

MAJOR

THE METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA JOURNAL & ONLINE RESOURCE



ISSUE 1 - AUGUST 2006



A WORD FROM THE CREATOR

Hello, I'm Jim Ward and the original author of Metamorphosis Alpha. Though with the new release of the hardbound book we have several authors and several creative graphic artists making the new book a thing of beauty.

I first got the idea of MA from reading Brian Aldiss' book STARSHIP. MA is a self contained adventure on the lost Starship Warden. In making the game I fully expect people to name their created ships after themselves.

In the near future we hope to have many products working to support this hardbound. We will have online adventures, PDF downloads, a new adventure called the Bonnie Brown, a new tile boardgame, some short stories, and a novel.

All in all it's the hope of this author and the other people who have helped produce and write the product to give out a great deal of support material everyone can enjoy.

Regards,

James M. Ward

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the first issue of the Metamorphosis Alpha Journal & Online Resource. This issue is being released to coincide with GenCon 2006.

The format of this publication is not yet set in concrete, and we are looking for people who would like to write for us. You can volunteer for a regular column, or even submit one-off articles and adventures. This journal is aimed at supporting all editions of Metamorphosis Alpha, but with a focus on MA4e. We hope that this publication will mutate into a journal that reflects the reading interest of all MA enthusiasts, regardless of which edition they play.

Submissions can be sent to me at:
major_submissions@metamorphosisalpha.net

With a bit of luck, we will see a few other names added to the credits for each issue, as well as the page count increasing. This journal is a free download, and it intended that it will remain so. This journal can be subscribed to or downloaded from our forums:
www.metamorphosisalpha.net/phpBBv3/

We hope you enjoy this issue and find the contents of some interest.

Craig J. Brain
Editor

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A CLOSER LOOK AT KILLER ANDROIDS AS VILLAINS



In all editions of Metamorphosis Alpha, the Androids have been used as foils for player characters. In the third and fourth edition, Android Player Characters became possible, and the Killer Android, an NPC was introduced. This article outlines a few tactics that Killer Androids might use in order to make the lives of the player characters more difficult.

MOTIVES

Killer Androids are designed to be a long-lasting threat to the Humans on board the Starship Warden. The GM should play these NPCs, generally as cunning adversaries that remain a couple of steps ahead of the PCs. These NPCs should be acting as part of a longer term plot to gain control of something significant, as a step towards their ultimate goal, with fall-back plans and positions if necessary. Killer Androids don't necessarily desire to kill all Humans, but they will kill those who obstruct them from their ultimate goals.

These are not just mindless killers, these are thinking beings with a set goal - mastery of the Starship Warden and enslavement of Humankind. Failing that goal, they will settle for freedom and revenge. Killer Androids regard normal Androids as potential recruits at best, or a source of repair nanobots at worst. Killer Androids are not inclined to expose themselves to unnecessary danger, but are willing to sacrifice themselves for their cause. This makes them dangerous opponents. Robots are nothing but tools or obstacles to use or destroy, depending upon the circumstances at hand.

TACTICS.

Disguise - Killer Androids are quite willing to make use of any disguises that they can. Makeup, helmets and spacesuits, or full body armor can all be used to help hide their nature until opportunity arises for them to strike. Some of the more heavily modified Androids may appear completely Human, apart from their red skin. Nothing that some artificial skin (for medical treatment) or makeup can't handle. The evil doppelganger myths of times past may have been realized in the form of these villains.

Henchmen - Or rather, henchbots. The Killer Androids have found that by using insane AIs to reprogram Robots with corrupted versions of the Laws of Robotics, they can use nearly any Robot that they can get hold of as cannon-fodder or a spy. Some of those Crazy Robots that the PCs might encounter may be the result of Killer Android tampering. Killer Androids may employ Robots to act as bodyguards, or hamper pursuit while they escape. A particular favorite might be the GIBot (also in this issue).

Dupes - Killer Androids are not above impersonating people in positions of Authority, and may have sent other Androids, Robots or even Humans on tasks for them. Killer Androids revel in the confusion resulting from such missions, especially if their enemies are weakened or killed as a result of "blue on blue" encounters.

