MODERNIZED

GAMING IN THE MODERN WORLD

more gaming goodness
STILL FREE

CHARLES BAIZE
SOUNDS OFF

LITAK
what secrets does this nation hold?
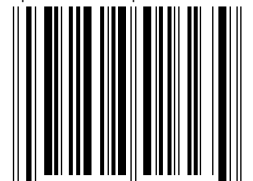
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Ronin Arts

TEAM
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HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY
who loves you, baby? we do.

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R A N T

I'm a gamer. It's a hobby. Or maybe an avocation, even. I'm not talking about video games (though I do like those, too), I mean RPGs... Role Playing Games. Pen and paper and dice and beer. The tools and accoutrements have changed since I first started gaming back in 1978 (didn't drink beer when I was 8, and all).

It's kind of a geeky hobby, yeah... but I also make a little bit of beer and skittles money by editing gaming books, and writing a little bit here and there... I've contributed to several books, and written an article and a few small two page mini products. I'm not what you'd call "involved" in the industry, but I'm kinda stirring the pot a little... kinda got my fingers circling lazily in the pot, as it were.

Gaming and gamers have changed somewhat through the years. Back in the day, we'd run people through mock battles between characters after leaving one classroom and on the way to another, or we'd game between classes as we walked, and resume following the next class. Now... this means we didn't always have the books at hand to reference, so we had to either memorize the rules, or have the capacity to run games by the seats of our pants, and keep game flow moving. We didn't argue for hours on end about the in-game definition of a wall, or a floor, or a dagger...

I didn't really encounter this until the early '90s, and it astounded me then. I'm

even more astounded that it has not only persisted, but it seems to have increased. And now... people will run 12 classes out to 50 levels just to see if any one class has some sort of numerical advantage over another anywhere in their progression. They'll spend hours pouring over the Wealth system in D20 Modern to see if there's anywhere, any way, that they can break the system down. They want to see if they can pull one over on the designers. They've lost the capacity to have fun with the game, and feel that they must approach it as a mathematical equation to solve. They're looking for power-ups or "cheat codes" within the system. Ways to break the system as if it somehow makes them superior in some manner to the designers.

I'm still trying to figure out what happened to the capacity of GMs to adapt, improvise... use a little logic and imagination.

Well, I've got news for you, sparky. If you are a superior designer to the ones who made the game... start writing. That's the one and only way to convince me your design skills are superior to the designers out there. Design a superior system. It's the 21st century and e-publishing is all the rage. You have no excuse not to. Otherwise, you're just another freakin' dork with too much time and an inferiority complex that you feel you need to attempt to rectify by attempting to prove you're more of a dork than the designers.

You win. You're more of a dork than the designers. They got paid to design it, while you're spending untold free hours poring over their work looking for a cheat. Congratulations. Dork.

So, I'm still trying to figure out what happened to the

capacity of GMs to adapt, improvise... use a little logic and imagination. I mean, they defined what a **door** is in Dungeons & Dragons 3.5e.

A door.

Now... I'm not sure if that's a symptom of the problem, or if that's patient zero.

Is the problem that people are too stupid to understand the definition of a door in a gaming capacity, or did that set the stage for a boatload of dumbasses to crap their minds right out of their bodies, and need to have every aspect of every concept defined in detail? Why is the hand-holding so necessary?

You have 25 year olds and older who can't figure out what an 8 year old figured out twenty-seven years ago... That it's a game requiring thought in a linear and non-linear fashion, as well as a little imagination combined with a small dose of logic.

Got something you want to say?
Send us a rant for the Grumpy Gamer Soapbox to
MODERNIZED@Gmail.com
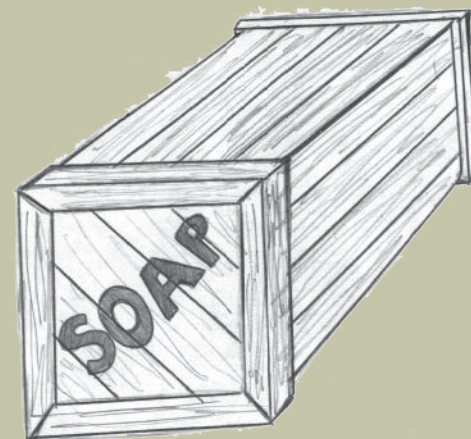
L O C A T I O N

Author's Note

This is NOT intended to be a real country, emulate another country, or be a primer on how most Middle East countries are. This is a work of fiction to allow a d20 Modern GM a fictional nation to be a villain or a location without having to worry extensively about real world politics or offending anyone. This is an amalgamation of every bad 80's movie portrayal of a Middle Eastern nation, as well as combining the worst from several nations over the last fifty years. If you are offended by the portrayal of an evil nation, and are unwilling to see the other nations in this series (so that you can see that it is not only the Middle East I'm portraying as having an evil nation), then get bent. You probably get offended by baby ducks, kittens, puppies, and clouds.

Introduction

A land of burning sun, rocky desert, dry winds, and sparse vegetation; Much of Litak appears as it always was in many of it's regions, unchanged by time and progress. However, it's eastern border is littered with rusting hulks of military equipment destroyed during a three-decade war with Libya. The central region along the Chartim River is dotted with small settlements, each with a Mosque that blares music and statements by the Litakian President.

Fertile ground lies along the river where many small plantations exist, using ancient farming techniques and practices from the Ottoman Empire; such practices are often shown in broadcasts as examples of bucolic Litakian life. Small, older cars move through narrow streets, often barely avoiding pedestrians and bicycle riders.

Limestone and adobe bricks are common in the architecture, as are single- or double-story buildings without much ornamentation or decoration.

It is in this backwards-appearing nation that the greatest threat to Middle Eastern stability is growing. In the harsh desert sands, nuclear reactors are being built. Staffed by grim-faced men working under the direction of rogue Soviet scientists, chemical weapons are being produced by a disposable workforce and tested upon criminals and undesirables. Biological

a nation that hides dangerous secrets

weaponry is being coaxed to an unholy life by masked and suited technicians. Massive military armaments, once owned by a now-deceased superpower, are being moved into port or underground, to be used for plans made in the dark of night. This is Litak: a country that appears unchanged, a poster for the triumph of ritualistic ways over modern applications, and a nation that hides dangerous secrets.

Background

Litak was part of Spain's African holdings until 1964. The nation endured three decades of ethnic warfare as well as invasions by neighboring countries before a semblance of peace was finally restored in 1991. Most invaders withdrew due to the International Task Force's resolution of the Iraq/Kuwait affair. The Litakian government eventually suppressed or came to terms with most political-military groups. They also settled a territorial dispute with its eastern neighbor on terms favorable to Litak, drafted a (supposedly) democratic constitution, and held multiparty presidential elections in 1991, 1994, 1998, and 2002.

The government follows Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi's political system, the Third Universal Theory. This system is a combination of socialism and Islam and is supposed to be implemented by the Litakian people themselves in a unique form of "direct democracy."

In 2003, Litak's government restricted all internet communication to government personnel, making it a capital crime for a citizen to be found with internet access. Government access to the internet is strictly monitored, with records of 'net usage stored in multiple locations and reviewed at least three times to find any traces of "Crimes Against the People." To date, over 300 "bloggers" and other unauthorized users have been executed.

In late 2003, UN inspectors (there to inspect former Soviet Union ammunition dumps) were ejected at gunpoint. This came immediately after a UN Nuclear Inspection Team claimed to have discovered something in direct violation of the nuclear proliferation treaty. Whatever the team found is a mystery, as Litakian insurgents forced the UN team to the side of the road and shot them, leaving their bodies and stealing the jeep.

In 2004, a new rebellion broke out in northern Litak, which is steadily growing in hostilities between the government and the rebels. Despite apparent movement toward democratic reform, power remains in the hands of a northern ethnic oligarchy; an oligarchy put in

power and sold weapons (and other war material) by nations of the EU in the late 1980's.

In June, 2004, an unmarked Mig-29a was tracked taking off just inside rebel-held territory. It left Litak airspace and proceeding toward the US 7th Fleet, where it lauched a refurbished AGM-84D Harpoon missile that struck the U.S.S. Long Beach, killing 19 and injuring 37. The Mig was sunk, and the wreckage contained no clues as to the originating authority for the attack or who possessed the jet. The government of Litak denied responsibility, placing the blame on rebel groups. Despite the attack, US forces have not intervened in the Litak civil war.

In October of 2004, an unknown rebel group used blister agent upon a refugee hospital manned by European Union doctors and medical personnel. The attack claimed 124 lives and wounded 1,400. Since that attack, relationships between Litak and the European Union have been strained. Rebel leaders deny that they authorized or planned the attack, and place the blame upon the government, claiming that the Litak government is trying to provoke the EU and the US into eliminating the rebels groups.

