TUNNEL WARS

A game about goblins and dwarves running around in magic pants made of copper fighting a war

No, really, that's actually what the game is about

By molub

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Tunnel Wars

A study of the finer points of subterranean combat in magic pants

It is year 18 of the Copper Wars. The underground Dwarven Nation and the unified goblin tribes fight ceaselessly hundreds of feet below the peaceful surface of the world, each desperately striving to secure the most precious metal in existence; copper. Long considered one of the lesser metals, copper was formerly cheaper than gold and softer than iron. Above the surface, it still is. Below, however, copper has been transformed into the ultimate weapon.

Two decades ago, the Dwarven smith Axebeard Anvilhammer III stumbled upon a fabulous new method of enchantment; pantscomancy (the magic of pants). With it, he found that he could imbue pants with magical abilities that could be used by their wearers. Unfortunately, these effects were transient and unstable at best. Many magical pants would malfunction and lose their power after only a few days. Axebeard and his craftsmen tried everything from weaving strands of valuable metals into his pants to soaking them in rich and exotic elixirs. Nothing worked.

After a year or two of trying and failing to make his magic pants function stably, Axebeard's life took a turn for the worst; while out mining for molybdenum, the latest metal he planned to enchant, he was captured by goblin raiders. Before they could subdue him, he invoked the power of his pants, badly burning one of the raiders. They took away Axebeard's pants and, through insidious blackmail and torture, they squeezed the secret of the pants out of him. He told them everything. Axebeard was executed, his body dumped into a deep subterranean shaft. Having extracted all the information they could from Axebeard, the goblins quickly began research on their own magic pants.

Keeton the Terribel (yes, it is spelled like that) was the first of the goblins to practice pantscomancy on pants forged from copper. History does not recall what he enchanted his pants to do. What is remembered, though, is his tremendous success. The unique composition of copper was perfect for pantscomancy: enchantments placed on it were stable, and the copper itself

gained a supernatural hardness. The hubris of the dwarves had left them blind to copper's potential; they considered only materials such as gold and iridium suitable for items as majestic and powerful as magic pants. Powerful spells previously ephemeral in nature could now be permanently bound to copper pants.

The goblins quickly began to produce stable, copper versions of Axebeard's invention. When they attacked their first dwarven settlement, one of Axebeard's protégées recognized the pants, and the material they were made of. The settlement fought off it's magically enhanced attackers with heavy casualties, but the secret of copper was out. In only weeks, the dwarves had created their own armories of magic pants to combat the goblins.

So began the Copper Wars.

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FORWARD
AND MORE BACKGROUND

Tunnel Wars is a game about subterranean combat in magic metal pants. It's a good idea. Trust me.

Tunnel Wars uses only one ordinary six sided die, like you find in casinos and boardgames. You can use one made of diamonds, if you have one. Otherwise, you should probably use one made of wood or plastic.

Characters in Tunnel Wars are humanoids taking part in the bloody struggle for the copper needed to give their side an edge in the brutal conflict. The war is almost entirely subterranean; the few above ground battles that have occurred took place at the mouthes of tunnels on high mountain peaks, far away from civilization.

As such, the secret of pantscomancy and of the value of copper is known only to the goblins and dwarves. Humans, elves, and all the other unimportant surface dwellers are blissfully unaware of copper's value, and are eager to take advantage of the apparent surge in copper's popularity underground, by

trading it to dwarves and goblins at slightly increased prices (still well below it's real value).

Both goblins and dwarves commonly tell surface dwellers that copper is a new fashion trend and nothing more. So far, nobody seems to have noticed how unusual it is for goblins and dwarves to suddenly have developed a sense of fashion.

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CHARACTER CREATION

The first step to creating a character is to choose their race. Are they a stout, squat-ish dwarf, or a hunched, sneaky goblin? Tunnel Wars can be played either with a group of characters of the same race, or it can be played with two separate groups being pitted against each other.

There are four primary stats possessed by characters in Tunnel Wars;

Strength; a measure of physical might

Speed; how quick and coordinated a character is

Stamina; a character's staying power

Skillz; an attribute used for invoking the powers of pants, among other things

The last one has a z at the end because this is a game about dwarves and goblins running around wearing magical pants made of copper. Also because the author is an idiot.

