

Issue 2

EXTRA: ANOTHER GREAT POST APOCALYPTIC TREASURE TABLE

Excavator Monthly™

Official magazine for The Mutant Epoch™ milieu

TME Role Playing Game • Fiction • Art

In this issue...

REGARDING SOLO-PLAY GAMING

GM'S BUNKER:
INDIVIDUAL
SECRET MISSIONS

PLAYER'S PERSPECTIVE:
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• APOCALYPSE MYTHOLOGY

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• BLOAT CREEPER
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INHABITANTS:
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PC GENERATION VAT:
**GAMBLER
SYSTEM**

RELICS RECOVERED:
• REMOTE WATCHER
• SEMI-AUTO SNIPER RIFLE



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*William
McAusland
WM*



Excavator Monthly ²

Official magazine for **The Mutant Epoch** milieu
TME Role Playing Game • Fiction • Art

Issue 2

Publisher: Outland Arts™

www.mutantepoch.com

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ISBN 978-0-9782585-5-9

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Front Cover: 'Point Guard', digital over graphite. Art prints of this image and other prints and items available at zazzle.com/outlandarts*

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Last Round

If you didn't get a look at issue one, we're here to let you know what is waiting between the covers of the inaugural release of Excavator Monthly magazine. The issue was 40 pages long and covered gaming podcasts, a few blogs, and an article for game masters about GM rewarded experience factors for players who have their characters engage in excellent and creative in-game conduct. We also introduced the double barrel character generation system in the PC Generation Vat, while under the Player's Perspective section we featured an article on how and why to allow players to control multiple PCs. New to that issue were three truly nasty critters; the Creeping Digester, Jaw Hog, and the cruel Howling Eviscerator, as well as a couple of NPCs including the

contract spy and thief Boka the Snitch and a crab clawed, half nude female tour guide of the ruins called Breekola the Guider. Of course, every issue has a couple of new relics, and in issue 1 we had the important liquid flesh and the handy net gun. A full short story by Otto Toms came next entitled Demon in the Depths, followed by a robust cover feature article: Spiderborgs, Friend or Foe? The issue also included a quick product review of our first official community setting, Pitford: Gateway to the Ruins, along with an overview of The Mutant Epoch web site with a run down of all the free downloads and information available to Society of Excavators members. The magazine closed with a two page, d100 item treasure table.

Issue one is permanently available as a downloadable PDF or print copy, check our online store for details and links.



Cover of EM issue 3

Next Round

Issue 3 is player character focused with an article in the GM's Bunker on Character Type Rotation and Similarity, a Player's Perspective article on how the PCs met up, and a special section on a new character type: 'Halfies', based on half human and half humanoid crossbreeds.

Under the PC generation vat we offer the Fixed Value Allotment system. For creatures we have Mutant Perch, Jaw Crawlers and the monstrous arachnid from the cover, the Devil Spider. In the relics section are the Landmine Detection Coil and Advanced Grenade Launcher, while the NPCs include Karrel Bedsworth the bounty hunter, and Pegleg Pete, a cannibalistic wildman.

Finally, issue three includes an article on Silver Coins and Ancient Money, explaining how to handle the discovery of old world cash. To conclude, we have yet one more highly useful treasure table to close out the issue.

From HQ

As we insert the artwork and tweak the layout for this issue, I reflect on the summer and the many hours drawing around roaring campfires, on patios listening to crickets, or on the shores of large British Colombian lakes. Whenever I look at the inked or digitally painted art in this issue, I recall where I sat when I did the sketch for each image and realize how much time I spent enjoying these last few months. Summer is a busy time, and getting hours in the studio has not been easy, yet, we reached our publication deadlines for issue 2 and are well into issue 3; however, finishing the artwork for Pitford, Gateway to the Ruins has been slow. With the kids back in school and trailer about to be winterized, I should be able to get back to my usual feverish pace.

That said, I hope you enjoy this issue. Please drop us a line at info@outlandarts.com or join us on the TME forums to let us know what you think, and what you would like to see in upcoming issues.

