GAME EXPANSION

PANDORA WITH BRAINS

The Specimens As Player Roles

by Ted Woods and David Ritchie

I have an intuitive feeling that this form of Pandora may turn out to be the most popular of all — the sides are so clearly drawn, the victory conditions so primal. Who amongst us hasn’t at one time or another wished to be an all powerful monster, stalking the puny humans in the shadowy claustrophobic confines of a death-trap space ship? Isn’t being a source of terror a greater thrill than being its victim? — RAS

A game, like a novel, tends to develop a life of its own, exclusive of the intentions of its designer or developer. Regardless of what the designer is trying to say or how the developer is trying to say it, the game will inevitably wander down many a shadowy dead end and explore any number of obscure corners during its developmental existence. Part of being a developer is (hopefully) knowing when to let the game “find its own way” and when to cut a bit of extraneous fluff. If the developer guesses right, he usually ends up with a clean “player” dressed in just enough chrome so that it retains the players’ interest. If he guesses wrong, he may end up with a game that is so streamlined as to be barren, or with an ornate monstrosity that only a parent could love. The milestones marking the degree of success or failure are manuscript pages filled with notes on all those great ideas that never made it into the finished game.

In the case of SPI’s Ares #2 game, The Wreck of the Pandora, not a week went by when the ever-inventive members of the Munchkin Brigade who were testing the thing did not come up with some new bit of optional insanity. Many of these ideas were actually quite good, but they simply did not fit into an 8-page rules format. Others were 180° opposed to the design concept. Pandora was supposed to be a solitaire game first, and a two-player or multi-player game second, and had been designed accordingly. It was also designed primarily for team play in a semi-cooperative setting. The idea of a standard two-player competitive game was outside the scope of the project. Yet, it was exactly this idea that kept creeping into play (and into the testers’ suggestions). So...

The rules that follow are designed for use in a two-player game of Pandora in which one player plays the crew members and the other player takes on the role of one of the escaped specimens in a battle for control of the ship. A number of the sections below can be plugged into the existing game even if players do not wish to play out the scenario provided. They follow the same format as the original Pandora rules for easy reference.

[17.0] Placing Hull Breaches (Optional)

COMMENTARY:
Early in testing, somebody got the bright idea of placing hull breaches around the ship during the initial set-up. The appeal of that idea was not sufficient to balance out the dirt it added to the game, but some of the situations that result when this rule is used are quite interesting.

First Player must roll for hull breaches before the start of the game. If the First Player must roll for hull breaches one or more times, he consults the Breach Location Table (17.3) and rolls two dice for each possible breach (maximum of 2). By indexing the first die with the second die on the Breach Location Table, he determines the location of any breaches at the start of the game. He then places a Hull Breach Marker in each space (Pod or Tube) on the Ship Display where the Breach Location Table indicates that a breach has occurred. Once all Hull Breach Markers (if any) are in place, play may commence.

CASES:
[17.1] A Hull Breach Marker may not be placed initially in a space containing a Crew Member or in a space which would prevent a Crew Member from exiting the deck he currently occupies.

If such a situation arises as a result of a roll on the Breach Location Table, the Hull Breach Marker is not placed and the First Player must roll again on the Breach Location Table until he gets a result which is possible without violating this rule.

[17.2] Hull Breach Table

GENERAL RULE:
As part of the initial set-up of the game, after all crew members have been placed on the map and the order of movement has been determined (see 1.0), the First Player determines the number and location of hull breaches according to the procedure below.

PROCEDURE:
The First Player rolls 1 die and indexes the resulting number with the number of Players in the game as shown on the Hull Breach Table (17.2). The resulting number is the number of times the...
[18.0] Sealing Locks (Optional)

COMMENTARY:
A continuing refrain on the part of testers was “what do I do when Mother, Typhoo and Grendel are all three following me around and I can’t seem to shake them?” One suggestion was that Crew Members be allowed to seal Locks behind them to keep the specimens out of the way. Unfortunately, that tended to make it too easy in a test conducted by the developer. As it turned out, the developer made a snap judgment based on that one test and was wrong. Subsequent testing indicated that a few modifications in the mechanic suggested made it a valuable tactic without giving the Players a “lock” on the game, so to speak. By then, however, the game was in the can and it was too late to change the rules.