The choice of a character's race directly influences their attributes. The base attributes of each race are as follows:

DWARF		GOBLIN	
Strength:	4	Strength:	3
Speed:	2	Speed:	4
Stamina:	4	Stamina:	3
Skillz:	3	Skillz:	3

Once a character's race has been chosen, a player may transfer a single attribute point from one attribute to another. After that, they may transfer attribute points between attributes at a 2-to-1 ratio, where they must remove 2 points from one attribute to add a single point to another. Obviously, moving more than one point isn't a good idea, unless you've found some massive rules exploit and are taking advantage of it, or something like that.

Once you've decided your attributes and race, mark them down on your character sheet (included in the back of this book).

Goblin characters start with 200 iron Keetons (the goblin unit of currency, named after the famous Keeton the Terribel).

Dwarf characters start with 200 Urists. The origin of the name of dwarven currency is unknown, but it is whispered in dark circles that it is a reference to an independently made computer game about dwarves. Not that people in this game have computers, or anything like that.

By some freak miracle of economics, goblin currency and dwarven currency are functionally identical with regards to purchasing power in their respective societies.

The next step in character creation is to purchase starting equipment from the lists in the next section. Prices will be listed in Keetons because the author wants to include the word "Keeton" in his entry as many times as possible.

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EQUIPMENT

Magic pants have revolutionized the art of underground fighting. The old ways, of pickaxes and hammers, have been marginalized. Despite this, they are not by any means gone. Although it is highly recommended that a character wear magic pants of some sort, it is also recommended that they carry some other weapon or implement, such as a pick.

There are two features of every pair of magic pants: Ability and Power. Ability is the effect that the pair of magic pants can be invoked for, and Power is a measure of how strong the effect is. Each pair of magic copper pants may possess only one ability. The catalog of types of magic copper pants is as follows:

Ability: Scorch
The ability used by Axebeard Anvilhammer III in his attempt to fend off the goblin raiders that captured him. Scorch is a highly destructive ability that calls upon the forces of the world's molten core to unleash a fiery blast behind the wearer. Of course, this means that the user of this ability must have his back turned to his enemy to use it effectively. The few humans who have seen this power in action (and have either been killed or swore to secrecy, of course) seem to have found it hilarious, due to some bizarre quirk of their culture. Only surface dwelling plebians such as them could possibly find such a destructive weapon amusing. Pants with the Scorch ability are used by both goblins and dwarves.
The cost and damage effect of a pair of magical pants with the Scorch ability is as follows:

Power 1 – 100 Keetons   Damage: 3
Power 2 – 200 Keetons   Damage: 5
Power 3 – 250 Keetons   Damage: 6

At Power 2 and 3, a foe damaged by Scorch will take an additional 1 damage each round for either 2 or 3 rounds, respectively. Victims are allowed a save to prevent this (see skill test rules). Damage dealt by Scorch ignores armor.

Ability: Thunder

One of the more flashy and bright abilities that can be woven into a pair of magic pants, Thunder is said to draw it's devastating power from massive banks of mist hovering far above the surface of the world. Few dwarves or goblins have actually seen such banks of mist, and those that have are probably just lying. Thunder pants must be invoked by pelvic thrusting in the direction of an enemy, shooting a bolt of lighting in their direction. Thunder pants are used by both goblins and dwarves.

Power 1 – 120 Keetons   Damage: 1
Power 2 – 240 Keetons   Damage: 3
Power 3 – 360 Keetons   Damage: 6
Power 4 – 800 Keetons   Damage: 12

When a foe is damaged by magic thunder pants, they will be stunned for a number of rounds equal to the Power level of the magic pants they were stunned by. Victims are allowed a save to prevent this (see skill test rules). Damage dealt by Thunder ignores armor.

Ability: Kinetic Blast

Perhaps the least subtle type of magic pants in existence, Kinetic Blast Pants can be used by their wearer to project a large amount of kinetic force in one broad direction. Users can blast their enemies back, or invoke the pants to aim downwards, projecting them upwards like a jet. Only the dwarves use Kinetic Blast pants. They may not be purchased at character creation by goblins, but they may be used if they are found (read; looted) later.

