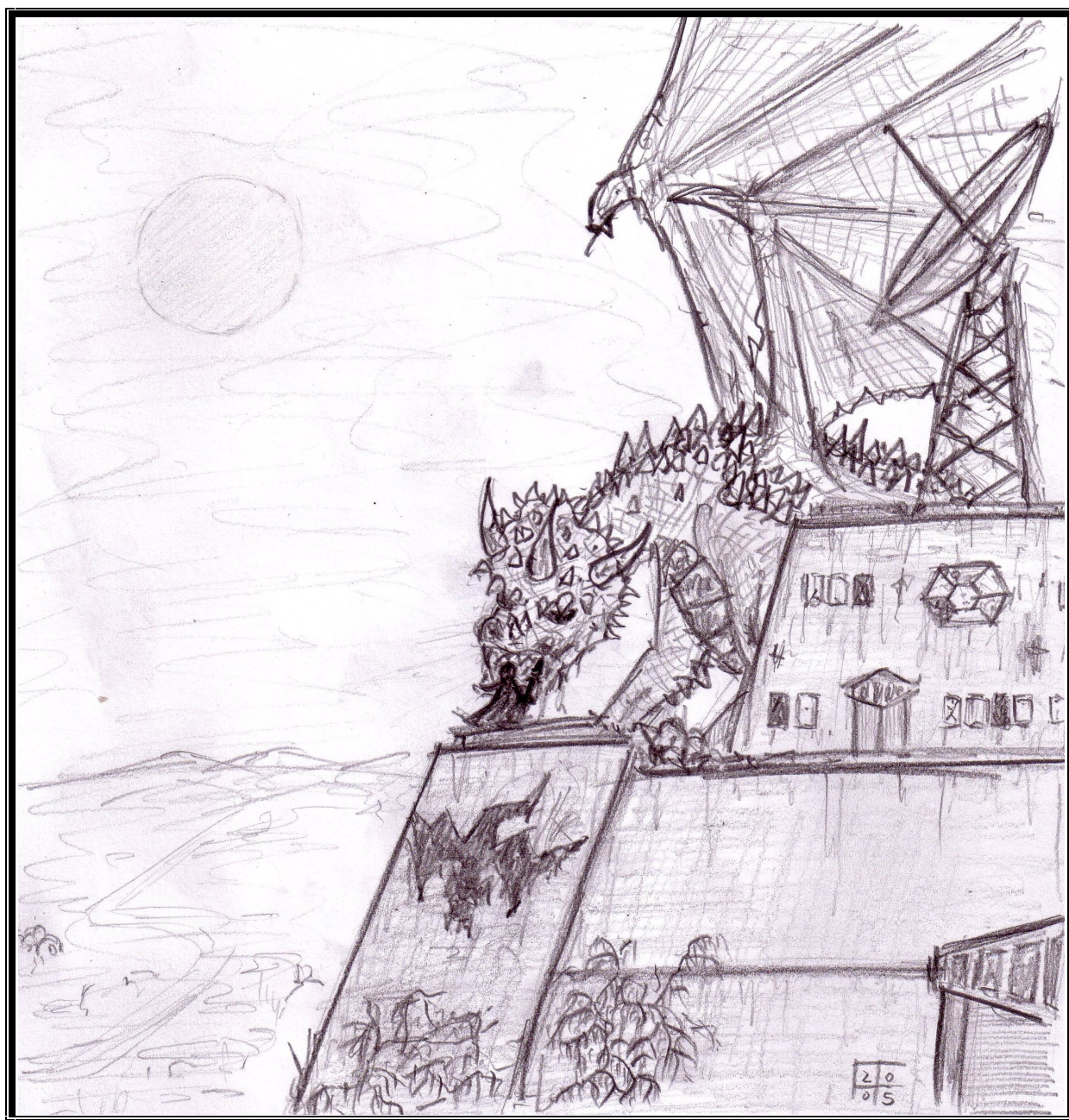


# MUD PLANET



**A Savage Roleplaying Game  
by Frank Tarcikowski**

**Scundea, the Mud Planet, is a foul place.  
Treachorous swamps and pools of rotting water stretch far and wide  
under a sick yellowish sun.**

**The Dragons that roam the overcast skies  
are hideous creatures of terrible might and cruel cunning.**

**But those few Gifted who dare touch the predator's mind,  
those chosen champions that dare mount and master the Dragon,  
are bearers of hope to a people abandoned by civilization long ago.**

**The Lancers, as they are called, must not falter in their discipline and devotion,  
for the Dragon's urges and instincts are of violent power.**

**Those who fail become beasts themselves,  
Savages that dwell in the wild and have forgotten all about virtue and reason.**

**Yet in the linking of souls, the stirring of the beast inside the man,  
lies great power and terrible temptation to behold.**

**Can you handle the mind of a Dragon?**

# WELCOME TO THE MUD PLANET

Greetings, stranger. My name is Jordan, and I have been asked to tell you about my home, the Mud Planet, and my life as a Lancer. Somewhere in the depth of the Stronghold, there is a room that contains files and files of paper. These are hard copies of data extracted from the main computer before it quit service, all those years ago. Most of it is the Galactic Encyclopaedia. Few care to read it these days. If you do, however, you can learn the history of our people.

