?

Dawn breaks as the caravan heads south and west, down the spine of the mountain ridge. By mid-morning, and after a short disagreement between Sand Squirrel and Azcal, the caravan deviates for the main route, deep into the valleys and high paths of the mountains. It is at least out of the hot sun.

Eventually, the path follows a very narrow ridge across a high cliff - a crevasse below. Summoned by pipe music a wicker basket is lowered down the cliff to the caravan. Shist and Gorm manage to fit in and are dragged the dizzying 30-meter journey straight up the cliff. At the top, another ridge, and a windswept and sun-bleached sage awaits them. Yaya invites them in to her home, a spherical basket hanging out over the cliff on a large branch. She offers them tea. Her hermitage swings wildly in the wind as they get in but there is enough hot water in the pot to make tea.

Does Yaya know the location of the tomb? Why is Azcal so interested in this mine? Is Tufa up to something?

More questions and some answers in the next episode of Dark Sun!



SECRETS OF CATS & KIDS ON BIKES DOWNUNDER

By Simon Stainsby

with Lev Lafayette, Andrew Daborn, Michael Cole, and Rodney Brown

The following are notes from a Secrets of Cats campaign, which is still being expanded into an overall campaign supplement, alternating with Kids on Bikes. It is vaguely based in a south-eastern Victorian town (Wonthaggi was a general template) with additional influences from other RPGs such as Call of Cthulhu, Little Fears, the TV series Twin Peaks, and more recently, Stranger Things. There is still a plan to expand this campaign into a larger publication.

Themes

- * 1980s Nostalgia. A nostalgic look at being a kid in a small town the 1980s - Roleplaying inspired by the Netflix show 'Stranger Things' and 'Twin Peaks'
- * Post-industrial disrepair. 1980s of neo-liberalism, post-industrialism and hopelessness for kids in a town that's lost it's main industries. A place where the future offers little more than pregnancy, prison or nuclear annihilation. As an additional theme, Australia hides its class and race conflicts
- * Big crime in a small town. This small town is the perfect hideout with the hotel "Big Dick's Halfway Inn" is a front a heroin and Australian wildlife smuggling operations
- * Horror, specifically "Folk Horror". Under the 'everyone knows each other' cosiness of the country town people are keeping dark secrets. This quiet country town hides many secrets and bad adults challenge resourceful children.
- * Supernatural Horror. Just beyond the realm of the everyday there are beasts threatening to take over. Only the secret work of some unthanked citizens keep it at bay (an inversion of the cultist trope). The Catholics have forgotten the ritual to hold back the Dholes. The Red Leopard Group is a demon summoning doomsday cult
- * Conspiracy. Child protective services as a baddie. G-Men protecting a secrets man was not meant to know. ASIO is on the hunt for a communist cell. The Seventh Day Adventists are being recruited by the Lions Club (antichrist masonic new world order, etc)
- * Magical Realism - A Child-like reality; what happens in dreams influences the mundane world. There are monsters just beyond the edge of perception. Favoured animals can be spiritual protectors: Aboriginal Dreaming and the Dreamscape (of the Unknown Kadith, c.f., Terror Australis). And, of course, sapient, magical cats

Playable Characters

Greg Baker (Playable Character). Kids on Bikes. Loner Weirdo. Kid : 12 years old

Fear: That being the kid that no-one likes in a nowhere town might be as good as it gets.

Motivation: Stay under the radar until I can get out of this town

Flaws: Gloomy, Reckless

Grit: D20 Fight: D12 Brawn: D10 Brains: D8 Flight: D6 +1 Charm: D4 +1

Prepared. Spend two adversity tokens to 'just happen to have' one commonplace item with you (GMs discretion).

Tough. If you lose a combat add +3 to the Negative Number. You still looks the roll no matter what, but could reduce your loss to -1.

Quick Healing You recover from injury very quickly and don't suffer lasting effects.

Mum. Elizabeth Baker is overprotective - and a little bit racist.

Dad. Jake Baker, loves football, doesn't get why I'm not interested in it. He gets weirdly upset about me not caring about or being any good at sport. Secretly Jake worries he might be raising a sissy (and failing as a man by not raising a manly son).

Attends Wonthaggi Central Primary School. "I have a special connection to Gus, the Baker family cat. You once told a story at school about how he talked to you in a dream. The kids at school mock you for that. Will Shorten believes me talk about animals being smart and able to talk to people in their dreams. Will once saved Gus from a fox. I owe him for that. He says the fox that tried to kill Gus was a Trickster spirit called a Waang. Wangs are funny. I'd like invite Will over for a sleep over, but mum won't let me.

Aewin Lewis, the lady from that hippy shop *The Expanding Universe* on the main drag is the only person in this town who is nice to me. She occasionally makes me mix tapes of songs they never play on the radio from bands no-one has ever heard of. She says that she believes me when I talk about cats having special abilities. Maybe she believes me, maybe she's just being nice.

Agnes Black has started being really friendly recently and I can't work out why. I reckon she's up to something."

Angus Black (Playable Character) Kids on Bikes. Young Provider: Teen: 15 years old.

Fears: That department of social services will break up our family.

Flaws: Insecure, Resentful

Grit: D20 Brawn: D12 Charm: D10 +1 Brains: D8 +3 Fight: D6 +1 Flight: D4

Loyal. Each adversity token you spend to help friends gives the +2 instead of +1.

Protective. Add +3 to rolls when defending your friends.

Rebellious. +3 When Persuading or resisting persuasion from children. Add +3 When resisting persuasion from adults.

Skilled at Maths

Motivation Feed the Family

Attends Wonthaggi and Districts High School

Works the Friday evening shift at The Co-op (and other shifts as required by his boss Ralph Nicholson.

"I work really hard to put raise his little sister Agnes Black but she asks for so much and can be really annoying at times. I do my best to take care of my mum Rosa Black but she's hitting the pain medicine pretty hard. I was in the car and can remember the Car Crash that killed my dad David Black and partially paralysed my mum Rosa Black. I am respected at his job at The Co-op by my boss Ralph Nicholson. I often has to shoo away Tomson, a stray cat that rummages though the bins at work.

Agnes Black (Playable Character) Kids on Bikes. Funny Sidekick. Kid: 9 years old.

Motivation: To win the love of her (emotionally distant) brother Angus Black

Fears: I've seen something scary on the hill just outside of town. Don't go there.

Charm: D20+1 Brawn: D12 Flight: D10+1 Brains: D8 Grit: D6 Fight: D4

Heroic. You don't need GM's permission to spend adversity tokens to overcome fears.

Quick Healing. You recover from injury very quickly and don't suffer lasting effects.

Skilled at Entertaining

Sister of Angus Black. Daughter of Rosa Black and David Black (deceased). Attends Wonthaggi Central Primary School

"I almost drowned at the Lake last summer, but Will Shorten saved me. We've been firm friends ever since.

I will be "in" with the popular kids at school when I manage to pull off the ultimate prank on that weirdo kid Greg Baker that nobody likes.

I'm a good singer and even got to perform at the Union Theatre at their Labour Day weekend show. One of the organiser ladies at the theatre, Mia Pand says I've got real talent. My brother Angus Black didn't even show up. He said he had to work that night, but I think he just doesn't care. I've been selected for the Uniting Church nativity play. Angus says he can't make that either. Hmph.

I like cats, and will stop to pet cats when walking around. I know some of them by the places they regularly hang out. Some cats will approach me for pats." (Protected by the Parliament of Cats)



Will Shorten. (Playable Character: Kids on Bikes). Scout: Kid: 10 years old

Motivation: To connect to Country and become a proud Boon Wurrun Waang man (as an escape from a town that treats him like dirt).

Fear: The Wonthaggi Yowie that lives in the saltmarsh just out of town and attacks cheeky kids in their dreams.

Flaws: Blunt, Restless

Brains: D20 Grit: D12 Charm: D10+1 Brawn: D8 Flight: D6+1 Fight: D4

Cool Under Pressure. Spend 1 adversity token to take half the die's value instead of making a 'Snap Decision'.

Treasure Hunter. Spend one Adversity token to find a useful item in your surroundings.

Quick Healing. You recover from injury very quickly and don't suffer lasting effects.

Has an animal connection to Muninn one of two Ravens that hang around the Caravan Park

Descendant from the 1863 miners via his mother's (Nicholson) line.

"Dad, Ernie Shorten, and his mates regularly take me camping where we tell stories and learn bushcraft. I'm learning Culture and Lore. My mum, Claire Shorten, raised me when I was little and dad was in jail. We went to the Anglican Church a lot during those days. Nowadays prefer camping with dad than going to church. Church is a town thing and town people are always looking down at me. Camping and telling stories about country is more fun.

My grandparents, mum's parents, are Ralph Nicholson and *Martha Nicholson. They live in the Caravan Park. It's where poor people live.

I go to Wonthaggi Central Primary School.

Dad and I go fox hunting. He says it's an important part of protecting country - and that animals embody spirits - traditional spirits of country but animals of the white man invader have their own spirits too. Foxes are tricksters, Cats clear an area of all animal spirits then defend it."

Recently I broke up a fight recently between Gus, Greg Baker's family cat and Tucker [Tormentor] a fox of Waang moiety that's been preying on the local Ringtail possums. Greg really appreciated me rescuing his cat had been really nice to me ever since. He's alright. We spend a lot of time bitching about how much this town sucks.

Last year when dad was camping with Uncle Archie McEwan, Archie told me about the Wonthaggi Yowie. That story scared the hell out of me. I have been having nightmares and night terrors about the Yowie about twice a month for about a year now.

I like-like Agnes Black. I can't quite explain how she makes me feel. I'm glad we are friends. A few months ago in summer we were play-fighting near the Powlett River. I thought we were both were having fun, but I must have been roughhousing, because she almost drowned after I pushed her into the lake. I felt so guilty and dived straight in and was able to rescue her. It's turned out OK and she's been really friendly to me ever since. Does she have feelings for me too?"

Gus Baker Playable Character (FATE: Secrets of Cats) Cat Name: Meowrukami

+4 Lore +3 Naming, Will +2 Territory, Notice, Athletics +1 Fight, Physique, Investigate, Rapport

Literate, Control, Animate

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Burden: Greg Baker

Lives with Elizabeth Baker, Jake Baker

Goal for burden: To ease his gloominess

'Princess Leia / Assima Dreamweaver' Playable Character (FATE: Secrets of Cats)

Lives in Wonthaggi Riverside Caravan Park, lot three with Simon Pederson

Is tormented by two ravens Huggin and Muninn who sit on power lines to caravans and will steal food from his bowl

Burden: The residents of Wonthaggi Caravan Park (Simon Pederson, Ernie Shorten, Clare Shorten, Will Shorten)

Tomson Playable Character (FATE: Secrets of Cats)

Big orange tomcat.

Hangs around The Co-op looking for tasty treats.

Raids the bins of The Co-Op

Son of the big orange tomcat who raided The Co-op bins in the 1970s.

Brought the Murdered Girl in the Playground to the attention of the cops.

Behemoth Playable Character (FATE: Secrets of Cats)

Name (for Cats): Bruiser Name (Kitten): Sootie. Name (for Humans): Behemoth, Bastard

High Concept: A tough stray from the wrong side of town

Trouble: 'Nobody calls me chicken'. (Quick to fight, easily provoked into fight).

True Name: Badass Shaper

Burden: Trudie Walker, the girl across the street who is kind to animals.

Chosen: You're not clumsy, you knocked that over on purpose!

Refresh: 3

Skills Great: (+4) Fight. Good (+3) Shaping, Physique. Fair: (+2) Notice, Provoke, Territory. Average: (+1) Agility, Will, Burglary, Warding

Stunts Magic: 3

Change Size (Shaping Exclusive)

+2 Opposition per level to Change Size (and gain the relative size bonus / penalties)

Insect < Mouse < Rat < Cat < Dog < Human < Tiger < Horse

Larger : Attacker = Weapon 2, Defender = Armour 2,

Smaller: Attacker = Attack + 1, Defender = Defend + 1

Shadow Form: (Shaping Exclusive)

Convert to incorporeal shadow - invulnerable to physical attacks, but cannot attack

Knack for change

Maintain one additional (ie total of 2) Shaping advantages.

Normal: 3

Size Advantage (Physique): If fighting something smaller than you and you succeed with style, you can reduce the damage by one to create the advantage 'Pinned' rather than gaining a boost.

Scrapper (Fight): When fighting something larger than you, spend fate point to convert a hit into a mild or moderate consequence.

Nine Lives: When taken out in a physical combat, Pay your opponent a fate point to concede instead. (You don't get the 'conceding' Fate Point at the end of the conflict if you use this stunt).

Stress: Physical: 4 (+2 Due to Physique) Mental: 2 Consequences: Mild : 1 Moderate : 1 Severe : 1

Burdens: Bruiser lives with Graeham Newbury - A grumpy old man who drinks too much. He lives in the poorer part of town in a rundown house. Bruiser wandered into Graeham's place one day as if he owned the place and Graeham fed him. Now he comes and goes as he pleases. Graeham likes it that way. Graeham ignores Bruiser most of the time and 'That Bastard Cat' has learned that knocking things to the floor will always get his attention.

Bruiser protects Trudie, the girl from across the street who is kind to animals (mostly because people haven't been very kind to her. Trudie has a rough life, is bullied at school and spends a lot of time worrying about what her friends might think.

Tom Pratchett from the bookshop calls Bruiser 'Behemoth'.
Sunseeker says that it's some kind of literary reference.

Hadrian Playable Character (FATE: Secrets of Cats)

Name (for Cats): Choirmaster Flash Name (Kitten): Mittens Name (for Humans): Hadrian

High Concept: The Jazz Cat. (Protecting Sliver Ford with Style)

Trouble: No matter how hard I try to protect them, my burdens remain ungrateful.

Aspects:

True Name: Hep Cat Warden

Burden: The Starr family.

