LOST IN SMARAGDIS:
ADVENTURES IN THE EMERALD WORLD

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Wealthy American planter and amateur archaeologist Edward Aubrey Jr. is now believed dead, following the disappearance of his two-seater biplane somewhere over the Peruvian Amazon last week. Aubrey, who had claimed to have seen the tops of overgrown pyramids rising out of the jungle, was known to be scouting the area for a planned expedition on foot later in the year. Aubrey was also aware of some kind of magnetic anomaly affecting the area, for he had already recorded from previous flights that his compass became erratic and when flying over certain valleys ...

[Translated from an Ecuadorian newspaper, June 1932]

In the Year of Our Lord 1671 there was a revolt among the white slaves in the silver mines at Arica. The slaves, heretics and pirates all mostly of English and French origin, massacred their guards and made off with quantities of silver ingots hacked into pieces with axes. Cavalry was dispatched to head them off from the sea, lest they rejoin their pirate brethren from Tortuga, and so they fled deeper into the jungle where they must all have perished. Yet the Indians say the slaves reached what they call the Great Sanctuary and are safe from us whatever we do now ... I have ordered those scoundrels with rebellious tongues quartered and hanged as an example to their people ...

[From the historical archives of Lima, Peru]

In the Year of Our Lord 1539 Governor-General Francisco Pizarro sent forth from Lima a half-regiment under the command of Nunez de Bazan in search of the fabled Valley of Emeralds. Nothing was heard of the expedition for two years. In 1541 one of the Indian guides who went out with Nunez de Bazan was found hiding in an Aymara village, and put to the torture to determine what had happened. All we could get out from the Indian was a wild tale of a "gate of green light" through which de Bazan and his men had passed, never to return. We executed the Indian, but had no men to spare for a search ...

[From the historical archives of Lima, Peru]

Beyond the Pillars of Melkarth [untranslatable] *a wide green land like unto Lower Africa* [untranslatable] *beyond the River-which-is-like-a-Sea, in the forest-covered mountains* [untranslatable] *rich in gold and silver and emeralds, a land pleasing to the gods, and to which the gods have led their servant Utush-Hadad of Carthage* [untranslatable] *Utush-Hadad did embark on his ships the men and servants of his house, and the women of his house, with all his treasure and stacks of shields and spears* [untranslatable] *with the blessings of the Council of Suffetes, to establish a city, a daughter of noble Carthage ...*

[Translated from a damaged Carthaginian plaque c. 270 BC]

LOST IN SMARAGDIS is a pulp-style science fiction adventure RPG inspired by the lost-race, lost-world type stories of authors like H. Rider Haggard, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, A. Merritt and Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Smaragdis, the Emerald World, is an alien yet earthlike planet inhabited by a collection of lost tribes and civilizations living in terror of dinosaurs and a tyrannical Conquistador kingdom. Scattered across Smaragdis are the relics of a vanished alien civilization - mysterious mind-gems that can grant strange powers but at the risk of madness, gangly robotic Demons, gigantic flying machines that can rain down lightning on command, and enigmatic monuments of stupendous scale that may hold the secrets of the cosmos. A portal in the Upper Amazon jungle can transport those who wander into it to Smaragdis, but if there are any portals leading back to Earth they have yet to be found.

What is an RPG?

New to the hobby? Then welcome, and here's a short explanation of roleplaying games to help you get into the fun. Roleplaying games are one of the world's most unique and entertaining social pastimes. Remember those "let's-pretend" games you had as a kid, when you and your friends would make up fantastic stories together with yourselves as the heroes? Roleplaying games are the more "grown-up" version of these games, played with the aid of rules and various resource materials for greater richness of experience and smoother running; but just like those "pretend" games you used to play as kids, all the action happens inside your head.

In a roleplaying game (RPG for short), you create a fictional hero character and "play" that character through all sorts of challenges such as fighting crime, rescuing people in distress, finding lost treasure, or exploring strange and dangerous places; you "play" your character by deciding what he or she says and does, occasionally making rolls to see if your hero can succeed at dangerous or uncertain tasks.

For example, in one adventure your character might need to steal a treasure map back from some bloodthirsty pirates, a mission that could involve sneaking into the pirates' lair, tricking the pirate captain into leaving the map, then fighting your way out when the captain discovers the map stolen.

The challenges your character is faced with are "run" by a player with special responsibilities, called the Game Master (GM for short). The GM is responsible for setting up a game, assisting the other players in creating their characters, telling the story of the adventure, answering player questions, and calling for the rolls and judging their results when needed.

What is needed to play?

You will need a copy of these rules, one or more - preferably about half a dozen 20-sided dice, and writing materials. You will also need a place to play, preferably one with a table that will seat all the players and where you will not be disturbed, and not disturb anyone too much - trust me, you'll be making a lot of noise!