Power 1 – 120 Keetons   Damage: 4
Power 2 – 260 Keetons   Damage: 4

Power 2 Kinetic Blast pants are more refined, and a wearer may direct all kinetic force onto a small pinpoint area, thus doing 8 damage instead of 4. Pinpoint force may not be used to jump, but Power 2 pants can also be invoked for the standard broad kinetic blast.

Ability: Refresh

One of the few magic pants abilities not used exclusively to wage war, Refresh is used to wage healing. Because damage is taken by subtracting from the 4 attributes, Refresh restores drained attributes. Unlike the more attack oriented pants, Refresh's Power list includes how much damage they heal to their

target (who must be in physical contact with the pants), as well as the number of turns it takes for the pants to recharge after use. Both goblins and dwarves use Refresh magic pants.

Power 1 – 130 Keetons   Heals: 3 Recharge: 3

Power 2 – 280 Keetons   Heals: 6 Recharge: 4

Power 3 – 400 Keetons   Heals: 6 Recharge: 2

Power 4 – 620 Keetons   Heals: 8 Recharge: 2

Ability: Contagion

Said to be the favorite magic pants type of Keeton the Terribel, Contagion is an ability that inflicts a horrible rotting disease on it's victims. The disease acts devastatingly quickly, but is fortunately not contagious, despite it's name. To inflict a foe with Contagion, the wearer of the pants only needs to touch them. The Power list for contagion lists it's duration. Contagion is used only by goblins, and may not be purchased by starting dwarf characters. If a dwarf later finds a pair of Contagion pants, they may use them.

Power 1 – 250 Keetons   Duration: 6 turns

Power 2 – 450 Keetons   Duration: 11 turns

Power 3 – 1000 Keetons   Duration: 26 turns

Each turn a character suffers from the effects of Contagion, they take one damage. Every fifth point of damage taken is permanent, and cannot be restored. Being effected by the power of Refresh pants will stop Contagion in addition to restoring the normal amount of damage. Each turn a character is afflicted with Contagion, they may take a save to stop Contagion. Damage dealt by Contagion ignores armor.

Ability: Tunnel

One of the more subtly dangerous magical pants abilities is Tunnel. It allows it's wearer to have a supernatural propensity for tunneling quickly through rock and dirt. A wearer of tunnel pants may tunnel through dirt and rock at a tenth of walking speed barehanded, without harming their hands. With a shovel or pick, they may tunnel at half walking speed. Tunnel pants can be used to cause cave ins, and several underground cities have been destroyed this way. Both goblins and dwarves use Tunnel pants.

Power 1 – 100 Keetons

A cave in does 5 damage for every square meter of earth or rock dropped. Caving in large areas is difficult and slow, however, and is likely to harm friends as well as foes. Every time a cave in is caused, the tunneler must make a speed save or take 5 damage.

Equipment That Is Not Pants

Pickaxe
A digging implement used to excavate areas. It is most effective if used alongside Tunnel pants. Without Tunnel pants, a digger moves (Strength) meters per hour.

Cost: 30 Keetons   Damage: wielder's Strength + 1   Accuracy: +1

Shovel
A digging implement that is designed to remove dirt, but that cannot break rock, unless used with Tunnel pants. A digger using it moves a number of meters equal to their Strength per hour (same as pick), but cannot tunnel through rock.

Cost: 10 Keetons   Damage: wielder's Strength – 1   Accuracy: +0

Hammer
A tool used to shatter stone and shape metal, but unsuitable for digging.

Cost: 25 Keetons   Damage: wielder's Strength   Accuracy: +0

Mace
A heavy spiked ball on the end of a bar. It is a weapon of war, and does not have any use as a tool.

Cost: 40 Keetons   Damage: wielder's Strength +3   Accuracy: +0

Axe
A cutting tool used to chop down trees, usually to be sent down to stoke the fires of forges under the earth, or to be made into various wooden objects. Most goblins and dwarves do not venture above ground, so the axe is a specialized tool.