Once, generations ago, jump ships of the Star Union discovered a planet they named Scundea. The place was barely habitable and was not marked for colonization. However, the Star Union set up a small military base. Later, a team of scientists arrived and set up their own base to study the interesting wildlife of Scundea—especially its giant flying reptile predators. Those were, quite naturally, named Dragons.

Soon the scientists discovered that though animals, the Dragons were not only clever beasts, but also Gifted. Or, as the Encyclopaedia rather calls it, they had psychic powers. Hiding in the clouds, they would spot prey using a sixth sense. The pure fact the their batlike wings could lift their massive bodies off the ground was evidence enough of their supernatural capability. Human psychics arrived to study the Dragons. The beasts started to draw quite some interest, and the scientist base became a crowded place.

Then came the war. There is only very little information about that to be found in our files. Seemingly, the Star Union was threatened by an entity called the Combine. Even in the days of interstellar space travel, men would not quit killing each other. Some day, jump ships and interstellar messages ceased to arrive at Scundea, and that was that. It took many years until realization sunk with the people. We actually came pretty close to extinction before we started making babies. But we finally did, and here we are.

Big marks on the wall of the Stronghold's festival hall count the years since the last contact. The Stronghold, that is of course what is left of the former scientist base. It has been 121 years now. There is no one alive on this ball of mud who has ever seen a jump ship, or even a laser gun that works.

## The World Today

Today, most of the equipment our ancestors brought with them from the stars has ceased to work. Mud and humidity keeps creeping into every corner, and power cells only last for so long. Over the generations, knowledge of how the technology works has dwindled. We now use the metal we can ransack from wrecked landing barges and ventilation systems to build much simpler tools. Lances, for instance.

Of course we are also out of supplies. The Mud Planet is a bad place to grow crop, but what choice do we have? Our people have split up into small village communities, seeking the few fertile spots and clean springs that can be found between poisonous swamps and dangerous eruptions. We are spread far and wide, openly exposed to the many dangers of this world.

When I say "our people", I mean the descendants of the scientists that once set up the Stronghold. The soldiers stationed at the military base did not join the people, or at least most of them did not. They would not live as peasants and fishers. Rather, they demanded tribute from our people. These soldiers were the reason for the formation of the Lancers. But before I tell you about the Lancers, I must tell you about the Dragons.

## The Dragons

A fully grown Dragon is a good 30 meters from muzzle to tail. His wings span even wider, and his shoulders stand more than 8 meters tall. The Dragon bears three large horns on his forehead. Many of these horns line the walls of the Stronghold's festival hall, towering the humans. With the flick of a claw, the Dragon can tear a man's body apart, and a splash of the acid dripping from his maw is no less deadly.

The thick hide covering the Dragon's body is speckled black, brown, and green. His massive head is framed by a shield of bone, covered in disarray by smaller pointed horns that also cover back, shoulders and other parts of the body. His eyes are gleaming yellow with slit black pupils. The Dragons are not beautiful creatures, but they inspire awe and reverence in the people.

Dragons are not intelligent, at least not in the sense that humans are. They are animals, though clever ones. My Dragon, Ferocity, understands many of my thoughts and commands, but on the other hand, much of what goes on in my mind is beyond her. When I link my mind to hers, I am struck by the simplicity and power of her urges and instincts.

The Dragons are Gifted. They are not capable of the subtle uses of the Gift that I and many other Lancers have mastered. But they can sense the presence of life, they can defy gravity by flying high in the sky, and they can communicate among each other using primitive telepathy. They cannot normally enter the mind of a human (unless

the human aids them), but the awe and fear they inspire in humans and most other living things is beyond the natural.

## The Lancers

When the soldiers from the military base turned against the civilians, demanding them to pay tribute “for their safety”, the people first obeyed. But the soldiers were a mean bunch, probably the scum of the Star Union Forces, sent to rot on this sorry planet. They took more tribute than the people could bear to give, and they went looting and raping among the villages. At the time, their landspeeders and laser rifles were still working.

The people had formed the Council to rule them, which consisted of the smartest and most respectable men and women. One of them, a Gifted scientist by the name of Jonas Peterson, took a desperate measure. He used his psychic ability to communicate with a Dragon and gain control over the mighty beast. It worked, and the Dragon crushed a band of soldiers in their Landspeeder. That was the hour of birth for the order of Dragon riders— the Lancers.

Today, the Council still resides in the Stronghold. Any children that show signs of the Gift are brought to the Stronghold at early age, and raised to be a Lancer. It has soon been discovered that messing with a Dragon’s mind is a dangerous business. Absolute discipline and devotion is required to keep the beast in check.