In November of 2004, a car bomb exploded in the parking garage of the Litakian Russian Embassy, killing 25 (including the Russian Deputy Ambassador) and wounding 32. Russia has removed their diplomats, but has not expelled Litakian diplomats from Moscow.

As of 2005, Litak is recognized as a "Red Zone" for tourism and industrial travelers.

Geography
Location: Northern Africa

Geographic coordinates: 25 00 N, 16 00 E
Map references: None Currently Available

Area:
• total: 83,821 sq km
• land: 83,539 sq km
• water: 282 sq km
• Area - comparative: Slightly smaller than American state of Oregon

Land boundaries:
• Total: 3,968 km

Border countries: Libya, Tunisia, Algeria
• Coastline: 314 km

Maritime Claims: 3 nm

Climate: Mediterranean along coast and Chartim River; dry, extreme desert interior

Terrain: Mostly barren, flat to undulating plains, plateaus, depressions.

Elevation extremes:
• Lowest point: Litak Depression -16 m
• Highest point: Omi Djissab 2,415 m

Natural resources: Titanium, vanadium, uranium, natron, kaolin, fish (Lake Litak)

Land use:
• arable land: 1.86%
• permanent crops: 0.02%
• other: 97.12% (2003)

Irrigated land: 200 sq km (1998 est.)
Natural hazards: hot, dry, dusty harmattan winds occur in north; periodic droughts; locust plagues

Environment - current issues: Inadequate supplies of potable water; improper waste disposal in rural areas contributes to soil and water pollution; desertification of existing arable land; chemical contamination from military and industrial uses of ground water and arable land

Environment - international agreements:
Party to: None
Signed, but not ratified: Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Biodiversity, Climate Change, Desertification, Endangered Species, Ozone Layer Protection, Wetlands
Signed, but not complying: Kyoto Agreement, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Nuclear Proliferation, Nuclear Test Ban, 1991 Libyan/Litak Disarmament Agreement
Geography - note: Lake Litak is the most significant water body in the country

People
Population: 2,619,212 (July 2004 est.)

Age structure:
• 0-14 years: 47.9% (male 545,863; female 324,602)
• 15-64 years: 49.3% (male 664,526; female 487,967)
• 65 years and over: 2.8% (male 366,126; female 230128) (2004 est.)

Median age:
• total: 15 years
• male: 14.3 years
• female: 15.7 years (2004 est.)

Population growth rate: -11% (2004 est.)

Birth rate: 24.15 births/1,000 population (2004 est.)

Death rate: 52.81 deaths/1,000 population (2004 est.)

Net migration rate: -15.17 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2004 est.)

Sex ratio:
• at birth: 0.84 male(s)/female
• under 15 years: 1.68 male(s)/female
• 15-64 years: 1.36 male(s)/female
• 65 years and over: 0.68 male(s)/female
• total population: 1.59 male(s)/female (2004 est.)

Infant mortality rate:
• total: 143.87 deaths/1,000 live births
• male: 86.4 deaths/1,000 live births
• female: 205.17 deaths/1,000 live births (2004 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:
• total population: 48.24 years
• male: 46.91 years
• female: 49.63 years (2004 est.)

Total fertility rate: 4.38 children born/woman (2004 est.)

HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate: 1.8% (2003 est.)

HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS: 3,000 (2003 est.)

HIV/AIDS - deaths: 362,000 (2003 est.)

Nationality:
• noun: Litakian(s)
• adjective: Litakian

Ethnic groups:
200 distinct groups; in the north and center: Arabs, Shotane (Dloumou, Praza, Krela), Shazawa, Panimenbou, Ouapplai, Hanguirni, Gahdermai, Oulbedda, Homozo, Bhausa, Nounina, Karlentu, and Paba, most of whom are Muslim; in the south: Sarpi (Ouadani, Moulleoiu), Farsati, most of whom are Christian or animist; about 500 Spanish citizens live in Litak

Religions:
• Muslim 41%
• Christian 35%
• Animist 13%
• other 11%

Despite public outcry, Litak refuses to curtail their chemical weapons production

Languages:
• English (official)
• Arabic (official)
• Sara (in south)
• more than 120 different tribal languages and dialects

Literacy:
• definition: age 15 and over can read and write English or Arabic
• total population: 80% is the official line, reality is 45.85%
• male: 82.4%
• female: 9.3% (2003 est.)

Country name:
• conventional long form: Democratic Republic of Litak
• conventional short form: Litak

Government type: Third Universal Theory

Capital: D'Naminique

Independence: 26 May 1964 (from Spain)

National holiday: Independence Day, 26 May (1964)

Constitution: Passed by Presidential Order 22 March 1991

Legal system: Based on Spanish civil law system and Litakian customary law; has not accepted and has flaunted compulsory ICJ jurisdiction

Suffrage: 15 years of age; male only

Executive branch:
• chief of state: President Supreme General Madrass (since 26 Jan 1986)
• head of government: Speaker for the People Antonio (since 6 July 2002)
• cabinet: Conscience of the People, members appointed by the president on the recommendation of the prime minister
• elections: president elected by popular vote to serve five-year term; if no candidate receives at least 80% of the total vote, the two candidates receiving the most votes must stand for a second round of voting; last held 26 May 2002 (next to be held 2006); Speaker for the

People appointed by the president
• election results: Supreme General Madrass reelected president; percent of vote – Supreme General Madrass 83%, Guiterrass 12%, Sakihr 4%, Other 1%

Legislative branch: Consists of a People's Tribal Assembly (11 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms) and a Senate (Disbanded due to Crisis of the People, formerly 126 members, members to serve six-year terms, one-third of membership renewable every two years)

Elections: People's Democratic Assembly - last held 26 May 2002 (next to be held in 26 May 2006)

Judicial branch: Supreme Court; Court of Appeal; Criminal Courts; Magistrate Courts
International organization participation:
ACCT, ACP, AfDB, AU, BDEAC, CEMAC, FAO, FZ, G-77, IBRD, ICAO, ICCt (signatory), ICFTU, ICRM, IDA, IDB, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, ILO, IMF, Interpol, IOC, ITU, MIGA, NAM, OIC, ONUB, OPCW, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNOCI, UPU, WCL, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WToO, WTO

Diplomatic representation in the US:
• Chief of Mission: Ambassador Abdallah el-Moulhadi Shahmat

Diplomatic representation from the US:
• Chief of Mission: Ambassador David S. Hallent
• Embassy: Avenue Madrass, D'Naminique
• mailing address: B. P. 1673, D'Naminique
• telephone: [555] (555) 007-86
• FAX: [555] (555) 008-54

Flag description: Twelve equal vertical bands of red (hoist side), blue, and white; design was based on the flag of United States of America, A five pointed crown with a crosslike star above the center, extended spike in the upper left of the flag. The star was added in 2002, after a supposed, unverified and unrecorded by international testing equipment and organizations successful nuclear test. The twelve stripes supposedly represent the twelve majority tribal chiefs. A thirteenth and fourteenth stripe has been removed as of 2004.

Economy
Overview:
  Litak's primarily industrial economy will continue to be boosted by major stripmine and refining projects that began in 1995. Over 80% of Litak's population relies on subsistence farming and stock raising for its livelihood. Cotton, cattle, titanium, vanadium, aluminum, and gum arabic provide the bulk of Litak's export earnings, but Litak will begin to export enriched uranium in 2006, despite international protest. Litak's economy has long been handicapped by its draconian labor and industrial laws, high energy costs, and a history of instability. Recently, the possibility of actual civil war has resulted in massive investor pullout, with Litak nationalizing facilities left behind. Litak relies on foreign assistance and foreign capital for most public and private sector investment projects. A consortium led by two EU companies, one Russian company, two United States companies, and one Japanese consortium of nine companies has been investing $6.2 billion to develop modern mining facilities estimated at 2 million tons of raw ore in southern Litak. Titanium resources are nearly played out, although vanadium, aluminum and uranium still exist in abundance.
  Agricultural economy has suffered as archaic farming methods and drought have dried up approximately 83% of the arable land that was available in 1960. Estimates put the complete destruction of agriculture in Litak at 2008 if the current trends of overutilization, archaic farming methods, industrial pollution and drought continue.

GDP: Purchasing power parity - $322.14 billion (2003 est.)

GDP - real growth rate: 15% (2003 est.)

GDP - per capita: Purchasing power parity - $3,400 (2003 est.)

GDP - composition by sector:
• agriculture: 18.2%
• industry: 58.6%
• services: 23.2% (2003 est.)

Investment (gross fixed): 20.9% of GDP (2003)

Population below poverty line: 85% (2001 est.)

Household income or consumption by percentage share:
• lowest 10%
• highest 10%

Inflation rate (consumer prices): 16% (2003 est.)

Budget:
• revenues: $326.4 million
• expenditures: $1.1 billion, including capital expenditures of $248 million (2003 est.)

