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The Mad Dogs

by Michael Tresca

NOTE: This article, while usable on its own, is best used with Ronin Arts' *Modern: Mercenary Manual*, also by Michael Tresca.

The shot was still echoing in their ears when somebody started weeping uncontrollably.

Tom swallowed hard. He tried not to move. He certainly didn't cry like that other idiot. He had never been more certain in his life that to draw attention to himself right now would be utterly fatal.

And yet, he could not look away at the spreading



halo of blood around Jack's hollowed skull. He still had a hint of a grin on his face. It was the same sheepish grin he wore when, innocently, he stepped forward and admitted he was the mercenary who fired a rocket launcher at the jeep.

It was an accident of course. What more could the Captain expect? All fourteen of them had signed up to make some easy money, possibly doing training, maybe digging ditches or something. Not one of them had combat experience.

Give a man a rocket launcher, sit him in the jungle



in the dark of night, and tell him the enemy's coming and of course something went wrong. Jack saw a jeep and he fired at it. Tom was more amazed that he hit it.

When they realized their mistake, they fled. But there was no escaping Captain Imover.

The remaining men who were still alive were standing in a square. The cold sweat that had come over Tom was making his back slick. He thought briefly, insanely, of escape.

Impossible. The rest of the mercenary company, seventy men strong, was facing them with submachine guns and heavy machineguns on jeeps at the ready. There was nowhere to go. And despite the size of their weapons, of more immediate concern was Imover's pistol, still slightly raised after firing three bullets into Jack's face.

One of the guys threw up.

"You stupid bastards," Imover hissed in his clipped accent. "You fired on us and then you tried to leave us here. If you had kept your noses clean I would have let you go, with pay even."

He pistol-whipped the vomiting man, a slightly portly fellow named Bob. Bob fell to the ground, moaning.

"Get him up," he snapped at one of the trusted mercenaries. Then he turned back to the rest of them. "Strip."

A new wave of sweat soaked every cell of Tom's being. Stripping only meant one thing.

Jesus, thought Tom, he's going to execute the lot of us.

Tom stood there, his pants around his ankles. If he was going to say something, he knew he had to say it before they took him somewhere.

"Sir," he said, shouting in military fashion. "Please give me another chance, sir! I believe I am of value, sir!"

Imover was in front of him, staring up at him. He was a short little maggot, thought Tom.

Imover pressed the barrel of the pistol squarely between Tom's eyes. He could still feel its warmth from when it had executed Jack.

"Why?" was all Imover asked.

"Because," Tom said, his voice cracking. He swallowed again and shouted, "because I'm a mechanic sir!"

The Sergeant Major stepped forward, Billy. "It's true," he said to Imover. "He's the only thing keeping most of the rovers moving at this point."

The next few seconds were an eternity. Tom dared not look Imover in the eye. He was trying to pretend he was military. He looked straight ahead.

The pressure of the gun barrel left his forehead.

"Pull your pants up, recruit. You look ridiculous." He laughed. In the middle of an execution, the man laughed at his own jokes.

Tom almost lost control of his bowels as he struggled to put his clothes back on – then he thought better of it and walked out of the square to be on the other side of the machineguns.

He had just put his clothes back on when Billy came back over to him.

"You owe me your life," Billy said. Tom didn't like the glint in his eyes. "So now you're going to start paying back. You're coming with me."

Tom's fists clenched. Oh hell, what exactly did the man want from him?

Like cattle, the men were piled into the back of one of the troop carriers. Tom and Billy got into the front. Tom found himself in the driver's seat. Imover sat in the middle.

A jeep pulled up ahead of them and behind them.

"Drive," was all Billy said, his hand resting on his weapon.

He drove. They were three miles outside of town when Billy told him to stop. It was a gently sloping grass valley.

Imover bounded out of the truck. He ordered the half-naked men out.

Jesus, thought Tom, he's enjoying it.

Tom only barely registered that a submachine gun was thrust into his hands.

"Face the valley," Imover snarled at them.

More of the mercenaries in the jeeps lined up to Tom's left and right. The man on Tom's left looked disgusted, his lips pulled back in a sneer. Tom wasn't sure if he was disgusted by the deserter's actions or by the horrible task he was about to perform.