Chosen: "Hold my Catnip" I'll do anything for a taste of the 'nip

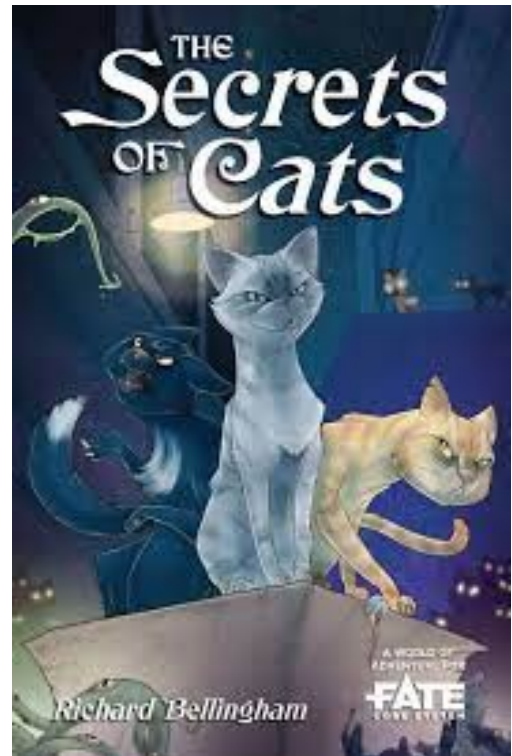
Refresh: 3

Skills: Great: (+4) Agility Good: (+3) Warding, Empathy Fair: (+2) Fight, Rapport, Notice Average: (+1) Seeking, Territory, Physique, Will

Stunts

Magic: 3

Absorb (Warding Exclusive) : Whisper your true name and the true name of an ally on a stone, whilst you hold the stone any stress the ally would take is halved, the remainder you take as



physical or mental stress. Drop the stone to break the link.

Shadow Armour (Warding Exclusive) : Gain armour equal to your Warding for rest of scene and fill your lowest consequence. Use fight against spirits (and they can use fight against you).

Cat Walk (Warding Exclusive) : Whisper your true name to create a magic bridge only you can use.

Normal: 3

Psychologist (Empathy): Once per session Roll Empathy to reduce severity of a Mental consequence. Requires at least half an hour of 'talking time'.

Snazzy Cat: Free invoke when you create an advantage relating to your looks (eg Well Groomed)

Offensive Defence (Agility): If you succeed with Style when defending with athletics, forego the boost to deal 2 stress to your attacker

Stress: Physical: 3 (+ 1 due to Physique) Mental: 3 (+ 1 due to Will)

Consequences: Mild : 1 Moderate : 1 Severe : 1

Burdens:

Nathan Starr is pastor at the Silver Ford Baptist Church. When will I get a decent sleep? Night after night with the infernal cat noise.

Ruth Starr, Nathan's wife, is immensely house proud, cleans daily and has wields a water spray bottle to deter the cat from leaving half eaten "presents".

Paul Starr, Ruth's son, is the youngest in his group of friends, hasn't really questioned his parent's world view, but is sensitive to accusations that he is naive or is 'a little kid'.

Mary Starr, Paul's older sister. She is preparing for college entrance exams. She hopes entrance into an ivy league college will give her a way out of this backward little town - and perhaps meet some more interesting boys.

Other cats:

Choirmaster Flash worked with Bruiser to establish a ward protecting Tom from Silver Ford books from a creature from beyond after he read something he shouldn't have from a book with a mysterious past.

Sunseeker owes both a boon.

Diana Name (for Cats): Sophia the Wise Name (Kitten): Tux Name (for Humans): Diana

High Concept: Dream defender

Trouble: Boy Germs (Human men are not to be trusted)

Aspects:

True Name: Zoog Eater, the Spirit Seeker.

Burden: Carol and Alice

Chosen:

Refresh: 3

Skills Great: (+4) Seeking, Good: (+3) Provoke, Will, Fair: (+2) Stealth, Notice, Burglary, Average: (+1) Fight, Naming, Athletics, Deceive

Stunts

Magic: 3

Dream-walking (Seeking) : Inhale dreamer's breath to enter and modify their dreams.

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Astral Projection (Seeking Exclusive) : Take Astral Form, interact on spirit realm.

Psychometry (Seeking Exclusive) : Read emotional residue on inanimate objects.

Normal: 3

Invisible Pockets (Burglary) : Carry up to two small items (up to chicken egg size) without holding them in your mouth. You can only make them reappear if nobody is watching.

Preternatural Awareness (Notice): +2 to notice invisible beings, astral travellers and other supernatural weirdness.

Caaaat! (Provoke): Jump out and inspire terror. Once per session during a tense scene where your victim can't see you, use Provoke as Weapon 2 mental attack, opposed by Will.

Stress: Physical: 2 Mental: 4 (+2 due to High Will)

Consequences: Mild : 1 Moderate : 1 Severe : 1

Burdens:

Carol (a recent divorcee) and her daughter Alice - Fled after her husband was possessed.

(The Invested Secrets of Cats: Animals and Threats p27).

Alice is new to Silver Ford and hopes one day that she is no longer called 'the new kid'. It is important to her that they accept her, which is why she keeps notes from her friends on her bedroom dresser.

Other cats:

Supporting Characters

Ernie Shorten

Father of Will Shorten

Husband / Partner of Clare Shorten

Student to Arneet (Uncle / Elder) Archie McEwan

Halfback Wanthaggi SeaEagles AFL Football Club

Fears: That my old, self-destructive ways are one angry cop, one drink or toke away.

Motivation: No cop is ever going to send my boy to jail.

Lives in the Caravan Park. (Where the poor people live).

Works Ernie needs a JOB or story about why he doesn't have a JOB

Raised by Anglican Step Parents. Doesn't know who his real parents are. Lots of anger mixed up in the life he had when his step parents were his guardians. Doesn't know where his step parent fits into his new BLAK 'straight edge' life.

Grew up in and out of institutions. Ashendale Boys Home, Sandhurst Goal Ballarat, Pentridge Prison for a variety of offenses usually involving Drugs, Aggro and Cop hassle.

Has met his wife Claire Shorten when he was a 'bad boy'.

Last stint was for a Drunk and Disorderly offence (with parole violation) that the cops say contributed to a Car Crash resulting in the death of David Black and the paralyzing injury of Rosa Black.

This last stint was a life-changing term. In prison he fell in with BLAK activists -- straight edge aboriginal land rights types who got him off the booze and junk, and connected him with country.

Currently lives as a long stay tenant at the Wonthaggi Caravan Park

Clare Shorten (nee Nicholson)

Mother of Will Shorten

Wife / Partner of Ernie Shorten

Daughter of Martha Nicholson and Ralph Nicholson. The Nicholsons are an established dairy farming family.

Lives in the Caravan Park

Clare is the black sheep of her family who fell in love with the 'bad boy' of town. Clare fell in love with Ernie whe he was a tearaway. She drinks and smokes like the Ernie of old.

Clare raised Will Shorten whilst Ernie was in prison. It was hard, but she made it work and doesn't know where Ernie fits when it comes to raising Will.

She is doesn't really know who this BLAK straight edge Ernie is and is skeptical about all this "Land rights and spiritual stuff he's pushing onto Will - especially now that Will's not going to *Uniting Church*.

Rosa Black

Mother of Angus Black and Agnes Black

Partially Paralysed, chronic Pain invovling nerve damage due to the Car Crash

Addicted to pain medicine

Raised Anglican but questioning her faith.

Spends most of her mobile time encouraging Agnes to get better dance theatre school.

Simon Pederson

Danish guy from the lot 3 from *Caravan Park*

Owner of Princess Leia

Loner. Animal watcher.

Drinks more than he ought to.

Grand father of Roisin occasional visitor the Caravan Park

Aewin Lewis

Shopkeeper of The Expanding Universe bookshop.

A 26 year old punky alternative woman who listens to weird music bootleg compilations cassettes of Melbourne bands mailed to her by her city friends (e.g., The Shower Scene from Psycho, SPK, The Boys Next Door, The Young Charlatans, Tch Tch Tch etc).

She wants to organies a Wanthaggi music festival.

She knows the cats have special powers and are looking after us.

Aewin has no time for 'little kids'.

A teen with similar musical interests will find a true friend.

Pastor Greg

Uniting Church pastor. Runs the Religious Education class at Wonthaggi Central Primary School. Students from *Seventh Day Adventist Church* don't attend Religious education. Organises the Nativity Play.

Father Peirce

Deacon (Assistant priest) at St Joseph's the Catholic Church (the people)

Kids have heard non-specific rumours indicating Father Peirce is an adult who cannot be trusted.

Recently transferred from Ballarat Parish.

Was Chaplain at Sandhurst Gaol Ballarat when Ernie Shorten was serving time and going through rehab.

An innovator who has sold off Catholic Church assets (such as the disused convent Our Lady Blessed Virgin Magdelene Laundry) to the Red Leopard Group to secure funds to repair St Joseph's Catholic Church (building). Dismissive of "tradition" arguments when the financial survival of the 'mother church' is at stake.

Margaret Evans

Chair of the Wanthaggi Local History Society

Holder. Keeps detailed Genealogical Records and copies of the Wonthaggi and Districts Gazette going back years in a shed in her back yard.

Martha Nicholson

Mother of Clare Nicholson

Husband of Ralph Nicholson

Secretary of the Wanthaggi Local History Society

Often found at the District Football or outside The Co-op running fundraising stalls.

Is proud of her *Nicholson Family* Local farming heritage and her Anglican *Uniting Church (the people)* faith.

Is disappointed her daughter Clare "went off the rails" and is living in the *Caravan Park*

Caterin D'Hart

Parishoner of St Joseph's Catholic Church (people) who objects to the selling of Catholic lands to fund the operation of the church. In particular she objects to the church selling Our Lady Blessed Virgin Magdelene Laundry to The Red Leopard Group to use the site as a corporate retreat.

Uncle Archie McEwan

Arneet (Elder) Bunurong Aboriginal people, Waang (Raven) moiety

Ralph Nicholson

Father of Clare Nicholson, Husband of Martha Nicholson

Business manager of The Co-Op, boss of Angus Black

Executive member of Wonthaggi Lions

Midorder batsman Union Cricket Club

Quick to ask for and call in favours (such as shift swaps).

Huginn - the raven

Secrets of Cats (Animals & Threats)

Raven

Burden: Ernie Shorten

Motivation: Keep Ernie Shorten sober, off the gear and connected to his Waang (Raven Spirit) moiety.

Companion of Muninn

Tormentor of Assima Dreamweaver / Princess Leia

Named by Simon Pederson

Personification of 'Thought'

Muninn

Secrets of Cats (Animals & Threats)

Raven

Burden Will Shorten

Companion of Huginn

Tormentor of Assima Dreamweaver / Princess Leia

Personification of 'Memory'

Elizabeth Baker

Mum of Greg Baker, Husband of Jake Baker

Overprotective - and a little bit racist. Is concerned that Greg's friendship with Will Shorten will encourage his weird views about cats and that Will could lead Greg into trouble with the law.

Won't let Greg "Cross the Highway"

Jake Baker

Dad of Greg Baker, Husband of Elizabeth Baker

Full forward Wonthaggi SeaEagles football club, member of the 1979 District Premiers Team.

Aspires to have his son fill his football boots and become the football great he didn't quite become.

Secretly Jake worries he might be raising a sissy (and failing as a man by not raising a manly son) because Greg isn't interested in sport. Last home game he spent more time watching two cats fight in the grandstand than the game

Has a collection of interesting VHS tapes a tool box in the garage.

Keeps a collection of porn magazines in a plastic bag under a log in the woods behind the the Sports oval.

Randy Carter

Corporate spokesperson for The Red Leopard Group

From Louisiana

Sergeant Stephen Smith

Cop

Hassles Ernie Shorten and Will Shorten

Drives an XB Falcon outside of work hours

Spin bowler for the *Union Cricket Club*

Mia Pandzic

Croat Catholic Union Theatre Director

Parishoner at St Josephs Church

Sees real acting talent in Agnes Black. Wants to cast Agnes to play the role of Katrin (a mute daughter) in an upcoming production of Mother Courage and Her Children by Communist playwright Bertolt Brecht. Is prepared to cast Will Shorten in a minor role in the play *Swiss Cheese* if it will help convince Agnes to talk on on the role of Katrin.

Places

The Dreamscape

p18 Strange Adventures Kids on Bikes

The Black family home

Angus Black, Agnes Black, Rosa Black

The Baker family home

Greg Baker The loner weirdo kid, Elizabeth Baker Greg's mum , Jake Baker Greg's Dad., Gus Baker The cat

Has a VHS player (a big deal in 1983, "have we got a video?")

Big Dick's Halfway Inn

A seedy hotel and bar

On the Avenue of Honour close where the road meets the highway.

Bikers and people from out of town go there

A place where young women without skills can get a job waiting tables. "Nice Girls" don't go there

Owned by "Big Dick" A short man named Richard.

Petrol station on the Highway

Outside of town

Has a automatic pump for BMX bike tyres. The limit of bike travel for kids who's parents say "Don't cross the highway"

Wonthaggi Caravan Park

On the edge of town. Caravan park has several long stay residents who are poor.

The caravan park gets busiest with tourists between November and March, but doesn't get many (tourists prefer parks near the beach).

Caravan Park managed by Nathan Coleman and Stephanie Coleman a pair of retirees on behalf of the Council. They receive a small salary from the Council to keep the park in good order and keep a Nannie Goat called Helga

Ernie Shorten, Clare Shorten and Will Shorten live at lot seven.

Simon Pederson lives on lot three. He is a Dane who drinks more than he should. He lives alone with a cat called Princess Leia. The cat was named by Simon's seven year old grandson Roisin, an occasional visitor to the caravan park.

Two ravens Simon has named Huginn and Muninn sit on the power line to his van and steal cat biscuits when Princess Leia isn't looking.

Cats consider the caravan park to be a 'limbo' transition area that some people get stuck in.