THE WORLD OF SMARAGDIS

Portals

The way to Smaragdis is through the Emerald Gate, a dimensional portal located somewhere in the Upper Amazon jungle. Explorers of various sorts - Indian hunters and guides, archaeologists and other scientists, bush pilots, journalists and other hangers-on to an expedition - might find their way to it by going over the Andes from Peru or Ecuador, or by coming up the Amazon from Brazil.

Alternate Portals

There is also no reason why Smaragdis can't have portals in other locations; any place that is associated with major mysteries such as the Bermuda Triangle in the Caribbean, the Devil's Triangle off Japan, the ruins of Ponape in the South Pacific, even the Pyramids at Giza or Stonehenge in Britain could have a dormant gate that opens just when the player characters come visiting. This opens the possibility for many interesting kinds of visitors and artifacts from Earth; for example, a German U-boat crew for whom the war has never ended, and their submarine.

Working the Portals

How do the portals work? They are matter transporters of some sort, with apparently instantaneous action. They trigger automatically when something enters the area, and can even snatch a plane from the air. A portal's opening is marked by a flood of green light, and the mere proximity of a working portal will cause compasses to become erratic, interferes with radio signals, and can make electronic devices of all sorts stop functioning.

Physical Paradigms

The Planet

The world of Smaragdis must be about the same size and mass as Earth, for there is no perceptible gravity difference. Atmospheric composition is also similar enough to Earth that Terran life can exist very comfortably. A Smaragdine day is 25 hours 8 minutes long, its solar year 369 days 2 hours 15 minutes. There is no axial tilt; climate is apparently driven by the lunar tides, and there are no clear-cut seasons. Most of the world seems to be tropical, but that may be a mistaken perception - too little of Smaragdis has been explored to verify any such broad statements. Smaragdis has four moons, of which there is always at least one in the sky at any time, and solar eclipses are frequent but briefer than on Earth - the moons orbit faster.

Ancient Civilization

The most unusual feature of Smaragdis is the ubiquitous presence of Ancient civilization and its relics. Long ago, apparently before humans first arrived here, a highly advanced alien civilization called Smaragdis home. Why they vanished no one knows, though there are dozens of conflicting legends and theories. Crystalline mind-gems abound, giving Smaragdis' "sorcerers" many odd powers of clairvoyance, telepathy, and control over the creatures or constructs that Smaragdine peoples call Demons. Sleeping Demons seem to be scattered across the world, sometimes in sealed crypts, sometimes in less formal burials; most will awaken if disturbed, and some seem programmed to kill. It is generally agreed that the Demons were the Ancients' servants, but of course none but a modern Earthman would realize that they are actually robots.

Guardians of Smaragdis

Sorcerers claim there is a god - or devil - living beneath the earth, able to see and hear everything going on above and capable of granting knowledge and power to those who learn to speak with it

through their mind-gems. This being, whatever it is, is jealous of any advanced technology not of Ancient origin. Activating anything more complex or powerful than a flashlight is sure to trigger hostile Demon activity sooner or later.

Demons will instinctively attack anything with a functioning internal combustion engine, electric motor, electric generator, and most specially anything that emits a radio signal; and God help anyone who gets in their way. However, Demons are unevenly distributed throughout the world so it may be several days before any arrive. The people of Smaragdis have no idea of this law of their world, though a modern survivor who has preceded the player characters might have some clue.

GEOGRAPHY

The Emerald Sea Basin

New arrivals usually appear somewhere around the Emerald Sea. The Emerald Sea is an enormous star-shaped freshwater lake, with an area of about 120,000 square miles. Five great rivers - which the inhabitants call the Nerostris, the Albarracin, the Halit, the Coatl and the Asante - pour into the Emerald Sea, their triangular deltas forming the "arms" of the star. The sea and rivers create a balmily gentle subtropical climate, warm all year round cooled by brief rains in the morning and evening almost every day.

The lands of the Emerald Sea basin are low, rolling, well-watered and covered in lush jungles broken here and there by patches of open savanna. There are scattered ranges of low hills like the backs of whales or flat-topped like tables, and mountains whose shield-like shapes hint at volcanic origin. Within the river deltas are reedy marshes cut by innumerable narrow channels. Here and there, half-hidden by the jungle undergrowth, can be found enormous, mysterious monuments of a bluish metal or perhaps crystal, carved with unreadable inscriptions.

Life Around the Emerald Sea

The whole basin is very rich in life - life that would astound a modern scientist, and send the more prudent scampering into the trees for safety. There are hulking long-necked sauropods munching on the tops of trees, hadrosaurs and ceratopsians grazing on ferns and low cycads, terrifying carnosaurs and raptors stalking behind the brush, and pterosaurs the size of a Cessna patrolling the clouds. Giant insects abound, some of them dangerous to man; there are carnivorous water beetles twelve feet long, pack-hunting giant mantises the size of hyenas, and worse.

