SAND



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What is Sand?

Sand is the title of a role-playing game that I designed in the nine days between 20 May 2005 and 29 May 2005. It was one of many role-playing games designed by many imaginative designers as a part of an annual *Game Chef* competition, to make a complete game within a set timescale and with several or more restrictions and specific requirements.

The website is here

http://www.game-chef.com/

The game design forum is here

http://www.1km1kt.net/forum/forum15.html

The rules for the 2005 competition are essentially these

- 1. Create a game that is based on, or inspired by, a historical period.
- 2. Choose three of the following five 'ingredients'. These ingredients must appear in some way in your game.
- Wine
- Entomology
- Accuser
- Invincible
- Companion
- 3. Choose at least one of the following six rules limitations and incorporate it into your game design.
- There is no character sheet
- The system makes use of designer created cards
- All player-characters are fixed no character generation
- Resolution system must use colours
- Hand gestures have mechanical effects in-game
- Use a dice based system where at least three distinct pieces of information can be derived from a single roll

How did it go for me?

Well, I had two false starts. Then I thought about giving up entirely, having regard to the excellence of some of the entries already beginning to show up in the forums. However, having one last ditch effort, I looked up Invincible for the umpteenth time on a Google search and came across the HMS Invincible and it suddenly hit me what to do with it. Several ideas rapidly followed and the game was afoot!

So, Invincible pretty much chose itself. I decided that I needed a backwater planet out on the reaches of the Empire (pretty much like the Falkland Islands are to the UK) and a reason why it might have suddenly become important. Looking down the words again, it hit me that Wine would be kind of like Spice from Frank Herbert's Dune. So, I had two of the three words and 'bugs' just kind of naturally followed, just to give some extra antagonists.

From there I had pretty much laid the foundation and what you see is simply a continuation of my thought processes as they came into my head. It pretty much follows traditional role-playing lines of a Gamesmaster who sets the scenes and creates and acts on behalf of the npc's and several or more players, with characters, character sheets and dice rolling to determine the outcome of certain events. I haven't yet had a chance to play test it, but I do intend to shortly.

I have to add that this game is very much unfinished. I wanted to do more with the three different colours of dice and whilst I had some ideas, these didn't seem to work. I will be looking again at this more closely. I also want to flesh out the specialities lists, add some text about the various psychic powers and include some more background, equipment, space combat, spaceships and other details. This will be added to the list of my other projects to be worked on from time to time.

Any feedback would be most welcome.

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Check out more of my games here
http://www.geocities.com/simonwashbourne/Beyond Belief.html

Theme

Inspired loosely by the 1982 Falkland War (with a sprinkling of Dune and Starship Troopers).

The Invincible in 1982 was the sixth ship of the Royal Navy to bear the name and the first of the Invincible Class of Anti-Submarine Warfare Carriers, was laid down at the Barrow-in-Furness yard of Vickers Shipbuilders Limited in



July 1973 and was launched by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II on 3 May 1977. She served with distinction in the Falklands Campaign in 1982.

Ingredients



Invincible – this is the name of the space cruiser that has been set to defend the far-flung Empire colony of Sand, in the Castle Sector.

The current Invincible, the twelfth ship of the Royal Navy to bear the name (and the second space cruiser) was built at Marquee in the Landis sector of the Empire in 2954, and was

launched by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth IV in the same year. She served with distinction in the Falthroy Campaign of 2967 and the Hextor Campaign of 2971.

Wine – The rare, valuable and highly addictive nectar-like juice produced by the *Pandoxa* plant and extracted and sold by the colonists on Sand.

Wine is very potent and taken in it raw state will kill a person instantly. Only a very tiny amount produces the narcotic effects that its addicts crave. It is taken in many different forms. It tastes absolutely delicious though and therefore is most often served as a beverage, like the drink after which it got its name.

Entomology – the indigenous hive-like race of 'bugs' called the *Xixuthrus*, who live on Wine and protect the Pandoxa fields with a fervour bordering on insanity.

Xixuthrus are huge, vaguely termite-looking and extremely dangerous bugs that build their nests close to fields of Pandoxa plants for the workers to collect the Wine that is produced in the plants. The Soldiers actively guard their fields against intrusion by Scouts from other colonies. They are terrifying fighters, especially when high on Wine and will defend their territory to the death. Although nobody has seen one, it is believed by the few entomologists that have visited Sand to study them, that in the nests there is a Queen, pretty much like ants, termites and bees of Earth.