Wonthaggi Central Primary School

Greg Baker attends in grade 6, Agnes Black attends in grade 4, Pastor Greg runs Religious Education class

Primary school term dates 1983: Term one 28 Jan to 8 Apr , Term two 26 Apr to 1 Jul, Term three 18 Jul to 23 Sep,

Term four 10 Oct to 20 Dec

Guide Park

A great park a short walk from Wonthaggi Central Primary School the Caravan Park, the Coal Mine and Wonthaggi Hospital

It has awesome play equipment including:

- a suspended board swing (Rebecca lost a tooth when the board hit her in the face)
- A maypole with swing chains (Amanda pretends to be tied up and we can rescue her during our games of 'Batman')

- Monkey bars (We all signed Daniel's cast when broke his wrist after falling badly)
- A really long slide (bring a towel, that slide get really hot in summer. Christopher got burnt bum over Christmas)
- A spinning ball roundabout that us kids can't use. The teenagers claimed it. (Its a hidden place to make out and smoke joints).
- A daggy lion statue with a little plaque saying the Lions Club funded the park back in the 1963.

The council want to rip out our playground and put in equipment for little kids (safe stuff). Work has stopped and parts of the work site have been fenced off. There's a rumour going around the Primary School that work stopped because they found a body. One version of the rumour says that Tomson the big cat that no-one owns that hangs around the The Co-Op was caught eating a girl's finger from a severed hand.

The Expanding Universe Holistic Bookshop

On The Main Drag. Shopkeeper Aewin Lewis

Sells fragile knickknacks, bongos, Basic Dungeons and Dragons Boxed Set, Hippy/Punky clothing, art supplies, books on the occult.

Receives low level hassle from Seventh Day Adventists as a 'coven' for devil worship.

Has a water bowl and a cat bed, even though the shop has no 'shop cat'.

On second Tuesday of the month the shop hosts live drawing classes. Shop has a "you break it you bought it" signage on narrow rows of fragile knickknacks.

Lucky Stars Newsagent and VHS video library

On The Main Drag

Lotto, comic books including 2000AD and Marvel, magazines for grown ups in plastic bag.

Library

On The Main Drag.

Pat's Chinese Restaurant

On The Main Drag, takeaway "Chinese".

Has a mogwai

Aussie Burger

On The Main Drag, a family run burger bar

Shopkeeper: Bob A Croatian 1960s migrant

Has Moon Patrol tabletop coin op arcade game. Very popular!

La Rive Gauche

On The Main Drag; a French themed cafe serving crapes and icecream.

A fat snobby cat lives in the window.

The Cop Shop

On The Main Drag.

Sergeant Stephen Smith does truancy patrol and regularly picks up Will Shorten

The Union Theatre (building)

On The Main Drag; rundown art deco

Removable Chairs, convertible into a dance hall.

Rehearsal and performance space for *The Union Theatre Company

The Wonthaggi Farmers and Miners Co-operative Store.

Aka 'The Co-op'

On The Main Drag, a Grocery and General Store.

Open Late (till 8pm) on Friday Nights. Closed Saturday and Sunday.

The Co-op will order most things upon request. They take about 3 weeks to be delivered.

The Co-op runs a credit book for the town families.

At the back of the Co-op there is a 'Cash for Cans' station where kids can recycle aluminum for sweets money.

Ralph Nicholson is the store manager. Angus Black works the Friday night shift and other shifts as Ralph requires.

The Wanthaggi Local History Club (Matha Nicholson and Margaret Evans) and the Wanthaggi Lions Den have a low level rivalry to host fundraising stalls on Friday evenings.

A large orange tom, son of the previous large orange tom, named Tomson hangs around the bin area of the Co-op.

The Powlett River

A place to swim a bike ride from town.

At dusk if you know where to look can see platypus and maybe something a bit more supernatural (as if a platypus isn't strange enough).

The Avenue of Honour

The road linking town to the highway.

A row of trees planted to honour locals who fought in various wars. Boer War: Podocarpus, WWI: Sulix, WW2: Lebonon Cedar, Korean War: Fir Tree

Trees maintained by the RSL

Good climbing trees but protected by grumpy old war veterans.

Wonthaggi Oval and VFA club house

VFA district in winter, Cricket in Summer.

Banked Concrete around the outside of the oval (former velodrome, now parking area to watch games). Change rooms under the grand stand.

Clubhouse bar (kids not allowed without supervision) A place where dads hang out.

Netball Courts behind the grandstand, on the other side of the car park.

Player's mums sell coke and chips during Saturday games.

A road nearby the grounds has been closed with mounds of dirt. This is a great place for BMX stunts.

Clubhouse is shared between The Wonthaggi SeaEagles VFA football club and The Union Cricket Club

The Uniting Church of Wonthaggi

Incorporating Anglican, Methodist and Wesleyan Churches

On the Main Drag, far end from the river

On the biggest hill in town near the centre of town.

Venue is available to book for community events. Bookings via Greg the pastor. Has a Gestetner copying machine available for approved community use.

Once a month (Second Tuesday 2pm) the Wonthaggi Local History Society meet

Church surrounds have great skate features including Hubbas, Ledges and a nice downhill run.

St Joseph's Catholic Church

Off *the Main Drag* . On the second largest hill in town

A bigger church than the Anglican (Uniting) Church with a steeple that was once just a little bit higher than the Anglicans. (This is a point of pride for the parishioners.

The building is in poor structural condition (following a recent earth tremor) and part of the steeple fell off (so the Anglican spire is now higher).

The Wonthaggi Council building inspector is threatening to impose a works order on the site (that would prevent people from entering).

Father Peirce the deacon (Assistant Priest) is often there.

There is a bus shelter outside the church. One of the few places in the area where a kid can get shelter from the rain.

Wealthier Catholic families bus their kids to the Catholic College in Inverloch.

Wonthaggi RSL

Has a light field gun in the front yard. A drinking place for old mining unionists.

Farmers talk of "The bush grew back as if it were trying to reclaim the farm when we were fighting the war" (WW2) bush spirits

Veterans of Malaya, Korea and Vietnam conflicts feel uncomfortable here. They're a bit new.
Maintain trees in The Avenue of Honour.

Wonthaggi and Districts Hospital

Has medical records in the basement going back to 1910 (and some unsorted boxes from even earlier than that).

Wonthaggi State Coal Mine

Outside of town. Closed when the railway closed in November 1978

Mine once provided coal for steam trains and for power stations.

The mining union representative, Joseph O'Malley, is organising a speaker to talk about options to reopen the mine. Using the coal we have will help Victoria deal with the Oil Crisis.

The mine is rumoured to be haunted by a kid killed during the 1930s miners' strike.

Wonthaggi Dairy

Makes Milk, Cream – a very popular destination for members of the *Parliament of Cats*

A large employer in town.

Many new arrivals (including many Seventh Day Adventists) work here.

The dairy is part of the Wonthaggi Farmers and Miners Co-operative

Makeout Hill (real name is simply Wonthaggi Hill, but most people under 40 call it "Makeout Hill")

Outside of town. Good view of the whole town

A place of aboriginal significance, which the white township is yet to realise or acknowledge.

The disused railway station (and railway siding buildings).

Rail line closed 1978 (four years ago).

A train once ran over a miner.

Rumours of a 'Ghost Train' that can be heard on foggy nights.

Creepy old house near the disused railway station.

Is a hangout for teenage toughs.

The War Memorial in the centre of town

Every country town has a big cross listing the locals who went to war and didn't come back.

The saltmarsh scrub behind the Sports oval.

Has tracks to ride BMX bikes in.

Floods in winter turning the tracks into thick stinky black mud, which is even more fun.

Eerie lights at night. Stories of kids drowning in the mud after following the lights.

The footballers keep a stash of magazine porn under a log.

St Dymphnas Hospital

Just off the main drag in the centre of town. Regional hospital mental health facility.

Originally established by St Josephs Catholic Church but sold to the Victorian Government in the 1970s.

Secured Areas (Fences to Jump)

The hospital car park is the largest flat paved area in town - a great skate spot.

There is a helicopter landing pad next to the car park.

The treatments at the hospital are notorious. insulin shock therapy, Psylocybin, electroconvulsive, water immersion.

Some inmates once escaped; the 1978 Asylum Breakout

Our Lady Blessed Virgin Magdalane Laundry. aka the old convent

Now the *Red Leopard Corporate visioning retreat*

Out of town. On the rail line

Beautiful Bluestone complex of building surrounded by lush dairy farm land.

Elaborate Garden, currently being re-modelled into a golf course.

Extensive climate controlled wine cellar.

{Secret knowledge} The garden was designed as a Demon warding glyph - with the convent gardeners undertaking rituals to strengthen the glyph as they maintained the plants.

The wine cellar is currently being extended and upgraded into a nuclear fallout bunker.

Wonthaggi Drive in

Films shown: John Carpenter Double Features (Halloween 1,2,3), Ozploitation films 'The Return of Captain Invisible (1983), Road Games (1982)

Kiosk serves food and drink.

A hangout for Revheads

There is a break in the chainlink fence behind the screen. Kids can sneak in.

Judah

An incomplete suburban estate under construction on the outskirts of Wonthaggi.

Seventh Day Adventists live in the few completed homes in the estate.

Many the outskirts of the estate are returning to dairy farmland. Cows wander through half built suburban homes.

Established dairy farming families make dark jokes about selling land for housing as "Farming fundies now"

Estate founded through donations to the company 'Imminent Return Pty Ltd'

That company was bought and asset stripped by Four Wings Management' a subsidiary of *'"The Red Leopard Group"

Communities

The Parliament of Cats

(FATE: Secrets of Cats)

Boon Wurrun (Bunurong) Aboriginal People

'Uncle' Arthur McEwan, Ernie Shorten , Will Shorten

Saltwater people of Mornington Peninsula to Wilsons Promontary

See the world as belonging to either a Bunjil (Eaglehawk) or Waang (Raven) moiety.

Bunurong people have disputes with the Gunnai people of Gippsland.

Were disrupted by disease, women stolen by whalers and sealers, and then colonialisation.

Moved to Coranderrik station in 1863. Later moved to 'Bung Yarnda' (Lake Tyers) mission in 1924.

Culture includes Bunurong sorcery and tales of the Wonthaggi Yowie

The Uniting Church of Wonthaggi

The Uniting Church is the establishment church for the Farmers and Land owners of the area.

Parish includes the descendants of Cornish miners who arrived in early 20th C.

Parishoners are generally older and the congregation is aging and declining.

Services are based on the KJV.

Greg the pastor is attempting outreach to the youth and runs the Religious Education class at Wonthaggi Central Primary School and maintains the Parish Register, a document showing every parishoner going back to the founding of the Anglican, Wesleyan and Methodist churches in the area. Greg also publishes a monthly newsletter "David's Call"

St Josephs Catholic Church

Father Peirce is local Deacon, Caterin D'Hart is a parishoner

Is in financial difficulty.

Parish comprises a mix of Irish Catholic miner families who came to the town in from the 1920s to 1940s and the "new blood" Italian and Croatian families post war 1950s migrant families.

Some members are also Knights of the Southern Cross

The Catholic Church (history) has several versions.

Church of the Seventh Day Adventists

The building is on the outskirts of town, kind of tacky looking.

The Seventh day Adventists started arriving in Wonthaggi around 1973 - about ten years ago.

Members actively door knock - evangelising - looking for new converts.

The seventh day adventists are not like by most established families in Wonthaggi. They are derisively known as "That Lindy Chamberlain Cult"

Seventh Day Adventists get excluded from Religious Education at Wonthaggi Central Primary School, can't attend birthday parties and don't "do" Christmas.

Jeremiah 5:6 NIV "Therefore a lion from the forest will attack them, a wolf from the desert will ravage them, a leopard will lie in wait near their towns to tear to pieces any who venture out, for their rebellion is great and their back sliding many".

Wonthaggi Local History Society

Meets monthly at the Uniting Church building (Second Tuesday of the Month 2pm - 4pm - Januarys excepted)

Hosts fundraiser cake stalls at District Football games and outside The Co-Op

Chair is Margaret Evans who keeps detailed Geneological Records and copies of the Wonthaggi and Districts Gazette going back years in a shed in her back yard.

Secretary is Martha Nicholson. Publishes a quarterly newsletter *Pioneer Spirit*

Tells the "right kind" of history, the boring kind. (Family Histories of the Dairy Farmers and their 'Pioneer Spirit', The rise and decline of our Coal mine and Captains of Industry who run it).

Knows about but is reluctant to discuss: 1936 Mine Collapse and Strike and local Ghost stories including: The Miner's Ghost and the mutilated body found after 1978 Asylum Breakout.

Do not know the secret history of the town including Catholics vs The Yowie

The Lions Club - Wonthaggi Den

Established 1959

Host fundraising stalls near The Co-op

Competes with Wonthaggi Local History Club for the best spots.

Recently bought set of "Jaws of Life" car crash rescue equipment for the Wonthaggi CFA in response to the *Black Family Car Crash*

Current fundraising is for famine relief in Ethiopia (in 1983 the famine was underway but not widely known about).

The club executive is aloof from the general membership.

The Wonthaggi Country Fire Association (CFA)

A place where dads hang out.

Has 2 Fire control Tankers, 1 Ute, 1 Command Vehicle with Jaws of Life

The Lions Club recently donated a set of jaws of life to assist CFA first responders to deal with car crashes.

The Red Leopard Group

Corporate visioning retreat

Operates from the old convent outside of town

Teaches a management theory with a heavy emphasis on capturing value via labour outsourcing and asset stripping - using techniques such as "bottom of the harbour".

Symbols include a mix of Sun Tzu and Alexander the Great with a "Move Like a Leopard" slogan.

Corporate Branding includes Greek mythology references including Chimera (creatures made up of parts of other creatures)

Melbourne city folk looking for the retreat often end up in Wonthaggi asking directions to the retreat.

Rumour around town: The Red Leopard group are a front for some secret spy stuff. They are building a nuclear fallout bunker.

Wonthaggi Union Cricket Club

Are a bit rubbish. Threatened with relegation to 'C-Grade'

A place where dads hang out. Play at the District Football Oval

Cricket is popular with the farmers sons and is seen as "the toff's game"

Wonthaggi SeaEagles VFA District football club

Are a very good team. (Too good for their league). Won district premiership in 1979 (the year after the mine and railway closed).

A place where Dads hang out. Players are rough nuts.

Alternates between 'Home' and 'Away' games weekly.

Wednesday nights are training night.