Mammals from the Amazon jungle have also found their way here, with predators and tree dwellers like jaguars and monkeys doing best; terrestrial herbivores have fared less well because of the carnivorous dinosaurs. The waters of the Emerald Sea ripple with the sinuous motions of swimming phobosuchi forty feet long and even larger paddle-finned mosasaurs. The vegetation is also unearthly - in fact more unearthly than just being of the same era as the dinosaurs. Amid the ferns, cycads and rainforest giants are definitely alien trees and bushes, usually identifiable by their purplish foliage and weird forms; and some of them are carnivorous.

Peoples of the Emerald Sea Basin

In this savage paradise it seems almost impossible that men would survive, but in fact mankind is thriving on the Emerald World. Most live scattered in ingeniously hidden or defended villages, but in the north and west, and in the arid far south there are walled cities that would rival any of ancient Earth. The northern coast of the Emerald Sea is dominated by the Hispano-Punic kingdom of Tartescia, created when Spanish conquistadors from the army of Pizarro seized power over the Punic city-state of Tarshish.

Tartescia is the prime mover and shaker of the Emerald World, possessing as it does the largest armies entire battalions of which are armed with matchlock guns, cavalry mounted on chimeras - dwarf hadrosaurs bled for courage and speed - and a powerful fleet of galleys and triremes. Tartescian slave raids and conquests have altered the distribution of the tribes and destroyed the Murian empire of Kampila in the south.

The west is divided between the warring Punic city-states of the Ishtarite and Melekhite Leagues, the former a matriarchy advocating the worship of Ishtar and the universal rule of its serially

immortal Queen Dido, the latter an alliance of kingdoms whose true rulers are the child-sacrificing priests of Baal-Melekh. Just off the Halit Delta lie the islands of New Tortuga, home of the Brotherhood - a fraternity founded by French and English buccaneers, and dedicated to war against Spanish Tartescia.

The southern and eastern shores, as well as many wide pockets within the Tartescian and Punic lands, are the home of the many Murian and Indian tribes and their allies the Maroons, descendants of African slaves escaping from Portuguese Brazil. Many of these have developed unique ways of protecting their communities - the Maroons typically build walled villages whose walls and roofs are studded by great ironwood spikes, the Tree Aymaras build sprawling cities in the branches of forest giants, the Water Aymaras rely on deep moats on which they float reed rafts where they grow their crops, the Chac Tien live in tunnels carved into sheer cliff faces, and the Murians of Kampila use their command of Demons to build megalithic walled cities on artificial mounds. Unique among the tribes for living an exposed existence are the nomadic Tolkemecs and Tigre Caribs, who roam in hunting bands mounted on chimeras stolen from the conquistadors. Much of this territory was under the empire of Kampila, until the conquistadors destroyed Kampila around 1745 AD.

Far to the south the jungle gives way to savanna, then dry steppe, and finally desert. Here, out of reach of most dinosaurs and of the Tartescians, is the great empire of Amut-Aten. Its rulers are Egyptians, Atenist exiles who sailed out of the Mediterranean, across the Atlantic and up the Amazon to reach a promised land. Their histories establish the date of this voyage around 1500 BC, when young Tutankhamun recanted from the monotheistic religion of Akhenaten and the priests of Amun began a systematic persecution of the remaining Atenists. It is rumored that Amut-Aten possesses the greatest hoard of Ancient artifacts and working devices, including things not seen at all in the north.

CHARACTER CREATION

Before starting a game in the Emerald World, you must first agree with the GM and other players where the adventure will start and what characters are appropriate. An adventure that starts on Earth may be better off with all player characters being from Earth - everybody gets to join the game more or less at the same time - while an adventure that starts already in Smaragdis is more open to characters being from that world as well as from Earth.

Step 0: GM Briefing
Where does the adventure start? What characters are appropriate? What is the time period setting - the golden pulp era of the 1930s, the 21st century, other? What will the tone of the game be like - Lost in Smaragdis is meant to be high-action, rather light-hearted pulp entertainment, but you can also play your game as grim and gritty, or even downplay the action for drama if that's your kick. What's important is that all players know what kind of game is being offered.

Step 1: Concept Line
Is your character going to be an Outsider - that is, a modern Earthman (or modern relative to the chosen time period) - or a Dweller, a native of Smaragdis? What does he do, and what does he know? What mental or physical Traits make him stand out from the crowd, if any?