The longer you are a Lancer and the more you communicate with the Dragon, the stronger a link your two minds form. It is like a bond, which is almost a necessity if you want to safely control a Dragon. Few master the mighty predator in the first attempt. It would be far too risky to send them out there on a Dragon they do not know.

As the telepathic road becomes travelled both ways, however, the Dragon’s animal mind begins to influence you. The Dragon does not separate your feelings from his the way you do. For him, you two are one, and if you feel threatened, his mind cries, “Fight!” Jonas Peterson was not prepared for that. Before too long, his discipline faltered, and he became a Savage, living in the wilderness with his Dragon, feasting on raw flesh and forgetting what it meant to be human.

Many have shared this fate. Yet it is the duty of the Gifted to try and steel themselves for the task, to harness their self-control, their sense of duty, their love for the people, to be strong in the face of bestiality. To put up reason against urge. Those who are judged worthy are appointed Lancers. Some quit by themselves early on, for they fear too much what they see when touching the Dragon. Others are expelled because they are not committed enough. Some of them have been known to leave their community and go look for the Dragons, fascination drawing them to become Savages.

Those who become Lancers, however, live to sacrifice their lives to the people. They swear oaths of absolute obedience to the Council and their superiors. They must exert iron discipline over themselves at all times. They are subject to the common laws, as well as the special Code of the Lancers. Their duty is to protect the people from all harm, at all times.

Since the Gift is often inherited, it is crucial that Lancers have children. Given the small size of our community, it is also important to mix genes well enough to prevent hereditary disease. Therefore, the Council makes arrangements. Often, a Lancer is ordered to lie with a married woman, so she will have his child and raise it in her family. Female Lancers are forbidden to carry out a child, for the pregnancy rouses very strong instincts in her Dragon. The child, feeling the presence of the Dragon's mind throughout the pregnancy, becomes what we call Dragon Blooded.

## **The Law and the Code**

The law of the people is pretty much the law of the Star Union. It treasures freedom, equality, democracy and charity. This includes laws on the use of the Gift, which must not interfere with other peoples rights. It is a crime to read and manipulate the minds of others. Hard to prove, you say? Well, not if a Gifted more powerful than you is granted special permission to read *your* mind.

The Lancer Code is much stricter than the law. A Lancer must remain decent and calm at all times. He must not, ever, allow his urges and emotions to control him. Reason must prevail always. Also, he must follow orders by his superiors without question or even hesitation.

The Code also requires a Lancer to report immediately if his comrade shows any sign of Savageness. Of course, any violation of the Code is regarded as Savageness. A Lancer turned irredeemably Savage must be killed, if possible. The same applies to any Dragon Blooded children that are accidentally born.

## **The Service**

As a Lancer, you are normally guarding a village or several villages. Lancers always operate in teams of at least two, not so much because one Dragon would not be enough to protect the villagers, but because the Lancers need to monitor each other. Sometimes, there are calls for help, telepathically transferred by other Lancers or Gifted persons that are no Lancers.

Life on the Mud Planet is pretty dangerous. You can be battered by sudden earthquakes and eruptions, attacked by wild Dragons and/or Savages, by other predatory animals that dwell in the depths of the swamp, or by raiding bands of outlaws.

These outlaws are wild bunches, some of them descendants of the Star Union Soldiers, others cast-outs of the people. Some of them have united under a leader called "the Major" and use the former military base as their haven. Others just roam the swamps on their own. They become especially dangerous when they side with a Savage and his Dragon.

So, the Lancers fight all the enemies of the people, and they report back to the Council. They also take part in regular ceremonies at the Stronghold, which are meant to keep spirits high and remind them of their duty. Of course, the Lancers are revered as heroes. Reverence is their reward for the sacrifice they make. Their only reward.

## **The Call of the Wild**

Of what I tell you now, you must keep absolute privacy. The system does not work just the way it is supposed to. Whoever is all devoted and disciplined, all of the time? Who can be expected to not live and feel and love? Especially when you can sense that enormous heart of your Dragon companion beating in heat.

Ferocity and I have linked our minds for years. She is closer to me than any other living being in the universe. She considers me a part of her. To her, we are one person. And I have come to feel much the same way. I know I must be careful lest I become a monster. But honestly: Sometimes she is right. I have urges, too. There is more to life than just reason. Why should my desires not be satisfied sometimes?

And there is one thing more. I can channel the power of her Gift. If we join forces, if I let her have her way, she enhances my psychic capability by a square. I can do amazing things using her. Depending on the situation, it can be sweet temptation or desperate measure. I have used it. I will use it again.

People say I am not acting quite human any more. There is something predatory about me. That happens a lot with Lancers. The Code is very strict on this, but the Code is only enforced by people. They cannot possibly accuse two out of three Lancers. And it is not like I was on the verge of turning Savage. I control it. There is no need to worry about me.



# PLAYING THE GAME

*Mud Planet* is a roleplaying game for one GM and 2-4 players (recommendation). All players take on the roles of Lancers serving the people and the Council. The GM plays everyone else, unless he chooses to assign something to a player. To play, you will need a copy of these rules, some copies of the Character Sheet, pen and paper, and a standard poker deck.