Cost: 60 Keetons   Damage: wielder's Strength +3   Accuracy: +1

Fists
A weapon of last resort. Just the character's bare hands.

Cost: 0 Keetons   Damage: fighter's Strength – 4   Accuracy: -2

Clothes
Simple clothes and shoes, designed to protect from mild scrapes and cuts

underground. They provide only the most basic of protection. Pants not included.
Cost: 5 Keetons   Protection: 1   Weight: 0

Mining Gear
Thick clothes reinforced with leather and metal plates. Mining Gear includes a helmet (no lantern) and heavy boots. Pants not included.
Cost: 20 Keetons   Protection: 2   Weight: 1

Chain Armor
A shirt made from small iron chain links. A helmet (no lantern) and iron toed boots are included. Of course, pants are not.
Cost: 60 Keetons   Protection: 3   Weight: 2

Plate Armor
Several metal armor plates connected as a shirt. A helmet (without mining lantern) and iron toed boots are included. As usual, pants are not.
Cost: 100 Keetons   Protection: 4   Weight: 4

Normal Pants
Just normal pants. Made of cloth. You feel ashamed and inadequate for wearing them. Copper pants give more protection, so normal pants get -1 to protection total. Wearing no pants at all gives -2.
Cost: 1 Keeton   Protection: -1   Weight: 0

Helmet Mounted Lantern
A lantern mounted on a helmet. A mining lamp. Helmet not included. Without a helmet, it may be used as a normal lantern.
Cost: 5 Keetons

Rope
A sturdy rope, which can be used to climb otherwise insurmountable obstacles.
Cost: 1 Keeton per meter

Grappling Hook
An iron three-pronged hook that can be attached to a rope and through to

hook onto something, allowing the rope to be climbed.
Cost: 10 Keetons

Rations
Disgusting food carefully packaged to keep forever. Water is included. Provides enough food for one meal. Dwarves need to eat 3 meals per day to be healthy. Goblins need 2. A character operating on less than the required number of meals each day suffers from a -1 Strength penalty (but no damage). Each day a character goes without any food, they take 3 damage.
Cost: 1 Keeton

Paint
A can of paint containing enough paint to cover sixteen square meters. A brush is included. Comes in yellow, blue, red, green, black, white, and purple.
Cost: 20 Keetons (fluorescent version costs 40 Keetons)

Iron Spikes
Spikes made out of iron. I'm sure you can think of about a million things to do with them.
Cost: 1 Keeton each

Copper Ore
A lump of copper gouged from the earth. It can be sold at a high price.
Cost:

Inventory: A character can carry 6 objects, not including their copper pants, weapon, money, and any armor they may be wearing. Multiples of an object stack and are considered as one object for carrying purposes. This rule was put in to facilitate fast, easy play, unencumbered by encumbrance rules regarding carrying stuff. The item limit was put in to prevent characters from becoming walking armories.

Weight: The weight of the armor a character is carrying is subracted from his speed, to a minimum of 1.

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COMBAT
AND SKILL TESTS

Skill tests are taken when a character attempts an action with an uncertain outcome. Attempting to juggle lumps of magma with a shovel, trying to climb a rope, and attempting to swim are some examples of actions that would call for a skill test. When a skill test is made, a target number is set, and a single six sided die is rolled. It's roll is added to the most relevant attribute of a character. If the sum of the roll and attribute are higher than or equal to the target number, the action succeeds. If the attribute and roll are lower than the target number, the action fails.

If a 1 is rolled on the die, the action automatically fails. If a 6 is rolled, roll the die again and add the result. Continue rerolling and adding until a six is not rolled.

In short, the mechanic for deciding if a roll succeeds is:

1d6 + (Attribute) vs. Target Number

Some sample target numbers are as follows:

Action	Difficulty	Attribute Tested
Climb a 10 meter rope	5	Strength
Lift one's own weight	7	Strength
Run for 15 minutes	7	Stamina
Catch a small falling rock	5	Speed
Invoke Magic Pants	6	Skillz
Avoid self damage from cavein	7	Speed
Recover From Contagion	8	Stamina
Prevent Stunning from Thunder	8	Stamina
Prevent Scorch extra damage	9	Stamina
Forcefully remove foe's pants	11	Strength
Jump 1 meter	7	Speed

Opposed Actions

Opposed actions are actions where two characters (player or not) compete to do something. One character might be trying to hold a door closed and prevent the entry of another character, for instance.