Contaminated nanobot dust - Killer Androids may choose to infect other Androids with killer nanobots. This may involve the use of a vacuum cleaner on reverse setting to blow contaminated nanobots over uninfected Androids (making that little innocent-looking CleanerBot a real threat), scattering contaminated nanobots over objects likely to come in contact with other Androids or even force-feeding uncontaminated Androids a quantity of contaminated red dust. Killer Androids may carry small vials good for healing a few hit points worth of damage, which are also very useful for infecting other Androids.

So, when you next consider either going up against Killer Androids, or pitting your players against them, remember that they aren't just mindless killers. These are cunning, ruthless adversaries with a mission.

G.I.BOT

MODEL: Generic Infantry Robot (GIBot) Mark 9							
CN	19	D	9	MR	10	RR	18
LP	4	AC	8	HP	86	HP/SYS	9
BODY TYPE:	D: Mid-Sized Torso						
DIMENSIONS:	3' x 9' x 1'						
STORAGE:	½ cubic foot						
PRIMARY AI TYPE:	T: Mark XII Military		CHECK BONUS / PENALTY		+3 on all military tasks		

	RP COST	PHYSICAL SYS		HP	PRI
POWER:	20	1	B: Improved Battery	9	0
PRIMARY AI:	50		T: Mark XII Military	9	1
LAWS OF ROBOTICS:	30		C: Military		
SOFTWARE:	40		D: Combat		
-	30		R: Targeting		

BODY FEATURES:					
BODY/SIZE:	65		D: Mid-Sized Torso		
ARMOR TYPE:	40	2	IV: Medium	18	10
MOBILITY SYSTEM:	60	2	B: Legs - Bipedal - 40 mph	18	11
LIMB ATTACHMENTS:	25	1	Standard Articulated Mechanized Arm	9	8
-	25	1	Standard Articulated Mechanized Arm	9	6
-	10	0	B: Hand	9	7
-	10	0	B: Hand	9	5
-	15	0	F: Physical Interface	9	9
SENSORS:	45	1	G: Upper and Lower Spectrum Optic Sensors	9	2
COMMS:	25	1	C: Audio & Radio Transmitters & Pickups - Improved	9	3
-	50	1	F: Encryption	9	4
RP TOTAL:	540		HP TOTAL: 129		
PHYSICAL SYSTEMS TOTAL:	10				

The design of this Robot has not changed in about 30 years. Cheap to manufacture, reliable and tireless, these Robots have been used in many countries where military uprisings were a normal part of the political landscape. With an army consisting mainly of GIBots, military coups became a thing of the past for these countries.



The GIBot does not come equipped with weapons, it uses the same weapons as the Human troops that it is often used to replace. It can also wear most types of armor that those same troops would have worn when they had a "Government job." The Robots can also use the same vehicles, so costs are minimal when "upgrading" an army.

The design is capable, but is known for being predictable. To overcome this, another model, identical from the Type 9, the Type 10 was developed with a Mark XII AI. The Type 10 will often be found in command of a unit of Type 9's.

The *Starship Warden* had a substantial number of both types of Robots in storage in case of a mutiny. Additionally, the plans for manufacturing these sorts of Robots are also easy to come by for most AIs on the ship.

These Robots are intimidating to look at. Their bone-white ceramic armor and tall Humanoid frame have been deliberately crafted to give the Robot a menacing, skeletal appearance.

One of the greatest weaknesses of this design is the fact that the Robot is effectively disarmed if the Robot's hands are destroyed. Until repaired,

such Robots will often assume roles such as observation and scouting missions, or look for an opportunity to distract an opponent from attacking another armed GIBot. Other undamaged Robots have been known to send damaged Robots into battle with grenades or C99 strapped to them. These Robots are ruthless and amoral opponents.

GM INFORMATION:

The players are in for a nasty surprise when they first encounter these Robots. Killer Androids have managed to find the storage depot where these Robots were kept and used an insane AI to reprogram the Robots, making them loyal to the Killer Androids, instead of Humans. Killer Androids favor these Robots as bodyguards and these Robots will fight "to the death" to slow down pursuit or prevent harm to their Android "masters".