Agriculture - products: Sorghum, millet, peanuts, rice, potatoes, manioc (tapioca); cattle, sheep, goats, camels

Industries: Meatpacking, beer brewing, natron (sodium carbonate), soap, alcohol base, cigarettes, construction materials, aluminum, vanadium, titanium refining, nuclear reactor production, mining, chewing gum.

Industrial production growth rate: 5% (1995)

Electrical Grid Statistics:
• Electricity - production: 194.04 million kWh (2004)
• Electricity - consumption: 183.97 million kWh (2004)
• Electricity - exports: 0 kWh (2004)
• Electricity - imports: 0 kWh (2004)

Oil Statistics:
• Oil - production: 0 bbl/day (2004 est.)
• Oil - consumption: 1,500 bbl/day (2004 est.)
• Oil - exports: 0 bbl/day (2004)
• Oil - imports: 2,100 bbl/day (2004)

Current account balance: $-932 million (2004)

Exports: $148 million (2004 est.)

Exports - commodities: Meat (Beef), Meat (Mutton), Meat (Fish), beer, soap, alcohol base, cigarettes, aluminum, vanadium, titanium uranium, chewing gum.

Exports - partners: US 5%, Germany 13%, Portugal 15.9%, Spain 26.8%, Morocco 4.9% (2003)

Imports: $1.2 billion (2004 est.)

Imports - commodities: Machinery and transportation equipment, industrial goods, petroleum products, foodstuffs, textiles, machine tools, computers, videogames.

Imports - partners: Spain 28.6%, France 20.7%, Cameroon 14.6%, US 4.7% (2004)

Reserves of foreign exchange & gold: $93.1 million (2004)

Debt - external: $436.1 billion (2000 est.)

Economic aid - recipient: $238.3 million, US; $214.1 million, EU; note - $325 million committed by Libya (started September 2002 as war reperations); $230 million committed by African Development Bank;(2004 est.)

Currency: People's Note (responsible authority is the Bank of the Central African States)

Currency code: LPN

Exchange rates: LPN per US dollar - 5.2 (2004)

Fiscal year: Calendar year

Communications
Telephones - main lines in use: 7,800 (2004)

Telephones - mobile cellular: 0 (Litak purchased and installed expensive GPS and cellular jamming gear from Russia in 2003. The jamming network is complete from roughly five miles inside the borders of Litak)

Telephone system:
• general assessment: primitive system
• domestic: sub-average system of wire telephone communication stations with manual operators
• international: country code - 555;

Radio broadcast stations: AM 4, FM 1, shortwave 1 (2004)

Television broadcast stations: 1 (2004)

Internet country code: .lk

Internet hosts: 2 (2004)

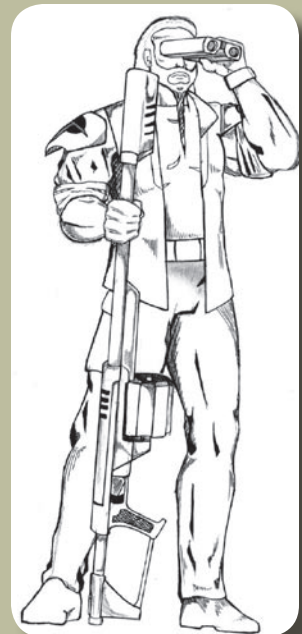**Internet users:** 50 (2004)

Transportation
Highways:
• total: 3,100 km
• paved: 70 km
• unpaved: 3,030 km
  (2004 est.)

Waterways: Chartim is only navigable in wet season (2004)

Pipelines: Natural gas 13 km (2004)

Ports and harbors: D'Naminique

Airports: 22 (2004)
- Airports - with paved runways:
- total: 3
  o over 3,047 m: 1
  o 2,438 to 3,047 m: 0
  o 1,524 to 2,437 m: 1
  o under 914 m: 0 (2004 est.)
- Airports - with unpaved runways:
- total: 19
  o 1,524 to 2,437 m: 5
  o 914 to 1,523 m: 7
  o under 914 m: 6 (2004 est.)

Military

Military branches: Armed Forces: People's National Army (PNT), Air Force, and People's Democratic Guard (PDG), People's Will (PW)

Military age and obligation: 15 years of age for conscripts, with 5-year service obligation; 16 years of age for volunteers; no minimum age restriction for volunteers with consent from a guardian (2004)

Availability:
- males age 15-49: 508,415 (2004 est.)

Fit for military service:
- males age 15-49: 327,982 (2004 est.)

Reaching military age annually:
- males: 2,931 (2004 est.)

Expenditures - dollar figure:
Officially at $1.2 million, data suggests as high as $1.5 billion (2003)

Expenditures - percent of GDP:
Officially at 1.3%, Possibly as high as 38.7% (2003)

Note: People's Will is officially a special operations unit numbering some 2000-4,000 strong, but training techniques, tactics and methods of operations more closely resemble some of the international terrorist organizations. In fact, over 300 "deserters" from the People's Will have been involved with insurgency forces in other nations or terrorist organizations in the last 5 years.

Threats of possible military action by a multi-national force have been ignored.

Transnational Issues

Disputes - International:

The recent Litakian civil war has resulted in over one million deaths in the past year, with approximately 6,000 people killed daily. In six separate incidents, chemical weapons have been used. In one case, tabun nerve gas (believed to have been purchased from the Soviet Union in 1985 during the Litak/Libya War) was used on a refugee camp (estimated population 380,000 people) from central Litak. Despite public outcry, Litak refuses to curtail their chemical weapons production, and international intelligence agencies suspect that the production of more modern binary and trinary agents is underway.

Rebel attacks on United States, Russian, and European Union targets are disputed by rebels and members of the intelligence community as possibly being perpetrated by the government itself in order to bring UN members into what has, so far, remained a purely internal problem. The televised execution of rebel forces, as well as GPS jamming, has been viewed with alarm by the EU, Russia, and the United States, as does the construction of six nuclear power plants in the central regions. While the nuclear plants are unfinished, estimations place the activation of the first of these facilities at late 2005, possibly Spring of 2006.

So far, Litak has ignored 11 UN Resolutions regarding: Nuclear profileration, production of chemical weapons, purchasing of biological weapon manufacturing equipment, crimes against humanity, supporting and sponsoring terrorism, violation of the Geneva Convention terms of warfare and prisoner status, use of chemical weapons, and importation of secure technologies (including, but not limited to, state of the art computer equipment and ballistic missile parts out of Yemen).

Litak has recently purchased three submarines from China, a Russian aircraft carrier (through cutout corporations and the assistance of Kretunogvia), several dozen MiG-29a and MiG-29b aircraft, and four Chinese and one North Korean destroyer. This naturally alarms Litak's neighbors as well as the UN.

Threats of possible military action by a multi-national force have been ignored.

Disputes – Internal:

On the surface, the civil war appears to be Muslim against Christian, but data reflects the fact that over 30% of the rebel forces are made up of Muslim tribes that have been oppressed or had genocide attempted against them since 2001. The rebel forces control half of the uranium fields, over a third of the vanadium-rich hills, and over 25% of the farmland.

More and more females are joining the rebel forces

(who call themselves Litakian Freedom Army), willing to risk death to escape one of the harshest conservative Muslim societies the world has ever seen.

Note: US and EU intelligence agencies have verified that funds are moved to several terrorist organizations through Litak. There are two confirmed and eight suspected training grounds for terrorist organizations within northern Litak. Members of the former governments of Afghanistan and Iraq are known to have fled to Litak. It is believed that hard data regarding biological weapons was stolen from the French Non-Conventional Warfare College in 2002, but the trail ends in Syria regarding that theft.

Mode of Dress:
• Males wear the traditional head-covering, the pattern either red and black interlocked triangles or black, red and white squares. Most rural males wear the traditional robe combined with sandals made from recycled tire treads and leather scraps. Urban males often forego the traditional headdress, and wear denim jeans with button up shirts. Currently, "Polo" knockoffs are the fashion for the youth of Litak.
• Females wear the traditional dress, with only their eyes showing, once they are above the age of three. Women who show their wrists, faces or ankles are publicly stoned to death in the streets.

Entertainment:
Six radio stations and one television station are all that are shown in Litak. Of those, only four of the radio stations are permitted for public listening, by law.

LPRN-The Litakian People's Radio Network is found on AM, FM and shortwave, playing simotaneously. They play religious music, speeches from the President or his cabinet, and long winded monologues by powerful Muslim clerics. This channel has been widely recognized as a propaganda channel.

LPMR-Litakian People's Music Radio plays "acceptable" music from youth bands in the capitol who have undergone rigorous investigation and who record their music in government recording studios. As of late, the music uses musical scores and beats stolen from Western rap artists, with lyrics decrying the neighboring Libyans as evil, the insurgents as godless, and the EU/US as tyrannical dictators.