For opposed actions, take the appropriate attribute of a character, roll 1d6 (rerolling and adding 6's), and compare it to the attribute and roll (again, rerolling and adding 6's) of another character. The highest total wins. So, the mechanic is as follows:

1d6 + (attribute) vs. 1d6 + (attribute)

Combat

When two characters engage in combat, the attacker rolls 1d6 (rerolling and adding 6's) and adds their Strength attribute and the accuracy bonus of their weapon, and another character rolls 1d6 (also rerolling and adding 6's) and adds their Speed attribute. If the defender is wearing or carrying armor, make sure to subtract the armor's weight from their Speed.

1d6 + Attacker's Strength and Accuracy vs. 1d6 + Defender's Speed

If the attack hits, take the damage that the weapon deals and (unless the weapon ignores armor) subtract that armor's protection. This is the amount of damage dealt to the defender.

Weapon Damage – Armor Protection = Damage Caused

Each point of damage dealt results in the temporary (until healed) drain of 1 point of the defender's attributes. The attribute draining may be distributed point by point by the defender. A character goes unconscious when one of their attributes drops to 0. When two of their attributes drop to 0 or one drops into negative numbers, they die. When that happens, it's time to fold up the character sheet into a tiny origami gravestone, say a few words, and make another character.

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OTHER CREATURES

Characters in Tunnel Wars are (thankfully) not limited to fighting with each other. There are many strange and dangerous creatures lurking under the earth for them to be killed by. This section lists them, as well as listing stats for some surface dwelling races, such as humans and elves. Some monsters are incapable of using magic pants, so they do not have a Skillz attribute at all.

Taupe Hulk
A looming, brown-ish figure with beady little glowing eyes. Taupe Hulks are somewhat rare, but they are very dangerous when encountered. Their origin is unknown, and there are no successful recorded attempts of communication with them, although it is thought to be possible. Taupe Hulks often are found carrying 1d6 hunks of copper ore with them, so someone who could figure out how to trade with them could become very wealthy. They will attack with their claws (Damage: 8, Accuracy: +1)
Strength: 6   Speed: 3   Stamina: 5   Skillz: 1

Anger Bat
Anger Bats are named after their characteristic angry little screams and spluttering noises, which they emit constantly. They flutter erratically around in caves, and are generally harmless. They are edible, if cooked. If their flesh is eaten, it has a tendency to make the eaten cranky. If a very large amount were consumed, it could make the character fly into a rage (providing +1 Strength and +1 Speed)
Strength: 1   Speed: 5   Stamina: 1

Nalonal

A bizarre race of humanoid creatures characterized by their rugose skin and the masks they constantly wear. They move quickly, screaming gibberish and babbling inanely at intruders. There are legends of a hero defeating a Nalonal by leaving a pebble in front of it, and tricking it into tripping on the pebble. Those legends are, of course, not a good example. Not only are Nalonals usually peaceful (despite their screaming), they are not particularly prone to tripping on pebbles. If pressed to attack, they will fight barehanded.
Strength: 2   Speed: 5   Stamina: 3   Skillz: 1

Human Spelunker

A human from the surface, on some sort of expedition underground. Likely to carry a pick, a week's worth of food (humans eat 2 meals each day), mining gear, a lantern, a rope and grappling hook, and a few trinkets from the surface. They can be reasoned with quite easily, and will usually believe claims that any copper pants nearby characters are wearing are just fashion objects. If dealt with diplomatically, they may offer to trade objects, or provide some other form of assistance.
Strength: 4   Speed: 4   Stamina: 3   Skillz: 2