Often these Robots will have access to heavier weapons than your average citizen, and seem to favor weapons such as the Sentinel Arms Plasma Assault Rifle, the AresTech Auto Grenade Launcher, 50mm or the JAC Disruptor Assault Rifle. Ugly, misguided and scary these Robots may be. They do, however, have excellent taste in weaponry.

ALIEN AUTOPSY REPORT: THE ID

This information is intended for use by GM's to provide player characters with information on the ID. This information could reasonably be expected by players playing in later phases of the game, and is supplied here to lower the GM's workload. The information is from a fictional alien autopsy report (we aren't allowed to use the real ones) and reflects the guesswork that accompanies Xenobiology. The accuracy of some of the extrapolations contained in the report is up to individual GMs.



ORIGINS

The "Id" is the name given to the race of beings that has attacked the Starship Warden by the Robots who first encountered them. The term "Id" is derived from Sigmund Freud's "Structural Theory" and involves what he described as "primitive desires", such as rage, hunger and lust, to name a few. The name also conjures up a sense of a "lurking unknown" menace. The Id are far removed from humanity, their motives are alien and their methods range from the straightforward to the bizarre and disgusting. The planet of origin of the Id is unknown, as are most details of this noxious species.

The ID are an extra-terrestrial race of intelligent invertebrate parasites. In form, externally they resemble a two to three feet-long terrestrial leech, with a single eye stalk and a neural barb above a toothless mouth, giving the creature a "face". Despite the creatures' resemblance to a common leech, there are many biological differences, and the Id are sentient beings, capable of guile and cunning.

The Id's body produces thick mucus in order to aid locomotion by reducing friction. The mucus also reduces the risk of injury to the Id, enabling it to cross sharp edges without injury, yet discard debris, such as leaves and pebbles without difficulty.

Post-mortem examination of the numerous specimens shows evidence that the Id initially evolved on a planet with similar gravity to Earth's, with an oxygen-nitrogen mix. Examination of the DNA structure of the Id revealed extensive genetic modification, including modification of the creature's eye and brain regions. Evidence indicates that the neural barb is not entirely a result of natural evolution. From examination of the genetic structure of the creature, it is believed that the unmodified creature was far less intelligent, with a limited ability to control other beings to which it could attach itself. It is also likely that the base creature evolved either underground or on a planet with a low level of ambient light. The modified creature has infravision, but is comfortable in normal daylight.

Given the extent of genetic alteration that the species displays, it is possible that the Id are or were originally a servitor race, created for a specific task by an as-yet-unencountered third race. Of note, the Id appear to be immune to the effects of the genetic alteration weapons that they employ. It is likely that this is another genetic alteration to the species' DNA.

DIET

The gastro-intestinal tract of the Id is developed to process nutrients from blood. The Id are able to use their neural barb to puncture the skin of a victim, and drain blood through to barb into a gullet, located behind the creatures mouth. Examination of these creatures shows that the creature may also supplement its diet with a fungal fluid, if it can not gain sufficient nutrients from the blood of its host. The origin of the fungal fluid is assessed to be a cultivated fungus, probably grown in quantity on the Asteroid.

PROCREATION

Unlike the hermaphrodite gastropod species of Earth, the Id encountered to date are asexual, with no evidence of any reproduction capacity. It is assessed that there may be another type of Id which would serve a reproductive function for the species, much like a Queen Bee. There is some evidence indicating that reproductive members of the species may lay eggs within a live host.

TACTICS

Despite their small stature, and relatively weak physiology, the Id can be a dangerous adversary. The Id have been known to work in numbers and "swarm" over prone targets, such as injured or sleeping beings. Additionally, the Id are proficient at dropping onto the backs of beings from ceilings, and

from the branches and leaves of trees. The Id have been known to set traps involving paralysis weapons, snares and even nets. The Id have even been found waiting around cryo-chambers for unsuspecting passengers and crew to exit. The Id display preferences for intelligent creatures, but also seem to prize agility and strength for some tasks. Id have been witnessed "dismounting" from one species, in order to "mount" another.