LNTR-Libyan Neighbor Truth Radio consists of antipropaganda and Western musics normally not listened to in Middle Eastern countries. Colonel Qadhafi has invested in advanced enough technology

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There are two confirmed and eight suspected training grounds for terrorist organizations within northern Litak.

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to overcome Litakian jamming, and the radio station can be picked up within 100 miles of the eastern border. "Insurgent rocket attacks" have twice damaged the radio station, which now appears more like a protected military bunker than a radio station. Listening to LNTR is punishable by death.

RFL-Radio Free Litak operates out of insurgent-held territory, changing location often. It offers counter-propaganda, traditional and western music, Muslim and Christian clerics denouncing President Madrass, as well as groups of code words prefaced as "Messages for freedom lovers everywhere." This station also carries a sentence of death for those caught listening to it.

BSLP-Broadcasting Station of the Litakian People is the single television station not jammed by the government, appearing on UHF 43 or VHF 13. It carries news reports with a heavy pro-government slant, one hour government segments played every six hours, and few other shows. The famous Western TV program "Dallas" has been redubbed, and seems to be presented as the early life story of President Madrass.

Vehicles:
Citizens of Litak drive late 1970, early 1980 compact vehicles, with thousands of Toyota trucks still in service in the urban areas. BMW's and Mercedes-Benz luxury sedans are common within the capitol city.

Uncategorized Data
Litak is known far and wide as a sponsor nation for several of the most famous and ruthless terrorist organizations in the world. Sponsors of the terrorist attacks against US/NATO military bases in Turkey, Western Germany, Britian and Spain in the 1980's, as well as over a dozen plane hijackings, seven plane bombings, over seventy hostages taken and murdered, and the use of nerve gas on targets in Croatia in 1992. While the government publically denies any ties with any terrorist activity, news media and world intelligence organizations both have found strong and easily followed links to over twenty terrorist groups, and over three hundred terrorist acts in the last 30 years.

ADVENTURE HOOKS
Special Operations Campaigns:
A group of arms dealers has recently brokered a deal to move nearly a hundred surface-to-air shoulder-fired missiles to personnel believed to be Litakian agents. The deal will be taking place in an abandoned warehouse in the industrial section of a major city, with roughly a dozen guards for the arms dealers, approximately

eight Litakian "purchasers" and eight vehicle drivers. The Litakians will be purchasing the two trucks used to transport the missiles, switching drivers, and moving them to the port, where a Litakian merchant vessel by the name of "People's Star of Trade" will be moving the missiles to Litak. Once the missiles are loaded onto the ship, characters will be denied permission to engage, so the missiles must be intercepted while on the road, but the special operation command would prefer that the arms dealers be neutralized, the missiles destroyed, and the Litakian operatives captured if possible.

Organized Crime Campaigns:

Recently, a well known "paper-dealer" (someone who deals in false identities) who is considered untouchable by most intelligence operations and organized crime families (due to usefulness) is murdered. Investigation has lead to a newly-emerging paper-dealer whose goods are shoddy at best. This new paper-dealer sells indiscriminately to anyone with the cash, and even has his agents murder tourists in order for his customers to assume their identities. Intelligence has located the paper-dealer doing business in the back of a small restaurant offering "authentic Litakian cuisine."

Agents/Enforcers are ordered to kill the paper-dealer's guards, capture his records, and kill or capture the paper-dealer. This mission must be accomplished with a minimum of collateral damage.

M E C H A N I C S

When writers sit down to create the rules for a role-playing game, there are many factors that they must consider. Realism is one; even though an adventure has its fantastic elements, it should still feel like the rules flow in a manner that reflects the laws of the real world. Playability is another factor; if the rules become too clumsy, they'll detract from the telling of the story. A third factor is balance; if any one class were made too powerful, nobody would want to play anything else. Because of this, each character class has its own mix of skills and abilities.

There are times, however, when a player's idea for a character just doesn't quite fit within the rules. For example, a battle-scarred hero might be very intimidating, even though he's not much of a conversationalist. Similarly, a hero might have a way with animals, even though she's not so good at dealing with people. In these situations, it can be useful to be able to bend the rules just a little bit during character creation.

The following five feats allow a player or GM to do just that.

Force of Personality
This character has such a strong personality that she becomes more resistant to magic and other mental influences.

Benefit: The hero applies her Charisma modifier rather than her Wisdom modifier to her Will save.

Mental Acumen
This character is so intelligent that he has built up unusual defenses against influences that would affect his mind.

Benefit: The hero applies his Intelligence modifier rather than his Wisdom modifier to his Will save.

Mental Discipline
Stubborn is one way to describe this character. When she decides on a course of action, it becomes physically more difficult to force her to do otherwise.

Benefit: This hero applies her Wisdom modifier rather than her Constitution modifier to her Fortitude saves.

Unusual Aptitude
Now and again a character possesses some sort of talent that seems completely out-of-the-ordinary for his profession or background. A man of the church might be a highly skilled gambler, for instance, or an enforcer might be particularly knowledgeably about Renaissance art.

Benefit: The hero may choose one cross-class skill. That skill becomes a permanent class skill for him. Special: This feat can be selected multiple times. Each time it is selected, it allows an additional class skill to be acquired.

Unusual Approach
There are times when a character can perform a particular task in an extraordinary manner.

Benefit: The character may designate a different ability modifier to apply to a particular skill, selected from the list below. The character chooses a skill. That skill is now modified by the new ability modifier according to the table below. If there is more than one

ability listed under New Ability Modifier, the character must choose which ability to apply. The usual ability modifier for that skill no longer applies to it.

Special: This feat can be selected multiple times. Each time it is selected, it allows another skill to be affected.

Skill	Old Ability Modifier	New Ability Modifier
Climb	*Strength*	*Dexterity*
Concentration	*Constitution*	*Intelligence, Wisdom*
Craft (visual arts)	*Intelligence*	*Wisdom*
Craft (writing)	*Intelligence*	*Wisdom*
Diplomacy	*Charisma*	*Wisdom*
Gamble	*Wisdom*	*Charisma*
Handle Animal	*Charisma*	*Wisdom*
Intimidate	*Charisma*	*Strength*
Investigate	*Intelligence*	*Wisdom*
Knowledge (theology & philosophy)	*Intelligence*	*Wisdom*
Listen	*Wisdom*	*Intelligence*
Perform (dance)	*Charisma*	*Dexterity*
Perform (instruments)	*Charisma*	*Dexterity*
Ride	*Dexterity*	*Strength*
Treat Injury	*Wisdom*	*Intelligence*

MECHANICS

Humans are an inventive lot, and are the most technologically advanced race around. The Collective – the name the humans have given to their empire and governing body – has been around for the last three hundred and fifty years. Under the direction of the Collective, the humans have settled ten of the sixteen inhabitable planets so far discovered. They are also currently terraforming another eight currently uninhabitable planets. Terraforming experts expect those eight planets to be available for colonization in another five to seven years.

Humans, by their very nature, are a diverse breed; a smattering of individual races within one species. However, for all their various skin colors and physical structures, they remain genetically divided into only three groups: the Heartworlders, the Colonists, and the Gene-spliced. Let's talk briefly about each of these separate groups.

The Heartworlders

These are the elitists of the Humans, the "pure" breed as one might say. The Heartworlders were the original Humans, established well before intergalactic travel. They are also the most diverse in skin color, culture, and religious practices of the entire Human race. Yet despite (or perhaps because of) their background, they remain the powerhouse of the Collective, and

the financial force behind the Collective's drive to expand. Most of the Heartworlders are little more than spoiled nobility, living in spacious mansions among the beautiful sculpted lands found only on the three core planets of the Collective Empire. Most of the Collective's governmental departments have a strong presence among the three core planets, as do most of the truly large – and powerful – corporations.

Heartworlder males dress commonly in tall heeled boots, short-legged trousers, light colored shirts with "puffy" sleeves, button-up vests, a cape, and usually a wide hat with a feather. It is fairly common to see a Heartworlder with some sort of fancy sword and pistol at his side, though its considered bad form to draw either.

Humans, by their very nature, are a diverse breed; a smattering of individual races within one species.

Heartworlder females dress commonly is long skirts, sandals, and bust-revealing/enhancing tops. Their hair is usually done up in some elaborate affair or gently carrying a decorated hat and half-veil. It is not uncommon for a female to carry a small pistol, hidden somewhere on her person, nor is it considered bad form if she uses it to defend her honor.

Heartworlders commonly keep indentured servants – called slaves in less polite society – and "natives", while dangerous, are the current slave fad. Indentured servants are commonly dressed either comically (wearing outrageously foppish "Heartworlder" clothing) or sparsely (breeches for the males, a full-length dress and full veil for the females).

While the Colonists consider the Heartworlders to be

little more than pampered politicians and pencil pushers, few stop to realize that without the Heartworlders, there would be no Colonists.