Tom looked down at the gun in his hand. Oh my God, he thought, they're going to make me do this.

Imover hopped onto the back of one of the jeeps and swung the heavy machinegun around to point at their backs. He swung it slightly over at his own mercenaries. "When I give you boys the signal, you do it."

He flicked off the two safeties on the gun, grinning.

"Run, traitors!" he shouted at the top of his lungs.

There was a moment of shocked silence. What were they supposed to do? They were so terrified of moving up to that point that they didn't react at first. But then one did, and then they all did.

Joe just started walking. He didn't run. Tom wasn't sure if it was an act of defiance, a man in shock, or just that he thought that Imover was bluffing. Tom knew that Imover never bluffing.

Rob, slight and unassuming, took three steps, turned, and folded his arms with his chin set.

Phil didn't run. He stood right near Tom.

The heavy machinegun roared to life, spewing a steady stream of fire across the field. Some men were trying to zigzag, others were ducking, others covered their head and screamed. They all danced and twitched as the bullets shredded them like paper dolls.

"Fire!" ordered Imover. And Tom knew that if he didn't do it, he was next.

So he did. He wasn't aiming at them. He didn't have to. It was an automatic weapon, he just squeezed the trigger and it chattered to angry life.

Tom blamed anything that happened on the gun.

There were all down, dead and dying. The ones who walked, the ones who ran, even Rob who was ready for it – all down.

Tom was numb. He was only dimly aware of Phil next to him, the one who didn't run. He was the only one left.

"For God's sake!" Phil fell to his knees, clutching at Tom's leg. "I have a family! Please don't kill me!"

Imover walked over to them both. He kicked Phil in the ribs.

"Pathetic," he hissed. Then he fired a shot into Phil's stomach.

Phil screeched an inhuman wail of agony. His pleas had turned into hoarse wailing.

Imover rolled his eyes. He glared at Tom.

"Shut him up."

Tom didn't hesitate. He didn't even blink. He pointed at Phil and pulled the trigger. The gun shivered. Phil twitched. The screaming stopped.

Billy put his hand on Tom's shoulder. It was only then that Tom realized he had stood back, behind them, and didn't fire a single shot.

"Now we're even," he said.

Like the Wild Hawks, the Mad Dogs made their reputation in South American conflicts. Unlike the Wild Hawks, the Mad Dogs take on duties most self-respecting mercenary companies pass by.

The Mad Dogs don't turn down a contract. At least, that's what they brag. Mad Dog mercenaries are fond of stating that they take the contracts nobody else is willing to take. Depending on one's perspective, this can be due to the fact that the Mad Dogs seem to be perpetually broke, or because the Mad Dogs really are mad.

Agenda: A mercenary organization that specializes in conflicts in South America.

Structure: Small mobile military group.

Symbol: Frothing dog head.

Most Common Allegiance(s): Mad Dogs.

Requisition Limit: (35) military.

Overview

For those who have worked with Imover, they provide shaken testimony that he is indeed crazy. Imover enjoys screaming and shouting in combat, mowing down his foes with automatic weaponry, be it a submachine gun or a heavy machinegun. He has taken on tanks...and won.

Imover expects nothing less than fanatical devotion from his men. He enjoys ruling through fear, although he isn't averse to rewarding his followers with a higher cut. Few dare cross him. Those who do are often hunted down and murdered in horrible ways.

But Imover's rants are brief. His bouts of homicidal rage disappear quickly, usually after he has killed someone. Some have likened him to a dangerous, angry baby with heavy artillery.

So why work for a man who seems nearly suicidal in his tactics? Because he attracts desperate, rich employers. Imover is no fool, but he commands a high price precisely because of his complete lack of ethics and utter fearlessness.

The Mad Dogs are not particularly well liked or respect. Imover's reputation has assured that. But it is precisely because of their low prestige that some employers come to them. They have nothing to lose, everything to gain.

Structure

The Mad Dogs organize into "Killer Teams" – a rocket launcher wielding merc whose sole job is to eliminate tanks and other heavily armored targets always accompanies each group.

Bases of Operation

The Mad Dogs do not have a single base of operations. They recruit primarily out of Britain and France, but there really isn't a single place they call home, and for good reason: the law actively hunts many of the Mad Dog mercenaries. Imover makes a point of keeping on the move and staying only briefly in the more civilized countries.