Elf

An elf, probably in tattered clothes and suffering from malnutrition (elves eat 1 meal a day). Elves almost never go underground, so this one is probably lost. Very lost. If it sees anyone, it will attempt to convince them to lead it to the surface. If characters lead one to safety above ground, it will almost certainly agree to repay them by bringing them things. An elf ally could be a good source of copper. When an elf is encountered, apply 3 points of damage to it's stats, but do not lower any to 0. If forced to fight, it will fight barehanded.
Strength: 3   Speed: 5   Stamina: 2   Skillz: 3

Giant Roach

A huge insect, almost a meter long. It's chattering and clacking echoes throughout the nearby tunnels, and it moves blindingly fast. It is possible to tame these creatures, which survive on fungus and smaller insects. They are highly intelligent for insects. If tamed, they are very valuable (worth 300 Keetons) because of their extraordinary physical capabilities. It's eggs are worth 10 Keetons each, and a nest of them can consist of hundreds. They

are easier to tame at a young age, if only because they are less dangerous. It attacks with it's sharp mandibles (Damage: 6, Accuracy: +1).
Strength: 4   Speed: 4   Stamina: 4

Dwarf/Goblin Miner
A dwarf or goblin on a mining expedition. It carries a pick, lantern, food, rope, and a grappling hook. It wears mining gear and Magic Tunnel Pants. They often come in groups of 1d6. They may carry a chunk of copper ore.
Dwarf: Strength: 4   Speed: 2   Stamina: 4   Skillz: 3
Goblin: Strength: 3   Speed: 4   Stamina: 3   Skillz: 3

Dwarf/Goblin Warrior
A dwarf or a goblin dressed for war. It carries a weapon of some sort, wears either Chain Armor or Plate Armor, and is wearing one of the more military types of Magic Pants. It carries food, and comes in groups of 1d6.
Dwarf: Strength: 4   Speed: 2   Stamina: 4   Skillz: 3
Goblin: Strength: 3   Speed: 4   Stamina: 3   Skillz: 3

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ADVANCEMENT

Tunnel Wars is not a game of skilled, heroic warriors taking on armies singlepantsedly. It is a game of short people in metal pants shooting lightning at each other.

Nevertheless, it is possible for characters in Tunnel Wars to advance in status. When a character has defeated 10 foes (as a group or individually), they may add a point to one of their attributes.

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AFTERWORD

This was my first attempt at writing a 24-hour RPG, and I started the challenge 7:24PM, Monday, June 29, 2009. It didn't take too long to decide that I wanted to make a game about subterranean fighting, and the phrase "magic pants," the topic chosen for this game, seemed to fit well. Having Keeton as a required NPC turned out to be a big help, since it gave me a character to put in the backstory, as well as a character to name the goblin currency after. The dwarf currency is a reference to the game *Dwarf Fortress,* where Urist is a common dwarf name.

The Nalonal is actually an anagram of an in-joke, but it also fills the game's need for a screaming incoherent idiot wearing a mask.

I can't really remember why I decided that magic pants should be made of copper. It had something to do with that fantasy trope of upgrading weapons, with weapons made of copper usually being low on the chain.

I worked on writing this and drawing some of those crude little MSPaint drawings from the start time to about 1:00 AM. I thought they would fit well with the game's concept. The next day was spent proofreading.

Overall, I consider my game a success. I had fun writing it, and it gave me a chance to use the phrase "Kinetic Blast Pants." I'm definitely planning to take part in future 24-hour RPG events. It's fun to write these, and there's always a chance that I can entertain someone who reads or plays one of my games. It's unlikely, but the chance of it is worth it.

I recommend that anyone who hasn't tried writing a 24 Hour RPG yet give it a shot, whether they can get it in an official contest or not; it's a great experience.

If you have any suggestions, ideas, or death threats, email me at inaluct@gmail.com.

Tunnel Wars Character Sheet

Character Name:_____   Race:_____

Player Name:_____

Strength ___
Speed   ___
Stamina ___
Skillz   ___

Pants:

Ability:	Power:

Melee Weapon: _____

    Accuracy:_____   Damage:_____

Non-Pants Armor:_____

    Protection:_____   Weight:_____

Inventory: Item Weight

1._____   _____

2._____   _____

3._____   _____

4._____   _____

5._____   _____

6._____   _____