Rules limitations

Resolution system must use colours - The system uses three different coloured d10's - Red, White and Blue. (The colours of the Empire Flag, called the 'Union Jack' when painted on the side of a starship).

Three distinct pieces of information can be derived from a single roll – All three dice are rolled at the same time when a character takes an action that has a chance of failure.

- If no dice come up lower than the attribute (or speciality) being used, then the character failed his task attempt.
- If only one dice comes up lower, then he succeeded but only marginally.
- If two dice come up lower, then he succeeded very well.
- If all three dice are lower, then it was a resounding success.
- Whenever the red dice (the Wine dice) is lower than the attribute
 or specialty being used (i.e. is a success) this means that the Wine
 in the characters system 'boosted' his action. The character's
 current Wine score immediately reduces by one point.

The Background

The date now is 2982. The Empire has reached the stars. Huge space transports ply the space lanes.



The Empire

The Empire is ruled by the much loved Royal Family, headed by Queen Elspeth II and advised by her First Minister, Margery Hatchet "The Steel Axe". The Empire, which has really seen its day now, has

contracted in recent decades leaving the, until comparatively recently, unimportant backwater planet of Sand out on the very farthest reaches of the Empire (the Junta say outside of the Empire), unguarded and unloved. That is until the discovery of *Wine*.

Sand is located in the Castle sector, which borders the Argent sector of the Junta. Port Stanley (the only space port on the planet and that isn't saying much) cannot ship the stuff fast enough. Plans are in place amongst the big Merchant Guilds and Noble Houses to send huge ships out there to build great factories to harvest the Wine and expand the port to ship it around the galaxy. The trouble is none of the Merchants or Nobles can agree on who owns Sand or how it should be divided up. With all of their bickering, backbiting, machinations, and protestations, nobody has actually managed to agree anything. Several of the Noble Houses have almost come to blows and it won't take much to set them off. Meanwhile, the Church of The Empire looks on in disdain, hastily trying to raise support for the outlawing of Wine in any form, despite (or because of) the fact that many members of the clergy are already hooked on the stuff. This quarrelling has left Sand (and more importantly the supplies of Wine and the trade route) completely unprotected. The nearest ship is the cruiser *Invincible* with its contingent of marines and this has been hastily dispatched to the Castle sector.

The Junta

A loose collection of despotic and war-like planets in the Argent sector, overseen and nominally ruled by Dictator-General Luis Piedra III from his palace on the planet Aconcagua, roughly in the centre of the sector. The

planetary warlords are normally a quarrelsome bunch who can't agree on anything. However, it seems that Wine has overridden their normal tendencies to want to kill each other and they have come together under Luis Piedra III. Their fleet is a motley collection of hastily armed freighters and a few outdated warships (none of which on their own would be a match for the Invincible, but all together who knows?). However, this armada is protected by about a two dozen comparatively modern, well armed fighters, purchased recently from Red Star, a slumbering giant of an Empire that doesn't directly want to involved itself, but indirectly seas siding with the Junta as a golden opportunity. The Junta fleet is thundering its way across the void to reclaim the planet they believe is rightfully theirs.



Sand

Sand is a desert-planet. It is typical of this type of planet – hot during the daytime and cold at night. Believed to be of little value after it was first discovered, nevertheless a hardcore of colonists decided to try to make the most of it. The biggest danger, besides the harsh environment itself, was the Xixuthrus or bugs as they are affectionately called. (It was actually finding this indigenous species that convinced the early colonists

that the planet was habitable). It was the xeno-entomologist Dr Herbert Frank who discovered Wine, when he was studying the Xixuthrus and their feeding habits. The discovery of Wine led to a rapid rise in the colonial population as everyone tries to stake a claim to their own Pandoxa plantation. It's a dangerous living though as the Xixuthrus tend to kill anyone who messes with their plants. And they are becoming more aggressive. They are diligent, powerful and well directed (by the Queen, so Dr Frank suggests). The colony now is several thousand strong, but it is a frontier town, largely lawless and without much external support. Several of the Merchant Guilds and Noble Houses have sent their own teams to grab what they can or buy out those who have already found the best fields of Pandoxa. The Church has sent some representatives too, to keep a watching

brief. This influx of people has put a huge strain on the planets already scarce resources.