Resources

Imover values mobility over raw firepower. The Mad Dogs relies on weapons with flash and firepower that require less aiming and more noise. Imover has a near rabid hatred of armored vehicles, presumably because he commonly faces such inimitable foes.

The Mad Dogs has a huge budget. Imover may be crazy, but he's also a savvy negotiator. Although the Mad Dogs have a less-than-stellar reputation, their willingness to take on the most dangerous missions makes them a highly paid company. Contractually, the Mad Dogs expect just about everything to be paid for and they usually get it.

Involving the Heroes

PCs who are in Imover's company are bound to encounter trouble. They could sign up for more than they bargained for and have to deal with the crazy captain. Alternately, they may end up competing against the Wild Dogs for a contracted goal. And Imover plays for keeps.

Using the Mad Dogs

The Mad Dogs recruit just about anybody who will join. Imover makes up for the inevitable rate of high desertions by executing anyone who defects. This keeps the mercenary company lean and very mean.

The Mad Dogs operate in South America but are willing to go just about anywhere for the right price. Their ranks consist primarily of ex-convicts, psychopaths, and desperate men trying to forget their pasts. The Mad Dogs are utterly immoral and construct their contracts to give them free license to rape and pillage.

The Mad Dogs do not take kindly to rivals and will attack any group they perceive as competitors. Imover isn't stupid, however; the Mad Dogs will only expend enough energy to drive off the competition and take their booty.

Learning About the Mad Dogs

The heroes can gather information about the Mad Dogs through the use of the Knowledge (current events) or Research skills. The charts below represent the amount of detail a hero can collect by using each skill.

Knowledge (Current Events)

The Mad Dogs make no secret of their activities and enjoy their infamy. The popular press points to them as the worst kind of mercenaries, literally "Dogs of War."

DC 1: Imover leads the Mad Dogs.

DC 5: The Mad Dogs is a mercenary organization that specializes in South American conflicts.

DC 10: The Mad Dogs are infamous for their "Killer Squads," groups of men armed with rocket launchers.

DC 15: The Mad Dogs have taken out entire columns of tanks with just rocket launchers.

DC 20: Imover is famous for executing deserters.

DC 25: Imover is said to have escaped from an asylum for violent psychopaths.

DC 30: Imover is believed to be the son of a wealthy dictator who funds and protects him.

Research

Research checks represent a hero's ability to collect data about an organization through fact-finding efforts like trips to the library and browsing the Internet.

DC 1: The Mad Dogs are a mercenary organization active in South America.

DC 5: The Mad Dogs consists of primarily Latin American members.

DC 10: The Mad Dogs have only been active in the past few decades.

DC 15: The Mad Dogs are wanted on multiple counts of murder.

DC 20: The Mad Dogs are considered a terrorist group by several South American nations.

DC 25: The Mad Dogs have acted as bodyguards for several dictators.

DC 30: The Mad Dogs have partial ownership in several diamond mines, which keeps the company infused with cash between missions.

Members

The Mad Dogs officers consist of one lieutenant (strong hero 3/fast hero 2), two sergeants (strong hero 2/fast hero 1), and four corporals (strong hero 2). The Mad Dogs has the following individuals in its roster: 1 Cook (tough ordinary), 7 Heavy Gunners (strong hero/tough hero), 1 Mechanic (smart hero), 1 Physician (smart hero), 20 Infantrymen (tough hero) and 10 Tankbusters (tough hero/fast hero/soldier).

Imover is a dark-skinned, brooding type with wild eyes and a nervous demeanor. He is prone to fits of rage and bouts of violence. Indeed, Imover wouldn't even be employed if it weren't for the fact that he's crazy enough to try any tactic.

Imover (Fast Hero 6/Soldier 6): CR 12; Medium-size human; HD 6d8+12 plus 6d10+12; HP 84; Mas 14; Init +7; Spd 30 ft; Defense 22, touch 22, flatfooted 19 (+0 size, +3 Dex, +9 class); BAB +8; Grap +11; Atk +11 melee or +11 ranged; FS 5 ft by 5 ft; Reach 5 ft; AL none; SV Fort +7, Ref +9, Will +7; AP 6; Rep +6; Str 16, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 7.