Write down a 1-sentence capsule description of your character - this will serve as the basis for everything that will follow. Include in your Concept Line your character's name, nationality, occupation, and give us an idea of why he's different. For example: "Luis Chardon, 35-year old Peruvian-American archaeologist, former star soccer player and amateur bush pilot."

Step 2: Detailing the Character
Now that you have a basic idea to work from you can now get to the details. Characters are defined by Abilities, Traits, and Hooks. Abilities determine how many dice you can roll for an action, Traits can provide bonus dice for an action, and Hooks help you earn Story Points. Finally, you should list your character's Outfit - his equipment and possessions.

Abilities:
What is the one thing your character best at? List this as your Main Ability. Next, your character's Major Abilities - the things he's quite good at, by virtue of what he is. You may take up to 4 Major Abilities, one of which must be your character's nationality or ethnicity, based on what language your character would consider his cradle tongue. Your character's career and major interests will also make good Major Abilities. To round it all off, you may take up to 5 Minor Abilities.

Luis Chardon's Abilities are: Athletics (Main); Peruvian-American*, Archaeologist, Bush Pilot, Speak Aymara (Major); Radio Operator, Guns, Jungle Survival, First Aid, Whitewater Rafting

*it makes sense for Luis to be bilingual given this background

Option: you may create a more versatile but less focused character by taking no Main Ability, up to 6 Major Abilities, and up to 8 Minor Abilities.

Traits:
You have 3 dice to distribute among your mental and physical Traits. What are your character's natural talents? Is he stronger, tougher, or more agile than most? Smarter? Determined? Charming or beautiful? Or simply lucky? List your character's Traits and the dice you allotted each, noting the dice as O's.

Luis Chardon's Traits are: Physical Fitness OO and Daredevil Courage O

Hooks:
Hooks are motivations, ideals, weaknesses, vices, quirks and circumstances that tend to drive your character's actions and sometimes complicate his life. It's common for every character to have at least one dramatic Hook which makes him more lifelike and interesting; you may take as many Hooks as you like, though two or three is usually enough for a broad sketch.

Luis Chardon's Hooks: Soccer Nut, Thrillseeker, Impatient

Health:
Health is a measure of a character's ability to take physical damage, and is based on size and build. Human characters have a standard Health of 4. Traits that indicate increased physical strength or toughness however may be tapped to soak damage, thus acting as a cushion to Health.

Outfit:
A character can have whatever clothing, equipment, and possibly arms that are appropriate to what he's doing and reasonably available to a person of his background. As Outsider characters will typically enter Smaragdis through an expedition into the Amazon jungle, it's quite appropriate for Outsiders to carry modern hunting weapons (relative to the time period) and equipment for outdoor living.

Luis Chardon's Outfit: khaki clothes, floppy hat, gaudy bandanna, machete, revolver, archaeologists' tools, first aid kit, water canteen, backpack, safety matches in waterproof case

Step 3: Finishing Touches
Go over your character and check if it's shaping up the way you want it. You can go back and change anything to have the character make more sense or be more entertaining to play. Lastly, let the GM take a look at your character sheet; the GM might suggest a change or two to make the character more interesting or have a larger role in the game, and checking out your character's Hooks can give the GM additional story ideas.

PLAYING THE GAME

Abilities

Abilities indicate what your character knows or can do. You are free to come up with your character's Abilities in your own words, subject to GM review and approval (usually to make sure you both understand just what an Ability is going to be used for).

What can be taken as an Ability?
An Ability could be a specific skill, a career compassing a broad range of related skills, a hobby, etc. etc. You also take your character's nationality or ethnicity as an Ability to indicate fluency in your native language and familiarity with its customs. What languages your character knows can be quite important on Smaragdis, for the Emerald World's tribes have no common language but you just may find a tribe speaking a tongue you can understand.

Ability Ratings
Abilities are rated with dice; this is the number of 20-sided dice that you will roll when using the Ability. Your Main Ability is rated 3 dice, Major Abilities 2 dice, and Minor Abilities 1 die.

Best Fit Rule
What Ability do you use for a task? Whatever fits the situation best among your Abilities. If you don't have any Ability that seems to be appropriate, you usually still get one die by default unless the task requires special training.

No Ability Rule
What happens if you need to do something and have no Ability for it? This depends on the complexity of a task. Basic tasks like running, jumping, climbing or spotting a hidden jaguar can be done by anyone training or no, so everyone gets 1 die by default. Skilled tasks that require previous practice or knowledge, like swimming, allow you 1 die by default but the roll is made as a Chaos Roll - failure is reinterpreted as a disastrous Flub. Expert tasks such as working a computer or piloting a plane to a safe landing simply can't be done without training, so you get no dice at all.