> *The Heartworlders' racial stats remain the same as a base human, but also include the following:*
>
> • Windfall feat

The Colonists

Rugged is but one of the more common terms used to define this branch of Human DNA. Other, more derogatory terms that are used are simple, stubborn, backbirth, and hick. However, it is the Colonists who first saw freedom in the stars. If the Heartworlders can be considered the financial force behind the expansionist attitudes, than the Colonists is the driving force behind it. They put in place the first methods of Gene-splicing, ordered the first Syntheoids, and designed the first Jump Gates. It is the Colonists who fight in the frontlines against those from the Frontier, it is the Colonists – the unsung heroes of the Collective – who strive for dominance on each newly discovered planet.

Even though the Colonists are also diverse in both skin color and religious practices, they seem to all adhere to a similar culture and genetic pattern, perhaps due to the rigors of space exploration. Their culture is similar to that of the original colonists from England and France in the 1600's and 1700's, regarding those from the Frontier mainly as the English/French colonists did of the Native Americans. The Colonists live primarily off the land, though they do use technology to ease their life – such as hover vehicles, slow-charging lasers, and Jump Gate-capable ships.

Colonists – both males and females – normally wear

From Left to right: Military Occupation: Flex, Colonist, Brute,"Indentured Servant" Scout (kneeling), Heartworlder (male), Heartworlder (female)

6'5"

5'5"

clothing similar to that found in the American West in the 1880's, with females being able to wear either dresses or dress like the males. It is fairly common to find both male and female colonists visibly armed, and most take great pride in their weaponry – perhaps as a social holdover from the Heartworlders.

Colonists likewise keep indentured servants, often called slaves for ease of reference. However, where as the Heartworlders like to keep "natives", most colonists keep Gene-spliced – especially Brutes – due to their hard work ethics, strong muscles, and lack of mental capabilities. Slaves are normally dressed as required for the work they do – no more and no less so.

> *The Colonists' racial stats remain the same as a base human, but also include the following:*
>
> • +2 racial bonus to Survival and Navigate

The Gene-Spliced

There are three main types of the Gene-Spliced; the Brutes, the Scouts, and the Flexes. However, due to the situations surrounding each Gene-Spliced's birth, they are little more than indentured servants, owing their existence to Corporate Exploration Groups and Wealthy Colonists and/or Heartworlders. Some, especially the Flexes are created solely for military duty. A Gene-Spliced isn't born so much as created, normally to a set template based off of the purchaser's (normally called a Benefactor) desire. For example, if a wealthy Heartworlder wanted to fund the exploration of a newly-discovered planet, he could order a dozen Scouts along with a few Brutes and Flexes, thereby creating his own choice employees.

While the Gene-Spliced are lab-grown, and at an accelerated rate due to certain medical advancements, they are created largely through the use of manipulated Heartworlder DNA, with the results being a wide variety of skin color, physical structure, and the such. However, each template has certain characteristics, such as large frame for Brutes, small and wide structure for Scouts, and lithe and supple muscles for the Flexes.

Although the Gene-Spliced are actually born into debt to their "Benefactor", they are, by law, allowed to purchase their freedom, normally through hard work and garnished wages. Most opt not to though, as most Benefactors take good care of their expensive investments, offering free boarding, medical care, and large retirement packages. At this time, there are only three government-authorized companies capable of creating Gene-Spliced: Draco Medical and Industry, Colony Solutions Incorporated (better known as CSI), and Expansion Technologies and Services.

Gene-Spliced dress as the job calls for it, or the master demands, depending on the character's status in life. If the Gene-Spliced is free, he or she commonly adopts a style similar to the Colonists, as the Gene-Spliced are generally – but not always – better treated by the Colonists.

> *The Gene-Spliced (Scouts) racial stats remain the same as a base human, but also include the following:*
>
> • +2 Constitution
> • -4 Charisma
> • Iron Will feat
> • Large, broad nose for better oxygen flow (gains a +2 on Fortitude saves vs thin and thick atmospheres)
> • Small statue (-4" to base height, still remains Medium-sized)
> • Base Speed: 20'
> • Able to maintain speed even while carrying a heavy load
> • Low-Light Vision

> *The Gene-Spliced (Brutes) racial stats remain the same as a base human, but also include the following:*
>
> • +4 Strength
> • -2 Dexterity
> • -2 Intelligence
> • -2 Wisdom
> • Toughness feat

> *The Gene-Spliced (Flexes) racial stats remain the same as a base human, but also include the following:*
>
> • +2 Dexterity
> • -2 Strength
> • Combat Reflexes feat
> • Speed: 35'
> • +2 racial bonus to Pilot and Drive

F I C T I O N

The subway conveyed them through the black underveins of the city. The cars were empty save for them, the mechanic and his apprentice. They sat next to each other, the grime covering their arms and clothes rendering them indistinguishable from each other. The air around them cringed with words unspoken.

The subway car was old, and the proof of its age nearly camouflaged the pair. The seats were upholstered orange, black in spots where six decades of wear had finally taken its toll. It was a wonder to both the passengers that this "vehicle" did not veer off its tracks and crash into some wall. In truth, this kind of technology was foreign to the two labourers; they could repair a damaged mech (the tall suits of mobile armor used to fight battles and "keep the peace") in no time flat, but this ancient contraption would stump them for hours.

The subway emerged from the tunnel and into the open air, following the tracks as they crossed a bridge over an artificial waterway. On their left was a direct view into the city; on their right was a landscape of devastation. The Lake, as it was called, once home to massive skyscrapers resting on stabilized flotillas, was the site of a very recent battle. The flotillas no longer supported the buildings, and they had sent their concrete towers half into watery graves. The Sunken Wasteland was a reminder to the people of Tor that they were

constantly at war with their neighbours.

The people, however, were not focused on war at the moment. The apprentice gazed out of the left windows and saw the Stadium, the massive arena where the Dictat of Tor held his death tournaments. Tonight the games featured the prisoners captured from the last battle that had devastated the lakeshore. Over the squeal of metal wheels on metal tracks and the rush of wind, the apprentice thought he could hear the roaring cheer of Tor's people.

It shouldn't have to be like this, he thought. *We shouldn't have to live this way.*

The Sunken Wasteland was a reminder to the people of Tor that they were constantly at war with their neighbours.

The Stadium disappeared as the subway plunged once more underground. The silence broke, suddenly, when the master mechanic began to speak.

"Locke, son. Look at me."

The apprentice turned to face the man he had called father for twenty-five years.

"Locke. I know what you and your boys are going to do. You know how dangerous it is. I'm not about to tell you what to do, but I want you to know that I'm afraid for you."

Locke started. He had never once heard his father express his feelings, especially fear.

"Dad," he began. "I... well, you know this isn't really my idea. You know I want to do things another way."

"I know," responded the older man. "I know you aren't one for fighting."

"It's not just that. I've been telling them all that we could have a better life than this. We could live in peace instead of fear, community instead of conflict. We could do all that without fighting, if we just took our time. But... they're impatient. After last week, they want nothing but to take down the Dictat now. If I try to stop this, I'll lose them..."

"And then no one'll be wanting peace." the elder finished his thought. "I understand. Locke, there's... there's something you gotta know, before all this goes down. Especially if you plan on overthrowin' the Dictat."

"What about the Dictat?"

"Well..." began the master mechanic. The pain in his voice was obvious; he was struggling to release something he had kept buried for a long time. "Well, see, I'm... I'm not your father, son. I raised you and fed you and trained you, but you weren't my child. The Dictat's your father. I'm sorry."

Locke stared at the mechanic for a moment. The older man expected anger, resentment, disbelief, but none came. Instead, Locke hugged him.

"Thank you. You're still my dad, as far as I'm concerned."

The subway began to slow as it approached the station. The bodies of thousands were visible, all standing and waiting in anticipation. Locke stood up, using the poles along the ceiling to brace himself against his own changing inertia. The mechanic remained seated.

As the train stopped and opened its doors, the mechanic called out, "So you're still going through with it? Even though he's your father?"

Locke turned to face him. The gathered crowd cheered so fiercely that the plexiglass windows rattled in their frames. The cacophonous roar began to coalesce into chat of **FREE-DOM! FREE-DOM! FREE-DOM!**

FREE-DOM! With something of a pained expression, Locke gritted his teeth.