Jake Baker Full forward (Very Competitive. Plays to recapture past glory)

Ernie Shorten Half back (plays to reconnect with town life after a stint in jail. Not competitive. Doesn't drink and is considered a sourpuss by other players. Drives the team bus during 'Away' games

The Knights of the Southern Cross

A semi-secret society within the Catholic Church

Have a public side focusing on charitable works (Freemasonry for Catholics) and more secret initiate circle.

The Union Theatre Company

Eastern European migrants put on plays by European Intellectuals and 'Fractured Fairy Stories', pantomime tales where the morality tale has been inverted.

e.g. Kids think they are "telling the story wrong" when their version of Cinderella involves the prince renouncing his

crown after seeing how the people live before meeting Cinders.

Possibly harbours some Communist members.

Background events

1983 in history

5 March 1983: Australian Federal Election Fraser v Hawke.

Last episode of MASH

Franklin Dam Protests

Dick Smith Circumnavigates Australia in a Helicopter stopping at many small towns

Did Lindy Chamberlain Do it? 'A dingo stole my baby'

Seventh Day Adventists interpret the dingo as *the Wolf from the Desert* of Jeremaih 5:6 NIV

Space shuttle launches in April, July and October.

ET is a popular film in the cinema.

Easter falls 1 - 4 April

Weirdness and tales

Wonthaggi Yowie aka 'The Gippsland Puma'. The Wonthaggi Yowie is scary campfire story told by Uncle Archie McEwan. The Yowie lives in the saltmarsh just out of town and attacks cheeky kids in their dreams.

The Gippsland Puma is a pub tall tale and occasional Wonthaggi and Districts Gazette story about a strange animal occasionally seen on Iverloch road. Accounts vary with the creature reports of the creature including with a blood curdling yell, being as big as a dog, with large claws, a huge head, glowing eyes a furry body striped like zebra with a long tail that can climb trees and moves really fast.

Skeptical listeners believe the creature may be a greater possum glider (an endangered creature) or a large feral cat.

Seventh Day Adventists* interpret the Gippsland puma living in the saltmarsh as the Lion in the forest of Jeremaih 5:6 NIV.

Secret history - A Bunurong sorcery awoke the Yowie and directed it to torment the descendants of the miners who destroyed two sacred sites in 1857.

Bunurong sorcery

Take Food (eg a possum bone) discarded from your victim. Put it in a Kangaroo Bone and roast it in the coals of a dying fire. Sing the curs as the bone is reduced to ash. This will kill.

(Based on a historic account)

Sing the bush to regenerate. Attempt made during WW2 whilst farmers were away.

Cthonians (Dholes)

Underground Monsters that cause earth tremors.

S Hudde M'ell "A grey thing a mile line chanting and exudeing strange acids charging throug the depths of the earth at a fantastic speed in dreadful fury melting basaltic rocks like butter under a blow torch"

Cthunans "Flowing Tentacles and pulpy grey-black elongated sack of a body. No distinguishing features other than the reaching groping tentacles."

Dholes: "Huge Slimy Worm-like creatures at least several hundred feet long"

Old miners hint "there's more underground than I can let on"

The 1978 St Dymophna's Asylum Breakout.

The external gate to St Dymophan's Asylum failed. 17 Inmates escaped. 14 of the Escapees were found and recovered within six months. The remaining three were never seen again.

Shortly after the breakout four kids from the district disappeared, (assumed murdered). Their bodies were never found.

Rumours around town darkly hint that at least one of the escaped mad men live in the salt marsh just outside of town.

The Murdered Girl in the Playground.

Wonthaggi Council are replacing old play equipment in *Guide Park* following many injuries.

During replacement works construction workers found the decomposed remains of what appears to be a 5 - 12 year old girl near the Maypole swing.

Tomson the cat was found protectively growling over a 'kill' near the maypole, when he was shooed off the kill was discovered to be a child's finger.

The girl was buried under the concrete foundation of the maypole, indicating she was buried before 1963.

1930 Mine Collapse and Strike

Following the 1929 stock market crash, mine operators scrapped safety teams as a cost saving measure.

20 Sept 1930. Shaft B Collapsed following earth tremors trapping 18 miners. Mine operators deemed a rescue operation too costly (as it involved disturbing damaged during tremors with risk of secondary collapses. It would also require suspension of mining operations to sure up access prior to the rescue).

The Union took over the site, coordinated a rescue and took over mining operations during and immediately after the rescue.

Mine operators respond to this worker takeover of the mine with a lockout. Works react with a strike.

Mine company responded to strike by recruiting 'Special Constables' strke breakers from Farming Families and 'Patriots' from Melbourne. Communist vs Fascist street fights broke out.

Fascists kidnapped a child of George Chynoweth the chief union organisers

The Fascists then threw the kid down a mine shaft to intimidate the union (you can't protect your kids against us). The grief stricken union organiser became demoralised and the strike was broken shortly after.

The ghost of Colleen Chynoweth is said to haunt the mine and cause mining accidents.

The Black family Car Crash

2 Oct 1980: David Black (Driver), paralysed Rosa Black (front seat passenger), Angus Black (rear seat passenger) driving home from an 'away' game of the SeaEagles AFL Football Club game. Occurred on the *Avenue of Honour*, the road out of town towards the highway. David Black, paralysed Rosa Black, traumatised Angus Black

Sent Ernie Shorten to prison. Ernie was Hunting the Wanthaggi Yowie when the Belmont arrived and swerved to miss something (the Yowie). Later The Police reconstruction of events claimed David Black swerved to miss a drunken Ernie in the middle of the road.

Local Ghost stories

The Miner's Ghost

The mutilated body found on the Highway after *The Asylum Breakout

St Josephs Catholic Church of Wonthaggi (local history)

Established a convent and asylum in the area in 1853.

Secret history (The asylum and convent was established to deal with a horror unearthed during initial mining explorations)

Bunurung version (secret local history)

In 1857s the miners tore up two sacred sites.

We sung the invaders to death by awakening the Wanthaggi Yowie

The Yowie torments the miner's descendants.

'Lion of Judah' the Secret side of the Lions Club

The general membership of Lions club are quietly anti-communist and have a slogan "Lions = Liberty, Intelligence, Ourn Nation's Safety"

The executive of the Lions club acts as secret society

'The Lion of Judah'. Symbolic Meaning: Jesus or Ethiopia.

The inner circle of Lions club are anti-communist Freemasons.

The child under the maypole is a human sacrifice in the Wicker Man tradition to protect Wonthaggi from Dholes.

The Powlett River guardian spirit creature

A Platypus spirit guards the river

Songlines

If properly activated can be used for magic. (eg magical defense from mundane surveillance).

The Red Leopard Group (secrets)

The red leopard group are an occult society inspired by Daniel 7:7 and Rev 13:2.

They seek 'dominion' and 'power' from 'The Beast' and 'The Dragon' via prophetic dream interpretation and summoning rituals.

Daniel 7:7 KJV

"After this [in the Dream] I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which ad on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it."

Revelation 13:2 KJV

"Now the Beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feed were lke the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. THE dragon gave him his power, his thrown, and great authority"

Harry Holt

The crazy old man who lives in a driftwood shack in the salt marsh. Is he the same 'Prime Minister Harold Holt' who disappeared in 1967? He avoids all contact with town people but will occasionally leave a light out visible from the sea.

He is trapping and smuggling animals (and cryptids) for the Chinese (ROC) market.

Psychic influences

A Seventh Day Adventist goes full Abraham and takes his son onto Makeout Hill and attempts to kill him.

He has been influenced by a malevolent force from the dream scape.

Inhabitants of the Dreamscape

Bunjil The Eagle - Lore giver and judge

Waang The Crow - Trickster spirit

Yowie A Devourer and creater of nightmares

The Parliament of Cats Messengers

Hyginn and Muninn manifestations of Waang

Cthonians a background presence.

ONE BAD CAT: A D&D BECMI SCENARIO

By Lev Lafayette

Multiple issues of Dungeons & Dragons mention the strong antipathy between Blink Dogs and Displacer Beasts. There are some deep reasons in D&D setting lore why this is the case, but for the BECMI edition of D&D, for which this scenario is written. In the D&D Expert rules the Blink Dog entry reads: "Blink dogs always attack displacer beasts, their natural enemies" (p46) and likewise the Displacer Beast entry reads: "They hate and fear blink dogs, and will always attack them and anyone traveling with them" (p48). In the most recent edition of Dungeons & Dragons a mystery of over thirty years is cleared up, essentially that the Displacer Beast is associated with the Unseelie Court and the Blink Dog with the Seelie Court.

In the BECMI campaign world of Mystera, it is typical for lower-to-mid level characters to start in The Grand Duchy of Karameikos, a rather wild land which has plenty of goblinoid creatures (bugbears, orcs etc) and the threat of the Black Eagle Barony to the west. In this challenging scenario, a group of PCs who have two Blink Dogs companions must rescue a Displacer Beast and return it to the woodlands near Wereskalot just inside the border of The Five Shires. However, as the name indicates, Wereskalot is more than just a halfling village.

Just the Dungeons & Dragons Basic (1983) and Expert (1983) rulebooks are required for this scenario. The scenario is designed for 4-6 characters of levels 4-6 (c24 levels in total).

Scene 1: The Luln Military Camp

In the opening scene, the PCs are in the employ of the Duke of Karameikos to scout the borders of the Black Eagle Barony to provide assistance to refugees and escaped slaves trying to make their way to Luln. As people escape the clutches of this tyranny, it is common for the Barony to send various troops, mercenaries, and goblinoids to recapture the asylum seekers. Attempting to escape from the Barony automatically results in a person being reduced to a serf, and if they were already a serf, to a slave, and if already a slave - well, the punishment is just worse slavery.

The PCs have just taken two score of such individuals, bedraggled but safe, to a small military encampment just outside the township of Luln, where they will receive basic shelter, food, and clothing. From there they will be processed and allocated a new homesteads or township lodgings in Kelvin, Threshold, or Luln as appropriate to their profession. There will be fond farewells from the asylum seekers, especially the children, who will profusely thank the PCs from rescuing them from the clutches of the Black Eagle Barony and marauding goblins, orcs, etc.

As the refugees make their way to their new but temporary homes the PCs are called over by a Sergeant who escorts them to the Captain's tent. Captain Argyros is a gruff bearded man in his late 30s (Fighter, L6), will give congratulate the PCs on a job well done, yet again. He is reserved in his praise, but it is certainly genuine enough. In fact, he mentions that the PC's party is the most successful group this season in escorting people escaping from the Black Eagle Barony.

The Captain explains that there have been careful negotiations with the wild elves that inhabit the region north near the Black Eagle Barony and a sort of agreement has been reached, concerning their mutual dislike of the various goblinoid kin. In summary form, the Duchy has agreed to limit their expansion into the woodlands of the wilderness of

nominally-claimed Grand Duchy, in return for their assistance in pressuring the Barony and dispatching the goblinoids. As a token of their sincerity, the Elves have provided a most remarkable offering; a pair of Blink Dogs to the most successful party - which of course is the PCs.

The PCs are dismissed and when they step outside the tent they will discover that a man-at-arms has already brought them their Blink Dogs, named Mosel and Riesling. The sun is beginning to set and there will be celebratory eating and drinking at the large mess tent and given the fact that the PCs have to venture out again the following afternoon, why shouldn't there be an opportunity for a bit of revelry?

Scene 2: The Luln Soldier's Mess Hall

The Luln Soldier's Mess Hall is essentially a series of marquees joined together to form one large tent, with different parts of the hall sectioned off for different activities. The central section is various long tables for eating and drinking, the north is where food and drink is prepared, the west where it is purchased and served, the east has various physical activities (swordplay, darts etc), and the south has gambling games, true to the tradition of every D&D bar! Approximately two hundred people are present, consisting of about one hundred soldiers from Luln, and the same number of people of camp followers, including a number of attractive men and women of "negotiable virtue".

The food is nothing special, a large but healthy stew and with plenty of vegetable, grains, a reduced meat stock, and thick slices of a dark bread with a server of butter. It will sell for 2gp for a generous-sized plate. There is also beer which sells for 1/2 gp per quart (roughly 1 litre) and wine for 1 gp per quart. Negotiations for an evening's companionship start at 50gp. Savvy providers choose their time carefully between evident wealth, drunkenness, and lateness.

No D&D scenario would be incomplete without at least an attempt on drinking rules. In this case, for every half-quart of wine or quart of beer that is consumed, the PC must make a saving throw versus poison at 0, -2, -4 etc. If they fail the first time their WIS and DEX is effectively halved, and they'll wake up with a shocking headache the following day. However for the next four hours they will also be euphoric in their confidence and sociability with their CHA increased by +3. If they fail a second roll however, they will become completely inebriated and will be unable to function at all. Note that after failing the first roll, they must make a WIS check (at the new value) of d20 under WIS to stop drinking.

The most popular gambling game in the south wing is two-up, imported from the fine land of 'Ralia which nobody can say where it is, but grizzled old veterans claim it's a land of sunshine where the average male human height is 6 foot 4 inches, and they have a propensity for eating bread with a salty and bitter tasting, but nutritious, yeast extract. The game is quite simple; two gp are placed on a paddle, and people bet whether, when thrown, they will land both heads, both tails, or one each. If they both land heads, the person throwing the coins wins, if they are two tails they lose and must pass the paddle to the next person. If it is one of each the "spinner" (person throwing the coins) throws again. Other participants can side bets against each other on whether the spinner will win or lose and the results of the next throw. There is also a simple dice game called "Rollmaster", where 2d6 are thrown with a 1 gp bet per player, with up to a dozen participants. The person with the highest roll wins, however if a natural 12 is rolled, they may roll again and add to their total.

On the east wing are various physical games, including boxing, swordplay (with practise swords), and games of darts. The boxing games simply involve betting on any two characters, taking the odds from bookkeepers and playing out the game until one is knocked out or cedes. The DM should simply assign odds according to the sum of the level of the

characters (it's almost always fighters) to determine the fractional chance of winning. Thus in a boxing match between a Level 2 character and a Level 3 character, the level 2 character has a 40% chance of winning and the level 3 character a 60% chance of winning. The same applies for the swordplay, and even the dart games. A notable character in the dartgame is a mage who seems quite competent, "Bigby The Theurgist!" he exclaims, before going on about he's "Advanced" and has travelled here through a some weird starship called a "Spelljammer" which crashed into the ocean. He's apparently quite mad, but harmless, but he does know how to play darts.



