

# Excavator Monthly COMPENDIUM



ALL SIX ISSUES IN ONE BOOK

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*For Use With*

## THE MUTANT EPOCH™

TABLETOP ADVENTURE ROLEPLAYING GAME

Created by

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"Putting YOU in the Game"

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# Introduction

Why a compendium? At Outland Arts we get it that many players of The Mutant Epoch will have already purchased Excavator Monthly Magazine in either PDF or Print formats, perhaps both, and have no need to get all that content again. For others, buying this book will simplify the acquisition of all 6 issues of the magazine, plus make it easier to bring along and use the content at the game table. This hefty tome is divided into sections and includes areas for game master only articles, topics of interest from a player's perspective, alternate character generation methods and PC types, a few new skills, non-player characters, foul creatures and wondrous relics, as well as always helpful treasure tables. The entire book closes with an art gallery of all six covers, as well as a robust and highly useful index. For PDF buyers, the index, table of content and numerous locations within the book are hyperlinked allowing users to quickly flip between pages and whole sections of the book.

At the time of publishing this compendium, we have no plans to go back to a monthly format and instead plan to go with a larger periodical called Excavator Quarterly. We had a great time working on these six issues of Excavator Monthly, and are proud to present them in a single book form. However, each issue took more than a solid month of full time work to put together, making it impossible for us at Outland Arts to get onto the larger source books and adventures which TME game masters and players were clamoring for.

Whereas Excavator Monthly was about 40 pages, the quarterly will be over 80 pages and allow our writers and game designers to include in-depth coverage of topics, as well as complete adventures, gripping fiction, full page art, and much more. Going with a longer page count magazine also makes economic sense to buyers of print copies since so much of the cost of getting their hands on a magazine is the physical cover of the periodical, as well as the shipping; two prices which vary little based on the page count.

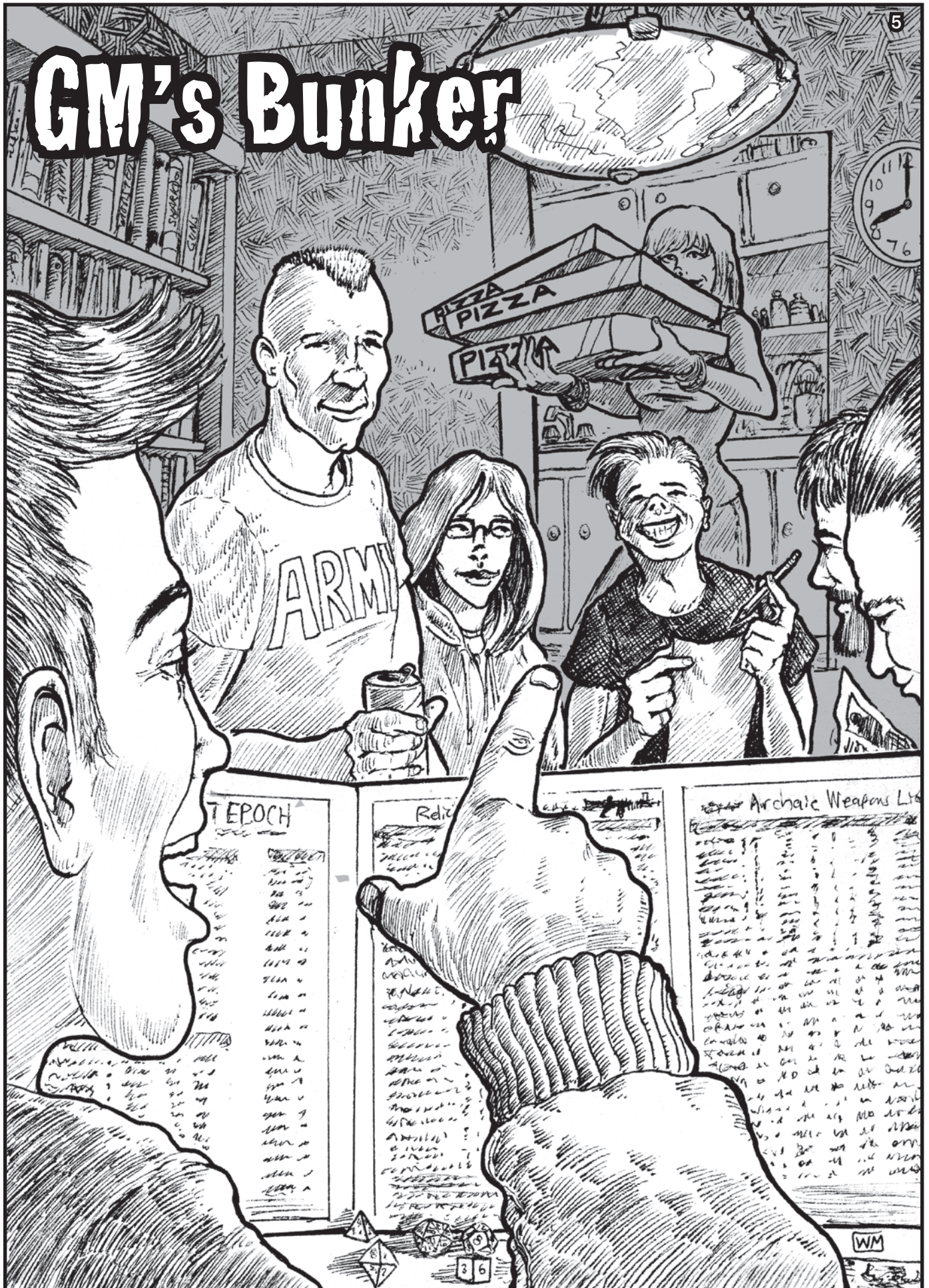
Putting together this hefty tome was a challenge, but well worth it I think. I know for myself, as a TME game master, having all six print issues of the monthly in one book will really speed things up at our table, since even I could not always recall what relic, creature or character generation method was in which magazine! With these topics divided into their own sections, and all at my fingertips, this book is going to get a lot of use.