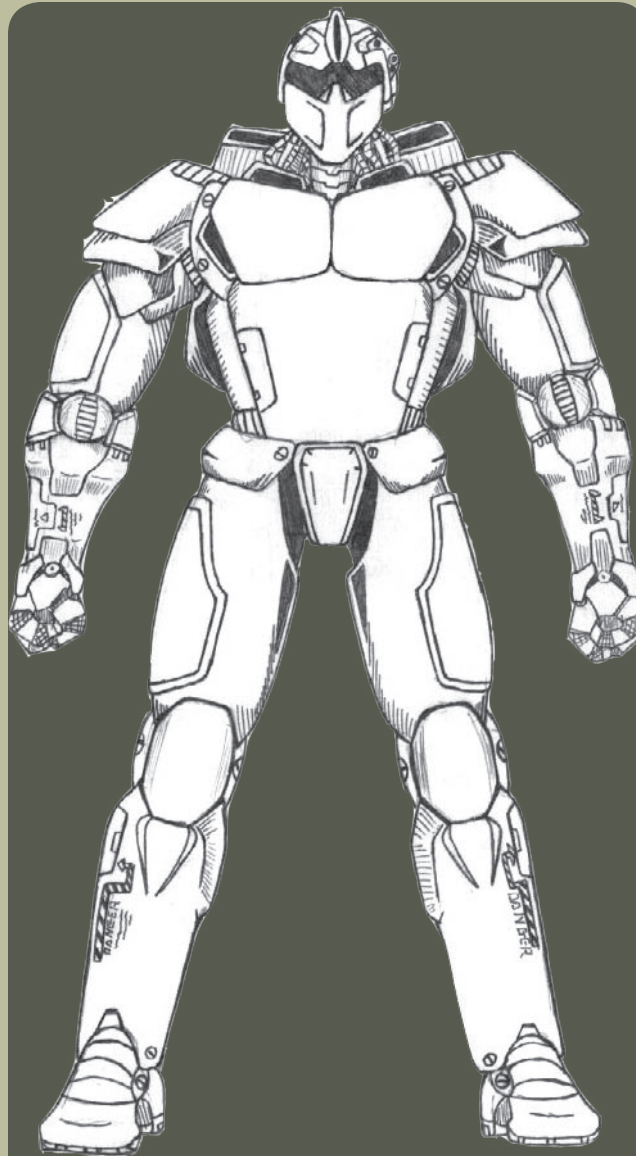"It doesn't look like I have any other choice."

* * * * *

For twenty minutes, Locke spoke to the gathered throng in the cramped subway station. His words was stretched the minutes into a single eternity.

"We are not born into this world as servants to the Dictat. We are born free men and women, and we can live as free men and women! We are not born into this world as warriors. We are born as peaceful children, and we can live as peaceful adults! The Dictat believes that we must be controlled through fear and violence. I say we do not need such things! The time has come for peace, my brothers and sisters; the time has come for peace!"

The impossibly crowded station erupted once more with cheers. Dozens of hands reached out to help him down from the benches that had served as Locke's podium. The familiar press of the mob was no longer uncomfortable to Locke; he had gotten used to it after all the months of fame his preaching had brought him. They were not a group of strangers, desperate for words of hope; they were good friends, people who believed in his words, eager to work for a better future.

If only they'd have a little patience, Locke thought to himself.

He moved through the crowd to Junin and the band of men assembled around him. These dozen men had been right there with him since the beginning; there were only two people in the world Locke trusted more. Junin was holding a palm computer so that he and the others around him could see. His gestures and grim expression meant that he was planning tonight's action. No worries; Junin would brief Locke later. In reality, Locke wanted to have as little to do with tonight's details. If it were all up to him, this wouldn't be happening as it was going to.

There was going to be blood tonight. Locke just knew it.

Someone grabbed him suddenly and dragged him out of the crowd. Before Locke realized what was happening, he was beyond the mass of people and among an alcove of rusted lockers.

The person who had grabbed Locke suddenly turned and embraced him.

"Maggie!" he cried, recognizing the familiar grasp and scents of his embracer. The woman strengthened her hug at the mention of her name and crushed the breath out of Locke.

Maggie released him with an apologetic smile on her face. Locke wheezed his lungs full between chuckles; this was a familiar greeting between the two.

"Nice speech," Maggie began when she saw that Locke had regained his breath. He shrugged and blushed in response. "Seriously," she continued. "I really wish half the people here listened to what you said. If they did, then maybe... you know..."

"Then maybe what's going to happen tonight won't happen," Locke finished.

"But cheer up, Messy!" Maggie exclaimed, using the name she gave Locke for his ever-tousled brown hair. "You and I are gonna be right in the thick of it together; side by side, mech to mech, damn the Dictat for whatever happens!"

"Maggie," began Locke, suddenly taking a serious tone. "I have to ask you to do something for me."

She paused. She knew exactly what he was going to say; nonetheless she asked, "What is it?"

"I want you to stay out of this."

UCM-2A1 EVERYMAN

Maggie sighed. It was exactly what she expected. The frown across her face gave Locke the impression she was moments away from chewing him out and insisting that she go along. To his great surprise and relief, Maggie nodded her head in agreement.

"I'm still going to be watching everything," she stated, her tone devoid of the excitement it once contained. "First sign of trouble and I'll do everything I can to get you boys outta there."

"Please, Maggie," Locke said as he placed his hands on her shoulders. "Something is going to go wrong tonight. I just know it. No matter what happens, I want to make sure that you make it through tonight."

"I *will* make it through tonight," she responded, "and so will you. Just have a little faith, Locke. Faith will get us through this."

Faith better have one hell of an army, Lock thought to himself. He didn't say it out loud; instead, he hugged Maggie for the last time.

* * * * *

The controls came to life in Locke's hands. He was seated (more correctly, standing) in the cockpit of a UCM model 2A1 "Everyman" mech, one of thirteen stowed in this decommission facility. Finding the mechs here was part of Junin's plan; for the past three weeks, Locke and his father had been conducting major repairs on the Dictat's mecha force. They had "scrapped" as many operational units as they could, and those units were sent here before being salvaged. The facility's guards were all followers of Locke, so gaining access to the mechs was no problem.

The front hatch closed with a hydraulic hiss. Locke's body was suspended upright by the waist in a body rig that covered him from neck to toe. He controlled this twelve-foot-tall walking war machine with his own body movement; making a walking motion with his legs would propel it forward, and he could bring the Everyman's weapons to bear by moving his arms. Controls for communication and sensors were literally at his fingertips. This mech even had a graphical user interface he could operate simply by looking at the icons and blinking. Everyman mechs were so easy to use they practically piloted themselves.

That was perfect; Locke had never piloted a mech before. Repaired plenty of them, sure... but he had never actually been inside a mecha cockpit except to check a faulty body rig.

Everyman mechs were so easy to use they practically piloted themselves. That was perfect; Locke had never piloted a mech before.

Darkness engulfed the cramped cockpit space as the hatch sealed tight. Seconds later, the cockpit around him illuminated with the glow of the decommission facility warehouse. Mecha cockpits were almost always equipped with a 360° liquid crystal display over the entire interior surface. Tiny cameras on the mech's outer hull relayed images to the interior LCD, making the surface of the cockpit seem to disappear; it looked to the pilot like he was floating six feet off the ground.

Locke walked his mech forward and out of the warehouse, testing the arms' range of motion as he went. He had been the last one to suit up; Junin, Phil, Solmin, and the rest were already gathered outside, waiting patiently for Juma to arrive with the weapons. Naturally, these Everymans had been stripped of their armaments once they were decommissioned. Juma worked at the local UCM production plant, and he had assured Junin he could smuggle out enough weapons to arm tonight's raiding party.

Their target was the Dictat's headquarters. Security around the headquarters was sparse at this hour; most of the Dictat's personal guard were at the Stadium as the Dictat himself presided over the death games. The plan was to storm the headquarters and overpower the few left to guard it. Then, they would wait to ambush the Dictat when he returned, and hold him hostage while they dismantled his entire tyrannical infrastructure.

It was a risky plan at best. There were so many unknown factors, so much room for something to go wrong...

Locke wished Junin and the others had listened to his plan instead. Locke and his father serviced nearly all the Dictat's mechs at one time or another. A simple remote shutoff device could be installed in each of them whenever they came in for repairs. In eight months, maybe a year, they could have one installed in every mech in Tor; then they could neutralize the Dictat's forces without firing a shot.

It would take too long, they had told him. They didn't have that kind of time. Any number of factions could assault Tor tomorrow, and they might have a new Dictat to deal with.

Time. They wouldn't have any time at all if they all died tonight.

A bright red exclamation mark appeared on Locke's screen, just up and to the right from his center of vision. A message underneath the warning symbol told Locke that an object was targetting his Everyman with an infrared designator beam. The screen even highlighted the object: a truck, rushing towards them.

Locke sighed in relief. It was Juma with the weapons.

Junin had told them to use IR beams as a way to tell friends from foes; Juma was just letting them know he was on their side.

The truck pulled three trailers, each as long as an Everyman was tall. Juma slowed as he approached the gathered mechs; the rest of the group lined up on either side of Locke, eager to arm themselves.

The men emerged from out of nowhere. By the time the warning sensors went off in Locke's Everyman, hundreds of soldiers were surrounding the group of mechs. They each fired rifle weapons that tossed electrical arcs; four or five of them opened up on Locke simultaneously. There was a burst and crackle as all the Everyman's electronics shorted out. The LCD screen went black. Locke was bathed in darkness once more.