## Creating a Lancer and his Dragon

Take a look at the Character Sheet in the back of this game text. It starts from the top with the Lancer and from the bottom with the Dragon. In the middle of the Character Sheet, the Lancer and the Dragon overlap to form the row "Relationships".

Start creating the Lancer and the Dragon by writing down a name and a brief description for each. Don't forget to mention your Dragon's predominant color. Is it mostly black, mostly dark green, or mostly golden brown? Also, please collaborate with the GM and the rest of the group during character generation.

### Stats

There are four Stats to the Lancer and one Stat to the Dragon. Each Stat is also a maximum to the other ratings in that column, which means physical Traits and the Health Monitor can never be higher than the Body Stat. All ratings of the Dragon are governed by its Might (didn't work out quite right with the column there). The Stats signify:

- **Body** the physical strength, fitness and agility of the Lancer.
- **Mind** the alertness, intelligence and knowledge of the Lancer.
- **Soul** the empathy, social competence and inner rest of the Lancer.
- **Gift** the psychic talent and supernatural power of the Lancer.
- **Might** the strength of the Dragon's instinct, will and muscle.

You start by dividing 30 points between these five Stats. Maximum for each is 10, minimum is 3. Yes, that means you can start with the most mighty Dragon that roams the sky. The question is: Can you handle it?

### Traits

Traits are special attributes, skills or equipment that might aid the Lancer. They are divided into five groups: Physical, mental, social and psychic for the Lancer, plus the Dragon's Traits. You can pick any trait you find interesting, as long as it is specific.



Ask the rest of the group when you are not sure about whether your Trait is specific enough.

Traits can rank from 1 to a maximum of your corresponding Stat. You get to distribute another 20 points among your Traits.

### Psychic Powers

It is deliberately left open to the players what exactly psychic powers can do. They allow the Lancers to bond with the Dragons, and they include telepathy and manipulation of the mind, so much is set. But can a Gifted crash metal doors by telekinesis? Can she cast lightning strikes, cause the swamp to boil, make a man's head explode by just staring at him? That's up to you to decide. Maybe you should talk about this a little before all of you pick psychic Traits.

***Example:** I want to play Mud Planet with Nicole, Peter and Olliver. We sit down to make Characters. Nicole wants to play a Lancer by the name of Lynara. As description, she jots down: "Tall, long black hair, blue eyes, cool and confident". For her Dragon, she decides on a male called Havoc. She writes: "Mostly black with green pattern, young and proud, but already scarred".*

*Now she gets to divide the Stats. She wants her Dragon to be strong, but not too strong to control, so she assigns an 8 to Might. Also, she imagines Lynara to be cool and sharp, so she assigns another 8 to Mind. The rest goes into Body 5, Soul 4 and Gift 5.*

*Next, she writes down a couple of Traits witch she discusses with the rest of us. Since she doesn't have a very high Gift rating, she wants to at least have some useful traits there. Finally, she comes up with:*

*Physical: agile 3*

*Mental: witty remarks 2*

*Social: unsettling presence 2*

*Psychic: Dragon controlling 5, telepathic communication 2, telekinesis 4*

*Dragon: Daredevil 2*

## Monitors

The Monitors are the ratings that will change most often in play, for they adjust to the situation at hand.

- **Health (Lancer)** monitors whether the Lancer is ill or hurt. It starts at the Lancer's Body rating.
- **Self-Control** monitors how well the Lancer holds his anger and fear in check. It starts at the Lancer's Mind rating.
- **Commitment** measures the Lancers devotion to the people and his duty, as opposed to his own desires. It starts at the Lancer's Soul rating.
- **Savageness** measures the amount to which the Lancer has taken on the predatory instincts and urges of his Dragon. It starts at 1.
  
- **Health (Dragon)** monitors whether the Dragon is ill or hurt. It starts at the Dragon's Might rating.
- **Impulse** measures the Dragon's anger, fear and other wild, unchecked emotions. It starts at half the Dragon's Might rating (rounding down).
- **Hunger** monitors the urgency of the Dragon's needs and desires. It starts at half the Dragon's Might (rounding down).
- **Revolt** measures the Dragon's conviction to disobey the Lancer. It starts at half the Dragon's Might (rounding down).

## Relationships

Last but not least, you write down some Relationships in the middle of the Character Sheet. These are supposed to guide you and the GM in creating stories for your Character, and also as an indicator for whether your Dragon's Impulse or Hunger kick in.

There is only one area for Relationships because there is no division between the Lancer and the Dragon here. They are bonded. As far as the Dragon is concerned, they are one. Whatever concerns the Lancer concerns the Dragon, and *vice versa*. Such is the nature of the bond.