Occupation: Military (bonus class skills: Demolitions, Hide).

Skills: Balance +7, Bluff +0, Climb +5, Concentration +4, Craft (mechanical) +1, Demolitions +1, Diplomacy -1, Disable Device +1, Drive +4, Escape Artist +4, Forgery +2, Gamble +3, Gather Information +0, Hide +6, Intimidate +4, Jump +5, Knowledge (Current Events) +1, Knowledge (History) +1, Knowledge (Popular Culture) +1, Knowledge (Tactics) +3, Listen +3, Move Silently +6, Navigate +2, Pilot +4, Profession +2, Repair +1, Search +1, Sense Motive +2, Sleight of Hand +5, Spot +2, Survival +2, Swim +4, Treat Injury +2, Tumble +4.

Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Dodge, Exotic Firearms Proficiency (cannons), Focused, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Leadership, Mobility, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Quick Draw, Renown, Stealthy.

Talents (Fast Hero): Evasion, Opportunist, Uncanny Dodge.

Talents (Soldier): Weapon Focus, Weapon Specialization, Tactical Aid, Improved Critical.

Imover's insanity was tolerated because he was crazy enough to take on tanks. He created what he liked to call "Killer Squads." He would load men up in jeeps, and then in an almost suicidal attack, drive full speed into camp, firing rocket launchers and machineguns.

It worked. They had destroyed four tanks so far. The fact that several of the company had died in the process was irrelevant.

Imover only got bolder with each attack. He had fourteen men with him on foot, seven on a side. They were all armed with rocket launchers, hunkered down behind a low rise before a common trail.

They were stalking an armored column. Two jeeps led the way, followed by several truckloads of troops. Behind them was a cluster of tanks, trucks, and jeeps led by an armored bulldozer. The entire line trailed a mile-long column of over a thousand troops.

The odds were a million to one. The fourteen men with Imover were the most aggressive, most capable, and the most trusted. They had to be. They were all Imover had left.

Two enemy jeeps went by. Imover waited.

Several truckloads of troops went by. Imover waited.

Finally, the armored bulldozer ground to a stop. The column was resting.

Imover's squad raised, fired, and scattered with deadly efficiency. Soldiers ran screaming as the rockets spiraled through the air. One troop transport exploded, spewing bodies hither and yon.

The troops started running, utterly disorganized. The tanks made them feel invincible. Imover's men knew better.

Billy's men, on the other side of the trail rose up, fired, and scattered. A tank exploded into flames.

Imover was chortling, spewing death. He was actually laughing. The troops were horrified. Billy wasn't. He had witnessed the ugly scene a hundred times before.

They rose up and fired again. A rocket impacted against the front of the bulldozer and exploded with little effect.

Imover ducked back down in the brush. He gave a hand signal to Billy from across the trail and pointed.

He wanted the armored bulldozer taken out. No one later was able to say why. Maybe it was because the troops were cowering behind it. Maybe it was because the bulldozer represented the most fearsome

resistance of the enemy.

Maybe it was because Imover was just plain mean.

They crept forward to where the bulldozer was in the line. Imover gave the signal and they unleashed everything they had on it. Ricochets punctured dozens of men as they fired on it. Another rocket exploded on its side, rocked it, but failed to penetrate.

Imover decided it was time to use a different tactic. He screamed at the top of his lungs, submachine gun in hand, and began to slowly make his way towards the bulldozer. He was determined to tear the driver's throat out if need be.

Finally, one of the bullets hit something; the wrong thing. There was a high-pitched squeal as a stray bullet ignited a spark. Imover watched as the spark pirouetted in the air and landed behind the bulldozer.

Onto an ammunition truck.

He turned to run. The explosion waved through the air, exploding rockets and bullets. Body parts and foliage blew past him. For a second, Imover thought he had once again emerged from a suicidal fray unscathed.

Then he realized he couldn't feel his leg. He collapsed into the muck.

Imover looked down. Shrapnel had sliced his calf.

"Help me God damn it!" he shouted to an approaching figure.

When the enemy troops finally found Imover's body it was face up, eyes wide open in surprise. A bullet hole between Imover's eyes stood as mute testimony to what had transpired.

The soldier spat on the corpse.

"Mercenaries," he muttered.

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