



House Rules & Case Studies



~The Age of Hastur~

Author: Djr

Release Date: September 2009

Version: 4.0

This is a collection of micro-systems and one-liners that have evolved out of actual game play. Feel free to cherry-pick any of these that float your boat.

Contents

- Combat.....1
 - Combat in a Crowded Place.....1
 - Martial Arts Threat Zone.....1
- Equipment.....1
 - Adjust Tech Level.....1
- Hacking.....2
 - Cracking Passwords.....2
 - Permission Gateways.....2
- New Hero Bonus.....2
 - Jack of All Trades (Master of None).....2
- Occult.....2
 - Spotting an Astral Spy.....2
- Skills.....2
 - Learning from Helping.....2
- Travel & Exploration.....2
 - Walking without shoes.....2
- Yellow Dawn - Back to Basics.....3

As it happened, one of the sword wielding maniacs failed the roll, so I determined they got tangled up and were unable to reach / attack the character for the next 1d6 rounds.

Meanwhile, one of the character's associates heard the commotion, looked down the lane and saw what was going on. He ran to a nearby table, jumped up onto it to give him elevation (I asked him to 20 or more on DEX+1d20 to avoid falling on his arse). With a clear line of sight, he began shooting at the swordmen. However, the lane was now in chaos. People running around or standing around watching in open-mouth shock. I rolled 3d6 to determine the density of the crowd. And used this value x 5% to determine the chance of him shooting bystanders for any bullet that missed the swordmen. After a couple combat rounds, I decided that the gunfire and subsequent wounding would drive most people to the floor, so re-rolled the crowd density, only using 1d3 this time.

This case study shows the use of 3d6 to determine density values (clutter, natural cover; crowds), and how to apply these as variables in scenes of high-action and combat.

The case study highlights the ability to apply common sense to the dice rolls, reducing the likely density of the crowds (from 3d6 to 1d3) because of the probably reaction of people to gunfire and wounding.

MARTIAL ARTS THREAT ZONE

When a Martial Artist is carrying no weapons or only "close proximity" weapons, once they take a "stance" and display they're a martial artist, they automatically get a 1-metre Threat Zone. In other words, anybody entering the 1-Metre Threat Zone with no weapons or with only close-proximity weapons, must succeed in a COOL check to do so, in which case they will be exposed to a free-attack by the Martial Artist.

COMBAT

COMBAT IN A CROWDED PLACE

An unarmed character was ambushed by three sword wielding maniacs. Ordinarily the 3rd attacker would have gained bonuses to-hit. However, the character used the description of the area to his advantage. The character was in a narrow lane cluttered with people enjoying late night coffee and cocktails, there were tables and chairs aplenty. The character ploughed in amongst this lot. As a GM I applied the following rubric:

- o I rolled 3d6 to determine the density of furniture.
- o To avoid getting tangled up and falling over, the character and each NPC had to roll under their DEX - minus this score, on 1d20.
- o I determined that the clutter of chairs provided about 40% natural cover; therefore, each attack against the character had a 40% chance of striking a table or chair instead.

EQUIPMENT

ADJUST TECH LEVEL

There's a simple way for the GM to regulate the amount of technology that enters their interpretation of the Yellow Dawn world. When characters are looking to "Purchase Equipment" they normally roll under SIZE+TECH on 1d20 for general items, and SIZE+TECH on 1d20+5 for Specialist Items.

If you want more technology: apply a negative DM to the 1d20 dice roll. Making it more likely they'll roll under the target score.

If you want less technology: increase the positive DM to the 1d20 dice roll. Making it less likely they'll roll under the target score.

HACKING

CRACKING PASSWORDS

Such as found on a PA or on password protected files. A hacker can get through this password via "Hacking In from the Outside" rules. Alternatively they get three attempts to "guess" the password before the system locks down.

PERMISSION GATEWAYS

Some computer systems contain gateways to other computer systems. Access to pass through these gateways is assigned to a particular authenticated user by the system admin. A hacker can assign these privileges to their "fake" user account. Treat this as an item on Table 20.4, "Offensive Options as an Authentic User", and give it a DM of -20%

Succeeding allows the Hacker to enter the general files of the connected computer system, via the permission gateway, and so continue hacking.