Relationships need not be people. They can be groups of people, institutions, places, beasts... they can even be abstract concepts or ideas if you want. In *Mud Planet*, there are two relevant sorts of Relationships:

- **Threats** are anything or anyone that poses a possible danger to the Lancer or the Dragon.
- **Desires** are anything or anyone the Lancer or the Dragon wants badly.

You should write down some 4-8 Relationships. Don't bother to specify too much about them right now, a few prompts are all you need. You should have at least one

Threat, at least one Desire, at least one Relationship the Lancer brought about, and at least one Relationship the Dragon brought about.

Later , in play, you can add new Relationships as you see fit. You should do so to reflect what happens in play.

**Example:** After Nicole has followed the instructions to calculate her Monitors, she moves on to Lynara's and Havoc's Relationships. Again, she discusses her ideas with the rest of the group before she writes down:

*Threats:*

- *Sonia, a teacher at the Stronghold who thinks Lynara's an arrogant little bitch*
- *Lynara's father, gone Savage years ago (who served with Sonia)*
- *a bunch of outlaws that haunt our area and occasionally call on father to help them*
- *Reaper, a huge golden-brown male with a broken horn that once defeated Havoc and chased him off his hunting grounds*

*Desires:*

- *Whiplash, a beautiful dark green female of Reaper's harem*
- *a family*

## Conflict Resolution

Mud Planet follows the rule of "say yes or roll the dice". If a player wants his Lancer or Dragon to achieve something and the GM (or some one else) will not accept it, there is conflict. If the GM (or some one else) wants something to happen to the Lancer or the Dragon and the player will not accept it, there is conflict. There may also be conflict between the Lancer and the Dragon, but on that, later. Let's for now assume that the player controls the Lancer and the Lancer controls the Dragon, hence the player also controls the Dragon.

### Stakes

The first step in the conflict is to set the stakes. Stakes can be anything, including death. Make sure before you draw the cards that the Stakes are clear. Also, the Stakes must not defy all plausibility. The GM has the final say here.

Note that the Stakes are about what both opponents want, not only "do you get it or don't you". In case of a tie, both don't get what they want. So if you state "I want to kill him", you may well oppose "He wants to kill you".

### Stats involved

Next, find the right Stat to use in the conflict. You get a number of cards equal to the Stat rating. For the Dragon it's always Might, for the Lancer it may be any of his four

Stats, depending on whether the conflict is physical, mental, social, or psychic. If, in the course of the conflict, the relevant Stat changes, the player may draw additional cards if his new Stat is higher. This goes for both parties in the conflict.

### **Human versus Dragon**

In a mental or social conflict, a Dragon cannot participate (which is pretty obvious). In a physical conflict, a human cannot directly oppose a Dragon's Might with her Body. The Dragon is obviously much stronger. Does that mean there cannot be a conflict with a human's Body against a Dragon's Might? No, such a conflict is possible. Only the Stakes and what happens in the conflict must adhere to plausibility.

***Example:** While Havoc is out hunting, Reaper attacks Lynara out in the swamps. I say: "His acid splash is aiming straight for you." Nicole says: "I dodge." I for a conflict. It's a physical one. What's at Stake is: Lynara wants to avoid Reapers attacks until Havoc hurries to her aid. Reaper wants to kill Lynara.*

### **Lack of Opponent**

Sometimes the GM may not want to say yes, but there won't be an opponent at hand. At such time, the GM just draws eight cards. I advise that a GM only take this option if it really is a hard and exciting challenge.

### **Playing the Cards**

Both opponents put their cards on the table openly. The player discards all black cards, the GM discards all red cards. If there are two players, both get to keep the red cards. Now the one with more cards starts. If there is a tie, the one with the single highest card starts, after that the second highest and so forth. Aces are high, all colors are equal.

The beginning player attacks: she plays a card and backs that up with a bit of narration. That bit of narration must be something the opponent cannot ignore. Now the opponent must defend, either by playing a card, or by taking a Blow (see below). The defense must also be backed up with a bit of narration.

If the defender took the blow or defended with a lower card than the attacker, the attacker can keep attacking. If the defender played an equal or higher card than the attacker, the defender becomes attacker for the next exchange. Same goes if the attacker does not want to continue attacking. If one opponent has run out of cards, the other one automatically is the attacker.

These exchanges go on until some one gives in or until both opponents run out of cards for a tie. Occasionally, it can stop early because some one dies or freaks out. That will be explained later on.

## Drawing new Cards

To draw new cards, you have to activate your Traits. Traits are activated by including them into your narration. (Yeah, I know this is *Dogs in the Vineyard* all over. It's just too damn good not to copy it.) At the moment you narrate the Trait in action, you may draw the cards and use them. Don't forget to discard the ones of the wrong color, though.

Now there is one other way to get more cards. It involves letting the Dragon take over, which is generally a very desperate measure. Needless to say the Council strictly forbids it. You will read about it later.

## Taking a Blow

If you cannot defend or you do not want to, you can instead take a Blow. The Blow goes into the corresponding Monitor.