Nota bene: It's cute that many, including the designer of the miniature, thought of pub darts. The weapon dart is basically a javelin (image from Chris Pramas)

Scene 3: Capturing The Cat

The third scene involves an encounter on the woods near the Black Eagle Barony. The PCs are engaging in their usual task of patrolling the border and keeping an eye out for refugees or escaped slaves. If they have stated the have scouts they will notice the parade of humans and goblinoids pulling a cart that holds a Displacer Beast and will be able to react with the benefit of surprise.

Otherwise, conduct the encounter normally; this will be a tough fight with the enemies making full use of their combination of cannon-fodder to engage and missile weapons to make life very difficult for the PCs!

The cat parade will consist of 8 human mercenary bandits with bow and spears (BD, p23) AC 7 HD 1, hp 5, Dam 1-6, and one leader AC 2 (ring of protection +2, -1 Dexterity), HD 5, hp 30, Dam 1-8+4 (+2 Strength, +2 sword), The leader, Adelhard, also wears a steel collar. This collar is linked to the steel collar on the Displacer Beast that is part of the parade, and allows telepathy (up to 60') between the two wearers. Travelling with the bandits is a Cleric of Chaos and a Mage. Cleric: AC 3 (chain and shield+1), Level 4, hp 28, Dam 1-6+3 (Mace +2, +1 strength), Cure Light Wounds*2, Striking. Mage AC 7 (cloak of protection +1, Dexterity -1), Level 4, hp 12, Dam 1-4, Charm Person, Sleep, Invisibility, Web, Wand of Negation with 10 charges.

In addition to the human bandits. The humans also have 12 Orcs travelling with them (BD, p35) which are also armed with spear and bow: AC 7 HD 1 hp 5 Dam 1-6. Dragging the cart (but with weapons at the ready) are two ogres (BD, p35) with clubs: AC 5 HD 4+1 hp 21, 22 Dam 1-6+2

Finally, well-tied in a wooden cage and with a collar and chain, is a Displacer Best known as Felix: AC 4, HD 6, hp 30, Attacks 2, Damage 2-8/2-8, -2 to attack, +2 to saving throws, bite attack, (E p48). It is probable, either through overhearing conversation from scouts, or by questioning any prisoners, or by using the collar of telepathy, that the reason for the Displacer Beast becomes known – it has being taken to Wereskalot as a gift in forging an alliance with the the Werewolf Baron, Kynewulf whose alchemist from Glantri, Haoyu The Mage, has some unknown plans. Note that Displacer Beasts are not very intelligent. Communication with the beast will be stilted, it will not conjugate verbs, it will use short words etc. If anyone bothers to ask the cat what it wants it would be to "go home", but it can't really explain where home is (because it lives in between the Prime Material and Ethereal plane with Shadow Elves of western Karameikos).

There is also the problem of transporting the cat. The Blink Dogs will simply not let up whilst the Displacer Beast is present and vice-versa. Some means of controlling one or the other will be required.

Option 1: Skin the Cat

A character may make a d20 roll under their Intelligence plus level (+3 for Magic Users) to realise that a Displacer Beast would be valuable if taken to an alchemist, living or dead. The closest alchemist of sufficient level to make use of such a beast would be in Specularum (excepting, of course, the visiting alchemist in Wereskalot). Moving the cat to Specularum would be quite difficult in its own right, and Lawful characters would certainly object to slaying the beast in cold blood (especially given its sapience, albeit at a low level). If, however, such moral objections are somehow overcome, the corpus of the cat could be used for the following:

Whips or Ropes +1: The two tentacles of the Displacer Beast could be treated and made into whips or ropes. As a whip, it would do (as per MP p19) 1-2 damage and require a Saving throw vs Death Ray against entanglement. As a rope it would provide a +1 to any climbing checks.

Blood for Potions: Displacer Beast blood can be used in a potion to create the same effects as the displacer beast's shimmering effect (-2 to attack, +2 to saving throws). There is enough blood for 10 vials of such a potion with each dose lasting 12 turns.

Skin for Cloaks: The shimmering effect of the Displacer Beast hide can also be used to make 2 Cloaks of Protection +2.

Option 2: The Wereskalot Campaign

A more extensive option is to take the Displacer Beast to Wereskalot and find out what is going on there. Apart from having to notify the military leaders in Luln, this is a journey fraught with many challenges and dangers along the way most of which is outside the scope of this mini-scenario's outline. However, once reaching Wereskalot the following facts will become known:

* Wereskalot is a halfling town that is ruled by human-werewolves! Ruled by Baron Kynewulf, Wereskalot is to The Five Shires what the Black Eagle Barony is to Karamaikos.

* Baron Kynewulf has hired Haoyu The Mage to fashion a various potions. He hopes to develop a potion that can extend the disease of lycanthropy so that halflings can become infected, for example (see BP p33). Haoyu The Mage is a Chaotic high-level Magic-User who is primarily motivated by money; he could be bribed to make better use of his skills.

* An interesting possibility would a potion that combines Blink Dog and Displacer Beast blood to produce a fabled potion of Ethereality, allowing the imbiber to step in the Ethereal plane once within 24 hours of drinking it (see CD p49, if available).

* Whilst the Blink Dogs are honour-bound to the PCs as long as they are asked to they, like the Displacer Beast, would prefer to live among their own people - the Elven peoples. It is possible that both cat and dog will find a common interest here to plead to the PCs to help them get home.

CATS OF THE GREEN ISLES

By Karl Brown

This article refers to two publications for D&D 5th Edition by Wizards of the Coast: Player's Handbook (PHB), Tasha's Cauldron of Everything (TCE)

The Green Isles

The Green Isles is an unofficial campaign setting for D&D 5th Edition based on the fairy tales of the British Isles and to a lesser extent Britain in the early Middle Ages before the introduction of gunpowder, about 1300CE. Other articles about the Green Isles appeared in issues 28-29, 31, 43, and 51-52. There is also a low volume discussion thread here: <http://www.thepiazza.org.uk/bb/viewtopic.php?f=15&t=18430>. I recommend works by Katherine Briggs and Joseph Jacobs on the fairy tales and folklore of Britain. "*The time traveller's guide to Medieval England*" by Ian Mortimer is an excellent primer on everyday life around 1300CE.

This article begins with a discussion of talking animals in the Green Isles then presents cats as an example talking animal PC race.

Talking Animals

British fairy tales are full of talking animals with intelligence to rival humanity. Most talking animals are indistinguishable from ordinary animals of their type. Most wear an item of clothing to ensure they are not treated as unintelligent beasts by accident. The exceptions are the snowy white talking beasts of Elfland.

NPC awakened animals are exactly the same as the monster stat block would indicate except the *monster's* Intelligence ability score is 10. Therefore, the adjustment for a *PC* race will be +0 Intelligence. They also gain the ability to understand and speak one language. PC awakened animals speak Common and any one other language. They also understand ordinary non-intelligent creatures of their kind and similar creatures. Finally, they look like normal animals which can be useful, this is the False Appearance Trait if the animal is a non-threatening one.

Varied Origins

Talking animals of all kinds are not natural creatures. How a normally brute animal comes to think and talk can occur through a variety magical means. Choose one of the following:

Magic Infused Beast: Whether by deliberate spell or exposure a magical location or disaster normal animals have gained the ability the think and speak. The magic that gives them speech alters their mind stripping away most natural instincts and behaviour and creating a personality matching the expectations of gods and humanoids.

Faerie Creature: Elfland's ambient magic and faerie animal husbandry have in tandem produced special breeds of many domestic animals some of whom speak. *Only a domestic animal who can speak Sylvan or Elvish at the time of character creation can choose this option.* Faerie beasts always have a distinct appearance and cannot be mistaken for normal animals. Most are snow white and move with fluid grace. If your race has False Appearance replace it with +1 to initiative, this adds to any other initiative you get from race or other sources. Faerie beasts have personalities more like elves than beasts. If your *race* normally provides a free choice skill you may swap one free choice skill for a sorcerer cantrip instead. Your spell casting ability for this cantrip is Charisma.

As well as Faerie Creatures the magical energies, Faerie Lords, and spellcasters of Elfland frequently produce Magic Infused Beasts as described above.

Cursed: Shape-shifting magic is rife in the Green Isles and you have been it's victim. You were once another race but a curse or wild magic has forced you into the shape of a beast. Most such individuals quest for the means to regain their former shape and lives. Often a once attractive young man or woman is turned into a talking animal by a hag or powerful fey.

Magical companions, cursed lovers

In the tales talking animals most often are companions of deserving human heroes. Others are once human or elven relatives or lovers of the protagonist who have been cursed into animal form. You could reflect this latter type of background using the Green Isles rules that replace Bonds with Quests. Regardless of background, talking animals in the tales use their animal abilities such as the small size, climbing agility, and stealth of a cat to offer unique aid to the protagonist. A PC animal should do the same. Animal PCs receive numerous or potent race traits to offset inability to use weapons. Players are advised to use these as often as possible. As well as the natural abilities of the animal species many talking animals use magic too. Innate magical powers could be represented by the classes bard, druid, and ranger, or magic-using archetypes of other classes, or even feats.

Token Clothing

Awakened animals frequently wear an item or two of clothing such as a hat, scarf, or short tunic so that they are not mistaken for brute beasts. Token clothing costs 1/10th that of a full set of clothing of the same quality.



Cats

The following information is specific to talking cats. This race was built using a mathematically formulated and well play-tested system

(<https://www.dmsguild.com/product/232813/The-Tinkers-Toolkit-Race-Design?term=tinkers>). The cat race has also been play-tested; a cat bard was a major PC in a long running Green Isles campaign.

Names

Wild cats tend to go by descriptors rather than true names such as Sneak or Fang. Domestic cats have the names humanoids have given them such as Tibbles or Whiskers. Those who were once human or humanoid hold onto their names as a last reminder of who they once were.

Race Relations

Unlike other Awakened beasts, cats often secretly live among humanoids disguised as ordinary felines. Humans tend to either patronise talking cats or be casually cruel. Thurse are kindly but patronising to cats. For this reason, talking cats get along better with elves and faeries who generally treat them like people. Since both are outsiders, talking cats and half-elves often form fast friendships.

The King of the Cats

Cats have a King. Unlike the Kings of Mice, Frogs, and Birds, the King of Cats is an actual cat and not a Faerie Noble. This 'King' does not rule as such, nor even have a kingdom, but traditionally has the respect of all cats and sets standards of behaviour loyal cats aspire to. The King of Cats comes from a long line of scoundrels and other cats often seek to emulate his trickery and thefts. In the North bands of singing cats (bards) waylay travellers and rob them.

Cat Traits

Paws. Unable to use any weapons, shields, or tools. Cannot don or remove armour without help. You do not gain any class features you cannot physically do in your natural form. A rogue cat can sneak attack with their claws. A cat can use the following fighting styles: Defense (PHB), Blind Fighting, Superior Technique, Unarmed Fighting, and Druidic Warrior (TCE41-42, 57). When granted a fighting style by a class, cats may take the Slasher feat instead (TCE79-81).

Cannot open locks, disable traps, pick pockets, open a doorknob, or write. For those without hands a spell focus can replace most material components and can be simply grasped or worn. I would assume you can interpret somatic components into complex sets of movements you can perform in your natural form. To be a wizard you must have learned to cast *Mage Hand* from your teacher's book before finishing your studies to reach level one so you can write into your book. A wizard must take *Mage Hand* as a known spell at first level. Spells requiring specific material components with a gp value require an active *Mage Hand*. Can cast spells where a focus can substitute for material components. Cannot use a component pouch without an active *Mage Hand*. Somatic components require your whole body to be free to move.

Size Tiny. Whenever your Size place you in danger or prevents you from doing something critical your DM might award Inspiration (PHB p125). If your Size makes something more difficult but not impossible apply Disadvantage. In some instances, a DM might require a Strength (Athletics) check for a Tiny character to climb up to a bench, bookshelf, or similar a Medium character could reach easily. Cats have advantage on this kind of Athletics check.

Do not use the following prices when buying first level starting gear, use the full price. For armour and other worn equipment cost is x1/16 and weight x1/4. Food and Drink weight and cost are multiplied x1/4. Most other gears costs x1/4 and weighs x1/64. Torches and lanterns do not scale down.

Type Beast. For better or worse you are not affected by effects targeting Humanoids but are affected by effects targeting Beasts.

Languages: Common and one other of the player's choice. Can communicate with ordinary cats.

Ability Score Adjustments. Str-4 { 1-6}, Dex+2, Con+0, Int+0, Wis+1, Cha-2.

A cat's strength cannot ever exceed 6. At character generation if point buy or standard array then 8, 9, or 10 must be assigned to strength.

Speed 40 ft., Climb Speed 30ft.

Cat Agility Proficiency in Acrobatics, Stealth, and Perception as well as Dexterity saves. If you class or other option also grants proficiency in Dexterity saves, then another save may be chosen.

Keen smell: advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

False Appearance: If not carrying any gear you look like an ordinary cat.

Low Light Vision No disadvantage on sight checks in dim light,

Claws. Your unarmed strike attack does 1+Dexterity modifier slashing damage (it has the Finesse quality).

ILLUSORY ADVENTURERS

By Karl Brown

This article describes free-willed illusions as a player character race for D&D 5th edition.
Fun but experimental

The idea of playing an illusion spell that has awakened to full intelligence and autonomy is a fun one. However, getting it to work in a game as combat focused and mathematically constrained as D&D 5th edition is a challenge. What follows is a unplaytested race that was built loosely following my race design math with best guesses for the values of newly invented traits. Use with caution then tell me how it went.

What exactly?

Your character will be a Medium or Small illusion of an adventurer. The illusion can appear to be of any race but you do not get any traits of that race, except Darkvision if the race possesses it. Instead, you use the Awakened Illusion race below. You take a class and background and progress through levels normally.