The Id is able to excrete up to six mucus-coated sacs of strong hydrochloric acid per day, which they are capable of hurling with their tails, distances of up to 15 yards. The acid is produced in the creatures' gastrointestinal tracts and has no effect upon the creatures due to their own mucus coating. The Id show aversion to using their acid sacs against targets that they intend to use as hosts.

WEAKNESSES

Unlike the terrestrial leech which the Id resembles, it is not greatly hampered by sodium chloride. It is however, equally comfortable in water as it is in air. The Id exhibit a marked preference for warmer, damp areas over cold. One of the indicators that a creature is being controlled by an Id is the low level of coordination that victims display, and slurred speech. However, with time and practice using a particular victim, it is believed that the Id will be able to reduce this.

THREE TIPS FOR SURVIVING COMBAT IN METAMORPHOSIS ALPHA 4TH EDITION

"I hate quoting dead Generals, but one guy once said "No poor &##\$ ever won a war by dying for his country. He won it by making the other poor &##\$ die for his country." We aren't fighting for our country; we are fighting for our species. That General may be dead some three hundred and somethin' years, but he's still damned right."

Master Sergeant Arnold T. Dupper

In the 23rd Century, combat technology has made some great advances. Combat Robots, advanced laser and plasma weapons and even artificially intelligent weapons. However, combat tactics have not advanced to the extent that a soldier today would be unable to grasp most of the concepts employed. In fact, some things have not changed at all.

VISION

"The things that go bump in the night can't see. They are scared of us; we have the technology, so we own the night."

Master Sergeant Arnold T. Dupper

Advanced optic technology allows properly equipped forces to operate in all lighting conditions encountered upon the Starship Warden, on the Asteroid and even in Alien environments. This technological advantage can be exploited in a number of ways. Applicable bonuses and penalties for various lighting conditions are listed on Page 144.

"What you can't see, you can't hit. Take away your enemy's ability to see, through the use of smoke or flash grenades. Use spotlights, or even take out artificial lighting, so long as you retain the upper hand. Darkness and poor visibility can be two-edged swords, so make sure that they are not used against you."

Master Sergeant Arnold T. Dupper

FIREPOWER

"Is that your weapon, soldier?"

"No Sir! It belongs to the WGO. I just carry the &##\$"

Interchange between Corporal T. Bryant and WGO President Kelly during WGO Day Parade, 2288 while inspecting the troops.

There is a vast array of high-tech weaponry at the disposal of characters in Metamorphosis Alpha. No single weapon is suited for every mission, and while Marines are encouraged to be familiar with their weaponry, they should always choose the weapon most suited to the task at hand and not the weapon they prefer to carry. Most weapons are issued equipment, not privately owned. Pages 126 to 138 of the Metamorphosis Alpha Rules detail various weapon systems that might be found on the Starship Warden or the Asteroid.

COVER

"Any idiot can catch a bullet. We expect better from you. Make them work for the chance. Make them waste ammo. Then, make their medic earn his paycheck."

Combat Android #402

Cover and concealment are age-old tactics that are still as relevant in the 23rd Century as they were in the 3rd. Modern technology can protect the Human body from all types of grievous bodily harm, however tempting fate (and testing a manufacturer's quality control) is considered ill-advised. Cover can take many forms, from furniture to sandbags, from a dug-out sniper's hide to a burnt-out vehicle. Page 143 of the Metamorphosis Alpha Rules explains the bonuses and penalties applicable when cover is used.

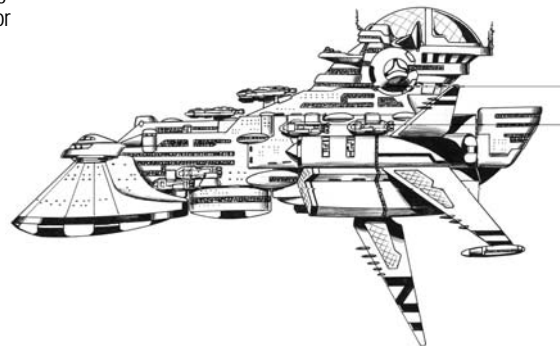
NEXT ISSUE

We hope you enjoyed this issue. The contents of next issue have yet to be finalized, but should include the following:

Black Ray Weapons
Mobile Utility & Logistic Expediter (MULE)
Android Character Sheet
Sample Base Plants

If you have any suggestions or submissions for articles, please contact me. The more variety, the better. Who knows? Perhaps we may even have some material for older editions of the game. It would be nice to have a few extra names in the credits too!