GENERAL RULE:
Crew Members (only) may seal a Lock through which they move during their Movement Phase. After moving through a Lock, the Crew Member’s Player rolls the dice to determine if he successfully seals the Lock behind him. A Crew Member cannot seal a Lock which he has not moved through in that Movement Phase. A Crew Member cannot seal a Lock during a Movement Phase in which he used Hasty Movement.

PROCEDURE:
If the Crew Member’s actions during a Movement Phase could not cause one or more specimens or berserk bots to react by following him through a particular Lock, he may attempt to seal that Lock. On a roll of 1-3, the Lock is sealed. On a roll of 4-6, the Crew Member is unable to seal the Lock in time, and any specimens or berserk bots that react by following the Crew Member through that Lock during the ensuing Reaction Phase only to determine if they attack him in addition to following him through the Lock. All reactions except a Move-Kill are ignored and treated as a simple Move Reaction.

CASES:
[18.1] A sealed Lock is impassable unless “forced.”
All Locks have a nominal Shield Rating of 8. Any specimen or bot which would have to pass through a sealed Lock as part of its reaction must either force the Lock or remain stationary. Only specimens with an intelligence of 5 or greater may attempt to force a sealed Lock. Bots may always attempt to do so. The specimen or bot attempting to force the Lock “attacks” the sealed Lock as if it were a Crew Member (more than one specimen or bot can attack at the same time) and any successful attack (i.e., one resulting in damage) forces the Lock and allows the specimen or bot to pass through it. Once forced, the Lock opens and closes automatically as it did prior to being sealed. It may not be sealed again.

[18.2] Locks leading into spaces containing Hull Breach Markers may not be forced.

[18.3] Crew Members may automatically unseal a sealed Lock by moving through it.

This action requires no die roll and involves no delay in movement. The Lock may be resealed afterwards using the procedures outlined in this section. If not resealed, the Lock will continue to open at the approach of any Crew Member, bot, or specimen.

[19.0] Special Crew Attributes

COMMENTARY:
Strangely enough, the question didn’t really arise in testing, but afterwards a number of people wondered why all of the Crew Members (regardless of their position and, presumably, their talents and training) had the same basic attributes. Neema Strof, for example, could have exactly the same Repair as L.J. Gepidus, despite the fact that Gepidus, as SO, could be expected to know more about systems functioning (or even bot functioning) than Strof. The point is, of course, well taken — even more so when one realizes that the system included in this section takes very little play time to implement.

GENERAL RULE:
Each Crew Member’s Player may select one special ability for that Crew Member from those listed on the Special Crew Abilities Table (see 19.1). Only those abilities listed opposite each Crew Member’s name on the Special Crew Abilities Table may be chosen for that Crew Member.

PROCEDURE:
After assigning all attributes to the Crew Members as outlined in 4.0, the Players individually (and in secret) assign to their Crew Member any one special ability from among those listed for that Crew Member. The nature of each ability is described in 19.2. The Crew Member is then considered to possess this ability throughout the game. The nature of the ability chosen is not revealed until it is actually used in play.

CASES:
[19.1] Special Crew Abilities Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crew Member</th>
<th>Special Abilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neema Strof, CO</td>
<td>D, E, F, G, M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. J. Gepidus, SO</td>
<td>A, B, C, D, J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Najeb Kelly, MO</td>
<td>A, C, E, F, L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bint Skraaling, GSO</td>
<td>G, H, K, M, N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hesiod Charybdis, BIO</td>
<td>B, I, J, L, N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[19.2] The following special abilities are represented by the alphabetical code opposite each Crew Member’s name in 19.1:

A: May increase Repair by 1 when attempting to repair CompPod, CompComm., or CompKit.
B: May increase Repair by 1 when attempting to repair MedPod, MedKit, or Crew.
C: May increase Repair by 1 when attempting to repair all Bots.
D: May increase Repair by 1 when attempting to repair any Major System (Power, Envio, Comp, Con, or Nav).
E: May increase Repair by 1 when attempting to repair all Weapons or Rigs.
F: May increase Impair by 1 for all purposes.
G: May increase Shield by 1 for all purposes.
H: May use Crew Member’s own Impair Rating (tripled in Stun Mode i.e., as if armed with a Weapon with a Stun capacity).
I: May automatically recover from Stun during the first Stun Recovery Phase after having been stunned.
J: May subtract 2 from Aggression of any specimen when making a Reaction Check.
K: May subtract 2 from specimen’s Shield for purposes of Stun Recovery if the specimen was stunned as a direct result of one’s actions (not action by Bots).
L: May increase Port by 2.
M: May increase Speed by 2.
N: May Remote Survey Pod from any other Pod (if one possesses the appropriate Pod Marker).