What is less well known, is that Dr Frank also found that the eco-system of Xixuthrus-to-Pandoxa is very finely balanced and



that upsetting the system too much, by perhaps wiping out the bugs, would do untold damage to Pandoxa and therefore to Wine production. There is also something that Dr Frank hasn't yet discovered....

Beneath the surface of the planet are tunnels leading from the surface Xixuthru nests to chambers carved out by the bugs thousands of years ago. Deep in the bowels of Sand sleeps The Great Queen, who awakens only every hundred years or so, at the time that the conditions on the planet surface become perfect for Pandoxa growth (the season becomes a little wetter). Every hundred years, there is more Pandoxa, more wine, greater activity amongst the surface Xixuthrus until there is literally an explosion of activity. The Great Queen receives vast quantities of Wine brought to her from the surface by the individual nest Queens (they are the only ones she allows near her, apart from her Drones, who are sightless workers who never venture to the surface and serve only to hatch her eggs). These vast quantities of Wine enable her to produce literally millions of eggs, which are hatched, make a frenzied rush to the surface to consume Wine, kill off any remaining surface nests and take then over, establishing their own Queens and starting the hundred-year cycle all over again.

It is now coming near to the hundredth year......

Characters

Characters are marines, specialists or psykers aboard the Invincible. (Although it could also be interesting to play characters from other factions who are already on Sand). They are heading out to Sand to make landfall on the planet, whilst the cruiser takes on the fleet of Junta ships, until the rest of the Empire Navy arrives.

There are three attributes Mind, which represents the character's will, determination, intellect, reasoning and memory. Action, covering the character's agility, speed, reflexes and dexterity and Body which is a mixture of strength, physique, constitution, endurance and health.

Characters start with 3 in each attribute. Their choice of position gives them another point in one attribute. Then the player has one more point to place where he likes. Added to that, the character gets a number of specialities, as set out in the list below.

Attributes and associated specialities

Mind Computers, Demolitions, Diplomacy, Electronics.

> Engineering, Leadership, Mechanics, Observation,

Shipboard Systems, Survival, Tracking.

Action Acrobatics, Dodging, Driving, Fire Combat, Piloting,

Shipboard Gunnery, Stealth

Body Climbing, Close Combat, Lifting, Swimming, Toughness,

Throwing

Position and specialities

Marines They get +1 to Body and +1 to add to whichever attribute

they like. Marines have the following four specialties plus one other of the player's choice. Fire Combat, Close

Combat, Toughness and Throwing.

Gear: Medium armour, assault blaster, combat blade,

Wine booster pack, 2 shots.

Psykers

Psykers get +1 Mind and +1 to add where they like. They have Void shield and the choice of any two of the following *Void* powers; Coercion, Empathy, Telepathy, Teleportation, Telekinesis, ESP, Healing, Void kill, and plus two other (non Void) specialities of choice.

Gear: Light armour, hand blaster, blade. Wine booster

pack, 2 shots.

Specialists

They get +1 to add to Action and +1 to the attribute of their choice. They automatically get Fire Combat, plus any three other specialties of choice.

Gear: Light armour, assault laser, combat blade. Wine booster pack, 2 shots.

The game system

Using dice

Whenever a character takes an action that may be difficult or the GM decides there is a chance of some sort of complication as a result of the action, dice are rolled. The dice used are ten-sided dice, called d10 in these rules. Empire characters use a red dice, a white dice and a blue dice. Other characters (those who are not Wine addicts) use only 2 dice.

Attributes

In order to succeed at an action, the character needs to get a number on at least one of the dice he that is below the attribute that is most relevant to the task he attempted. The more dice that are below the attribute level, the better.

Specialities

Specialities add +1 to the effective attribute level when a character is doing stuff that relates to that particular speciality.

Most of the specialities will be fairly self-explanatory, especially to those of you who are familiar with role-playing games, so I won't really spend too much time on them, given the time constraints for this early version of Sand.

However, you may feel that sometimes modifiers are appropriate where a character is doing something that you consider very difficult. In these circumstances, you can apply a -1 up to a -3 to the character's effective attribute for the purposes of that particular action. You could give a +1 for an action that is straightforward.