Playing an Illusion

An insubstantial character can be a challenge to adjudicate. As a rule of thumb, the world exists for the illusion but the illusion does not exist for the world. A door will block your way, but you can't turn the handle and open it. You can climb a real rope but not haul it up to take it with you.

The tactical roles an illusion is suited to changes as levels are gained. At low level, since few foes have magical attacks, an illusion is very resilient. At low levels the illusion can function as a frontline combatant. However, since they cannot even open doors they must adventure as part of a team. They also have poor ability scores and skills. At higher level they gain the ability to pass through physical barriers negating the issue with doors. However, they now need the protection of a team. Higher level foes have magical attacks the illusion is vulnerable to and the illusion has lower attributes and therefore poorer saves and armour class. At higher levels illusion stop being frontline combatants and become scouts.

Awakened Illusion

Awakened illusions are created by uncontrolled magical energies or arcane experiments by brilliant illusionists. They appear to be adventurers of any player character race. They can be seen, heard, and smelt but not touched because they have no substance. The tradition of illusion magic in gnome culture makes those who appear to be gnomes slightly more common. Conjured from nothing with no real past or substance and often trying to hide their true nature, illusions tend to be secretive and naive. They typically use the same naming conventions as the race they mimic. They are rare, but regions infused with wild magic or colleges of illusionists might be home to communities of illusions. Some illusions cast in the image of adventurers instinctively act out the role they have been given. Others venture forth driven to prove themselves as worthy as any 'real' person.

Traits

All awakened illusions have the following traits.

Ability Score Decreases. You are a created thing barely real with no past and thus struggle to define a sense of self. Your initial Strength, Constitution, Intelligence and Charisma scores are reduced by 2.

Ghostly Thews. You have no physical presence and therefore can use your strength to move yourself and your illusory gear but not move objects or creatures. For example, you can use Strength (Athletics) to climb but not to lift a portcullis or shove an enemy. You automatically fail Strength saves (but see insubstantial below).

Age. You were not born and do not age. Though you appear fully grown you might have only popped into existence a few minutes ago or you may have existed for centuries. Instead of life experience your Class could be knowledge

granted by magic to fulfill the role envisioned for you. Your Background feature could arise from your own deeds or be because you have the likeness of a famous person.

Type. Construct (Illusion). For better and worse you are affected by magic as a Construct. You do not breathe, eat, or drink, but you do sleep.

You are an illusion. You can be seen, heard, smelt, and give off body heat. However, you and your gear fails to hold up to inspection because solid objects can pass right through you. Those encountering you who suspect there is something unusual about you can make an Intelligence (Investigation) check. If they succeed you appear translucent to them revealing your true nature and your other sensory qualities become fainter for them. This may affect roleplaying but in no way alters game rules. The DC for this check is 8 plus your proficiency bonus and your Charisma modifier. *Detect Magic* detects you.

Size. Small or Medium. Once chosen your size and appearance never change.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet. You interact with surfaces as if you were solid. You walk on ground, sink in water etc. It's all part of the illusion.

Darkvision? If you are an illusion of a race with Darkvision then you have Darkvision with the same range.

Unchanging Gear. The only clothing and gear you will ever be able to use is that which you obtain at 1st level as starting equipment. If this gear is ever damaged or used up, then it magically reappears at the end of a long rest. Gear separated from you by more than 100 feet at the end of a long rest disappears from its current location and reappears next to you. Your coins are illusory too. The best thing to do is spend all your starting coin.

You might be able to technically own other treasure and equipment, but you cannot pick it up! You cannot open locks, disable traps, pick pockets, or even open a doorknob. If you are a wizard be sure to buy pens and special inks (in lots of 50gp worth, these replenish after a long rest enabling high level spells to be transcribed). Whenever these limitations place you in danger or prevent you from doing something critical your referee might award Inspiration.

However, your gear is an illusion just as you are and cannot physically affect others. For example, if you have a healing potion it only works for you. Any damage done by your weapons, gear, or unarmed strikes is changed to psychic damage. The target perceives the damage to be of the type normally associated with the attack unless they know you're an illusion. Your Strength and Dexterity modifiers are applied to attacks normally.

Insubstantial. You are immune to non-magical damage. Similarly, you are immune to the grappled, restrained, petrified, and poisoned, conditions. You may go prone but others cannot inflict that condition on you.

Mind Over Matter. Despite being an incorporeal being you were created to be a convincing illusion. You may not exist for others, but the rest of the world exists for you. You walk on the floor and cannot willingly pass through solid barriers or creatures. If buried alive or otherwise end up within solid matter, you are incapacitated and take 1d10 psychic damage at the end of every turn.

At 7th level you gain sufficient awareness and will to move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. Being able to move through solid walls and floors, you effectively have a burrow speed of 30 feet. If you end your turn inside an object or creature you take 1d10 psychic damage.

Other Illusions. Being an illusion does not make other illusions more, or less, real for you. You interact with illusions normally.

Languages. You can speak, read, and write Common and one other language of your choice.

CAT CHARACTERS

By Karl Brown and Lev Lafayette

A series of cat themed pre-generated characters for various RPGs and settings. They could be used as PCs or NPCs. Each begins with a heading in this format Character Name, Character Species/Role, Rule Set (author or publisher), Setting (author or publisher).

Mitzee, Mutant Quoll Scout, Gamma World 4th Edition (TSR), Auzya (Karl David Brown)

This character was made using my non-random variation of Gamma world character creation found here <https://www.thepiazza.org.uk/bb/viewtopic.php?t=24030> and uses the quoll base stock for my Gamma World Australia in issue 51 <http://rpgreview.net/node/317>. A quoll is a carnivorous animal sometimes called a 'marsupial cat'.

Genotype: Quoll

Description: A one-metre-tall anthropomorphic quoll massing about 50 kg with green skin showing beneath a light covering of spotted fur. A pair of bat-like wings sprouts from her back.

Class & Level: Scout 1

Cryptic Alliance: Ochre Empire (+3 to Wilderness Survival)

Home Town: Al-iz

Tech Level: II

Genotype abilities: Claw/Claw/Bite for 1d4/1d4/1d6 damage. Leap 2m. Has *heightened hearing*, *heightened smell* and *night vision* as the mutations. If food is fresh meat, then no drinking water is required.

Humanoid traits: talking, bipedal, hands.

PS 16 (+2), DX 21 (+5), CN 14 (+1), MS 8 (+0), IN 8 (+0), CH 8 (+0), SN 8 (+0).

THAC Melee +2, Damage bonus[/b] ,[/b] Max Lift[/b] kg.

THAC Ranged +5, **Stealth** +8, **Base AC** 15, 17 with shield.

Health 11 (13 v. radiation), **Mental Defence** 10, **Use Artefacts** +0, **Remain Unseen** +1, **Robot Recognition** 12,

Perception 9

light load 25 kg, **medium load** 50 kg, **Max load** 80 kg

Walk 17 (with medium load 11), **Trot** 34 (22), **Run** 51 (33)

Fly 22/44/66 (14/28/42) **Swim** 6/12/18 (4/8/12)

Hit Points 21

Domars 154

Class Skills: Detect Ambush/Trap 2, Hunting 8, Navigate, Tracking 8, Wilderness Survival 5

Common Skills: Ride

Physical Mutations.

Nocturnal (Defect): Can see well in low light (GW39) but has Diminished Sight During the day (blurred beyond 60m GW29)

Photosynthetic Skin: 3 hours in sunlight can substitute for food, 8 hours in sunlight heals 3 damage but +50% damage suffered from light-based attacks (GW40).

Radiating Eyes MP16: A blast of 21 intensity beam of radiation. This regenerates at 1 intensity/round. Head immune to radiation. +2 Health to resist radiation. (GW42)

Regeneration MP10: Heals self 15 hit points per day. Can regrow limbs (GW42).

Wings MP10: Robot Recognition -2. Speed 22.

No Mental Mutations

Gear (Kg) Backpack (1), bedroll (2), boots (1), Clothing (desert robes 1), 1 week dried rations (5), waterskin (0.5), Longsword (1d8+2, 3 kg), Heavy crossbow (2d8, 15m, 1/3, 9 kg), 24 bolts (1), steel shield (7) Total mass 30.5 kg.

Whiskers, the cat at the docks (secret bronze dragon), D&D 5th Edition (WOTC), Council of Wyrms (TSR)

Tiny beast, Lawful Good

Armor Class 12

Hit point maximum 109. **Hit Dice** 1d8+14d6

Speed 40ft., climb 30ft.

STR 3 (-4), DEX 15 (+2), CON 10 (+0), INT 13 (+1), WIS 17 (+3), CHA 13 (+1).

Saving Throws STR +1, DEX +7, CON +5, INT +6, WIS +8, CHA +6.

Skills Acrobatics +7, Athletics +1, Deception +11e, History +6, Insight +8, Intimidation +6, Investigation +6, Perception +8, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +12e.

e = Expertise, x2 Proficiency bonus.

Proficiencies: Natural weapons, dragon chess, thieves' tools. Cannot use thieves' tools while a cat.

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages. Draconic, Thieves' Cant, Metallic Draconic, Gnomish. Typically, does not speak to maintain the disguise.

Keen Smell. Whiskers has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

ACTIONS

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +0 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 1 slashing damage.

Dominate Yarjurit Iejiryth Hesjingaustrat D&D 5th Edition (WOTC), Council of Wyrms (TSR).

This character was created with my fan conversion of Council of Wyrms to D&D 5th Edition

(<https://www.thepiazza.org.uk/bb/viewtopic.php?t=18746>).

Yarjurit is atypical for a PC Adult dragon. To better emulate a Monster Manual adult dragon 5 to 9 class levels are needed. Yarjurit could join a 15th level party in Council of Wyrms. Alternatively, by altering his back-story he could play along 15th level PCs of any race in any D&D world.

Total level 15. **Class** Rogue 1. **Race** Adult Bronze Dragon level equivalent 14. **Background** Clan. **Alignment** Lawful Good. **Experience Points** 140 000.

STR 17 (+3), DEX 15 (+2), CON 16 (+3), INT 13 (+1), WIS 17 (+3), CHA 13 (+1).

Inspiration 0. **Proficiency Bonus** +5. **Saving Throw Proficiencies:** Strength +8, Dexterity +7, Constitution +8, Intelligence +6, Wisdom +8, Charisma +6. **Immune to lightning damage.**

Skills Acrobatics +7, Athletics +8, Deception +11e, History +6, Insight +8, Intimidation +6, Investigation +6, Perception +8, Sleight of Hand +7, Stealth +12e.

e = Expertise, x2 Proficiency bonus.

Passive Wisdom (Perception) 18.

Proficiencies: Natural weapons, dragon chess, thieves' tools.

Languages. Draconic, Thieves' Cant, Metallic Draconic, Gnomish.

Armour Class 21 (natural armour). **Initiative** +2. **Speed** 40, Swim 40, Fly 80.

Hit point maximum 109. **Hit Dice** 1d8+14d6

Attacks

Bite reach 10 ft. +8 2d10+3 Piercing

Claw reach 5 ft +8 2d6+3 Slashing

Tail Slap reach 15 ft. 2d8+3 Bludgeoning

Unarmed reach 5 1d3+3 Bludgeoning

Offensive traits

Frightful Presence DC15 Wisdom save all creatures within 120ft or frightened for 1 minute. Repeat saves allowed at the end of sufferers turns. Save makes them immune for 24 hours.

Sneak Attack. Dropped objects only +1d6 damage.

Breath Weapons. Recharge on a 5-6. Save DC16. Choose one of the below.

Lightning breath. 90 x 5ft. line. 12d10 lightning damage. Dexterity save for half.

Repulsion. 30 ft. cone. Strength save or pushed back 60 ft.

Wing Buffet. Unlike the NPC version this is a standard action. It is not an attack action. All within 10ft must make a Dexterity save DC16 or take 2d6+3B and be knocked prone then I may fly 40 ft.

Equipment on person. Huge satchel containing thieves' tools, a scrap of cloth from an old pennant, and coins (8gp, 9sp, 10cp).

A blue silk pennant attached to one horn and a thin gold ring on left index talon.

Characteristics

Personality Traits. My diet is carnivorous as befits my place in the natural order. I like to observe humanoids disguised as a housecat.

Ideals. I'm reluctant to give my word because when I do I keep it no matter what. The strong should protect the weak.

Bonds. I'll protect my vassals of Herring Port no matter what.

Flaws. I'm zealous in my opposition to tyranny. This can be a problem when dealing with chromatic clans and the mediating Council of Wyrms. Huge Size. Limited tool use.

Traits.

Dragon Type. Huge Size. Limited Tool Use. Detailed rules for huge dragons and dragon talons are given in my conversion. Blindsight 60 ft. Darkvision 120 ft. Amphibious: can breathe water and air.

Change Shape: change into a humanoid or beast with a Challenge 15 or lower. Gear can be absorbed or carried by the new form, his choice. When changed use own alignment, hit points, Hit Dice, ability to speak, proficiencies, and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores. All other statistics as per the new form. Do not gain class features or legendary actions of new form.

Background Feature. Clan Hospitality. *Within your clan, vassals tend to hold you in high regard and assume you have the right to be wherever you are within clan lands. Dragons of your clan will offer you hospitality for short periods.*

Age 102. **Length** Neck & Body 14'5", Tail 12'5". **Weight** 2223 lbs. **Eyes** Glowing green with tiny pupils. **Skin** Verdigris green. **Scales.** Bronze. I have the Clan Rune carved into a scale on my chest (this cost 5gp at the time).

Factions.

Iejirynth Hesjingaustrat (Clan Waveflyer) Renown 3, Rank 2 Dominate.

Council of Wyrms Renown 1, Rank 1 Dominate.

Story

Born into Clan Waveflyer (Iejirynth Hesjingaustrat) Dominate Yarjurit was not a particularly ambitious dragon and rather small for his age, but nimble. However, 52 years ago by birthright and age he found himself responsible for the gnome fishing village of Herring Port. The vassals think Yarjurit is an absentee ruler content to let village elders govern and send tribute. However, whenever the village is threatened he seems to show up just in time to defend it. In one of these battles his first kindred, Blandergon the gnome, died. He is reluctant to bond another.