[20.0] The Specimens Strike Back (Scenario)

COMMENTARY:
Almost from the first, someone wanted to play the specimens against the crew. It was an attractive idea, but not really in line with the design concept of the game. Here, we do not labor under such constraints.

GENERAL RULE:
This scenario is designed for two Players, only. One Player takes on the role of 1 to 5 Crew Members (his choice) while the second Player takes on the role of one of the specimens (blindly drawn from an opaque container at the start of the game). The First Player is called the Crew Player. The Second Player is called the Specimen Player. The two Players fully control the individual Specimen or Crew Members on their side. The specimen controlled by the Specimen Player is considered to be an Active Specimen; that is, he is possessed of the same Intelligence as Crew Members and may move and act in any way as a Crew Member.

PROCEDURE:
At the beginning of the game, all attributes of the Active Specimen are generated as described in 4.2 with the following exceptions:
1. Neither Intelligence nor Aggression is rolled for. The Active Specimen is presumed to be intelligent, and his actions and reactions are controlled by the Player.
2. All Active Specimen attributes are rolled immediately before the start of the game (not when used as described in 4.2).
3. The specimen’s Intelligence modifier is used to modify a die roll which is used to determine the specimen’s Repair. In addition, 2 is subtracted from the die roll. Modified die rolls of less than 1 are treated as 1.

After the specimen’s attributes have been generated, the Specimen Player chooses one special ability for the specimen from the Special Specimen Abilities Table (20.2). All attributes and abilities are chosen secretly by both Players. Once the Players have determined their characters’ attributes and abilities, the characters are placed on the map as described in 1.1 and play may commence. All rules from Sections 1.0 through 21.0 are employed in this scenario.
CASES:

[20.1] The Active Specimen is treated in all ways as a Crew Member.

The order in which the Crew Members move is determined normally, but the Active Specimen is treated as a Crew Member. This means that there are up to 6 Player-Turns possible with the Crew Player executing up to 5 of these individual turns. Active Specimens may attack Crew Members (and vice versa), may repair and use Pods, Tools, control Bots, etc., and generally function as Crew Members.

[20.2] Special Specimen Abilities Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specimen</th>
<th>Special Abilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>B, D, K, L, M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mouse</td>
<td>E, F, G, K, O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grendel</td>
<td>A, B, H, J, O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golem</td>
<td>H, J, M, O, Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typhoo</td>
<td>A, L, P, Q, B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shazam</td>
<td>A, H, I, K, O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>C, D, E, L, O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind Pig</td>
<td>A, H, J, M, N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fletcher</td>
<td>C, E, J, L, N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrod</td>
<td>B, G, K, M, N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[20.3] The following special abilities are represented by the alphabetical code opposite each specimen's name in 20.3.

A: May increase Impair by 2 for all purposes.
B: May increase Shield by 2 for all purposes.
C: May increase Repair by 1 when attempting to repair all Kits.
D: May increase Repair by 1 when attempting to repair any Major System.
E: May increase Repair by 1 when attempting to repair all Kits.
F: May increase Repair by 1 when attempting to repair any Weapon, Rig.
G: May increase Repair by 2 when attempting to repair any Pod other than a Major System.
H: May automatically recover from Stun during the first Stun Recovery Phase after having been stunned.
I: May increase Speed by 2.
J: May increase Port by 2.
K: Can survive in vacuum (space containing a Hull Breach or Open Lock Marker) without damage.
L: Empath. Can control the actions of any other specimen in the same space as if that specimen were a Bot so long as the combined Intelligence and Aggression of the specimen being controlled is 12 or less.
M: Alien Disease. Contact between the Active Specimen and any other specimen or Crew Member in the same space leads to a loss to Stamina (or Shield) for the other specimen or the Crew Member of 1 per Game-Turn. Beginning 6 turns after the contact between the two figures, the stricken Crew Member or specimen removes 1 from the appropriate attribute at the beginning of each turn until dead or until a repair attempt leads to an increase of 1 or more to Stamina (or Shield) of the character. A stricken figure does not infect others.
N: May use specimen's own Impair Rating in Stun Mode.
O: Specimen moves 3 spaces when using Hasty Movement.
P: Electrical Field. May increase Repair by 2 when attacking Bots.
Q: Fear. All Crew Members or specimens in the same space at the beginning of a Reaction must roll their own Reaction out of the space.
R: Vision. A Crew Member or specimen in the same space as if that specimen were a Bot so long as the combined Intelligence and Aggression of the specimen being controlled is 12 or less.
S: May increase Port by 2.
T: Can control the actions of any other specimen in the same space as if that specimen were a Bot so long as the combined Intelligence and Aggression of the specimen being controlled is 12 or less.


