



Dead Man's Plaza: A Setting for Over The Edge by Scott Beattie

A rundown district with a sinister reputation.

What Everyone Knows

Dead Man's Plaza is a no-go area situated north east of Great Men. It is not a true plaza, but a collection of buildings in a dilapidated area, a general locale which has acquired the slang tag. No one is sure where it got its name from, yet even the Peace Force do not venture there. Anyone who enters is attacked and dumped unconscious on the Plaza of Great Men to recover. Curiously, people are seldom killed but are usually beaten within an inch of their lives. Demolitions experts, covert operatives, military strategists have all attempted to penetrate the secrets of Dead Man's Plaza but all have failed. Short of calling in an air strike, it seems impossible. As the location is derelict anyway, and not worth the cost of the payload, the peace force choose to live and let live. Dark rumours abound regarding the plaza. Some say that vampires and other foul creatures of the darkness make the place their lair. In response to the confusing architecture, some claim that only on the dark of the moon is there a clear path into the heart of darkness.

History

It is a little known fact that when Al Amarja fell to the Fascists in 1933, one sector held out against the invaders. A small guerrilla army, secretly operating out of the Hotel Totorum snapped at the jackbooted heels of Mussolini's troops during the occupation. When the island was 'liberated', these brave freedom fighters held out against the new D'Aubainne regime. The key to their success came as the troops evacuated the island. One of Mussolini's scientists defected and joined the Marxist rebels. They did not trust him at first, but he provided them with the product of his research - a drug which provided miraculous enhancement in strength, agility and resistance to injury. This drug, like an early form of PCP only much more potent, enabled the small group of rebels to fight on in the name of the people. The rebels call themselves "The Dead", invoking both the plaza's sinister reputation and Orwell's revolutionaries.

They use hit and run tactics, ambushing from the shadows to pummel an intruder senseless and then disappear into the night. This augments their supernatural reputation. Some hysterical victims have claimed that they have had blood drained from them and therefore the plaza must be a nest of vampires or ghouls. On one occasion the revolutionaries thought of marking fang marks with red felt pens on their victims but realised that this was just too silly...

Today there are few of the original rebels left, and they are in their seventies (although the drug does act as an anti-agarthic so most appear in their fifties). Vitus Stansky is not the most brilliant of leaders, yet he is one of the original freedom fighters and is much respected. Recently the group has been trying to recruit to supplement the dwindling numbers.

The Area

Dead Man's Plaza is an odd collection of shops (mostly closed) and buildings surrounding a small plaza, more of a courtyard. There is a dark, narrow and twisting lane which used to lead to the centre of this place, but it has not been boarded up and plastered with peace force warnings at the entrance and blocked by collapsed buildings further in. The inhabitants use other, secret ways to enter and leave the district. It originally took its name from the replica of that famous statue of a dying Gaul which rests in the centre of the plaza. It is tarnished but free from graffiti.

Characters

Vitus Stansky. Aging Marxist

The Leader of the Dead, Vitus was a member of the Marxist cell which resisted Mussolini's invasion of Al Amarja. Their sabotage schemes and hit-and-run tactics were a constant thorn in the Fascist's side the D'Aubainne inheritors. Most of the early members are now dead, making Vitus the reluctant leader. He is good at making speeches and get mundane details organised, but he is not really a military leader. If not for the guidance of the enigmatic Fixer, the group would have been captured long ago. Vitus is now tired of the fighting and half-wishes for failure just so it will all end. His wife, Pedi, would prefer to live in a real home, rather than stay barricaded in run-down rat trap. As tempting as this is, he is a principled man and will no doubt resist the D'Aubainnes until he dies, or someone takes his place.