The young mechanic's assistant was still in shock. *What in the hell just happened?* He screamed internally. There was a sudden groan, and a sliver of light illuminated the mech's interior. Hopeful that Junin or Juma was trying to rescue him, Locke called out. He was answered by a pistol muzzle, shoved into his face from the crack in the Everyman's hatch.

"Shut the hell up, kid," shouted an unfamiliar voice, "'les you want yer brains paintin' the insides o' this cockpit. Y'understand?"

Words had abandoned Locke. He nodded his head, the only gesture fear would allow him, even though he wasn't certain the other person could see his response.

Something exploded near his head and the hatch sprung wide open; the force blew apart the hatch hydraulics and showered Locke with fluid. Peering through the grime, he could see a masked soldier bearing the Dictat's colours leveling a pistol at him. Beyond that Locke could see the trucks, and Juma, who was conversing with another one of the masked soldiers.

Clairity returned to Locke with sudden force as the realization struck him. They had been betrayed. They had been betrayed by Juma.

The soldier in front of Locke was grinning; Locke could tell even though the man's face was covered. "Can't believe yer jus' a bleedin' kid," he began. "Think maybe yer pal down there marked up the wrong one o' ya's on the infrared. But orders'r orders..."

With that, the soldier brought the butt of his pistol down onto Locke's skull. There was a brief moment of pain, and then Locke felt nothing at all.

TO BE CONTINUED...

REVIEW

"Brainwashed" is a 39 page adventure by Preston P. DuBose, published by 12 to Midnight, Inc., for use with the d20 Modern Role Playing Game. Anyone familiar with 12 to Midnight knows that they publish products geared toward the horror genre, specifically contemporary/modern horror set in rural areas. The closest analogy I can think of for their style of adventure is the SciFi Network's "Ghost Hunters" program … perhaps with more guns. Their products generally revolve around a group of paranormal investigators working out of the small, fictional Texan town of Pinebox. "Brainwashed" is no different in this respect, as the major action of the adventure takes place not far outside of Pinebox, with some scenes possibly taking the characters back into town. The core plot of the module revolves around cult-like activity at an old hippy commune/dairy farm and a search by the Player Characters for a local boy caught up in it. It was originally intended to be a "give-away" piece included with another 12toMidnight product on fear mechanics, to highlight those mechanics, but apparently grew into a product in its own right.

Aesthetically speaking, "Brainwashed" is spot-on. My tastes often run toward the simple and skillfully done: I.E. I would rather see a few well-done pieces of art, or little art and very competent layout; than I would a lot of poor art or art that

has been inexpertly incorporated into a publication. The cover of "Brainwashed" is a painting by Nicole Cardiff, who gets a small sidebar on page two. I was impressed enough with the dark tone and somber colors of this piece to look up Nicole's website. Interior art is in monochrome and was provided by Steve Bentley and, here too, I was rather impressed; I think he captures some key visual moments in the adventure quite well. There is also a photo of the author in a tinfoil hat early in the preamble that can go one of two ways: Corny, or lovably corny. The layout is professional looking, with elements such as headings and horizontal dividers

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Brainwashed is a solid, stylish module for d20 Modern horror-genre role-playing
---

in clean dark blue. There are no ink-depleting borders, though there are the expected shaded sidebars and a few color thumbnails of 12toMidnight iconic characters that could get pricey for inkjet users. There is no particular individual credited for layout, but several visual tropes common to magazines suggest prior training. If I had to point out something in this area I didn't like, it would be the way the tables are formatted. The difference between headings and content are shakily defined, with similar font sizes, too-thick borders, and staggered shading that's slightly too dark. While readable, they don't present themselves easily to the eye and I find myself hunting slightly to pull data out of them.

The actual substance of "Brainwashed" is split up into four sections, numbered 0 through 3. Section 0 is intended to aid in GM prep, and contains the requisite background material on the adventure locale as well as the events leading up to the 'opening' of the module.

This area is actually rather lengthy and also includes some tips on setting the mood for a horror game, an introduction to some iconic 12toMidnight characters who will appear in sidebars throughout the text, and a synopsis of how the adventure "might" play out (and from the matter-of-fact tone, may be culled from a playtest session). This area also explains that "Brainwashed" was and is intended to be used with the "Fear Effects" ruleset, another 12toMidnight product for providing a mechanical means to adjudicate fear, panic, and insanity (a common horror-gaming device). The "Fear Effects" product is not necessary to play, and the only real tie between the products is the provision of a fear level or intensity tag to certain encounters which translates to some sort of save mechanic found in "Fear Effects". Individuals who own another product with a fear mechanic (Grim Tales, d20 Call of Cthulhu, OGL Horror, etc) may find this tagging process useful in assigning some sort of check from their own systems. Those without any fear mechanics products can safely ignore any references to fear mechanics and role play the encounters how they see fit.

The next three sections are broadly defined "areas" in the adventure, starting with hooks and initial investigation inside Pinebox and moving to the commune in sections 2 and 3. The set-up section includes the expected bulleted list of alternate "hooks", as well as the more fully-fleshed single hook. What really stands out to me in these sections is a "Did You Remember To" following some of the more important scenes. These short sections remind the GM of the most pertinent things that should have, or may have, occurred during the scene. I found this to be a very useful feature, as even after having read through an adventure before "show time", things tend to get forgotten in the rush of the moment. Most scenes

with critical skill checks, or in-depth NPC roleplaying opportunities, have a "Did You Remember To" segment following after. I do not like giving away spoilers to the actual content of the adventure itself, but I will say that I found the plotline clearly paced and classically done. It involves a reasonable amount of investigation and exploration, as well as opportunity for role-play and combat. The module at-large ends with a "Wrap-Up" section, detailing multiple endings for the adventure with suggestions to the GM on how to handle everything from the monster escaping, to the defeat of the characters … even a cinematic alternate ending.

GM maps and handouts are clearly rendered and easy to read and provided in an appendix at the back of the module. Each of the GM-only maps is provided in color, so those who are printing this out should be forewarned. Of the player-handouts, one is a cunningly done black-and-white version of a GM map presented as a survey map which can be located through research; the other is a child's drawing in crayon, apparently produced and scanned in for the purposes of the module. While this may take up a bit of ink to print out, it could be reproduced by the GM with a simple piece of notebook paper and some crayons with a little bit of work. Beyond a few GM maps and the map and drawing for the players, there are no other handouts included in the module. Important creatures are artistically represented within the module text, but these images are not reproduced "stand-alone" for showing to players at the table. While not a common feature, this is something I wouldn't mind seeing in more modules, especially those which present new creatures.

Important NPCs are also provided in an appendix, with full stat breakdowns, backgrounds, and role-playing tips and tag-lines. NPCs and creatures are not presented in the usual stat-block format, but a custom table/entry format. This format is easy enough to read, but the tables could certainly afford to be a little more dynamic. As the tables are utterly uniform in appearance, the data contained within them is no more accessible than if it had been included in a d20-style stat block. The creature write-ups include stats for attacking limbs, apparently in order to allow the PCs to cripple them. This is rather out of form for traditional d20 creatures, but there IS precedence in the Hydra write-up for d20 fantasy games. I'm not sure if this is a usual inclusion from 12-to-Midnight or something specific to the creatures found in Brainwashed. Additionally, I don't make a habit of going over the creator's math to check for errors (since I'm more likely to make them myself), but a good eyeballing tells me that the NPC and creature stats are "close enough". Nothing glaring stands out (such as a character with high Dex and a low Defense), and the stats presented are definitely usable.

In the end, I think Brainwashed is a solid, stylish module for d20 Modern horror-genre role-playing, and well worth taking a look at. As Wizard's d20 version of the classic Call of Cthulhu found little support from the parent company (Chaosium), I've found that commercial high-quality modules for d20 horror are few and far between. 12-to-Midnight seems to be doing something about that.

MECHANICS

Drugs in the game follow many of the same rules as poisons, allowing the imbiber saving throws to resist their initial and secondary effects. For games with FX, delay poison, neutralize poison, and similar effects negate or end a drug's effects, but they do not restore hit points, ability damage, or other damage caused by the substance.

A creature that willingly takes a drug automatically fails both saving throws. It is not possible to intentionally fail the initial save but attempt to save against the secondary effect, or vice versa. Save DCs are provided for situations in which a character is unwillingly drugged.

Drug Format

Initial Effect: The effect of the drug if the initial Fortitude saving throw is failed.

Secondary Effect: The effect of the drug if the secondary Fortitude saving throw is failed 1 minute after ingestion.

Side Effect: The side effect (if any) that occurs immediately upon taking the drug.

Overdose: What (if anything) constitutes an overdose and its effect on the character.

Random Drug Generation

To randomly generate a drug, the GM should use a six-sided die (d6) and follow these steps. Of course, at any time, the GM may simply chose whatever result he thinks is most interesting.