Sincerely
Will McAusland *Creator*

Incoming

Here is a insightful comment from a reader of issue 1:

I read over the pdf of excavator monthly & i gotta say its top notch! I'll be buying every month. Two cool npcs, a few new monsters, some new tech, a story, a pc/npc race, a relic chart. Lotsa cool stuff! I have a few minor suggestions/ideas.

1) If you are having two npcs every issue- maybe have one good/helpful, one bad/enemy. Maybe call the section friend or foe, or something.



2) I like the relic charts, id like to see that every issue. Maybe have each chart "themed"- hospital, gun store/armory, school, etc. Something like that could really come in handy in adventures.
By blood axe

We think these are great ideas and although the treasure tables for the next few issues are already done, we will aim to create tables along the lines that Blood Axe suggested. Additionally, in this issue the two NPCs are arch enemies of each other, but sure as hell won't be very friendly to certain player characters.

Media Chatter

With current global financial woes, earthquakes, nuclear catastrophes, floods, tornadoes and Middle Eastern conflicts, it sometimes seems like a Mad Max world is not far off. As a married father of four who lives a creative, secure and charmed life, I am about the last person in the world who wants the Apocalypse, and not sure I'd last long in The Mutant Epoch. Nevertheless, the post apocalyptic genre has fascinated me since I first stumbled across it in John Wyndham's novel **The Chrysalids**.

Besides books, some other media that PA fans might find interesting include a BBC series my wife and I are currently watching called **Survivors**. We are getting all 12 episodes through Netflix and I am really enjoying it. It is a present day post-plague series, sadly without zombies or mutants, and only a couple of shotguns and pistols so far as weapons go, but excellent nonetheless. It is very interesting to see a post apocalyptic film set in Britain, with its mix of quaint farms and massive urban areas, and is quite the departure from the dusty, gun and hot rod infested wastelands of Australia or the USA.

Blogs

The High Quality Monsters and Beast Database: <http://monster-sandbeasts.blogspot.com> This site is just amazing! One could save images off of this site making it a great resource for those GMs wanting to stat up a new robot or beastly from the database and unleash it on their players.

Youtube

Prophets Of Doom <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKM9gEOxWw4&feature=related> . If you get depressed easily, maybe skip this series from the History Channel. A group of qualified men talk about various doomsday scenarios, some of which I eluded to at the beginning of this Media Chatter section. I thought I'd add the link here because some of what they profess is directly related to a few Apocalypse Myths discussed in this issue. I'd be curious to hear your thoughts on what they discuss on our forum.

Podcasts

The Chip Monk Family Survival Podcast <http://chipmonk.podbean.com/> A present day focused podcast, complete with survival and preparedness discussions on firearms, movie and book reviews, food storage, gardens, livestock and prepper gear; however, Chip Monk talks about a lot more. This well spoken host shares views on world events and how they can affect us all. Of course, The Mutant Epoch is anchored in a science fantasy genre rather than a survivalist genre, but its an easy step to simply embellish modern day issues and drop them in a far future setting. Furthermore, at our own table we have played near future Mad Max tech level games using the Mutant Epoch Hub Rules, so I'd certainly give modern day survivalism issues some attention as a game resource, entertainment, and maybe to get you thinking about making a few preps of your own.



GM's Bunker Individual Secret Missions

Prior to game time, email or otherwise deliver a short mission statement to a character's player, sent from the PC's employer, superior officer, clan chief, parent, holy man or other authority figure. The letter should be written in in-game prose, that is, as if one character is talking to another, not the GM to the player. Here is an example:

Wrong way/ GM to Player:

Hey Dave, how are things? Work still suck? Sorry to hear you and your girlfriend are taking a break. Anyhow, listen, for this Sunday's game, its your turn to bring the chips and those little donuts we all devoured last time, but that's not why I am writing this. I have an individual secret mission for your character, Thruker the Ghastly. He receives a letter while at the floating motel, sent by a freelance courier who approaches him when he is talking to a woman at the bar. The letter is from his uncle, who Thruker gave up for dead a year or two ago, stating that he is dying of the withering disease and is unable to travel from his shack in the far off slums of a city called Ventura. He states that he has information of a sensitive nature, and to

hand the second, smaller, enclosed letter to a man called Josh Core, an officer in the Freehold Scouts in Overpass. Your character, Thruker, can feel the smaller envelope has something small, flat and hard inside it. The character's uncle asks that the small letter never be opened, that to learn of what it contains may put your character's life in peril, and to please not tell another soul. If the small letter is delivered intact, Josh Core will reward your character with a great relic treasure, which has been in the officer's safe keeping since he and your character's uncle served together in the Overpass militia.

So, John, don't let on about the letter, but you must somehow coax the other players in our gaming group to Overpass to deliver the letter and receive your gift.

Right Way/ NPC to player:

RE: The Mutant Epoch RPG Individual Secret Mission Attention: Thruker the Ghastly

Thruker is at the Floating Motel, talking to a hot blonde, when a dusty, tired looking man with a short Mohawk and purple eyes, a canvas bag on his back and a holstered automatic pistol on his hip, comes up to and asks "Pardon me, sir, I am Kristov, Freehold parcel carrier. You match the description of Mr. Thruker the Ghastly, whom I was told frequented this bunk house. Are you Thruker? Great, because I have been carrying this letter around for about a month now. It is from a Halburt Norris, sent along to me by different couriers."

You recognize the name of Halburt Norris as that of your Dad's long dead brother, your uncle, who everybody said had died years ago when he went with an adventure team into uncharted ruins beyond Pitford. All you know is that he was once an officer in some army, and became an excavator of considerable renown.

Passing you the letter, the courier leaves, his job done. You immediately recognize the familiar writing of your uncle as well as his signature at the bottom. The letter states the following:

"Dear nephew, I trust that you are still alive, getting clean water, enough food and that this letter finds you in good health. As you can guess, I remain alive, for the time being. I have been living in Ventura, far to the North of the Crossroads Region and have enjoyed my life here, as I

have remarried and have three daughters. At any rate, I have contracted the withering disease, as they call it, perhaps from the radioactive dust when getting too near the big craters. I may have been receiving various herbs that have had miraculous healing properties, but I am afraid they are only postponing the inevitable cancer. I am sorry I have not written before now. Your father and I have not seen eye to eye in a long time and I have been called a traitor by those in Overpass. Given this, I have never had need nor want to return, nor involve myself with my old family. Recently, I heard news of you, and was overjoyed to hear you have set about becoming an excavator, just like me. There is no more glorious, satisfying and exhilarating profession, and I am proud to say you are of my blood.



"Alas, these are troubled times, dear boy, and I have need of your help. Within this letter you will undoubtedly have found a smaller letter. Inside it is a small data disk containing files that must be delivered to an old friend of mine who is an officer in the Freehold Scouts, situated in the city of Overpass. His name is Josh Core, a mutant like us and a man you can trust with your life. What is on this disc is essential to the continued existence of the Northern Freehold, and will go far to align the great cities of Ventura and Overpass, as both states have many enemies, and our future liberty is threatened increasingly.

"Trust no one. I can not stress this enough. There are diplomats that fly in balloons between our great cities, but they are greedy and corrupt, and one is a traitor, although which one I can't yet say. You must get this disc to Josh as soon as possible, without arousing suspicion among your comrades. It

is a terrible thing not to trust your teammates, but do you really know if they are who they say they are? Are the pure stocks truly open minded and tolerant of our kind? Are any cyborgs secretly serving The Pure Hold Republic of the west, or even the Mecha? Best you tell them nothing, and coax them to go to Overpass for the fine whores and cheap ale. When you give the disc to Jamis, he will verify it and then give you a gift of great power, which he has been holding for me, to pass on to you when you arrive.