### The Lancer takes a Blow

If a Lancer takes a Blow in a physical conflict, it goes into Health, in a mental conflict it goes into Self-Control, in a social conflict it goes into Commitment, and in a psychic conflict it goes into Savageness. A Blow to Health, Self-Control or Commitment means the Monitor going down by one. A Blow to Savageness means the Monitor going **up** by one.

Sometimes, there is a **Hard Blow**. This applies especially to an armed physical attack or a physical attack by a Dragon. But the GM may also rule that other Blows are Hard ones. He must declare this in advance. The players may also suggest that their own blows be considered as Hard. A Hard Blow simply has double effect, meaning the Monitor goes up or down by two instead of one.

### The Dragon takes a Blow

The Dragon takes physical Blows just like the Lancer, which go to his Health. However, a Dragon cannot take Blows in a physical struggle with a human because a human cannot harm a Dragon. That is unless, of course, the human comes up with something that *could* harm a Dragon after all.

The only psychic conflict a Dragon might enter is against a Gifted who would control him. There is some special rules on that, see below. In such a conflict, a Dragon might take a blow that decreases the Dragon's Revolt.

## Multiple Player Conflict

If more than one player are in a conflict, they can take turns attacking. However, if their oponent attacks, he can attack them both with the same card if he has some narration to justify it. The players must both defend, but one high card is enough to snatch back the right to attack.

**Example of a conflict:** *Lynara has been sneaking off duty to talk to her Savage father and learn what humanity may be left in him. As she comes back, she is confronted by the Village's mayor. Lynara wants to convince him that she saw another Dragon and followed him. I don't say yes. We set the stakes: Lynara wants the mayor to buy her excuse. The mayor wants Lynara to give herself away.*

*This is a social conflict, so Nicole only draws 4 cards (because her Soul Stat is 4). She has to discard three black ones and gets to keep the diamond eight. The mayor has a Soul Stat of 6, so I draw 6 cards and get to keep 3 black ones: a two, a five and an Ace. I have more cards, so I start. I decide to attack with my ace and put it forward, saying: "He looks at you sceptically. 'I saw no Dragon. No one did. Why didn't you tell anyone where you were going?'"*

*Nicole knows that she needs more cards, so she is looking for Traits to activate. Even though it's a social conflict, she can use all her Traits, so she goes for "witty remarks 2" and sais: "I would have told you, but I thought you might already have gone to bed and didn't want to disturb you and your wife with anything." She draws another two cards and gets the ten of hearts which she can keep, and a black card which she discards. She defends with her eight.*

*Since my ace was higher than her eight, it's my turn again, and I push on with my two. "Very funny. You could have told anyone. You know what I think? You were sneaking off on some business of your own!"*

*Nicole defends with: "Oh, I'm sorry, did the thought of myself in your bedroom at night unsettle you so?" And I put on my most naughty grin." There she goes, drawing another two cards for "unsettling presence 2", this time two reds, a four and a seven. So she uses the four to defend and snatch attack from me.*

*"Now seriously", she continues, putting forth her seven, "what would I be doing in the middle of the night in this deserted area? This suspicion is ridiculous. Do you want me to tell you more details about the Dragon I followed?"*

*I defend with some gossip about her bad reputation and activate the mayor's "gossip 4" trait, but only draw one black card, another five. So she pushes on her attacks with her final ten, and I only have that five. "You are a spiteful man", Nicole sais, "but you still haven't told me what business you think I have."*

*If I defend, we are both out of cards and there is a tie. But I want to win, so I take the blow. "The mayor is really struck by your insult", I say. "There is a pause." And I reduce the mayor's Commitment score by 1. Of course I know Nicole can't push her advantage because she is out of cards. So it's my turn again, and I attack with my final five: "Was that Dragon you saw by any chance bearing a rider?"*

*And there it goes. Nicole could take a blow as well, forcing a tie. But the little Commitment she has is too precious to her. So she gives it away: "I hit him straight in the face." Sweet.*

## Monitor Dynamics

As you have seen, Monitors can change through taking a Blow. But there are also other dynamics that add to the up and down of the Monitors. And the changes to the Monitors also affect the game.

### Health

Health can be lost through all sort of wounds and sickness. This may come in the form of taking a Blow, but it doesn't have to. It can, for example, also be the result of losing a conflict. If the stakes were "do you get poisoned" and you lose, your Health is going to be affected. Maybe it takes half your Health, or all but one. That will be agreed when setting the Stakes. "You lose three" is a bad idea, though, for it might kill you.

If your Health drops to Zero, you are dead. Period. Well. Not quite. The Savages have been known to tap their Dragon's strength to cheat death. But that is against the Code and highly indecent.

When your Health drops to half your Body rating (rounding down), you are seriously handicapped. You must tap your highest card in any conflict to keep the pain at bay. If you want to play that card, you must finish the conflict with it, and you will lose another point of Health.

A Health score of 1 means that you're unconscious.

Health is regained by natural healing. Just assume that the lost points of Health are back after a sensible while between scenes. Minor injuries might even heal within a day or so. The GM has the final say in that.

