

Diary of a Skull Soldier

A short game. Probably around 20 to 30 minutes. If this were a drink, it'd be dry and bitter.

Listing 'how to do things' inexplicably before there's a situation to do them in, in order to keep up RPG design tradition. And since went and slashed out having a char gen...better make up to the RPG gods somehows...

'Doing things'

You cannot change anything, now, in the instant. You kick a garbage can over, someone will right it, put back it's contents, sooner or latter. That or if no one does, it probably means there are no humans there no more. There will be no resolving moment where a villain who represents all that is problematic and upon which all problems hinge, is murdered for a brighter future. There is no lynch pin. There is only human inertia. Like riding a shopping trolley down a hill, maybe you can kick and it'll drift the other way a little. That's what you get. No hero's with shining, perfect teeth making things better simply out of being alpha male or alpha female.

Further, you try to do anything about the world of the skull soldier, your person will start to take on what the worries of the skull soldier, as outlined in his diary. They are called marks.

To do something, roll percentile
1-70% fails

1-60% - as well as failing to accomplish your goal, you've taken on a 7/10 strength mark of the skull soldier, related to the area he describes in his diary and what your doing. What are his concerns, the elements of his perspective. The ones tied to what you tried to change or do. That's the name of your mark and what it's about.

71-90% - you also taken on a 3/10 strength mark of the skull soldier. See above to determine it's details.

Don't worry about not retrying 'because it doesn't feel right to just try the same thing again'. It's a rule you've made up - it doesn't exist here. There's no piety in following rules that aren't there. The GM will give the nod to move on after roughly 10 rolls total or so, anyway.

And that's it. No myriad skill point allocation system so as to appear to grant complexity and meaning, as if that grants some sort of build up to the same eventual thing.

Note: Your not actually 'doing' anything. Sometimes I think everyone knows this, sometimes I think everyone genuinely believes that they are interreacting with fiction. People will say they know they aren't doing something, then insist that 'it's obvious my character could grab the peaches, he's standing right there!' or such. I could go into it, but this note is just here to avoid passively encouraging the latter.

Marks

What are marks?

They are there, with their attendant strength, to make you wonder what they are.

Actually Playing

Choose a skull soldier diary entry at random and lay it down so everyone can read it at once, like everyones reading someone elses newspaper over their shoulder.

Where the skull soldier talks about, you are. Someones a GM. They will elaborate. They always do. You happen to wear a suit of light exoskeletal armour. Sadly the outer support mechanisms are reminiscent of a skeleton, and you suspect the influence of a sub group named psych ops aimed for this. You happen to have gone through several months or years of training in areas called military camps. If a 'soldier' is what your person has come to identify themselves as or not, up to your depiction. This group that calls

themselves a military, whether they call these things skull suits or those like you, skull soldiers, is however it pans out in play - you don't need to decide in advance.

Your at the scene, from some sort of vector or angle. Maybe you don't care. Maybe it'll just pass and you'll shrug, like a cross between a bored 7/11 clerk and a heavily armed and armoured...clerk. That's okay, that's part of play as well.

After elaborating, the GM keeps things pattering along with extra details every so often. If things are quiet after a minute or two, move on to a new diary entry. Also move onto a new entry after about 10 rolls in total from everyone. If people are pushing for more, treat it like a horse your trying to reign in - you don't demand it stop instantly like a machine. But you reign in after the ten, like a compromise. Or maybe the two minutes will pass and you don't have to worry about this.

You do two out of three of the skull soldiers diary entries this way. If you ever find yourself reading the third - HA! Hooked ya!

Entry 1

People. With skins that are dark. So many of them, in their mud hut, or little dwellings on stilts. There's something damning being amongst them - on a radar maybe they'd be a blip. Just variables. But here, maybe you hear one laugh whole heartedly and you feel the edge of your mouth twitch toward a smile, beneath the helmet. Then they see you, skull suit and all, and they stop laughing. Maybe usher their children inside. That's how I show on their radar, I guess. I troop past. It's funny how they laugh, joyful, or just let any emotion out, when their exposed as hell. Multiple vectors to rolling in here and crushing their village, crushing life as they know it. Maybe they let their emotion out because of that - live life for today. Scientists say were supposed to be down to 2K once, long time ago. Just 2K. Extinguish that and that'd be it for another species. The brink. So why not live life for today? Thousands of years on from then, even. But living it for now, it'll never change - their village is still gunna be exposed as hell tomorrow, and the next day. Too busy living their own life to see how the other guy is going to live his. Other guy in a skull suit.

Entry 2

There's something about adrenaline - either makes everything seem to fit into place and every deed, every flesh rendered, is right, cause if it's not right the world is a slate of misery. One or the other. Ran an operation in [censored] today, clearing out insurgents. Bob can't stop reminding everyone of the 40mm he put behind some bunkers, only to see a severed forearm spinning through the air. Keeps making high five jokes. I feel a laugh work its way up to my face. The insurgents were nestled in deep into the town. Really what's the difference between them and the rest of the towns people? Wear the same clothes, eat the same food, sleep in the same beds. What's the difference except some have some part in their head that has decided against us? And any of them could do that - any second any one of them could switch and come gunning for us. It's one decision away. It's always one decision away. We try and paint borders, flatter ourselves with divides, as if theres a space between one deed and another. Mind you, am I ever gunna turn on my fellow skullies? Nah. Maybe there is a space. A divide. Now Bob's in here, trying to tell me that joke again. He's starting to piss me off. And the towns people - they are afraid of us. They wont change. Nah, I flatter us, they aren't afraid of us like were humans - they are afraid of us like were a storm. We tore through their town, wrecked several blocks, don't know what the 'co-lateral damage' tabs are (who ever really knows??). Were a storm to them, like a law of nature - they just try to ride us out. You don't fight storms. You can't. They keep seeing us that way, it's more than a decision away.

Entry 3

IED. It's the sort of weapon you'd imagine a stingy bean counting corporate type to make. No fight, no glory. Just chew up men more cheaply than the other guy. You hear about them, then it's your own team that gets hit. Your guys, spread out on the sand, and just hills, dark hills looking down on you, with some son of a bitch out there in them with a mobile phone. And all you've got is to pick yourselves up, following procedure best you can. That's your fight, picking up after yourselves. Not falling into the dirt and just staying there, or running screaming into the desert. That's the fight - picking up. We did, we [censored.....]. I'll never forget them. Or maybe next time it'll kill me - then I guess

I will forget, for being dead.