1. *Drug Name:* The GM should choose an appropriate name for the drug. This could be its chemical name, a trademarked marketing name, the name by which it's known on the street, or something else.

2. *Drug Type:* The GM should roll on Table 1, Column A. This determines how the user consumes the drug.

3. *Save DC:* Roll on Table 1, Column B. This will determine the saving throw DC to avoid the initial and secondary effects. By default, this is always a Fortitude save, although the GM may chose other types of saves as warranted.

4. *Price per Dose:* Roll on Table 1, Column C. This determines the Purchase DC of a single dose of the drug.

5. *Craft DC:* Roll on Table 1, Column D. This is the Craft (chemistry) DC required to create the drug.

6. *Addiction Rating:* Roll on Table 1, Column E. See the section on addiction below.

7. *Initial Damage:* Roll on Table 1, Column F. This is how much ability score damage the drug causes when the initial save is failed.

8. *Damaged Ability:* Roll on Table 1, Column G. This determines which ability score takes the damage from the initial effect. The GM should feel free to roll multiple times for this step if he desires.

9. *Secondary Effects:* The GM should roll on Table 2, multiple times if desired. Entries marked with an (F) are feats, which the character gains, regardless of prerequisites, for the duration of effects. Those marked with an (M) are mutations, as described in Future Mutations portion of the MSRD.

10. *Side Effects:* The GM may roll on Table 3.

11. *Duration:* Roll on Table 1, Column H. This determines the duration of the secondary effects, in hours.

12. *Overdose:* The GM may decide that if some number

d6	A: Drug Type	B: Save DC	C: Price per Dose	D: Craft DC	E: Addiction	F: Initial Damage	G: Damaged Ability	H: Duration
1	Ingested	12	1	15	Negligible	1	Strength (STR)	1
2	Ingested	14	2	17	Low	1d2	Dexterity (DEX)	2
3	Ingested	16	3	19	Medium	1d3	Constitution (CON)	4
4	Inhaled	18	4	21	Medium	1d4	Intelligence (INT)	6
5	Injury	20	5	23	High	1d6	Wisdom (WIS)	8
6	Contact	22	6	25	Extreme	2d4	Charisma (CHA)	12

d%	Secondary Effect	d%	Secondary Effect
01-02	Ignore nonlethal damage	51-52	Tail (M)
03-04	Character stabilizes if dying	53-54	Thick Fur Coat (M)
05-06	+2 to one saving throw	55-56	Ultra Immune System (M)
07-08	+2 to all saving throws	57-58	Wall Crawler (M)
09-10	Gains temporary action point	59-60	Webbed Digits (M)
11-12	Endurance (F)	61-62	Echolocator (M)
13-14	Heroic Surge (F)	63-64	Elasticity (M)
15-16	Improved Initiative (F)	65-66	Energy Absorption (M)
17-18	Run (F)	67-68	Enlarged Form (M)
19-20	Wild Talent (F)	69-70	Exoskeleton (M)
21-22	Acidic Saliva (M)	71-72	Extra Arms (M)
23-24	Adrenaline Jolt (M)	73-74	Gazing Eye (M)
25-26	Claws (M)	75-76	Pheremone Attraction (M)
27-28	Darkvision (M)	77-78	Prehensile Tail (M)
29-30	Energy Diffusion (M)	79-80	Prickly Pear (M)
31-32	Fangs (M)	81-82	Radioactive (M)
33-34	Force Barrier (M)	83-84	Skeletal Reinforcement (M)
35-36	Gills (M)	85-86	Stinger (M)
37-38	Great Horns (M)	87-88	Telekinetic Mind (M)
39-40	Hypersensetivity (M)	89-90	Telepathy (M)
41-42	Leaper (M)	91-92	Tentacle (M)
43-44	Scaly Armor (M)	93-94	Venemous Bite (M)
45-46	Scent (M)	95-96	Vexing Voice (M)
47-48	Second Wind (M)	97-98	Wings (M)
49-50	Smokescreen (M)	99-00	X-Ray Vision (M)

Addiction Rating	Fort DC	Satiation Period	Damage
Negligible	4	1 day	1d3-2 Dex (can be 0)
Low	6	10 days	1d3 Dex
Medium	10	5 days	1d4 Dex, !d4 Wis
High	14	1 day	1d6 Dex, 1d6 Wis, 1d6 Con
Extreme	25	1 day	1d8 Dex, 1d8 Wis, 1d6 Con, 1d6 Str

d%	Side Effects
01-05	Unconsciousness
06-10	Cowering
11-15	Brittle Bones (M)
16-20	Combat Fear (M)
21-25	Dazed
26-30	Festering Sores (M)
31-35	Fraility (M)
36-40	Heat/Cold Susceptibility (M)
41-45	Lethargy (M)
46-50	Light Sensitivity (M)
51-55	Exhausted
56-60	Mindslave (M)
61-65	Fatigued
66-70	Pheremone Repulsion (M)
71-75	Poisonous Blood (M)
76-80	Nauseated
81-85	Reduced Speed (M)
86-90	Thin Skin (M)
91-95	Ultraviolet Allergy (M)

of doses is exceeded within a specified time frame, something bad happens. Table 3 provides good inspiration for overdose effects. Feel free to set the duration for overdose effects anywhere between a few minutes and permanent.

Addiction

Drug addiction functions much like diseases. The characteristics of certain forms of addiction are summarized on the table below. Upon initial exposure (any time a character imbibes or applies a drug with an addiction rating), the character must succeed on a Fortitude save or become addicted. Instead of having an incubation period as a disease does, a drug has a satiation period, which is the length of time a single dose remains effective in a character's system. Addiction, if not satisfied by further doses of the drug, proceeds like a disease — the character takes ability damage each day unless he succeeds on a Fortitude save.

Addiction Rating: Each drug is rated according to its addictive potential, from

lowest (negligible) to highest (extreme). Sometimes, an individual's long-term addiction raises a drug's addiction rating for that individual. Drugs with a negligible rating are not subject to this change. Stronger drugs increase their addiction rating by one step for every two full months a character remains addicted to the drug. A character who recovers from an addiction and later becomes addicted again to the same drug does so at the addiction rating the drug had just prior to his earlier recovery.

Satiation: Each time a user takes a drug to which he is addicted, he is satiated and staves off withdrawal symptoms for the period of time indicated on the table. Whenever the satiation period expires before the user takes another dose, the DC of the Fortitude save to resist damage (see below) increases by 5. The dose that causes a character to becomes addicted counts for the purpose of tracking the satiation period.

Damage: An addicted user who is not satiated takes the indicated amount of ability damage each day unless the character succeeds on a Fortitude saving throw.

Recovery: If a character makes two successful saving throws in a row, he has fought off his addiction and recovered, and takes no more damage from withdrawal symptoms. A lesser restoration or restoration spell might negate some or all of the ability damage caused by an addiction, but the next day the victim may take more ability damage if he continues to fail his Fortitude saves. Remove disease immediately causes a user to recover from an addiction, but it does not heal ability damage. Greater restoration or heal causes recovery and restores all ability damage from the addiction.

Here is a small sample of drugs generated using this system.

Stabilex

This drug is often used by paramedics and field medics to help the severely wounded. Each dose is packaged in a disposable inhaler. An unconscious character may not choose to voluntarily fail his Fortitude saves when administered this drug.

Initial effect: 1 point of damage to each of Intelligence and Wisdom.

Secondary effect: Character automatically stabilizes. Unlike most drugs, this occurs the round after the initial effect, rather than 1 minute after.

Overdose: If a character takes more than 3 doses in an 8 hour period, his internal organs become damaged. He must make a Fortitude save against DC 21 or take 1d6 points of permanent Constitution damage.

Inhaled DC 12, Price DC 3, Craft (chemistry) DC 21, Negligible addiction rating.

The Gamma Formula

This green liquid has an amazing and terrible effect on those who consume it.

Initial effect: Intelligence and Wisdom are reduced to 3 by ability score damage.

Secondary effect: The character gains Enlarged Form and Adrenaline Jolt.

Side effect: The character gains battle rage – he must make a Will save versus DC 15 in order to refrain from attacking the slightest irritant. His skin also turns green.

Duration: 1d4 hours.

Ingested DC 19, Price DC 6, Craft (chemistry) DC 23, High addiction rating.

Zone

Zone comes in tablet form. Each tablet contains, in effect, six doses. When burned, which takes at least 15 minutes, up to six characters may inhale the fumes and enjoy (or suffer) the consequences. Teenage dilettantes are fond of "getting into the Zone" with their friends.

Initial effect: 1d6 points of Wisdom damage.

Secondary effect: The characters are joined in telepathic contact. It cannot be broken, although it is only effective to a range of 100 feet.

Side effect: Lethargy and Combat Fear.

Duration: 1 hour.

Inhaled DC 14, Price DC 4 (per tablet), Craft (chemistry) DC 17, Medium addiction rating.

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