NEW HERO BONUS

JACK OF ALL TRADES (MASTER OF NONE)

Idea submitted by Tony Jordan

Pre-requisites: INT 13+, can only be selected at character creation.

Character has an inherent ability to pick up and become proficient in new skills quickly, but lacks the willpower, or understanding to pursue these skills to a higher mastery, and is excluded from gaining true insight altogether.

In game terms all xp spent (on skills points only!) would mean double skill points up to 40%.

In other words, a character spending 10 xp to improve a skill that is current at 20%, would end up with a new skill level of 30%. For a character with the "Jack of All Trades" Hero Bonus, the skill would end up at 40%.

The sting in the tail is that any skill going over 40% will eat-up double the number of XP normally required, up to a threshold of 80%.

In other words, a character with the "Jack of All Trades" Hero Bonus, spending 10 xp to improve a skill that is currently 40%, would only end up with a new skill level of 45%. It takes 2 xp to increase skill by 1%.

A character with this Hero Bonus can **never** take a skill above 80%.

Characters with this Hero Bonus would avoid specialising but would be very good generalists.

NOTE: This Hero Bonus comes into effect after the character has been generated; after the PDP skill points have been allocated.

OCCULT

SPOTTING AN ASTRAL SPY

If a character or NPC is entering an area on the Astral Plane then they are technically invisible to other humans. If a potential observer has an Occult Skill of 80% or more (or Mythos of 40%+), then they're considered to be "sensitive" to other planes of existence and they might become aware of the presence of the person on the Astral Plane. To resolve this, allow opposed POW rolls. If the Astral traveller wins, their presence is unnoticed. If a potential observer wins, then they guess that somebody is "there" on the Astral plane – and can react according to their character.

SKILLS

LEARNING FROM HELPING

This is an enhancement to the existing rules, where character(s) can add 1/5th of their skill to a single person with the same skill, in order to help that person succeed. Of course, if that person succeeds they get an experience point; but the under the existing rules the person(s) helping get nothing.

If the person succeeds in the skill check: then anybody who helped them has a chance of learning from their experience. To determine this, anybody who added 1/5th of their skill should try to make an immediate skill check (using their skill score) and try to *roll higher*. In other words, try to fail. If they fail they gain 1% to that specific skill, immediately; they do not get an experience point to add to any skill later.

TRAVEL & EXPLORATION

WALKING WITHOUT SHOES

If in the middle of nowhere, or in a hostile environment, one of the most effective ways to "cripple" a potential foe is to take their shoes. What happens is that the feet get so badly damaged as to become virtually impossible to walk upon. The distance at which this happens is down to the GM, type of terrain (rocky, sharp, jagged, hot, cold?), but some typical distances are:

- EASY Terrain: 20 miles
- TOUGH Terrain: 10 miles
- VERY TOUGH Terrain: 5 miles
- INHOSPITABLE Terrain: 1 mile

Once this threshold has been reached, the person suffers a notional 1HP damage, which is not a lot in the scheme of injuries, but from now on any movement by foot is excruciatingly painful. Apply the following rules:

- To continue moving for another 1 mile, the person must succeed in a COOL check, otherwise they decide to rest for 1 hour (regardless of mortal circumstances – they simply cannot face the pain any more). Once 1 hour has passed they can try another COOL check to continue, otherwise they spent another 1 hour resting.
- Sprint & Run reduced to 1/5th Normal
- Walking Speed drops to 1 mile per hour, or 1 metre per round.
- If Sprinting, Running or Walking, the person is grimacing, hobbling and in extreme pain.
- At 7 A.M there is a chance of Infection.

Recovery

To heal fully from this state requires 24 hours of complete rest – no use of feet.

YELLOW DAWN - BACK TO BASICS

Documentation showing my thought-processes and use of Yellow Dawn rules as I disengage from months of running fast-paced, high-tech scenarios and bring the game group back to a slower pace and lower tech.

June 2009, Bristol, UK.