Void powers are available only to trained psykers and the hive-mind of Xixuthrus. They need a little explanation here

Coercion – the power to get into a person's Mind and force him to do things that are against his will. It is always an opposed Mind roll.

Empathy – Allows the psyker to sense what is wrong or the general mood of a living being with at least 1 in Mind. It can also be used to help calm or

soothe a person, animal or whatever to make aggressive people or animal less aggressive. It can be used on more than one subject as long as they are visible to the psyker - i.e. a group of Xixuthrus guarding their Pandoxa patch. It can also be used to negate the effects of Wine withdrawal for a short while.

Telepathy – allows long-range communication without electronic devices. To send a messages within a sector is quite hard, so a -1 modifier would normally apply. Across the Void, is a difficult task, and so a -2 would apply.

Teleportation – Allows the psyker to actually transport themselves and any equipment on them to another location on the same planet. Carrying passengers might accrue a -1 penalty for each additional person teleported. To a location that the psyker can see can add a +1.

Telekinesis – allows the psyker to move stuff around, using the power of the Void. Big, heavy things are more difficult so could accrue penalties.

ESP – allows the psyker to sense things – the location of a nest of bugs, where friends are and so on. The more specific the thing or the more distant, the harder it would be and modifiers might apply.

Healing – enables the psyker to use the Void to repair body damage by touch. For a marginal success (one dice below Mind + speciality) the number of wounds healed is the number on the lowest dice (i.e. the dice that succeeded). For a normal success (2 dice below the target) the damage restored is the number on the highest dice of those that succeeded. For a resounding success, damage repaired is the total number on all 3 dice rolled. A psyker can heal more than one character at a time with the single result. Psykers can also use touch to harm opponents too, turning the Void the other way around. They do need to touch their target, who cannot be wearing armour.

Void kill – is an attack into the target's mind. It is always an opposed roll. Normally, it requires the target to be within sight and becomes increasingly difficult over long distance. Instead of damage to the body, it does damage to the Mind. Each success is one point of Mind damage.

Void shield – this is used to add to Mind, to resist Void kill and other intrusive Void powers.

Wine

This registers the current level of the Wine stimulant within the character's body. For those that have Wine in their system, there are positive benefits. However there are negative reactions when characters no longer have Wine coursing through their veins and they are subject to withdrawal symptoms. Junta troops have never really had access to Wine before and so are unlikely to have a Wine rating at all.

For player characters and those that have a Wine rating (very, very many people in The Empire are addicted), it starts at d10/2+5 (i.e. 6-10). Whenever the character is 'boosted' by his Wine rating (see resolution system above), his current Wine score falls by 1. When Wine is zero, the character starts to feel the effects of withdrawal. He continues to roll the red dice as usual when taking actions, but no longer counts the results of the red dice when it comes up lower than the total he is aiming for (i.e. he is no longer 'boosted' by the Wine). What he does do though, is check the result of the red dice against the table below, to see if any side effect occurred as a result of the withdrawal of Wine from his body system. This happens each and every time he continues to take actions when he has no Wine.

1 Stressed -1 to Mind, until Wine taken
2 Shakes or Lethargy (choose) -1 to Action, until Wine taken
3 Nausea -1 to Body, until Wine taken
4 + no effect

If an attribute falls to zero as a result of this, the character becomes ineffective, requiring a boost of Wine to get him active again.

Obtaining more Wine

The Empire Navy realised from an early time that Wine greatly improves the performance of its personnel and initially did nothing to stop them taking it when on shore leave. Within the last year, the Navy have been actively providing their combat personnel with booster packs when on battle duty. However, this is proving a double-edged sword now that supplies are getting low, because withdrawal is highly detrimental to their effectiveness. Each marine is given 2 booster packs, containing d10/2+5 (i.e. 6-10) Wine points worth. There are also Wine shops on planets around the empire, pretty much like the old-fashioned pubs of British history. However, these

are struggling to cope with demand and stocks will be low, especially now that the Junta have invaded. Some have even started to dilute their Wine supplies to stretch it further. The stocks will continue to get lower if the Junta maintain complete control of Sand and its Wine production.