"Good luck, and may all who love freedom praise and preserve you. Your Uncle, Hal."

The above example shows the difference from sending a letter about a game, and then showing a letter inside

the game, even when game night might be a week away. The receiver of such a letter thinks about his or her character, the contents of the letter, and most of all, how to get his or her fellow player controlled characters to go along with a trip to Overpass and finally, if all goes well, how to explain the gift of a new relic from an officer of the Freehold Scouts.

Individual missions should be somewhat group orientated and not be side actions which might steer the GM's attention from the other players. If each player character is given a secret mission, they should all be achievable within a group expedition, destination or identical game location, such as taking place in the same town. Although called secret missions, sooner or later, such goals or objectives either become obvious to other players or must be disclosed to gain the trust and aide of fellow player characters. Some missions might start off secret, just long enough to get the group involved in the side plot, and by then, it is too late to pull out or debate the mission, especially a mission that is clearly important to the team's home community or faction, or to the team's empowerment and acquisition of relics.

Individual missions can be sent from the game master to a player by email, but mailing an actual letter which has been written with a calligraphy pen on torn, stained paper really adds impact to the message, and also provides the gamer with souvenir of the campaign.

During an actual game session, or immediately before, a crafty GM could hand the player a sticky note or other document without the other's seeing, or even play out a little of the side mission before or after the main group game session.

Some secret missions require that the character be able to read, and if the PC in question is illiterate, perhaps fudge this a bit by saying the person can read at a rudimentary level, and that whatever literature he or she is given was written with this in mind.

Here are some examples of other Secret missions that a character might be asked to perform. The random 15 numbers are for convenience for on the fly secret mission assignment to PCs and NPCs, simply roll d20, re-rolling results of 16 to 20.

1. You are to Map the route to the target area, take soil and water samples, use a digital camera to snap shots of the area the team explores and send back data covertly to the PC's master.

2. You have been tasked to Plant an optics-audio probe in an important spot to transmit data back to the authorities. Such a spot could be a saloon, Main Street, crossroads on a trade path, entrance to a community or fortress, motel room, private home, airstrip, meeting hall, brothel lobby, or overlooking a town from a tall hill or ruined skyscraper.

3. The leadership is not sure of the loyalties of all your party mates; therefore, you are to follow any lone teammate who wanders off from the group at camp, in towns, or aboard a ship.



4. You are given rough directions to an enemy stronghold in the ruins, and told to lead your team to the site explaining not to tell comrades as one is probably a traitor. Trick them into believing you are after a relic stash somebody told you about. You can keep whatever relics you can loot off the enemies once on target. You are given a rare communicator and when alone, to type in a code number. The device will send the authorities the character's exact location as long as the excavators stay above ground. When the enemy fortress is located, the PC is to press another code to summon a relic cargo helicopter loaded with crack troops who will come aid the team in the destruction of the enemy.

5. The local military from the PC's home town want the character to take special notes of the military composition, relics, defensive works and other features of all the towns and villages the PC enters, and once a month, mail the information back to the authorities using the services of the regional couriers.

6. In an attempt to discredit the PC, his or her family enemies have falsely accused him or her of a crime, such as the rape of a official's spouse, the theft of a holy relic, the murder of a lawman, etc. A reward is out for the character's head of 400sp. The character finds a wanted poster depicting a crude image and description of him or herself and the PC's crime. All those traveling with the PC, who didn't see the poster, could be considered accomplices and to be hanged along with the PC. The character will want to keep this news secret, least the party abandon him or her. There may be copies of this poster in other villages and saloons.

7. The character learns from friends and family that he or she has been declared a heretic by his or her home community's clergy, and to be beheaded and burned by any who should meet the PC, with a 500sp reward for the character's head. Obviously, keeping this reward secret from unscrupulous teammates is wise.