Happy gaming

William McAusland  
Creator  
The Mutant Epoch



# GM's Bunker



## GM's Bunker

*This section will be present in every issue of the magazine, and will often have more than one article or idea for encouraging great role-playing among your players. As the heading implies, the topics are mainly for Game Masters, but are not rules heavy or secrets to be concealed from your players.*

## Game Master Rewarded Bonus Experience Factors

Experience factors are often gained through the participation and survival of combat events; however, there are many ways for a character to gain ranks without constant fighting, and in the Outland System, the attainment of experience factors is achievable through being cunning, diplomatic, daring, or whenever the player conducts his or her character in a remarkable, unexpected or skillful way.

Great role-playing sessions are best had when the players challenge themselves to think in creative ways, as well as conduct their characters boldly, with earnest efforts at narrative or acting, thinking outside the box, and pushing their characters to respond to their surroundings, circumstances, or adversaries in new and entertaining ways. Likewise, the Game Master encourages the players to assert themselves in the game world by rewarding the player characters (PCs) with vital information, food, water, relic rewards, or, if no item is had from some bold act which boosts everybody's enjoyment of the game, then a modest, openly given bonus in experience factors can be handed out by the GM.

This EF bonus is not so much to reward the character for bravery, as this can soon lead to suicidal levels of risk taking, but rather to improve the gaming experience for everybody at the table. Additionally, recognizing skillful role-playing can foster player involvement in the game allow veteran role players to show new gamers that they are not passively being led through the GM's adventure by the nose, that their character has real power to make things happen in the game world. In some respects, great role playing clarifies to everybody that they are not merely watching some story unfold like a person watching a movie or reading a book, but rather, their character is actually *alive* in game terms, at least within the bounds of the setting and rules. While one's character might be shown as a bunch of numbers and words on a sheet, the data on that sheet is merely a repre-

sentation of a dynamic and growing personage, and that all those numbers, weapons, mutations, implants and skills are very real powers in game terms. Indeed, a character is not static, his or her traits, gear and abilities are not fixed, that the entity a gamer controls can improve in prowess and skill, become more tangible, develop, acquire new articles and better his or her odds of survival in future game sessions through experience factors and the advancement of rank.