The group of players are gathering at Hagen's pad today. Another all day session of Yellow Dawn. This is the first session since they completed "Shadows of the Quantinex". I'm looking forward to it because I can finally get back to the original flavour of Yellow Dawn. I'm calling it back to basics. Running Shadows of the Quantinex was a chance to play-test the Beta version and bug-fix, and to test the YD Rules that are involved in the high-tech and high-life options within the world.

Shadows is a massive campaign (it took a year to play) and involved the characters getting access to significant funds and equipment; they criss-crossed the globe in aeroplanes; they went up into Orbit; the hopped from Living City to Living City without only brief forays into the Wilderness, rarely having to deal with the grim horror of Dead Zones. Shadows of the Quantinex is a campaign for evolved characters: as such, it misses some of the original themes of the Yellow Dawn system. Hard times. Struggle for survival. Scavenging. Uncertain new map evolving as settlements spring up, wane or wax into empires.

So Shadows is finished; the characters who completed it are parked on ice.

The group have rolled up a new bunch of characters and they're starting from a SIZ 2, TECH 1 settlement in the middle of nowhere.

Right now I'm sitting at my desk in the Sky Bunker, pulling out rules I've not needed to use in ages.

I'm looking at "Map of the Land". I've decided that the characters are starting at a Grade D settlement, disconnected from the Interlink. Self-sufficient but poverty stricken. A very hard life.

The nearest place (Red Ridge) is 25 miles away; they communicate with Red Ridge once a fortnight by crappy radio, trying to preserve the few batteries they've scavenged.

The scenario is going to involve them walking to Red Ridge. After which I envisage them pushing further to explore the terrain around them. I don't have a map so I'm going to use the rules to create one, see what's around them.

I decided to give the next settlement a 20% chance of being Grade C, but it remains Grade D... so these places are way off the beaten track, probably in remote rural wilderness.

I'm going to say there's a very basic trail connecting the two settlements but because it's so disconnected from the rest of the Interlink I'll remove most risks of encounter or bandits.

I decide to make one Random Encounter roll for the journey between their settlement and the next, even though it's 25 miles and likely to take more than a day.

That reminds me I need to refresh on their encumbrance thresholds and really enforce the Fatigue rule system... they're going to be walking long distances with very little food.

For the random encounter I roll once on Table 10.2b (using Cross Country rather than Horse Trail). The result is NO ENCOUNTER.

Again, for the initial journey of 25 miles to the next settlement, I decide there is a small chance of something interesting sitting along the route, so I roll once on Table 10.6b: but I get no result.

So now I know the characters are not going to stumble across anything or suffer any encounters for their first journey; their only enemy will be starvation and the weather. The mini-scenario I'm putting them on involves a flash flood that has devastated the area.

They'll need to find a boat of some kind to cover the final 5 miles.

I decide to place a cluster of buildings that once represented a river fishing business for tourists; I'll allow the characters to find a sign or have some knowledge of this, and sure enough they will definitely find a boat.

I roll 1d6, and determine there's 5 buildings.

Using the rules for "Between Settlements" my cluster of buildings is

- #1 unscavenged -
- #2 Asset stripped
- #3 unscavenged
- #4 unscavenged
- #5 unscavenged

No Zombies in the area.

I want to give these buildings some flavour. So I flick to the Chapter Eleven, Scavenging, and use Table 11.1 to determine what each building is.

I end up with:

- #1 unscavenged - Small Family Home 2BS - MINOR DECAY
- #2 Asset stripped - Small Family Home 2BS - MAJOR DECAY
- #3 unscavenged - Small Office Building 4BS - INTACT
- #4 unscavenged - 2 story corporate office building - 4BS - MINOR DECAY
- #5 unscavenged - Small Family Home 2BS - MAJOR DECAY

***The original roll for this was prison/security structure, but this didn't fit my view of a small business renting out boats to tourists. SO I rerolled. I got a multi-story office building. Another large structure. Hmmm. I play with the idea of having something large here, but I decide against it: I don't want the characters finding a lot of artefacts / items at this point. It'll spoil the fresh new concept of them having nothing. A least let them go through one scenario with next to nothing and see how they cope. I settle on a small office building, 2 storeys, that I decide was once a shop and rental bureau.*

So now I've got my landscape for the mini-scenario set up. But, I know they'll finish this quickly with time left to start something else. So I go back to the "Map of the Land" system in the Yellow Dawn rules.