8. The character's spouse and children, or else parents, siblings or lover, have been kidnapped. One of the kidnappers, a raider, shows the character pictures of the captives along with samples of their hair as proof, and that to see them alive again, the PC must do something for the gang. This gang is either from the character's home town or perhaps villains who the character(s) have already encountered and pissed off. The PC must steal the relics off of fellow PCs as payment, or else convince the team to assassinate somebody or do something dangerous demanded by the raider-kidnappers.

9. The character gets a telepathic message one night while entering a trade fort. The telepath pleads with the character not to tell comrades of the message, saying that the others might not understand or be trustworthy. The message is that the local authorities have made bogus criminal charges against the team, and plan to arrest then execute them within hours, just to steal the team's relics. The telepath says the character should use whatever excuse he or she can to lead the team away at once.

10. While at a saloon or some other public location, town officials accost the character and ask him if he knows one of the other PCs as well as he thinks he does. They claim that the other PC is actually an enemy agent, and that unless the character wants his or her family back home to die, he must follow the PC at all times, report who he meets, what he says, and to search the questionable PC's belongings for enemy documentation; evidence that may have been planted there hours before.

11. One evening, as you grab a change of clothes from your pack, you find a sealed letter in your stuff. Opening it, it reads that the team is in great danger and must abort their current mission or else. Alternatively, such a note could say something like: "We are watching you and if you say anything to the others, our snipers will take them out. Just continue on your little mission and we will contact you again with our demands... and what we will pay you if you do what we order and keep your mouth shut." or "One of your comrades is an enemy spy, and a murderer. If he finds out that you know, he will kill you. Don't act until we arrive to help you." Or even "We know who you really are. Meet us at the Saloon tomorrow night or else we will kill your family and your silly friends. Tell anybody about this, and they all die. We know what you look like and will approach you when we are ready to talk and make our demands."

12. While momentarily away from the party in a village, you happen to bump into the ex-girlfriend of a fellow male comrade. Surprised to see you, and carrying a child, she says "This is Nugent, your friend's son. Please, I don't want the father to know of the baby because he might turn away from the excavator's path, and never be the great hero and leader of his people if he becomes a farmer or hunter." She would like regular letters on the father character's doings and location, so that the child can know of his father's greatness and heroics, and later, when the child is older, meet the man.

13. You learn that one of your comrades is actually the lost heir to the chieftainship of a large community, faction or nomadic people. You are told not to inform the high born character of this, but to protect him or her at all cost. When the time is right to announce the truth, and return the lost chieftain to his or her people, the emissaries of the noble one will

return. They mention that there is a civil war in the chieftain's community, and if the current illegitimate rulers learned of the identity and whereabouts of the lost ruler, they would certainly kill him or her. If you agree to watch out for the lost leader, you are rewarded with a submachine gun and two full clips, as well as special gifts and protection for your family back home. In addition, you are made to swear an oath never to tell anybody else about the great one in whose company you travel. If the unwitting heir dies, however, the emissaries will send assassins after you as punishment.

14. The male character's wife was kidnapped by Warmorts only a few days after being married and taken into the ruins near their home community. The character has recently heard a rumor that she was seen alive as a warmort concubine-slave. The character can either attempt to rescue her alone, or trick the adventure team into exploring those ruins looking for the warmort lair, or else be honest and tell them of his plight. Such a mission to rescue a slave held by the battle born is perhaps among the most risky, unprofitable quests a team could undertake.

15. Agents for the character's home town contact the PC when he or she is alone, saying that the character must collect a small power converter from nearby ruins and pass it over. The device is worth a fortune and if team mates recognize the value of the drab looking device, they might want to sell it instead of give it to the PC to in-turn pass along to his or her beloved people. The agents also give the PC a map to the ruins outside of town and promises there will be lots of more obvious treasure within the site. In return, the agents promise to give the character's family elevated social status, 500sp, an acre of farmland, and a clean slate for the PC and his or her family and comrades as far as debts and past criminal offenses go.