Ukrainian Man, age 70 (looks fifty), red hair and moustache

Central Trait: Administrator (3 dice) Vitus used to work as a civil servant before he became a rebel. He now puts his skills to good use making sure that everyone has enough to eat and that the Fixer has the right supply of reagents to make the victory drug.- Motheaten suit

Side Traits: Speechmaker (4 dice) Vitus can make stirring, inspiring speeches that even he ends up believing in. He can stir the rebels into a frenzy of violence or lift their spirits after a defeat - Likeable smile

Cunning Trapper (3 dice) In his youth in the Ukraine, Vitus enjoyed hunting. He now applies his hunting and trapping skills constructing a variety of wicked (usually non-lethal) traps for the enemy. - Carries a notebook full of complex designs.

Flaw: Agoraphobic. Vitus dislikes wide open areas, partly due to a finely tuned sense of paranoia and partly due to childhood nightmares about the sky falling on his head - Prefers to sit in his favourite chair in the back of the Cafe Brittany.

Motivation: To protect those close to him from harm.

Influence: Lenin. A great revolutionary.

Secret: When he was a teenager, before the Fascist invaded he once went to a ball with the daughter of a wealthy American Industrialist, Hector D'Aubainne. Vitus knows that the Fixer's drug is responsible for his slow aging but is not sure what Monique does...

The Fixer. Enigmatic Biochemist

The strange old man who works in a cluttered laboratory off of dead man's plaza is known to everyone and beloved. It was his miraculous victory drug which helped the resistance fight back the enemy. Little do they know, but the Fixer was once one of the enemy and it was the inhuman experiments sanctioned by Mussolini's government which enabled the scientific advances which led to the drug's invention. The Fixer has been embraced with open arms as a member of the resistance family. He is well respected and his advice is sought on all manner of problems. It was the Fixer who lead the drive for new members which resulted in the recruitment of Rick and Obidiah. He is still on the look out for new blood, to swell the ranks of the resistance.

Italian Man, Age 70 (real age unknown), white hair and beard.

Central Trait: Fringe Biochemistry (4 dice) The Fixer could be one of the world leaders in biochemistry. He keeps up to date with new developments via several email contacts around the world. No one asks who he is or where his expertise comes from. - Smells of strange reagents

Side Traits Clear Thinker (3 dice) The resistance is a fairly disorganised and chaotic bunch of people. It is often left to the Fixer to see things clearly and make the most rational choices. - Sparkling eyes

Occult Knowledge (3 dice) Much of the biochemistry which lead to the creation of the victory drug comes from ancient sources. The Fixer researched herbal and mystical psychedelic in order to sort fact from mythology. - The communist party badge he wears seems to be missing its hammer.

Flaw: Aged. The Fixer takes a penalty dice when attempting anything physical or strenuous - Cautious step.

Motivation: To atone for his sins and protect the innocent.

Influence: Mussolini, a man who showed the Fixer that anyone could be convinced to do anything to anyone, given the right incentive.

Secret: The Fixer does not allow anyone to know his real name. This is because he was a scientist who worked for Mussolini, performing inhuman experiments on live human subjects. He regrets this now and helps the rebels in order to find atonement.

The Victory Drug

The Fixer's drug is the ultimate combat booster. It enhances strength, agility and reflexes, adding two dice to any combat manoeuvre and gives the recipient another 14 hit points. When someone boosted by the drug is incapacitated, this tends to result in a knockout rather than severe injury or wounding. It is almost as though the local laws of physics are suspended by the drug. A curious side effect is that this also applies to the enemies of the drug user.

This creates a predilection for slapstick. Combat tends to devolve into a huge punch-up with a big pile of unconscious people at the end, but no-one hurt more than a few bruises. The Fixer has tried to discern the reason for this and has no clear answer but lots of pseudo-scientific occult theories about biorhythms, auras and ether dampeners.