A single glass of Wine is normally worth d10/2 points of Wine. A diluted glass is around d10/3, or even as low as just 1 Wine point.

Using attributes and specialties

The system is pretty simple and has largely been described above under the heading Rules Limitations. Where a character attempts a task, the player rolls three dice (two dice if he has **no** Wine rating as opposed to a **zero** Wine rating) in an attempt to roll lower than the attribute that is most relevant to the task. So, if he were jumping over a chasm, he would use Action. If he has a specialty that would help, then he adds that to his attribute level (making it easier to roll under). The number of successes determines whether he succeeds and how well he succeeds.

- If no dice come up lower than the attribute (or speciality) being used, then the character failed his task attempt.
- If only one dice comes up lower, then he succeeded but only marginally.
- If two dice come up lower, then he succeeded very well.
- If all three dice are lower, then it was a resounding success.
- Whenever the red dice (the Wine dice) is lower than the attribute or specialty being used (i.e. is a success) this means that the Wine in the characters system 'boosted' his action. The character's current Wine score immediately reduces by one point.

Sometimes a character will be doing something that is being opposed by someone (or something) else. In this case, both parties roll the dice as normal and determine their successes. The one with the higher number of successes determines which is the winner and which is the loser of the contest. However, the winner of the contest deducts the number of successes that his opponent got from his own total, before determining his level of success.

Occasionally, the parties in a contested action will score the same number of successes. In this case, what actually happens depends on what they are doing and what seems appropriate where a 'draw' occurs. If they are racing, for example, you could simply say it is a dead heat. Alternatively, you could determine they are neck and neck and require another roll to see gets his nose ahead in the final straight.

Combat

Fighting will occur a lot in Sand the RPG. There are the forces of the Junta to oust from the planet Sand and there are the bugs. Then there are other factions from within the Empire who might try to get their hands on the Wine. Characters are Empire marines and specialists and are trained to do this sort of thing.

The system is basically as described above, for opposed actions. Combat specialties would be close combat, fire combat, throwing, dodging and toughness. Where it is important to see who acts first, check the combatants Action. The highest is quickest and gets to act first. Where Action is equal, the highest current Wine rating is the decider.

Shooting

If one character is firing a gun at another figure, the one doing the shooting makes an Action roll, adding fire combat to his Action if he has the speciality. The target gets to dodge if he wishes, but loses his next action if he does so. Dodging give an Action roll, plus dodging, if he has that speciality. If the shooter wins the contest, he has hit the target. Damage is then done as described below. If the target wins, (or it is a draw) he avoids the shot and that's that.

Hand-to-hand

This is a simple opposed roll using one combatants Body (+ close combat if he has it) against the others. A character can dodge if he wishes (using Action), but if he gets a win result, he doesn't get to harm his opponent, although he can use the success to get away from the fight, if he wishes.

Damage caused to the target is determined by the level of the



success and the numbers on the dice from the fire combat or close combat roll.

- Marginal success the number on the lowest dice is the number of wounds caused
- Normal success the number on the highest dice that succeeded is the number of wounds caused
- Resounding success add the numbers on all three dice for the wounds caused

Weapons

- Fighting unarmed, characters subtract 1 from all wound results and damage sufficient to reduce Body to zero doesn't kill, just renders opponents unconscious.
- Blades subtract 1 from all wound results and are only used in close combat
- Combat blades subtract 1 from wound results of 2 successes or higher and are only used in close combat
- Hand blasters subtract 1 from wound results of 2 successes or higher, but fire at a range of up to 100 yards
- Laser rifles subtract 1 from wound results of 3 (resounding) successes and cannot auto-fire. They have a range of 3000 yards.
- Assault blasters can auto-fire and have a range of up to 2000 yards.

Auto-fire weapons

When using weapons with auto-fire capability, such as the assault blaster, wounds can be spread between up to two targets with a normal success and

up to three targets with a resounding success. In this case the total wounds are distributed evenly (not the dice results).

Armour

Marines wear medium armour. This automatically stops 2 wounds. Specialists and Psykers wear light armour. This automatically stops 1 wound.

In addition player characters (and some special npc

'characters') can try to resist the effect of the wounds by making a Body roll (adding the toughness speciality if he has it). For every success, he can reduce wounds by 1. The resulting number represents wounds caused directly to the Body of the character.