The possibilities are endless with this GMs tool, and many ideas and opportunities to use individual secret missions will present themselves over the course of a campaign. It is really up to the player character if he or she feels that one's comrades can be trusted in a matter, so too, how much dedication and attention the PC wants to spend on a secret. It might be helpful to have the GM run a separate mini-session with a player involved in a secret mission, either in person, over the phone or using email to resolve a side plot.

If other players at the table feel that something is up, that one PC is working against them, their characters will do something drastic and it could wreck party cohesion. In such cases, it is probably best for the character to come clean and tell the others what has happened, who he was approached by and why he had to keep the secret. Any secret should be one that offers an extra layer of adventure and in-character interaction. These secrets are also meant to be exposed sooner rather than later, and present a new challenge to the team, instead of breaking up the party. In nearly every case where the secret holder must act against his comrades, either stealing something, withholding information, protecting them or misleading them, the end result should be more drama, more daring-do, more immersion, more dangerous adversaries, more loot and a very memorable gaming session.



PC Generation Vat Gambler System

This issue's character generation system calls upon the usual 'luck of the dice' but so too, a high degree of choice and chance. The Game Master must first decide if a best of 2 rolls, or a best of 3 rolls technique will be used.

Here's how it works: for each trait, roll its value, and then decide whether you want to keep it, or take your chances and roll again in hopes of a better score. If using the best of 2 rolls technique, then the second roll, which you optimistically gambled on being higher, must be kept, even if it is lower than the first. On the best of 3 rolls technique, the player has yet one more choice; to keep the 2nd score or risk rolling a third time and possibly getting an even worse value, or a superior trait value.

This system requires GM and perhaps group supervision to hold a player to the dice scores rolled, and because of this, is probably best used when only one or two players are generating characters, or, if everybody rolls at the same time for each trait and all scores are observed and noted, with each player calling out if he or she wants to gamble and make another dice toss.



Player's Perspective

Your Stash

So your characters have been adventuring for a while, survived to tell about it, and acquired quite a pack load of loot. Recently, you used your last shot in that ol' survival rifle and then lifted a pump shot gun off a warmort your group killed. The shotgun was fully loaded and the previous owner had a bag of extra shells, so, you've switched from your trusty rifle to the pump gun. What to do with the old weapon? Just chuck it aside for any skullock or other humanoid to come across? Destroy it so it doesn't fall into the wrong hands? You're associates already have better weapons, at least those who have fingers and can use a trigger, and carrying an empty gun around on your back along with all your other gear and treasure is pointless and encumbering. On the other hand, you've had the rifle for many months and while it is only a single shot weapon with a measly ten round mag, it saved your skin too many times to count; thus, you have a fondness for it and realize you might come across some more standard rifle ammo in the future and want to employ the survival rifle as a backup weapon. What to do? The solution: stash it!

Since most excavation teams and other active new era groups roam a specific territory within a region, or at

least will return to a home base at some point, it makes sense to bury your stash somewhere within easy access. Storing your valuable, but currently empty, drained or inferior relics, archaic armor and weapons, coinage, maps, books, and curiosities is often a happy problem, since an adventurer is lucky if he or she has enough surplus loot that he or she can just leave it behind.

Making a cache isn't just greedy, it's smart. Besides the simple fact of not being able to physically carry an extra rifle, crossbow, a rocket launcher, spare armor and an inoperative robot, if you get robbed of everything you carry, you at least have a cache as backup. Indeed, there is great peace of mind knowing you can always escape and then start over with a stockpile of half decent relics and valuables, digging up your stash and outfitting yourself handsomely. Many excavators like to stow a relic weapon with a few shots left in it, for the very purpose of emergency use down the road, likewise, they may keep extra survival basics such as a tent, sleeping bag, torches, fire making apparatus, a knife, water bottle, booze, and even spare boots and everyday clothing. Such items can mean the difference between life and death.

A wise digger knows, however, to never, under any circumstances, put food in with one's relic stash, as bears, dogs, and countless other animals will detect the scent and dig up the whole pile just to get some dried meat, exposing the artifacts within to any passing scav or humanoid. A good trick to make a complete stash is to bury