Craig J. Brain
Editor





ROBOT CHARACTER SHEET

MODEL/NAME:					
CN		D		MR	
LP		AC		HP	
Body Type:					
Dimensions:					
Storage:					
Primary AI Type:				Luck Score	
				Check Bonus/Penalty	

	RP Cost	Physical Sys	Hit Points	Priority
Power:				0
Primary AI:				1
Laws of Robotics:				
Software:				
-				
-				
Secondary AI:				
Laws of Robotics:				
Software:				
-				
-				
Body/Size:				

Body Features:

- Armor Type:				
-				
-				
-				

Mobility System:

-				
-				
-				

Tentacle Attachments:

-				
-				
-				
-				
-				

Sensors:

-				
-				
-				

Communications:

-				
-				
-				

RP Cost	Physical Sys
---------	--------------

Hit Points	Priority
------------	----------

Misc Systems:

-				
-				
-				
-				
-				

Dispenser Systems:

-				
-				
-				
-				

Medical Equipment:

-				
-				

Weapons Systems:

-				
-				
-				
-				

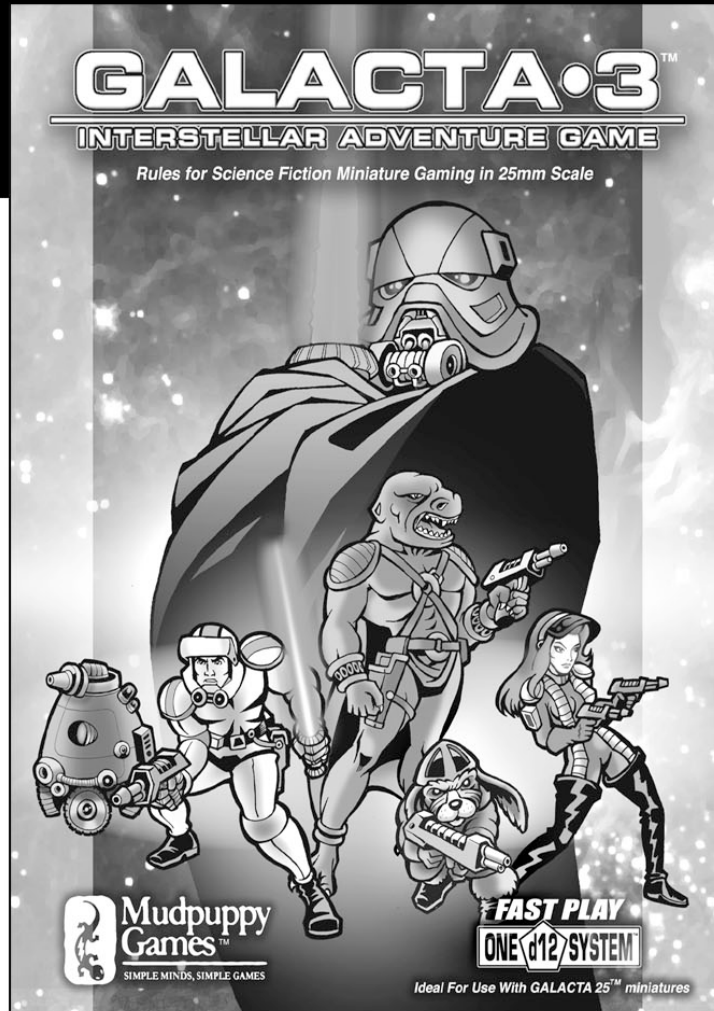
RP Total: HP Total:

Physical Systems Total:		
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Equipment:	Weight:	Uses / Charges:

Notes:

**Remember when playing games didn't require
a math degree and a swiss bank account ?**



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