There is a 20% chance that there's a c-Grade settlement near Red Ridge, otherwise the nearest settlement will be another

isolated D-Grade. I roll and there IS a C-grade. It's 20 miles from Red Ridge, there's no trail. This is good news I decide. The very nature of a C-Grade means that it will be connected to another C-Grade or even a B-Grade by horse trail... in other words, it means this is the route to get the characters out of the middle of nowhere, towards the Interlink (the surviving road network), allowing them to find more settlements, more people, more opportunity for adventure.

I give this place the name "New Falls".

The settlement of Red Ridge was destroyed during floods, so this place, New Falls will represent the first occupied settlement the characters are going to come across.

Still within chapter 10, I go to the section "Adding More Detail"

I generate SIZE, TECH, and Nature.

I end up with a place that has a population of 500 souls, a Tech Rating of 5 (reasonable) and a nature of 17 (which means they're extraordinarily nice people). It is governed as a Patriarchy.

I extend my map a little further and determine that this C-Grade settlement, New Falls, is connected to another C-Grade settlement by a horse-trail. I name this place Village of HillBrand. It's 15 miles from New Falls. It has a SIZE of 3 and a TECH of 1 and a Nature of only 8. Size 3 means it should have a population of 100, but on a whim I decide to make this 1d100. I roll and score 7. Only 7 people left... hmm, there's a story there. Also the TECH is only 1, meaning abject hardship and poverty. And a Nature of 8 means the place is plagued by violent gangs. The characters are going to have an interesting experience passing through here, eh.

A final more bits of preparation.

Still within Chapter 10, I turn to the section called "Terrain". I use Table 10.9 to randomly see what the terrain is. There's no rules saying how often you should make this roll, but I decide on a rule of thumb that I'll make a roll for each settlement on my newly evolving map, since each place is separated by around 20 miles:

Characters starting settlement is in forest.

Red Ridge is in cultivated farmland.

New falls is an area of lake land.

Village of Hillbrand is in a mountainous area.

Yet again the dice create a spooky synergy with the ideas in my mind. This works. It means the characters will set out from their place, deal with the destruction of Red Ridge, and then have to start heading towards the distant mountains, going cross-country to passing through New Falls and then taking a horse trail up into the mountains, where they'll come across the village of Hillbrand. Of course, I can see using the "Map of the Land" system to grow my map beyond the mountains and Hillbrand... but I don't need to do this yet. If the characters catch me on the back-foot, then I can also download a ready made map from the Yellow Dawn website, or even use the sample maps in the back of the printed rulebook as a basis for making something up on the fly.

Finally, I don't want to have this coming game session all about wandering aimlessly across the landscape of Yellow Dawn. The initial mini-scenario is about that, testing their abilities to cross the wilderness and deal with low food.

I go to my mountainous pile of scenario books, mainly Call of Cthulhu. I dig out a scenario that will work with a small remote township. It's easy to modify any scenario to fit into Yellow Dawn: even one set in a 1920's city. But I could have just as easily have used a cyberpunk, gamma world or D&D scenario. I could

even have gone online and found the plot précis of some Wild West film or novel, and applied that to the characters.

It means the players never quite know when they're dealing with pure adventure or something a little darker, until the shit is going down.

Ok, I'm ready. I pack up, leave the Sky Bunker and head over to Hagen's... a slightly sardonic smile curving my lips.

END

7th September 2009, keep checking back from time to time as this document will get updated with new House Rules as they evolve.

About the Author

David J Rodger was born in Newcastle Upon Tyne in 1970. He has published three novels (fiction) and is the creator of YELLOW DAWN, a successful role playing game based on the world formed by his books.

He has written freelance non-fiction for UK magazines and had short stories published in the UK, US and Canada. His presence on the Internet got him a place in a BBC documentary in 2000, 'Through The Eyes of the Young.'

