

HIS IS THE HAND

A game by John Wilson

Not to go on All-Fours; that is the Law. Are we not men?
Not to suck up Drink; that is the Law. Are we not men?
Not to eat Fish or Flesh; that is the Law. Are we not men?
Not to claw the Bark of Trees; that is the Law. Are we not men?
Not to chase other Men; that is the Law. Are we not men?

The Island of Dr Moreau - HG Wells

INTRODUCTION

Although Dr Alphonse Moreau perished on Noble's Isle sometime in late 1887, his work did not. In 1891, an expedition was sent by the British government to salvage what they could and return any papers or specimens that were still alive. Although the expedition was publicly reported as a failure, it did succeed in bringing back enough information for scientists to replicate Dr Moreau's work - the surgical hybridisation of Man and Beast.

A small laboratory was established somewhere in the bucolic countryside of England. The scientists at the laboratory successfully reproduced all of Moreau's techniques and added page after page to their new bestiary. The new creations were studied, both physically and mentally, to see what use they could be in the new century.

CHARACTERS

In "His is the Hand", the players take the part of the Beast-Men: hybrids created from the legacy of Dr Moreau. When creating a character, the player should decide what animals have gone into their creation.

Characters have the following abilities:

TRAITS - These are what describe the character's abilities. A character may have any number of Traits provided they have at least one point in every Trait. Traits should be neither too narrow, nor too wide. The referee is the ultimate authority on whether a Trait is suitable and what its effects are. The score assigned to a Trait indicates how good it is.

DRAWBACKS - Whereas Traits are generally positive, Drawbacks are negative. A Drawback must have a score, like a Trait. The score indicates how badly the Drawback affects the character. Again, the referee is the ultimate authority on the extent of a Drawback.

HUMANITY - This represents how spiritually close characters are to the ideal of Noble Humanity and how well they can resist the bestial side of their nature. A high Humanity score indicates

that the character thinks rather than reacts.

Players have 10 points with which to create characters. These points should be assigned to Traits. If a player decides to create a character with Drawbacks, they receive extra points for Traits equal to the number of points they have in Drawbacks.

PLAYING THE GAME

When a player wants to do anything in the game that is not an automatic success, they just roll dice. The number of dice they have to roll is equal to the score in any Traits that are applicable.

The type of dice used is immaterial. An even score indicates a success, an odd score is a failure. Only successes are counted.

The referee must set a Difficulty for each task. The Difficulty is the number of successes that are required. A Difficulty can range from 1 (Easy) to 6 (Insanely Difficult). Alternatively, if the player is being opposed by another character, they can roll the applicable Traits, and the character with the most successes wins. If a character has any applicable Drawbacks, these increase the Difficulty by the score of the Drawback,

There are a number of ways to use this mechanic:

ONE-OFF ROLLS - Roll against the Difficulty. Either the roll succeeds or it fails. Useful when the players can only have one attempt.

TASK ROLLS - If a player is trying to complete a long term task, the player may accumulate successes from each roll. Once the total number of successes beats the Difficulty, the task has been completed. The interval between rolls is up to the referee.

COMBAT - In combat, the number of successes scored against an opponent is subtracted from their Traits. Once one of a character's Traits reaches 0, they are out of the combat and at the mercy of their opponent.

HUMANITY ROLLS - When a character is faced with a stressful situation where they can act in accordance with either their bestial nature or human nature, the player must make a roll against a referee-selected Difficulty using their



Humanity score. If the roll succeeds, then the players must act in accordance with human nature, ie, they may choose what to do. If the roll fails, then they must act in line with their bestial nature, ie, the referee decides what happens.

TOOLS - If a character has an item that may help them, then they can have an extra dice. Some Traits will need tools to be used, so if the character does not have the required tool, the number of dice is reduced.

COMBINING TRAITS - If two characters have applicable Traits that are the same value, they may combine them to gain an extra dice. For example, two characters with a Trait at 3 may combine their Traits to roll 4 dice. A third character with the same Trait at 3 would not increase the number of dice rolled to 5 (3 is less than 4), but two more characters would!

ZERO TRAITS - There are some skills that everyone has, but which may not have an applicable Trait. These are called Zero Traits. If a character uses a Zero Trait in a skill roll, they automatically get 1 dice. The Difficulty of the task is raised by 1. Alternatively, other characters in the contest get their applicable Traits raised by 1.

SETTING

"His is the Hand" is centred around the confines of a scientific establishment in the late 19th/early 20th centuries. The establishment resembles a combination of farm and menagerie, more than it does a laboratory. However, its purpose is simple: to create and test new forms of life. As far as the Beast-Men are concerned, the laboratory is their world. What lies beyond its boundaries is known only to the Men in white and the Men in Black.

The establishment is divided into a number of areas. At the outermost edge of the establishment is the Line. The Line marks the limit beyond which the Beast-Men may not go. Any Beast-Man who crosses the Line dies in extreme agony. Only Men may cross the Line and live.

Just inside the Line are the Fields and the Woods. These are the areas of countryside that exist within the boundaries of the establishment. The Beast-Men are allowed to roam freely within them. Some Beast-Men have even made their homes in these areas, constructing rude shelters and hovels.

The main part of the establishment is a collection of buildings. The Men in White and the Men in Black live in these buildings. These buildings also contain the House of Pain, where the Beast-Men are created and altered, and the House of Testing, where they are subjected to the whims of the Men in White and the Men in Black. Only a few, selected Beast-Men have been in the other buildings.

At the centre of the buildings is the Court. The Beast-Men are sometimes gathered there by the Men in White and the Men in Black.

The establishment is ruled by the Men in White. These Men create the Beast-Men and decide their fate. The Men in Black carry out the instructions of the Men in White and discipline the Beast-Men.

PLAYING THE GAME

"His is the Hand" is a game of choices. The players are Beast-Men who are being evaluated to see whether or not they are useful to Humanity. If they are useful, then they will be allowed to continue. If they are not, then they will be exterminated. How the players react will determine their fates and those of their fellows.

Life inside the establishment is confusing to the Beast-Men. Much goes on that they cannot understand, and that they can only interpret through their limited experience. The players should therefore be presented with bewildering situations that are the results of their masters' actions. They cannot be sure what is the proper way to react, or if they should react at all. The only role models they have are the Men in White and the Men in Black - and their motives are often anything but transparent.

Because of this relationship, the referee should decide on the personalities of the Men in white (the scientists) and the Men in Black (the guards). Just because they are humans does not mean that they have high Humanity scores. Even Men in White and the Men in Black should be no exception. This could lead to situations where the players are punished for being more human than the Men around them.

Ultimately any game of "His is the Hand" must have an ending. The actions of the players in response to the capriciousness of their creators will decide what happens. So - do they give in to their fate, do they resort to primal savagery to escape their tormentors, or do they rebel against their creators and claim their destiny as thinking, feeling beings?

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