Rick Astor. Tough Leatherman

Rick Astor was a Hollywood stuntman in the early eighties. When motorcycle stunts went out of vogue, he found himself out of work. He moved to the San Francisco area and got work in a variety of professions; bodyguard, lifeguard, spa attendant and even some stunt work with a seedy circus. This was a period of great idyll in the gay community; lots of sex, few cares and a new sense of emancipation and freedom. Then the virus came. In 1989, Rick lost three friends in one year and decided that he had enough. He packed up his meagre belongings and set off around the world, to see the sights. He got as far as Al Amarja. When a throckmorton recruitment drive went wrong, he ended up a suspect in the murder of a senior peace force detective. Rick had killed the man in self defence after the enraged (and eyebrowless) cop had learned of his sexual preferences. Rick was a fugitive for months, but finally found sanctuary among the Dead. He and the Fixer are close friends and often plan the group's raids and sabotage ploys together. But it is that great lummox Obidiah who has a special place in Rick's heart. The two are constant companions and are usually the members of the resistance who are sent far afield on the most dangerous of missions.

American Man, aged 34, blonde hair and moustache

Central Trait: Toughguy (4 dice) Rick knows how to look after himself when the shit hits the fan. - Confident Swagger.

Side Traits Motorcycle Stunts (3 dice) Rick's teenage hero was Evil Knieval and he spent hours imitating the great man on his bicycle. When he was old enough to get his motorcycle license there was no stopping him.- Missing the little finger on his right hand.

Clever (3 dice) When in trouble, Rick uses his wits as much as his fists. The rest of the dead respect his ability to make quick decisions and come up with ideas under pressure- Cocky grin.

Flaw: Short. Rick is of below-average height and feels that he must overcompensate to make up for it. This often can lead to the wrong decision based on proving his masculinity, impairing his otherwise impeccable decision-making ability - Takes bodybuilding very seriously.

Motivation: To give one in the eye to the Fascists.

Influence: Michel Foucault, a regular at some of the San Francisco bars and spas.

Secret: Rick's mother still sends him knitted jumpers (to a post box in Flowers) to keep him nice and warm on those long nights of sabotage and mayhem.

Obidiah Liske. Steroid Abusing Wrestler

Obidiah was expelled from the Munich amateur wrestlers' association for abuse of steroids, ruining his chances of

Olympic competition. For several years he fought in the vaudeville professional arena in America, finding new and exotic chemicals to fill his body with. Somewhere along the line these drugs combined in a potent mixture and transformed Obidiah into someone other than human. At first his monstrous strength was a novelty - the fans thought it was a gimmick anyway. It ceased to be trivial when an weapons research corporation kidnapped Obidiah, seeking to study him and replicate the transformation. He was shipped to a compound on a Greek island. Fortunately the Fixer had learnt about this from a contact inside the corporation and sent the Dead to rescue the hapless wrestler. Obidiah has been with the Dead ever since. He is never far from his constant companion, Rick. He has recently picked up a stray as a pet - a pure white pit bull puppy which he calls Idefix and insists on taking with him on missions, against Rick's protests.

German man, age 30, red hair and moustache

Central Trait: Wrestler (4 dice) Obidiah could have been a contender, but he naively fell in with the wrong crowd. - Big brawny hands.

Side Traits Steroid Monster (fringe, 3 dice). A weird chemical cocktail of steroids has transformed Obidiah into something quite terrifying. He gets a three dice bonus on any roll that requires strength or fortitude. The Fixer refuses to give him any of the victory drug because of what it might do to him. This is a source of much sulking - Huge bulk.

Good Natured (3 dice) Obidiah is a genuinely nice person, if somewhat naive and child-like. Where his superhuman strength can't help him, his disarming manner often can. - Gentle smile.

Flaw: Inhuman Hunger. As a side effect of his strange physiology, Obidiah must devour an enormous amount of food. He is always hungry and often devours a table-full in a single meal. - Sensitive about his weight

Motivation: To enlarge his collection of trophies - a huge assortment of police and peace officers' helmets.

Influence: Rick, his best friend who rescued Obidiah from the vivisectionists.

Secret: ?