Declaring Actions

As you play, try to keep in mind that this is a pulp-style game - and pulp style means two-fisted, roller-coaster action! Whenever declaring a dramatically significant action, try to do so in as colorful and entertaining a way as possible. Don't just say "I shoot the mosasaur" - do something crazy but cool like "I wait until the last moment, stick both my revolvers in the mosasaur's mouth as it rears out of the water and squeeze the triggers!" Now wasn't that more fun?

As a reward for adding color to the game, the GM may grant you 1-3 bonus dice for your action. Clever tactics, colorful descriptions, taking insane risks and good roleplaying should be considered as basis for the bonus dice award. The GM may also decide to poll the other players as to how many bonus dice to give. It can be really satisfying when everyone at the table unanimously votes you three dice for being so cool!

Tapping Traits

Traits may be tapped to give bonus dice for an appropriate action. When a Trait may help you perform an action, you may tick off or shade one of its O's to gain a bonus die; you may mark off two or more O's to get more dice. For example, being Agile helps to climb a tree, so you could tap

this Trait to help climb a tree more quickly. The bonus dice gained by tapping Traits are cumulative with any dice given by the GM as a reward for colorful declaration. Trait dice pools refresh at the beginning of each new session, or whenever the GM declares it.

Group Effort

Having help can be a major plus to many tasks. When characters team up, every doubling of the number of participants in the action adds +1d, up to a maximum of +5d. That is, +1d for having 2 people at the task, +2d for 4 people, +3d for 8 people, +4d for 16 people, +5d for 32 people or more. Pack-hunting animals like velociraptors will use this bonus often.

For PCs, the greatest benefit of a making a team effort is that every participant can also add dice tapped from his Trait pools. For example if two of the party's strongest men heave at a log, and both have Strength OOO, they not only get +1d for teaming up, they can also tap a total of 6 additional dice from their reserves.

Target Numbers

To succeed at a task, you must roll a result less than or equal to a Target Number (TN) on at least one die. For example your TN is 14 and you have 3 dice; they come out 11, 15, and 20 - a success, because of the one die that rolled 11. If you roll at least one die exactly equal to your TN, you have succeeded with a spectacular Crit - you achieve exactly what you wanted, or more.

The TN is usually given by the GM. In conflict situations, however, the TN is determined by competitive bidding. TNs have a fixed range of 3-18, 3 representing a task incredibly difficult and 18 representing a task that is almost routinely easy. TNs should be understood as a holistic appraisal of a situation's difficulty; to save time it is better to simply evaluate a situation and give a "best-guess" TN for it rather than add up strings of modifiers.

A TN also reflects the pace of an action. The faster you try to do something, the lower your TN must be. This principle is the basis of the cinematic combat system used in this game.

Conflict

Cinematic, pulp-style conflict on the Emerald World can take many forms, from a desperate dive to get at a gun before your opponent does to a hair-raising swordfight to a wild chase on chimera-back. We resolve these conflict situations using a mechanic that maximizes the fun by encouraging everyone involved to give their all in describing the stunts they use to win.

Rounds

Conflicts, including fights, are resolved in rounds of about a few seconds each. Each round is concluded with a roll-off between the players whose characters are in conflict.

Escalation

The Escalation mechanic lies at the heart of conflict resolution. The principle is that a fight, race, or other form of conflict is an interaction - an exchange of "attacks" or attempts to win and counters meant to frustrate the other's action. This exchange goes on until one side or another fails to make an effective reply; your opponent fails to get his shield up in time and takes a sword in the gut, the Tigre Carib you're chasing swerves too late to avoid the tree you were herding him into, etc. etc.

Escalation is opened by either side - usually you, playing your character, or the GM, playing your opponent/s - declaring an action and bidding a TN for it. The GM may set the ceiling for the opening bid to reflect how difficult an action is; for example the opening bid for a swordfight high in the rigging of a tall ship will be lower than the opening bid for a swordfight on the much safer deck.

Once the opening bid is made, the other side may either call for the roll at the TN bid or describe a counter-action that defeats the opening action. For example, if you opened by announcing an attempt to drive your opponent overboard with a sudden rush, bidding a TN of 12, the GM may reply that your opponent sidesteps your rush and takes a slash at you as you go past, TN 10.

Bidding goes back and forth like this until one decides to call for the roll at the last TN bid. As you can see, this allows you to string together a colorful series of actions and reactions that make for a gripping story in itself.

The Roll-off
The dice are rolled at the last TN bid, and the results compared. To win, you must succeed while your opponent fails. This represents the failure of your opponent to effectively counter your winning move. Three results are possible in the roll-off, and they determine who gets to narrate the end of the exchange.