The truth is that a series of adorable stray cats seen around the village and docks were actually Dominate Yarjurit in disguise! As a cat Yarjurit can study the vassals and keep an eye out for threats. The latest of these is a small tabby the gnomes call Whiskers.

Lair & Hoard

His lair is a cave suitable to his Huge size. This is the site of his bonded hoard.

Total bonded hoard value: 140 000gp.

Items of note include: A nugget of bronze massing 210 pounds from out of my egg worth 105gp, a coral figurine of a cat worth 100gp which was a hatching gift from my parents, 3175 gold coins, 2 small emeralds (these are actually water elemental gems DMG168 worth 500gp).

The remainder of the bonded hoard consists of gems and art objects that can be described when required or desired.

Point Commander Sven Howell of Clan Smoke Jaguar, Timberwolf (Mad Cat) Mechwarrior, A Time of War (Catalyst Game Labs), Clan Invasion Era 3055CE (FASA/Catalyst Game Labs)

This character was created using the Grizzled Veteran archetype from the A Time of War Companion (Catalyst Game Labs) with seasoning and nationalising applied as per that same book. Where the character has xp earned between levels of a skill or trait the xp is noted.

Born, decanted really, into Clan society at the right time to be of fighting age during the long-awaited invasion of the Inner Sphere. Sven has capitalised on his engineered genotype with training and experience. For his ferocity in battle he was rewarded with the assignment of a Timberwolf, the premier heavy mech manufactured by the Clans.

Affiliation Clan Smoke Jaguar

Born 3029CE **Age** 26.

STR 4 (+0, 450xp), BOD 6 (+0, 650xp) RFL 7 (+1) DEX 6 (+0) INT 5 (+0, 550xp) WIL 6 (+0) CHA 4 (+0, 425xp) EDG 4

Movement Walk 11, Run 21, Sprint 42, Climb 6, Crawl 3, Evade 21, Swim 11

Standard Damage 12, **Fatigue** 12

Traits Custom Vehicle 5 (chose Timber Wolf a.k.a Mad Cat), Dependent -2, Enemy -2, Equipped 1, Field Aptitude/Clan Mechwarrior, Rank 4, Vehicle 6 (Heavy Mech), Compulsion/Distrust of Inner Sphere -1, Compulsion/Hate Nova Cats -1, Compulsion/Jaguar Arrogance -1, Reputation 1.

Nascent Traits* Combat Sense (+100xp) Compulsion/Arrogance (-50xp),

**The character has not yet earned enough xp to have these traits.*

Skill	Links	TN/C	Level
Art/Drawing	DEX	8/CB	+0
Career/Soldier	INT	7/SB	+3
Gunnery/Mech^	DEX+RFL 7/SA	+4 (total +5)	
Interest/Clan Remembrance			
	INT	8/CB	+2
Language/English	INT+CHA	8/SA	+1
Language/Any	INT+CHA	8/SA	+1
Leadership^	WIL+CHA	7/SA	+2
Medtech	INT 7/SB	+2	
Navigation/Ground^	INT	6/SB	+1
Perception	INT	7/SB	+1
Piloting/Mech^	RFL+DEX 7/SA	+3 (total +4)	
Protocol/Clan	WIL+CHA	9/CA	+1
Protocol/Smoke Jaguar	WIL+CHA 9/CA	+2	
Sensor Operations^	INT+WIL	7/SA	+3
Small Arms	DEX	7/SB	+1
Tactics/Land^	INT+WIL	8/CA	+1
Technician/Weapons	INT+DEX	9/CA	+1

^Field Aptitude/Clan Mechwarrior already applied to these skills.

Personal Gear (DBB) **C-bills:** 137

Though a warrior, Sven does not have the resources, licences, or illegal contacts to personally own military grade weapons when not on duty. He is still of the Warrior Caste though and thus owns a variety of civilian self-defence, hunting, and training weapons. Like most people of the 31st century his standard of living isn't great. His worldly possessions fit into a large backpack and every day is laundry day, or at least should be.

Bayonet 1M/1 1M - 8 250G -
Dart 1M/1 * - 3 10G +1 to-hit; half thrown weapon range (round down).
Stun staff single end 0E/4D 2M 1PPS 300/* - 3KG/* -
Bolt Action Rifle 4B/4 40/115/225/500 5 60/1 - 3KG/60G Simple action to chamber next round
Pump Action Shotgun 1B/6S 4/10/20/45 6 40/1 - 4KG/120G Recoil -1 with barrel
mounted flashlight 250g negates darkness mods to 15m.
LGB-46R "Paint" Gun 0B/0 1/2/3/4 15 50/10 - 1.8KG/640G Fires liquid payload typically
paint or water. He has it as a training/recreational weapon.

3 holsters for firearms above 150g each.

Vidphone 400g

Backpack 100g

Flak Armour Suit 1/5/1/3 - 8.6kg Torso, Arms, Legs -

Flak Helmet 1/5/1/3 - 1kg Head. +0 Perception. BAR 2 v. Flash.

Combat Boots 2/3/3/1 - 2kg Feet -

‘Civies’ Cheap shoes 0.8kg, Cheap pants 0.9kg, Cheap shirt 0.3kg, 2xSocks 12gx2, 2xUnderwear 15gx2, Fatigues 0.5kg

Assigned Vehicle. On Duty he pilots a Timber wolf. See Technical Readout 3050 Revised for stats (Catalyst Game Labs). The Timber Wolf (also known as the Mad Cat) is one of the iconic Mech designs of Battletech.

Razor, Mutant Puma, Tiny Wastelands (Gallant Knight Games), The Wild (Tobie Abad)

This character uses the “The Wild” microsetting in the Tiny Wastelands book.

Archetype: Carnivore Hunter (Mutant Puma).

Hit Points 6

Traits Brawler, Commanding (as per Tyrant archetype), Freaky Quick Reflexes Mutation.

Proficient Light Melee, **Mastery** Knives.

Description A muscular anthropomorphic puma wearing threadbare hunter’s fatigues.

Gear. 8 clix, ragged sleeping bag, lighter, belt pouch, cracked electric lantern with 72 hours charge, 50 feet of strong cord, 7 days rations (beef jerky), plastic rain poncho, 2 razor sharp knives.

Drive. *No-one is more ‘macho’ than Razor!*

Razor survives, finds food, and impresses potential mates by acting as a bodyguard for other mutant animals who are exploring the ruins of the city.

Fergus, Cat Singing Bandit, D&D 5th Edition, The Green Isles

The Green Isles is a setting for D&D 5th Edition that takes inspiration from the traditional fairy tales of the British Isles and to a lesser extent Britain in the year 1300CE. The roads of the Northern Isle are plagued by singing cat bandits who ambush travellers. Rules for cat PCs are given in this issue.

Class Bard 1, **Background** Criminal (Bandit), **Race** Talking Cat, **Alignment** Chaotic Good

STR 4 (-3), DEX 17 (+3), CON 11 (+0), INT 13 (+1), WIS 14 (+2), CHA 13 (+1).

Proficiency Bonus +2.

Saving Throws STR-3, DEX+5, CON+0, INT+1, WIS+4, CHA+3.

Skills Acrobatics+5, Animal Handling+2, Arcana+1, Athletics+3, Deception+3, History+1, Insight+2, Intimidation+3, Investigation +3, Medicine+2, Nature+1, Perception+4, Performance+3, Persuasion+1, Religion+1, Sleight of Hand +3 (limited use), Stealth+5, Survival+4. **Passive Perception** 14 (19 Smell).

Languages Common, Sylvan, can communicate with ordinary cats.

Tool Proficiencies. Light armour, gambling dice, bell, drum, gong.

Armour Class 15. **Initiative** +3. **Speed** 40/Climb 30. **Hit Point Maximum** 8. **Hit Dice** 1d8.

Claws Attack Bonus +5, 4 slashing damage (Finesse).

Bardic Inspiration 1 x 1d6.

Equipment. Studded leather armour (cannot put on without help), bell around neck (spell focus). Satchel containing bedroll, 3 potions of healing, gambling dice, and 9sp.

Personality Traits Tell me not to do something and I’ll do it! Whenever I enter a new place I look for valuables or where they might be hidden. **Ideal** the freedom of a bandit, with no masters and travelling the long road. **Quest** Needle-tooth Marga, a terrible hag, kidnapped my sister. I must find her. **Flaws** I bow to no-one. Tiny. No hands.

Traits. Tiny* Beast. Tool Use 1*. Advantage on perception check based on smell. No disadvantage to sight in dim light. Feature Criminal Contact.

*Full rules for Tiny PCs and characters with no hands are given in my "Tinker's Toolkit Race Design" on the DM's Guild. Really, though you can just 'wing it' based on what a real cat can do.

Age 4. Length 18" with a 9" tail. **Weight 9 lbs. Eyes green. Skin pink. Hair** Tabby short hair.

Spellcasting ability Charisma. Spell Save DC 12. Spell Attack Bonus +4.

Cantrips. *Mage Hand, True Strike.*

1st Level Spell Slots 2

1st level spells. *Charm person, cure wounds, Tasha's hideous laughter, sleep.*

Fragarach, Yinkin Shaman, RuneQuest Roleplaying in Glorantha

Generated from: The Cradle of Heroes <https://www.cradleofheroes.net/> for the latest edition of RuneQuest (2018)

Description: Wiry, dashing, with a cocky smile that woos the boys and the girls with ease, Fragarach is an archetypal scruffy rogue who carries himself with great confidence and speaks with a silver tongue of the world of spirits and especially the spirits of cats, which he loves. His parents were simple farmers and Fragarach has proven to be a poor worker, even if he does love his family dearly. He spends much of his time with the village shaman, learning the arts of the spirit world and tending to the numerous village cats which has very serious discussions with. Whilst he make light of his lack of strength, Fragarach is actually quite sensitive to it. An early encounter in his career with a Wasting Disease Spirit almost killed him, and sapped most of his strength. He was saved by the shaman who is quite prepared to remind Fragarach that he owes his life to him. For what it is worth, Fragarach is not resentful to the shaman for this and the reality is the shaman is rather fond of his apprentice, but dearly hopes that he will gain a sense of responsibility soon.

Runes: Air Man Illusion

Homeland: Sartar Occupation: Assistant Shaman Cult: Yinkin Initiate

Standard of Living: Poor Income: 20 L Ransom: 250 L

Stats: Strength: 8 (40%) Constitution: 16 (80%) Size: 13 (65%) Dexterity: 17 (85%) Intelligence: 18 (90%) Power: 14 (70%) Charisma: 20 (100%)

Derived Stats: Hit Points: 17 Healing Rate: 3 Magic Points: 14 Spirit Damage: 1D6+3 DEX Strike Rank: 1 SIZ Strike Rank: 2 Damage Bonus: 0

Movement: Ground: 8

Passions & Reputations: Reputation 39% Love (Family) 70% Loyalty (Clan) 60% Loyalty (Tribe) 60% Loyalty (Sartar) 70% Loyalty (Shaman) 60%

Cults: Yinkin - Initiate - Rune Points: 1

Elemental Runes: Fire/Sky 45% Air 80% Moon 50%

Power Runes: Beast 25% Harmony 50% Movement 50% Death 50% Fertility 50% Stasis 50% Disorder 50% Illusion 75% Truth 25% Man 75%

Skills:

Agility (+10%) Boat 15% Climb 50% Dodge 44% Drive (Chariot) 15% Jump 61% Ride (Horse) 15% Ride (Horse) 20% Swim 25%

Communication (+15%) Act 20% Art 20% Bargain 20% Charm 30% Dance 30% Disguise 20% Fast Talk 20% Intimidate 30% Intrigue 20% Orate 25% Sing 45% Speak (Heortling) 0% Speak (Beastspeech) 30% Speak (Heortling)

65% Speak (Spiritspeech) 35% Speak (Tradetalk) 25%

Knowledge (+10%) Alchemy 0% Animal Lore 15% Battle 20% Bureacracy 0% Celestial Lore 15% Cult Lore (Orlanth) 0% Cult Lore (Yinkin) 25% Customs (Heortling) 0% Customs (Heortling) 35% Elder Race Lore (Elves) 15% Evaluate 20% Farm 40% First Aid 35% Game 25% Herd 25% Homeland Lore (Local) 40% Library Use 0% Lore (Local) 0% Lore (Animal) 25% Lore (Plant) 30% Manage Household 20% Mineral Lore 15% Peaceful Cut 20% Plant Lore 15% Read/Write (Old Tarsh) 0% Shiphandling 0% Survival 25% Treat Disease 15% Treat Poison 15%

Magic (+10%) Meditate 55% Prepare Corpse 20% Sense Assassin 0% Sense Chaos 0% Sorcery (Spell) 0% Spirit Combat 75% Spirit Dance 20% Spirit Lore 30% Spirit Travel 30% Understand Herd Beast 0% Worship (Orlanth) 0% Worship (Yinkin) 45%

Manipulation (+20%) Conceal 25% Craft (Arms) 30% Devise 25% Play Instrument 25% Sleight 30%

Perception (+10%) Insight (Species) 30% Listen 35% Scan 35% Search 35% Track 35%

Stealth (+15%) Hide 25% Move Quietly 25%

Melee (+20%) 1H Axe 30% 1H Hammer 30% 1H Mace 35% 1H Spear 35% 2H Axe 25% 2H Hammer 25% 2H Mace 30% 2H Spear 35% Battle Axe 40% Broadsword 45% Dagger 45% Fist 45% Grapple 45% Greatsword 25% Kick 35% Kopis 30% Lance 25% Pike 35% Quarterstaff 35% Rapier 25% Shortsword 30% Whip 25%

Ranged (+20%) Arbalest 30% Axe, Throwing 30% Composite Bow 25% Crossbows 45% Dagger, Throwing 25% Elf Bow 25% Javelin 40% Pole Lasso 25% Rock 35% Self Bow 25% Sling 25% Staff Sling 30% Throwing Dagger 30% Thrown Axe 30%

Shield (+20%) Large Shield 45% Medium Shield 50% Small Shield 35%

Rune Spells: Charisma (1pts)

Melee Attacks: Grapple 45% Special SR 7 0/0 HP Medium Shield 50% 1D4 SR 6 12/12 HP

Ranged Attacks: Light Crossbow 45% 2D4+2 SR 1 6/6 HP Rng 100

Hit Locations:

(19-20) - Head Armor: 4 6/6 HP

(16-18) - L Arm Armor: 4 5/5 HP

(13-15) - R Arm Armor: 4 5/5 HP

(12) - Chest Armor: 5 7/7 HP

(9-11) - Abdomen Armor: 4 6/6 HP

(5-8) - L Leg Armor: 4 6/6 HP

(1-4) - R Leg Armor: 4 6/6 HP

Equipment:

Local herbs & powders

Several small statuettes

Crafted goods worth 25 L

5 L in coin

Loincloth and robe

Security Chief Félicette, Caitian Security Guard, Star Trek

Description: Designed for Star Trek: The Roleplaying Game (FASA, 1983). The historic Félicette was the first and only feline to go to space, launched on October 1963 as part of the French space programme. Like their historic counterpart, Félicette has a tuxedo style fur (black and white), which is a very unusual colouring for the species. Félicette is very independent, takes her work and fitness very seriously, and her relaxation even more so. Her independence could sometimes find her in conflict with the procedure-heavy rules of being a new chief security officer, so she whilst she follows the rules as necessary she will also be very assertive when independent action is called for. Félicette is very much a Caitian of very fine-dining (but very modest in quantity), classical music, the high arts, and refined conversation. Since joining Star Fleet Félicette has had very minimal contact with her family, but when contact does occur the bonds are deep and sincere. Her independence and high-culture preferences has meant that she has eschewed many a suitor but has not been adverse to subtly taking up lovers.