### Self-Control

Self-Control is lost through Blows in mental conflicts. A Self-Control of Zero means that you totally freak out and instantly lose the conflict. As long as it remains Zero, you cannot enter any mental conflicts because you freak out every single time.



If you want to restore your Self-Control, you have to exercise discipline. Regain 1 point of Self-Control if you are deliberately doing meditation or abstinence to punish yourself, or if you are punished by others and accept the punishment, or if some one close to you shows serious disappointment in you. Also, if you attend the ceremonies at the stronghold, you may chose to regain 1 point of Self-Control. Any of these alternatives can be used only once until you lose Self-Control again.

## **Commitment**

A Commitment of Zero means that you do not care any more. For lack of care, you will abandon any conflict. That's right, I said any. That applies also to some one trying to kill you. Oh well, as long as you have a Savageness rating, you can always fight for your life. But some NPCs cannot go Savage, so they just give up. Some even chose to kill themselves.

To regain Commitment, the community must prove worthy to you. Every time you draw some happiness from being a member of the community, your Commitment goes up by 1 (to the maximum of your Soul, as always). Sounds easy? I think it's bloody hard.

You can also chose to get a point of Commitment out of the ceremonies at the Stronghold, instead of Self-Control.

## **Savageness**

The effects of Savageness are explained in detail below in "Man and Beast". As you know, Savageness can be gained through taking a Blow in a psychic conflict. You will see that it can also be gained by allowing the Dragon to seize control. Unfortunately, it is pretty hard to get rid of Savageness. You can choose to lower your Savageness by 1 when you participate in the ceremonies at the Stronghold. Before you can do this again, however, you must gain more Savageness. The only other way to lose Savageness is to lose your Dragon and never bond with one again. When you sever the bond, the Savageness will go away after some time.

## **Impulse and Hunger**

The Dragon cannot take Blows to Impulse and Hunger. These two increase between scenes. Whenever a scene including her Lancer is over, the player draws a card from the deck. If it is a red card, Hunger goes up by 1. If it is a black card, Impulse goes up.

Both Monitors go down only if the tension is relieved. Impulse is halved if the Dragon gets into a fight with another Dragon and draws some blood. Hunger is halved if the Dragon mates or spends some days hunting and feasting.

## **Revolt**

Revolt will also be explained further in "Man and Beast". It goes down if the Dragon takes a Blow in a psychic conflict. However, it goes up to its maximum instantly if some one who is not bonded with the Dragon tries to control him. Moreover, Revolt goes up by 1 every time the Dragon is ordered to do something which is against his nature, like abandon a hunt or ignore a challenge.

## **Man and Beast**

The relationship between the Dragon and the man that controls it is a special one. That is reflected in the rules in several ways.

## **Disobedience**

To control the Dragon, the Lancer uses his Gift rating plus his Savageness against the Dragon's Revolt. That's right, the more Savage you are, the better you can control the Dragon. If you have a Trait of "Dragon controlling", you can also use it. Normally, as long as the Lancer's Gift + Savageness + Trait is higher than the Dragon's Revolt, the Dragon will do as asked.

If the Dragon's Revolt is higher, you'll have to do a psychic conflict with the Dragon's Might against your Gift + Savageness and use of any Traits that might fit. This may include taking a Blow to increase your Savageness and instantly draw a new card.

On very special occasions, you may have enough Gift + Savageness + Trait but you may still ask too much of your Dragon. Especially when his Hunger or Impulse scores are near the limit and you want him to go extremely against his nature. Such a case will be obvious to all the group.

If such a case arises, you do a conflict against the Dragon's Might, and add his Hunger or Impulse (rounding down) on top of that. If the Dragon loses the conflict, his Revolt score goes straight to maximum. You can only ask so much of a savage beast.

## The First Time

If you want to control a Dragon for the first time, it's also a normal conflict, with the Dragon's Hunger or Impulse (whichever is higher) added in. If you win the conflict, you can choose to bond with the Dragon and keep any possible losses he took to his Revolt. However, you can never bond with two Dragons at the same time.

## Urge against Reason

Let's go back to your Character Sheet now. You see Self-Control and Impulse standing opposed, and Hunger opposing Commitment. Between those two, there stand your Relationships. Now, in the back of his mind, the Dragon is always aware of what happens to the Lancer. And once its animal instincts are roused, they will rage through the bond over to the Lancer's mind and batter it.

Any time one of the Relationships, or something else that equally poses a threat or rouses a desire, is at Stake in a conflict, the Dragon may stir. Check the relevant scores: Is his Hunger higher than your Commitment? Is his Impulse higher than your Self-Control? If so, he stirs. If not, he is still dozing. But beware: If you draw a persona card (jake, queen, or king) in the conflict, he will stir.

If the Dragon stirs, draw a number of cards equal to his Impulse or Hunger (whichever is concerned). Discard all red cards. For each black card remaining, the player must tap one of his red cards and not use them in the conflict. This represents the effort it takes to control the Dragon. On the other hand, this allows the player to bring in traits that aid him against the Dragon.