> **Victory:** you succeed, your opponent fails. You get to narrate how the exchange ends. In a fight, this usually means you are able to land a hit on your opponent. If you win with a Crit, the exchange ends with a result that puts your opponent out of the conflict. In a fight this usually means you have killed or crippled your opponent.
>
> **Defeat:** you fail, your opponent succeeds. Your opponent's player - usually the GM - gets to narrate the end of the exchange. If your opponent wins with a Crit, the exchange ends with your character put out of action.
>
> **Standoff:** both fail, or both succeed. This is the usual result between equally matched opponents or when you bid a safe, high TN. The quintessential image of a Standoff is when two swordsmen clash in a flurry of strokes and counterstrokes, only to spring apart again, breathing hard, with neither even scratched. GMs should narrate Standoff results in such a way as to increase dramatic tension and encourage more aggressive bidding on the next round.

If the conflict does not end, another round may be fought until one side either yields or is taken out.

Damage

The results of physical combat are usually measured as damage. If an attacker cannot be persuaded to stop, the only way to get him to stop may be to make sure he cannot attack again. When a character or creature takes Wounds equal to or more than its Health, it is too seriously injured to take any more actions.

Mook Rule
Most small to medium-sized game animals, the lowly goons employed by villains as cannon fodder, and innocent bystanders are considered Mooks. They have a maximum Health of 1 and so go down as soon as hit. Armor has no benefit for Mooks - on them it's nothing more than set dressing. This is part of the cinematic conventions of the game and its style - your character is a hero, and by definition that means you can thwack lesser beings like chaff. Characters and monsters that are more important to the story, however, are another matter …

Weapon Damage
Most personal weapons have a Damage Rating of 1, meaning they inflict 1 Wound on a normal hit, but will instantly kill or cripple a man-sized target on a Crit. Heavier weapons such as large-caliber firearms, cannon, or the attacks of very large animals, may inflict more Wounds as indicated by its DR. Unless otherwise specified, assume that a weapon or attack's DR is 1.

Hardness
Hardness is the measure of how difficult it is to damage a creature or object. Soft flesh has a Hardness of 1, tough hide 2, wood and similar materials 3-4. A creature or object cannot be harmed by any weapon of damage rating less than its Hardness. For example an ankylosaur's head and upper body have a Hardness of 3; this means weapons of damage 2 or less, which includes most personal weapons, simply won't work on it - you either use a bigger weapon, or find a way to attack an unarmored side.

Personal Armor
Personal armor can soak Wounds by absorbing the damage. Pieces of armor are rated like Traits with O's that you can mark off for each Wound absorbed. For example if a Punic coat of scale armor is rated OO, it can absorb two Wounds for you. As a rule light armor is rated O, medium or good armor OO, and heavy or excellent armor OOO. Personal armor has no effect on a character's Hardness - as a human that remains 1.

Soaking Damage with Traits
Traits that indicate physical strength, size or toughness can be tapped to soak Wounds, one Wound per O tapped.

GMCs

GMC stands for Game Master Character or Creature. GMCs are described more simply than Player Characters (PCs) because the GM has a lot more of them to handle and player interactions with them are usually simple or limited. In a purely social encounter, only a PC's Abilities should be tested if necessary - for example if your character is courting a GMC village lass only your character's Romance Ability need be rolled. It's when a GMC comes into conflict with a PC that the GMC needs any sort of stats.

Threat Rating
The Threat Rating (TR) of a GMC is a shorthand, overall reflection of his competence at what he does. Only if a GMC has very different Abilities should he be given separate Abilities. For most GMCs like a savage warrior, Tartescian soldier or velociraptor a single overall rating is enough. TR is expressed as dice, from 1 to 5 or more.

One handy aspect of TR is that you can scale it to the importance of a GMC in the story. For example if you're injecting an encounter with an allosaurus as just another dangerous incident on the road you could give the allosaur a TR of only 3, while if you really wanted the players to worry and have a major combat or chase scene you could give the allosaur a TR of 5.

Health
The Health of a GMC is derived by the formula: Health = TR + (Size x Hardness). Player Characters are effectively TR 3, Size 1 Hardness 1, so human PC Health is 4. Size ranges from 1 - human size or less - to 5 (elephant size) and up, while Hardness ranges from 1 - bare flesh - to 5 - steel - and up.

For example, a T-rex might be TR 5, Size 7, Hardness 2; its Health would be 5 + (7 x 2) = 19.

RELICS OF THE ANCIENTS

There is no such thing as magic in the Emerald World, but there is certainly something very much like it, in the form of Ancient technology and the unique way of accessing it. Ancient relics lie scattered all over the planet, and may be found as buried treasure, traded for - though at high price, or looted from one's enemies if they have any. If one is particularly unfortunate, the Ancients' machines may find *you* first.