He spent 8 years working for a government agency, within the IT Division, developing a virtual communications service, before moving into commercial project management for a major UK Media Company.

He now lives in Bristol with a Braun coffee-maker, writing from a house on a hill with a view of the Earth's curve. He can be found on the web at:

www.davidjrodger.com

About Yellow Dawn

The Earth has been ravaged by viral pathogens. The death of billions was observed by the orbital colonies and deep-space habitats largely unaffected by the Outbreak. Terrified of infection, nobody came to help. Less than 30 percent survived the first few weeks. Then came the 2nd Wave of infection, spreading steadily outwards from the impact points, and that was when the horror really began...

It's been 10 years since Yellow Dawn happened and you're part of this world. A survivor. You've seen a handful of cities bounce back; you've seen settlements spring up across the New Wilderness and you've seen the dead things that come shrieking out of the ruins at full sprint. Rumours of alien monsters and Satanic ceremonies filter out from the deep wilderness on the tongues of travellers; you've seen recorded footage, fuzzy and badly shot, purporting to be evidence of a new threat to humankind. Some people believe, most do not. There's a hundred different stories hitting the satellite feeds every day, of people carving a niche for themselves in this Brave New World: adventurers, entrepreneurs, engineers, mercenaries and story tellers. It's been 10 years and now you've got a chance to join them. A chance to become a hero. Post an advert on-line fishing for clients, or stuff your possessions into a backpack and head off into the New Wilderness to test your skills.

FEATURES: High-tech and Low-tech weaponry • Equipment and armour • Zombie surges • Computer hacking • Drug abuse • Non-human characters • Scavenging Dead Cities for resources and raw components to build whatever you need • Enhancements through cyberware and bioware. • Complex political, corporate and quasi-religious tensions • Schools of Elemental Magick, occultism, demonology, and many new alien horrors of the Outer Chaos - H.P. Lovecraft's Mythos.

Preview or purchase a copy: www.lulu.com/content/923035

Yellow Dawn (The Age of Hastur) is a creation of David J Rodger. This document is Copyright © 2009 David J Rodger, all rights reserved. Visit davidjrodger.com for more free downloads, and to preview or buy his books of cyber fiction and mythos horror.

Shadows of the Quantinex

"Shadows of the Quantinex" is a major campaign for Yellow Dawn. It allows the characters to discover the truth behind this event: the machinations of an individual obsessed with The King in Yellow, and his desire to "bring his God into this world". It also plunges the characters into a desperate race to stop the next catastrophe... a major conspiracy building up to deal another blow to humanity, except this time the King in Yellow has been usurped by a far more powerful Mythos entity, and the consequences will be far reaching (not just Earth)..

Preview or purchase a copy: www.lulu.com/content/2216451

New "Mythos" Novels

For the uninitiated I'm referring to the collective body of cosmic horror begun by the American author of horror, fantasy, and science fiction, Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890 - 1937). In particular, I'm referring to his Cthulhu Mythos, which contains within its black heart a pantheon of monstrous, god-like entities, and often describes the "sanity-shattering" consequences for those protagonists who foolishly attempt to learn more about them, or worse, interact with them.

This is a brief statement the role Mythos plays in my writing to capture the interest of Mythos fans. None of the PR around my writing screams out "Cthulhu Mythos" bad guys. However, two of my novels, God Seed, and EDGE, have significant Mythos elements.

GOD SEED: see what an aspect of Nyarlathotep has in store for humanity. Can documentary film-maker, Adam Kyle, stop it? Or will Kyle merely capture a record of humanities demise.

Preview or buy a copy: <http://www.lulu.com/content/673735>

EDGE: after several millennia roaming the outer cosmos a potent Mythos entity - a Great Old One - has crawled back within our reality through a weak-spot in the Quantispheric boundary. The remote mountain is now a snowboarding resort in New Zealand. See the shocking consequences as its emergence corrupts the susceptible minds within the resort.

Preview or buy a copy: www.lulu.com/content/4137991

Wishing you the best of dark dreams.

David J Rodger
- Bristol, 2009