The player *may* untap the cards that hold the Dragon at bay and use it in the conflict. If he does so, however, he allows the Dragon to take over. He can use all his tapped cards **and** the cards from the Dragon in his conflict, but he must act by pure instinct and urge. His Savageness goes up by 1 if he only uses his own cards, by 2 if he uses the Dragon's cards as well.

## Going Savage

If your Savageness has reached the maximum (your Gift rating) and you would get another point, you risk going Savage. Add the Dragon's Impulse and Hunger. Subtract your Commitment and Self-Control. Draw a number of cards equal to the result (if it is positive). If one of them comes up black, you go Savage. If this doesn't happen, you must reduce either your Self-Control or your Commitment by 1. If both are already Zero, you go irredeemably Savage.

The Savage no longer cares about humans. He is still capable of talking to humans, and can force himself to think if he must. But most of the time, he lives like an animal

among the Dragons, hunting, mating with other Savages, revelling in bloodlust and destruction. The Savages do not, ever, use mental or social Traits or enter mental or social conflicts.

But beware: The Savages can use their Dragon's Hunger and Impulse as if they were Traits.

**Example:** After a few Adventures, Lynara's Savageness has reached 5. In a conflict, she sees no other chance as to let Havoc take over. She wins, but now she is at the risk of going Savage, for her Savageness rating cannot go up any more. Havoc has just fought, so his Impulse is down to 3. His Hunger is at 6, though. Nicole adds  $3 + 6$ , getting 9. Lynara's Self-Control is down to 6, her Commitment still at 4.  $6 + 4$  is 10, so  $9 - 10 = -1$  and Nicole doesn't have to draw cards. Lynara does not get Savage, but Nicole reduces her Self-Control by one.

The next time she lets Havoc take over, Impulse + Hunger is at 12 and Self-Control + Commitment is still down at 9.  $12 - 9 = 3$ . Nicole has to draw three cards. The first one comes up Queen of spades. Such a shame! Lynara goes Savage. She is not beyond redemption, though.

## Redemption

If you have gone Savage, but still have some Commitment or Self-Control left, you might not be beyond Redemption. Some one must make a serious appeal to your sense of duty or love for the people (depending on the remaining stat). Then you do a conflict. What's at Stake is: Does she redeem you? Or do you attack her? She must roll her appropriate Stat (Mind or Soul) and use her Traits as best she can. The GM will put your Dragon's Might or your own Savageness (whichever is higher) against it, and probably activate some Traits, too.

## Advancement

Players get an Advancement Point any time any of the following occurs:

- The Lancer engages in a conflict.
- The Lancer takes a Blow at least once in a given conflict.
- The Lancer lets the Dragon take over.
- A conflict is directly about a Relationship.

At any time, the player can spend Advancement Points to

- Raise a Trait by 1 (cost: 2)
- Take a new Trait at a rating of 1 because of what just happened (cost: 1)
- Raise a Stat by 1— Monitors also go up by 1 (cost: 6)

## **Gamemastering**

I'm running out of time here, I'm afraid. Well, here is the short version: Cause trouble. Use the Relationships. Try to play the Lancers against each other. Offer them something they really want, but at a high price.

I also wanted to include some Stats and Trait ratings for NPCs. No time left. Just make it up— I would have as well.

## DESIGNER'S NOTES

This game is an entry to the Ronnies competition of November 2005. It uses the terms "Dragon" and "Mud" and was written within 24 hours. It has been inspired by the following novels I have read years ago:

- the *Assassin* trilogy, by Robin Hobb
- the *Dragon Prince* trilogy, by Melanie Rawn
- the *Enwor* line, especially the *Stein der Macht* trilogy, by Wolfgang Hohlbein
- *Dune*, by Frank Herbert (okay, I only watched the movie, but still)

*Mud Planet* was also heavily influenced by the games I am currently reading and playing:

- *Dogs in the Vineyard*, by Vincent Baker (as you sure have noticed)
- *Primetime Adventures*, by Matt Wilson
- *Polaris*, by Ben Lehman
- *The Shadow of Yesterday*, by Clinton R. Nixon

***November 12, 2005***

<b>MUD PLANET Character Sheet</b>				
<b><u>LANCER</u></b>	Name	Description		
<b>Stats</b> (30)	<b>Body</b>	<b>Mind</b>	<b>Soul</b>	<b>Gift</b>
<b>Traits</b> (20)	Physical	Mental	Social	Psychic
<b>Monitors</b>	Health	Self-Control	Commitment	Savageness
<b>Relationships</b>	<b>Threats</b>		<b>Desires</b>	
<b>Monitors</b>	Health	Impulse	Hunger	Willpower
<b>Stats and Traits</b>	<b>Might</b>	Traits		
<b><u>DRAGON</u></b>	Name	Description		
<b>MUD PLANET Character Sheet</b>				