The Core

The heart of all Ancient technology, which provides power and instructions to all the mobile units, is the computer Core. The inhabitants of Smaragdis, even the sorcerers who have interacted with the Core extensively, have no idea the Core may be a construct, much less deduce its nature as a computer. The only way to access the Core is through the use of mind-gems, which give mind-gem users a direct telepathic connection to it.

However, the Core is not only a computer, it is an alien computer; its signals cannot be fully understood by a human mind because it was never designed for human minds. In fact first contact with the Core can damage a human mind that is unprepared for the barrage of sheer *alienness*. The only communication that the Core and sorcerers mutually understand is visual images and natural sounds. Speech, writing, and complex ideas cannot be translated. The Core controls all the Demons, Eyes, Thunderbirds, and other Ancient constructs on Smaragdis.

Mind-Gems

Mind-gems are the key that unlock the power of the Core for the sorcerer. Most mind-gems are circular, about 2 inches wide, with a one convex side and a flat side, with the appearance of dull onyx when inactive and bright glowing emerald green when in use. They must be worn next to the skin to work, so sorcerers usually have theirs set into bracelets, pectorals, and the like. Becoming a sorcerer is as simple as acquiring a mind-gem, putting it in contact with your bare skin - and not going mad at your mind's first brush with the alien presence of the Core computer.

> Resisting this "Primary Shock" event is a Basic task, and you can tap any Trait that indicates strength of will, courage, or ability to stay calm and focused; an Ability that gives you the skill to meditate will be very useful. The TN is 6..
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> Success means you resisted the madness, failure means your character develops an extreme psychosis - work out with the GM the details - which lasts until you are somehow healed. Even a successful healing, however, means you cannot try to use a mind-gem again.
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> A successfully initialized mind-gem will give you the following powers:
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> - access to the Core's information and memory banks;
> - access to the images and sounds recorded by any Eye under your command;
> - ability to command any Eye, Demon, Heron, Thunderbird or Scarab within your line of sight
> - ability to exchange telepathic messages with any sorcerer you know personally, at any range

Mind-gems have of course become the most valuable commodities on the Emerald World. Treasure hunters search for them in the wilds, where sometimes an Ancient crypt may be found and opened. It's possible to acquire a mind-gem by trade, but the price is very high - you are competing with the Pharaoh of Amut-Aten and the King of Tartescia for the item.

Demons

Demons are tall (7'), gangly, skeletal, androids, their forms seemingly a blend of humanoid and insectoid body designs. The triangular heads with their large black eye-panels at the sides and the long hornlike antennae heighten the insectoid impression. Some have two pairs of wings and can fly like giant locusts. All have clawed hand-like appendages that can grip and lift just like human hands, but much stronger, and shred flesh or even hard wood and thin metal. Some Demons were apparently made for war, for these are equipped with very sharp serrated blades on their arms and hands, and a beam weapon in their forehead. Demons only appear to be heavily armored, but in fact weapons like knives and swords can "kill" them; the problem is most Demons move blindingly fast and will often kill three or four humans in a fight before it can be taken down.

Demon: TR 4d, Claws DR 3, Laser DR 4/Long Range, Hardness 1, Health 4

Eyes

Eyes are spherical, self-levitating devices the size of a human head that act as the mobile sensors of the Core. Eyes may be found bobbing slowly in the air or lying dormant in sheltered places all across the world. An Eye can move no faster than a man can walk at a brisk pace; to move it faster it must be carried. An Eye is a two-edged sword, for any sorcerer can access any Eye and view what it is looking at; so having an Eye may help you, but it can also show an enemy where you are and what you're doing. Eyes are purely surveillance devices - they carry no weapons at all.

Eye: TR 1d, Health 1

Thunderbirds

Thunderbirds are usually no more than shadowy presences in the sky to most Emerald Worlders, and indeed none have ever seen one close up; they are seen only as specks in the sky or sometimes as shadows on the clouds. That they are immense winged shapes, however, is obvious from the range at which they are visible. These huge flying machines constantly orbit the world at very high altitude, and if given the proper command sequence can hurl devastating "lightning bolts" - actually plasma blasts - at anything on the world below. Fortunately few sorcerers have ever figured out how to do this.

Thunderbird: Plasma Blast DR 30/Extreme Range

Herons

Herons, or as the Tartescians call them "sincavezas" - a contraction of their words for "headless horse" - are ground vehicles in the form of an open-fronted, egg-shaped pod sitting atop two long, spindly backward-jointed legs that really resemble those of a heron. A Heron can carry a single human passenger in its pod, but human ingenuity often adds racks and panniers above and behind the pod that carries another passenger or two or cargo. Herons also have a pair of simple arms in front that can lift heavy weights, like a forklift. A Heron of course can only be controlled by a sorcerer.