Additionally, all Crew Members must be dead or restrained (in the same manner and according to the same rules as for specimens) in order for the Specimen Player to win, and the Active Specimen must be dead or restrained for the Crew Player to win. Exception: See 20.7.

[20.5] The Players may choose to keep any knowledge secret from one another in this scenario.

By mutual agreement, the Players may keep the nature of all Pods secret and need not reveal the nature or number of tools in each other's possession. When this option is used, the map should be machine-copied and all information normally recorded by markers should be written on the machine copy in pencil. The progress of the ship toward Cold Shutdown is always recorded on the Display.

[20.6] If more than one Crew Member is present at the beginning of the scenario, the Specimen Player may attempt to select a second special ability for the Active Specimen.

The Specimen Player secretly rolls a die and adds to the resulting number the number of Crew Members his opponent is using. If the result is greater than 6, the Specimen Player may choose one additional special ability.

[20.7] Typhoo, Shazam, and the Blind Pig win the game by slaying all Crew Members.

They need not re-establish control of the ship, seal Hull Breaches, or Restart Major Systems. They can win even if they, themselves, die in the process of killing the crew. However, they subtract 3 (not 2) from their Repair, and they cannot seal Locks, use the Scapecraft, Restart the ship, or use Tools or Pods. They can further damage equipment by attempting to repair it.

[20.8] Specimens cannot use Rigs.

Workshop-Talk (continued from page 30)

MM: Right. I have a philosophy I call counter-dynamics. If I have twenty units which are all the same, I'll go back — especially in an historical game — go back and look at them and find the worst one and downgrade it for some reason. And I will find the best one, and upgrade it, so that these units are not totally inter-changeable anymore. It makes people pay more attention to the units they have under their finger-tips. Yet that is very simple — rather than rating each individual unit on a very specific basis and giving them all characteristics that differ.

GC: Who do you see, other than yourself, as being the best active designers?

MM: It would have to be Frank Chadwick. Notwithstanding the fact that he is my partner, and that he and I work together a lot. I'm amazed at his ability to design systems. I can walk into his office with a piece of paper and say, "Look, Frank, I'm doing something." And he'll say, "You know, you can do this with that." Just off the top of his head he can spout full-blown systems. I think he's really an unsung hero. Perfidious Albion has been listing him as having won the Hall of Fame last year, although he did not. He's been trying to figure out how to quash that rumor without destroying his own ego.

GC: What do you think is the role of the conventions in the hobby, and do you think they're going to play an important part in the future?

MM: I think Avalon Hill took a really great step by setting up Origins. Before then there was really nothing to bring the companies together. Right now any company that doesn't show up at Origins is really left out in the cold. Conventions are a lot of fun for the people who go. I make about five conventions a year; but in my mind, the real benefit has to be for the professional designer, because we can get together at the cons and get to know each other and get to understand each other. That's what I see as the real value.

GC: What do you see as the role of the Game Designers' Guild?

MM: The Game Designers' Guild is in a really difficult spot, because it really isn't getting the support it needs from Avalon Hill and SPI. Until it does, it's got a hard road to follow. On the other hand, most of the other designers are owner-operators — they own their own companies, or they work very closely with their companies, instead of being like novelists who go to a publisher to see if they can get published. The Guild is currently in an adversary position with Avalon Hill and SPI. I think that's going to have to end. Unless the Guild gets awfully powerful, awfully quick, it's not going to make anybody toe the line for Guild policy. The Guild has to become more cooperative. But with the population base the Guild has now, with all the designers it can get hold of and talks to every three months, I think it's entirely possible that it can become less of an adversary and more of an important group within the hobby.

GC: What do you see as its purpose, then? What should the Guild be doing?

MM: Very strictly, I think it should be representing designers and designers' interests. I don't know that we're going to be able to force anyone to pay us better salaries. As a result, we're going to have to be a little more soft-spoken. But I think that the Guild can play an important role in letting designers know what they can get as opposed to what they have been getting. It's also important in letting designers know what's going on. Right now, the only place they find out is at Origins.