Kafka Onyx. Incompetent Grunge Musician

Perhaps the most unsuccessful busker in history, Kafka Onyx (real name: Miles Bush) left his middle-class family to tour Europe before embarking on his career as the next Grunge sensation (or go back to working in his father's bait shop). After being beaten in nearly every major European city, he found his way to Al Amarja. The Dead found his broken body lying on a pile of garbage outside the Terminal and took him in, healing his wounds. Although they are secretly fond of Kafka, many have regretted this decision ever since, such is the appalling nature of his warbling voice and his poor guitarmanship. He lives in a garret, far above the square where he doesn't disturb anyone, except Fulio the mechanic who is disturbed by Kafka's very existence. While Fulio is often quite cruel to the `musician', there is a strange love-hate relationship between them. Kafka is a good spy for the Dead as no-one suspects that the awful busker is someone undercover, trying to blend into the background.

American Man, Age 19, Blonde hair

Central Trait: Desperate (4 dice) Kafka has had to survive by scrounging and getting people to take pity on him.

Sometimes the only thing saving him from a beating is his pitiable, cold chihuahua-like patheticness. Then again, sometimes not. - Plaid flannelette shirt.

Side Traits Scruffy Good Looks (3 dice) Some women find a handsome, completely dependent layabout irresistible. This is one of the great mysteries of life.- Full and glossy head of hair.

Dumb (3 dice) Some people get their own way because it just isn't worth trying to explain otherwise. Kafka uses the dumb act to get away from the Peace Force, into embassies and out of having to pay for his round. But is it an act? - Dopey grin.

Flaw: A terrible musician. Kafka claims that he is before his time - sign

Motivation: To become a great rock star.

Influence: Kurt Cobain. When irritated by Kafka's singing, Fulio often suggest that he follow his hero's example.

Secret: Kafka knows all too much about fly-fishing.

Other Characters

Fulio Mattocks is a mechanic who runs shop out of Great Men. He lives in Dead Man's Plaza and acts as the general

odd-job guy for the group. He dislike's Kafka's singing intensely and has been known to gag and handcuff the unfortunate grunge victim, rather than listen to his busking version of 'Smell's like Teen Spirit' again.

Uni Genicks an Al Amarjan man who sells fish on the Plaza and acts as one of the spies for the group, bringing much gossip from the fishmarkets.

Gerald Atkins is an elderly British gentleman who runs the Hotel Totorum. His wife, is young, pretty and the source of much gossip. In truth, she loves the old man honestly and is not interested in the rumours of the fortune he has supposedly stashed away. The strange thing is, no one can remember her name...

Plot Ideas

Into the Darkened Plaza

As a part of another story, characters are forced to enter Dead Man's Plaza for some reason, either pursuing someone or being chased themselves. Play up the dark, gothic architecture and get them really paranoid about vampires. Characters can get what they came for and be hit from the shadows by the Dead. Next thing they know, they wake up with a headache in a pile of garbage off of Great Men.

Recruitment Drive

The Fixer decides that it is time for some new recruits. Rick or Obidiah could be introduced to your series as recurring characters as they check out the characters. They will keep their home secret until they decide they trust the characters or some event forces their hand.

Food Run

Characters may encounter the Dead during one of their raids or, more curiously, as they hijack a truckload of food for the every-hungry Obidiah. This should raise interesting questions as to why revolutionaries need so much food - perhaps there is a secret army waiting in the sewers? Perhaps not.

The Drug of Choice

Various conspiracies would no doubt love to get their hands on the victory drug. Of course, even if they do, they will not expect the slapstick results.

What are the Dead

A conspiracy which has an interest in twisting reality or deconstruction (such as the Cut-ups, the Semiotic Assassins or the Arcadian Club) becomes interested in the dead. They have their suspicions about the strange nature of the group, having no reports or memory of them existing until quite recently. The fact that the entry to the plaza is located on the corner of Goscinnny St and Uderzo Rd has confirmed some of their theories. Someone or something has made the Dead. Now if only they could get their hands on that quiffed reporter with the little dog or his friend the sailor, they might be getting somewhere...

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