> **Heron:** Health 15, Run Fast OOO; passengers 1, cargo 2,000 lb possibly a tad more

Scarabs

The only Scarabs known are in Amut-Aten. No other people have found any. A Scarab is a self-levitating aerial vehicle, probably using some kind of antigravity technology like the Eyes and the Thunderbirds, but it is built to carry passengers of about the same size as human beings - up to about twenty. There are no seats or other human amenities within. The term Scarab is very apt - the vehicle is ovoid, with two bulging oval windows in the "head" area and stiff wings that fold in and out like a beetle's elytra.

> **Scarab:** Health 30, Antigrav Flight OOO; passengers 20, cargo 4,000 lb

DENIZENS OF SMARAGDIS

Below are examples of the various creatures and characters that might be encountered in the Emerald World.

Chimera: a dwarf duckbill dinosaur domesticated by the Tartescians and now widespread as a riding and pack beast. The name chimera comes from an educated Spanish officer's reaction to the beast - he gave it the name of the Greek monster because it had "the head and bill of a duck, the neck and legs of a horse, and the tail and dewlap of an iguana." His description is quite accurate. Chimeras stand 8 feet tall at the shoulder, and are about 18' long from nose to tail.   TR 2d, Size 4, Hardness 1, Health 6, tail slap DR 4.

Allosaurus: a bipedal, fast-moving predator standing some 15 tall and a very fast bite. TR 4d, Size 6, Hardness 2, Health 15, DR 4.

Velociraptor: small but formidable carnivorous dinosaurs, pack hunters who can be quite cunning. They attack by leaping and kicking with their sickle-like foot claws to cripple their prey. TR 3d, Size 1, Hardness 1, Health 4, DR 3.
Triceratops: a big grazing dinosaur with horns and armored frill like a shield around its head. Though extremely dangerous because of its power and bad temper, it is hunted widely for meat and hide. TR 4d, Size 7, Hardness 2, Health 18, DR 5

T-rex: the biggest baddest carnivore on land (at least in the Emerald Sea area!). TR 5d, Size 7, Hardness 2, Health 19, DR 6

Phobosuchus: quite literally the "nightmare croc," this reptile measures 40-50 feet long, has armor that can resist even the heaviest firearms, and eats dinosaurs for breakfast. A phobosuchus could easily upset a boat or even a galley, and feast on the passengers hurled into the water. Its only vulnerable spots will be its belly, mouth, and eyes. TR 5d, Size 8, Hardness 4, Health 37, DR 7.

Tartescian Soldier: an armored, gun-toting conquistador that holds absolutely nothing sacred. Incredibly ferocious and arrogant, he holds all other men on Smaragdis as sheep to be enslaved, or butchered if they resist. TR 1d, Health 1, arquebus DR 2/Medium Range, sword DR 1

Tartescian Officer: a *hidalgo,* literally a "son of somebody," the Tartescian officers are if anything more ruthless than their men, though perhaps a bit more refined. The worst part is they're not Mooks, so they get the full benefit of their steel breastplates and conquistador helmets. TR 2-3d, Health 3-4, Excellent Armor OOO, pistol DR 1/Short Range, sword DR 1

Punic Slaver: the Punic cities of the west coast make much of their living by slave-raiding, selling the slaves to each other or to Tartescia, sometimes to Amut-Aten. The Punic traders maintain companies of hardbitten mercenaries for their slave raids. TR 1d, Health 1, shortsword DR 1, spear DR 1/Short Range

Punic Captain: the leaders of the slave-raiding gangs wear coats of scaled armor and usually wield a bow. TR 2-3d, Health 3-4, bow DR 1/Long Range, shortsword DR 1, scale coat OO

Tigre Carib: the Jaguar Carib Indians have adapted to life on Smaragdis by becoming mounted nomads, riding chimeras and fighting with bows, lances and stone-headed clubs. The men adorn themselves by painting their bodies with ochre and spots of soot, in a superstitious attempt to gain the powers of the jaguar god. Tigre Caribs have a taste for human flesh and will hunt human beings for ritual feasts. TR 1d, Health 1, bow DR 1/Long Range, lance DR 1, warclub DR 1/Close Range

RECOMMENDED READING

- **Pellucidar,** Edgar Rice Burroughs
- **Tarzan at the Earth's Core**, Edgar Rice Burroughs
- **Tanar of Pellucidar**, Edgar Rice Burroughs
- **The Lost World**, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
- **The Face in the Abyss**, A. Merritt
- **The Moon Pool,** A. Merritt
- **King Solomon's Mines**, H. Rider Haggard
- **Allan Quatermain**, H. Rider Haggard
- **She,** H. Rider Haggard
- **Jurassic Park**, Michael Crichton