Example of combat

Slade and McKinnon are in a firefight with a couple of Junta troops. Slade has Action 4 and McKinnon has 3. Both Junta men have Action 3. Slade goes first, followed by McKinnon, because his Wine rating is currently 6 and the Junta troops have no Wine.

Slade decides to fire his assault blaster and rolls 3 dice. They come up 8(red), 5(white) & 8(blue). Slade has Action + fire combat 5,



so only succeeds with the white dice. The Junta trooper dodges and rolls 2 die getting a 1 and a 3. He got 2 successes and so got out of the way (his two successes cancelled the one success of Slade).

McKinnon fires next and rolls a 2(red), 3(white) and 1(blue). All 3 are below his Action + Fire Combat total of 4, so he has 3 successes (a resounding success). His Wine (red) dice succeeded, so his Wine rating immediately drops to 5. Because he had three successes, he decides that he will use auto-fire to shoot at both targets (if there were three targets, he could have got all three if he had wanted to). The first junta trooper fails to dodge with his 2 dice (7 & 7 rolled). He therefore receives 3 wounds (2+3+1=6/2 for two targets) against his Body attribute of 3. He has light armour, so wounds are reduced to 2, knocking his Body down to 1 and severely wounding him. The second Junta trooper doesn't dodge (he wants to shoot back) and so suffers 3 wounds too – his armour absorbs 1 point, so he actually takes 2 against his Body of 3 as well.

Junta Troops			Other npc types			
_	Attributes	Specialties		Attributes	Specialties	
Standard Trooper	Mind 2	_	Merchant house	Mind 2	_	
	Action 3	Fire combat +1	mercenary	Action 3	Fire combat +1	
	Body 3			Body 3	Close combat +1	
	Wine -			Wine 2		
Gear			Gear			
Light armour (1)			Medium armour (2)			
Assault blaster			Assault blaster			
			Combat blade			
	******	*******	Wine booster pack			

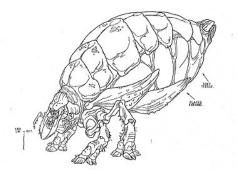
	Attributes	Specialties		Attributes	Specialties	
Elite Trooper	Mind 2	Survival +1	Merchant	Mind 3	Diplomacy +1	
1	Action 3	Fire combat +1, Dodging +1		Action 2	1	
	Body 3	Close combat +1, Throwing +1		Body 2		
	Wine -	_		Wine 5		
Gear			Gear			
Light armour (1)			Blaster pistol			
Assault blaster			Wine booster pack (2)			
Combat blade			*	:******	*****	
	******	******				
				Attributes	Specialties	
			Colonist	Mind 2	Survival +1	
				Action 2		
				Body 3	Toughness+1, close combat +1	
				Wine 10	,	
			Gear			
			Blade			
			'Raw' Wine (3)			

Xixuthrus

	Attribu	Specialties		
Worker	Mind	1	Scent +1	
	Action	2		
	Body	6		
	Wine	2		
* T .				

Notes

Tough carapace (1)
'Raw' Wine store (10)



	Attributes	Specialties
Scout	Mind 2	Scent +, Survival +1
	Action 3	Flight +1, Stealth +1, Acid squirt +1
	Body 3	
	Wine 4	

Notes

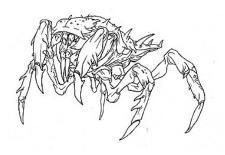
Thin carapace (1)
Wings



			Attributes	Specialties
Soldier	Mind	1	Scent +1	
	Action	3	Acid squirt +1	
	Body	5	Mandibles +1,	Claws +1
	Wine	3		

Notes

Thick carapace (3)



	Attribu	tes	Specialties
Queen	Mind	3	ESP +1, Telepathy +1, Scent +1
	Action	2	Acid squirt +1
	Body	9	Mandibles +1, Toughness +1
	Wine	5	C

Notes

Tough carapace (2)



SAND Character Sheet



Character name Position				Character nan Position	Character name			
Position				Position				
Attribute	Rating	Specialities		Attribute	Rating	Specialities		
MIND				MIND				
ACTION				ACTION				
BODY				BODY				
WINE				WINE				
Gear & Notes				Gear & Notes				
			_					
			-					
			-					
			-					