In many popular role-playing games, including computer RPGs, the advancement of the character is essential for maintaining player enthusiasm, investment, concern and value for the PC's well being. The very act of going up in rank serves as both a reward for playing well and being lucky, but also represents the growing toughness, fitness, luck, learning and evolution of the individual. A character who survives time and again, learns from each event and adapts to his or her environment is better able to step up to greater challenges, due both to superior personal growth, but so too, by the acquisition of relics, allies and other resources which make the entity far more potent and robust in the brutal world of the Mutant Epoch. While gaining ranks is a goal, it is not the main goal of a character, furthermore, the attainment of higher rank is not so much a carrot before the player's nose but rather to build identification and fondness for that character by its controlling player. A character which has undergone and survived numerous adventures becomes increasingly real to a player, just as a character in a book does as chapter after chapter the reader observes the character's undertakings and the audience becomes attached to the hero and begins to actually care what happens to the character. An emotional investment occurs through the continued play of a character that is fit enough to survive beyond first rank. A character who has earned an emotional investment is one that deserves the player's attention and concern, not only because of all the hours spent playing that character, but because there is clearly something about the character which has allowed him or her to survive where other characters did not. Often one character is better than another from the start, perhaps he or she simply had better traits, better gear, superior implants, skills or mutations, or, more likely at low rank, the PC was simply lucky, that a bullet or poisoned arrow hit another person instead of him or her, that the character stepped over a trip wire that a much more powerful PC in line instead snagged, unleashing a waiting trap, killing him, and so forth.

Experience factors are rewarded by three methods, first by the total rightfully earned by

acquiring 1/10<sup>th</sup> the value in silver coins worth of loot brought back to the character's home or base camp, through adventure (instead of through commerce or wages, etc.), and the second method by the experience factors value listed for adversaries conquered during game play. Conquering does not mean killing, necessarily, for to capture a being also brings about the gain of its EFs or Experience factors, while driving off a creature either yields half its EF value if the GM wishes it, otherwise none. The third way to gain experience factors is for the GM to arbitrarily reward them to either the whole group or to one or two exceptionally well conducted characters who either did most of the risk taking in the past adventure session, or the player played the character in such a way as to make that PC stand out, or advance the game session to make it more enjoyable for all. This last reason is essential for making The Mutant Epoch or any role playing game a success, and keeping the table top RPG hobby alive, flourishing and certain of its place as an entertainment form for future generations. Cooperative storytelling, talked about so much in this and other articles which support this game system, as well as elsewhere in RPG discussions, articles and forums, is really what role playing games are all about, getting together with friends and having an alter ego participate in a mutually assumed reality. By giving out d20, d100 or even set values of 50, 100, or more experience factors to a particular character, what the GM is saying to the whole players is, "Immerse yourself in the adventure, the setting, and the genre of the game, play well, act well, do stuff you can't or wouldn't do in your normal life. As the GM you want to encourage your players to do stuff that is heroic and wild, perform deeds with gusto and boldness which inspire fellow gamers to really dive into the game session, get behind their character and for a few hours at least, be somebody else, assume a role, and be the characters in the sort of a great book or movie you wish they would make, the sort of entertainment that is designed for you specifically, a form which is quite unlike anything else out there, where you, the player, acting through a generated entity or sorts, becomes the hero in a story that is potentially unending, without a set script, in a world and age where anything could happen, where the outcome of events and fate of hard pressed humanity is often up to the actions of an individual character.



# 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, Thrucker 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 Thrucker 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, Thrucker, 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: Thrucker the Ghastly**

Thrucker is at the Floating Motel, talking to a hot blonde, when a dusty, tired looking man with a