Species: Caitian **Specialisation:** Security
Age: 25

Attributes: STR 56 END 52 INT 60 DEX 86
CHA 67 LUC 49 PSI 29

Skills: Administration 40 Artistic Ability 25 Astronomy 10 Carousing 35 Computer Operation 40 Electronics Technology 10 Federation History 30 Federation Law 50 Ground Vehicle Operation 10 History (Caitian) 25 Instruction 30 Language 10 Leadership 40 Marksmanship (Modern) 80 Negotiation 20 Personal Combat (Armed) 45 Personal Combat (Unarmed) 45 Medicine (Caitian) 30 Planetary Survival 15 Psychology (Caitian) 15 Shuttlecraft Pilot 25 Small Unit Tactics 20 Starship Security 30 Starship Tactics 20 Zero-G Operations 25

Equipment: Federation Communicator, Universal Translator, Tricorder, Phaser II,

Personal Equipment: Libido post. "A libido post was a life-sized wooden sculpture used by Caitians to relieve their annual need to have sex. Ensign Beckett Mariner jokingly called it 'an important cultural sex toy from the past.'" (from: https://memory-alpha.fandom.com/wiki/Libido_post)

AWAKEN WENCH! Though it has not yet been emptied, the bottom of our kibble chalice is once again visible



TALKING CATS IN DELUXE TUNNELS & TROLLS

By Karl Brown

An idea raised in Deluxe T&T, but not developed beyond one example, is a Type for each Kindred. This Type has not been play-tested but has been carefully designed. Besides, dT&T is only loosely balanced and this edition's method of determining level from highest attribute helps balance things. Though written for dT&T this article could be easily adapted to earlier editions.

Talking cats are regular housecats who have magically gained the ability to speak and think as well as a human.

STR x0.33, CON x0.16, DEX x3, LK x1.5, IQ x1, WIZ x1.5, CHR x1, Height x0.08, Weight x0.07

Paws. A cat obviously can't wield weapons, shields, or use tools. Manual DEX for handling weapons, tools, doorknobs etc. is zero. A cat can wear armour but needs help putting it on.

Magical Attunement. As per rogue. Briefly, a talking cat is obviously magical. PC talking cats start with one spell for which they have sufficient IQ and DEX (use full DEX not manual DEX). However, they do not reduce spell WIZ cost by level, nor can they use staffs and other spellcasting aids. The Wizard's Guild will not teach them spells. They can use magic and make a melee attack in the same round.

Agile. +7 to Acrobatics including catfalls, instead of the usual +3 for a Talent.

Teeth and claws. Unarmed kicks and headbutts do 1d2, claws do 1d2, bite does 2d2. With sufficient dexterity, strength, and talents[#] a cat can make as many as four claw attacks and a bite. These attacks require STR 1 and DEX 9 each.

Speed F. dT&T has three speeds, S, N and F. Cats are faster than humans over short distances.

Talented Cat. At *creation* they gain Acrobat, Low Light Vision, and one extra talent. Cats begin with an extra talent *every* level. All of these extra talents must relate to the natural abilities of housecats including Tracking, Acrobat, Charming, Cat Lore, Mental Discipline, Low Tongue of Felines, Seduction, Dodge, Stealth, Thievery, Hunting, Overland Trekking, Wilderness Survival, Multiple Attacks with claws and/or bite[#], and other talents approved by the referee.

Shadow

A newly generated character ready to play. Shadow makes an excellent scout and thief of small valuables.

Kindred Cat, Type Cat (burglar)[^], Level 3. AP 0. Personal Adds +33

STR 4, CON 4, DEX 39, LK 18, IQ 12, WIZ 21, CHR 12, SPD 12, Height 6 inches at shoulder, Weight 14 lbs, Age 2, Hair sleek black, Money: 100 gp hidden in a safe spot. Weight possible 400. Carried 0.

Cannot use weapons, tools, or shields. Needs help to put on armour. Speed F.

Spell Hidey Hole.

Talents Acrobat (+7 not +3), Low Light Vision, Stealth, Dodge, three claws and a bite multi-attack (requires STR 4, DEX 36), Thievery, Streetwise, Appraise Treasure, Self-defence.

Languages Feline Low Tongue, Trade.*

Combat Multi-attack 5d2+33. No Armour (0 hits).

[#]*House rule: every combination of two or more attacks is a Talent. Humanoids use this rule for two weapon fighting. Ignore this reference to Talents if you do not use this house rule. [^]Every type can support a variety of concepts. *I grant characters their native language and the Trade Tongue.*

A CAT CHARACTER POEM

By Adam Karlovsky

The boy sat in a patch of dusty earth, he spent an hour shifting where his legs and elbows rested, scratched his nose, and let a sigh as he drew on the ground below

the counterclockwise rune; mostly his mind-wandering skipping through his memories, or ideas, or girls, or what his skills were worth, or why... ?

Counterclockwise. Soon. Repeat. Counterclockwise.

Storm attune.

Sometimes he would realize, mindful Seeing Air, to pick his posture up and write the rune into the welkin's bare and empty canvas, daylight.

A storm rumbles with distance, crackles skipping up and over mountains to the north that neatly wrap the village, mountain creeks feeding the firth.

He liked to think his etches (scribbled for hours unending) were what summoned distant thunders passing.

He saw within the clouds above... A feline, with hair colored fair, blue, like lotus vapor monsoon, sharing with Orlanth half-birth, it's volatile lair the typhoon...

tempest - percuss

Over a nearby knoll trotted, an alynx, eyes like moons that hint at travelling secrets seen in haunts and hollows where it slinks.

If one were watching from afar, as both sat side by side (its muscles rippling softly) this cat's stature would seem to tower over the young man.

Mother *squawks* and breaks his concentration.

Jumping with a start, like fingers snapped the alynx gone.

She never saw a hint of feline brawn.

The boy must leave to wash the scummy dishes of his shaman. And so he joins the kitchen, weakly sloshing pots and pans while feeling pits and gutted hope.

He looks down at his arms, shrivelled and malformed, sticks for flesh, moving in soap.

A muscle-wasting spirit cursed his birth, and jinxed his verging manhood.

The shaman's wisely eyes then glint, boy is given knowing wink. The alynx tattooed on his back reveals the sign as shaman turns and reaches for his rocking chair.

The shaman sits and nurses old burns running down his hands.

The boy stands at the sink. They murmur quiet chants together, with the cutlery's soft clinks.

"The strength is in your spirits, Garach-Fur, the cat your tether. Remember that until the day you die."

Hearten, Ho! wake wirey forearms, shoulders strengthen, Yinkin's ambit. The young man washes faster, mindful to be thorough. Alas, tears build up, bit by bit.

And letting go of tenseness in his body, he has trust to embrace his feelings to cry.

Catharsis resides deep inside the young man's exhalation.

Thunder up above cracks loudly, rain falls from the sky.

MOVIE REVIEW: CATS

By Anne O'Mouse

If you can believe some of the comments on various online sources, viewing the 2019 cinematic release of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical *Cats* will cause you to lose several sanity points, swear off glossy velour forever, and abandon all hope and good regard for Human civilization.

Look, it wasn't that bad. A lot of it wasn't great, for sure, but you just need to approach it in the correct frame of mind. Allow me to explain. Consider the following list: 1930's collections of whimsical poetry for children. Very early 1980s examples of musical theatre and contemporary ballet. *Cats* themselves, as beings and entities. None of these things actually need to make any kind of sense at all. However, popular cinematic releases are often expected to make some kind of sense, and thus a near-fatal clash of mental models occurs in otherwise innocent bystanders.

Perhaps I am biased, though. My father has always been a fan of Andrew Lloyd Webber (and Gilbert and Sullivan), and I had seen *Cats* on stage at least twice before the age of 12. We also had the original West End cast recording on LP, and I still know all the words to the songs. Thus I agreed to finally get around to seeing this new version. My partner, on the other hand, had no clue what he was going into. So one Sunday night we fortified ourselves with a bottle of "Cat Amongst The Pigeons" 2021 Eden Valley Pinot Grigio, and dove in.

For those unfamiliar with the work, *Cats* is a musical production that debuted in 1981, and is based upon T.S. Eliot's collection of cat-themed poetry written for his Godchildren called "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats". In the musical, cats of various ages, characters and backgrounds nominate themselves for selection to ascend to the "Heaviside Layer". This is a reference to Edwardian-era atmospheric physics, here apparently where worthy cats go to be reincarnated. Note that in this mythology cats are reincarnated as cats again, since what could be better? Set in the back-alleys and homes of early 20th-century London, the cats sing about themselves, dance, form alliances, and display rivalries, until one is chosen and ascends. That's it. That's the story. Not that bad, surely?

A lot of the poor reactions to the film are likely to stem from the mismatch between what works for an audience expecting to see a stage production, versus an audience expecting a high-definition big-spending, star-studded, special-effects film extravaganza. It also suffers from some big disconnects of tone and atmosphere in the early stages. The film opens with white kitten Victoria (Francesca Hayward) being cruelly abandoned in an alley in the middle of the night, and follows her fear and bafflement as she begins to meet the inhabitants of her new world. Then the first character song after this initial overture and introduction to the world is Rebel Wilson as Jennyanydots. And frankly it's a bit of a shock. It's bright, bouncy, colourful, comedic, and centres around a furry, tailed and pointy ear-having Rebel Wilson waving her legs in the air, falling off scaled-up household furniture, unzipping her furskin to reveal a spangly costume and the same furskin, and teaching cockroaches to tapdance and then eating some of them. I believe this is where many casual observers noped out. Look, fair enough. And that is even before we get to the issue of the legendary "Cats Butthole Edit" of the film. I urge the Gentle Reader to (carefully) Google this piece of film history. Suffice to say that the VFX artists working on animating fur in a movie about cats should have been more aware of the aesthetic issues posed by the hairy ball theorem of algebraic topology. I mean really, surely the name is a clue?

Most (some?) of the other character songs are less stark ravingly weird, often darker in tone, and more likely to use tricks from the stage production to smooth the path to your calm enjoyment of the performance. Herein lies my point

about the disjoint between the popularity of the stage show and the freaking out about the movie. Stage shows employ a minimum of set dressing and lighting to suggest a mood and a setting, and rely on the individual audience members to mentally fill in the details in whatever way makes best sense to them. This allows a production to stage the Battle of Agincourt with a dark room, five guys and three bricks. Or allows a GM to guide four player's minds through a fantasy city to battle a legendary monster using naught but a whiteboard and a blob of Blu-Tack with a pair of googly eyes. The lack of details gives your mind room to make the situation make sense. This movie had a LOT of details, leaving no room for the mind to escape.



It also has a lot to recommend it. Many sequences are fun, with enough details to be charming but usually not overwhelmingly weird. Or perhaps that was merely a product of me already having a mental template from the stage show that I could fit the pieces of the performance into. Many of the songs are excellent versions ("Memory" a standout, performed by Jennifer Hudson as Grizabella). James Corden was a surprisingly good Bustopher Jones, when he remembered to stop being James Corden for a damn minute. Sir Ian Mackellen was a great Gus (although he

gave a much better performance as a catty old theatre tragic in the ITV sitcom "Vicious", check it out). Idris Elba is glossy and villainous as Macavity, and Dame Judy Dench is beatifically fluffy as Old Deuteronomy. Dame Judy (introduced to Dungeons and Dragons and DM-ing by Vin Diesel on the set of "The Chronicles of Riddick", hello Dame Judi if you are reading!) was originally cast as Grizabella in the original West End production, before having to withdraw due to a snapped Achilles tendon.

My lovely companion for the night appeared to be largely unperturbed by the strangeness of it all, and was charmed by the approach to the scaling of the sets for the apparently cat-sized characters. He also noted that the use of magic powers was interesting, contrasting the sinister teleportation abilities of Macavity to the (no less effective) stage magic of the Magical Mr Mistoffelees. He thought the urban fantasy world of Cats, with its rogues, magicians and group politics is a highly gameable setting. No doubt he is writing a game mechanic as we speak.

In summary, my advice is to always keep in mind that this is not meant to make sense. You are merely asked to enjoy the colour, movement and texture of the world. Often this is hampered by an excess of glaring, nightmarish detail, true, but most of this is early on in the runtime and the wine helps. Also, as always in this flawed world we live in, be aware that it could always be weirder...

In 2009 it was discovered that in 1937 T.S. Eliot had penned a 34-line poem composed, again, for the children of a friend. This previously unknown poem was simply entitled: "Cows".

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