

## eXpendables

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Mankind had reached the stars, and begun to spread.

In 2369, a carrier-class deep space survey ship, the Rosenberg, was found drifting aimlessly on the edge of explored space -- whole, but unresponsive to hails. Main safety protocol was enacted and a small team of Expendables aboard a shuttle-class ship, the Xeres, was called in to dock with the Rosenberg, board it, and determine the situation on-board.

Most of the boarding team was killed fighting their way to the bridge, but before contact was completely lost with the team's survivors, the Expendables managed to transfer the Rosenberg's datafiles to the crew aboard their heavy-escort craft, the Darius' Pride. Reconstruction of the data by teams aboard the Pride revealed that the Rosenberg's crew had mutated into dangerous, animalistic predators one by one.

Facing an apparently highly contagious but unknown agent from an unknown source, the Xeres' escort enacted level V incineration safety protocols and burned both the Rosenberg and Xeres, and all aboard, into atomic dust to contain any possible spread of the incident.

The Expendables had once again lived up to their name.

The anomaly was recorded as a mutagenic phage incident and forgotten in the annals of history...for a time. The Rosenberg anomaly was not to be the last such incident to occur, however.

Five years later, in 2374, all contact was lost with deep space colony Pegasi 23a, located in the same sector the Rosenberg had been found drifting. When a team of Expendables was sent in to investigate the loss of contact, they found another incidence of mutagenic phage sweeping the planet. The colony was scoured from existence by orbital fire-bombs and warning beacons were set around the system: Pegasi 23a was a dead plague-world and off-limits. All routes to and from the planet were erased from the galactic database.

The fate of the Expendables sent in to investigate the incident? Need I even explain?

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Expendables are skilled convicts serving out their sentences by performing highly dangerous missions in return for the Galactic Republic commutating their sentence. The unfortunate truth is that Expendables rarely survive long enough to benefit from this commutation, but those who choose this course do so because the short life of an Expendable is of better quality than any length of life in prison and for the chance at an early parole (if they survive that long).

Very few petty criminals ever take on the role of an Expendable because the chance at freedom and likelihood of death when compared to their total sentence is not worth it; instead, most Expendables are hardened criminals looking at extensive sentences that would otherwise be served out in brutal prison camps for a lifetime or more.

Expendables take five-year service commitments to the program. 1 in 10 does not survive that time.

At the end of their service, should they survive, their record is cleared and their time is considered served. They are allowed to return to society as a full citizen of the Galactic Republic and are given a soldier's pension. Expendables who die in the line of duty can expect any immediate family to be adequately compensated for services rendered.

It should be noted that of those criminals who survive the service, few return to criminal activity. Most are hired by the Republic to serve as part of crack military or intelligence teams.

## Rolling Dice

eXpendables uses a die pool system. You roll a number of d12s against an opponent, high numbers win. Ties are discarded. That is, find the highest (non-tying) roll, and count the number of his dice that show numbers higher than his opponent.

Here's the point of rolls in this game: rolls are only made when physical violence or injury is going to happen if the roll doesn't succeed (or whether or not it does, as in the case of two individuals firing weapons at each other), because we're talking about violent, brutal people doing violent, brutal things and just trying to survive, so there's no reason to roll for anything else. When you fail a roll, when you lose a roll, things blow up, people start bleeding, and fists and bullets fly -- sometimes, that all happens whether or not you lose.

In the case of ties, both individuals "win", meaning that injuries happen to both parties involved in the conflict, but the rules for that are discussed in full below.

If one fails a conflict and doesn't like that result, one can Increase the Stakes. This means a reroll, but it means a reroll at a cumulative penalty of 1 die. One can Increase the Stakes as many times as one wishes.

## Creating an eXpendable

The first and most important part of your character is whether or not he is guilty or innocent of the crime for which he (or she) is serving time. This affects everything else about him, his relationships with other characters, and their relationship with him.

What crime were you accused of? Did you do it?

There are three types of characters in eXpendable: Innocents, the Guilty, and Repentents. Starting off as an Innocent and maintaining that throughout the game is a true feat.

## Guilt and Innocence

Heroes don't do bad things and remain heroes. Being a hero requires tough choices, choices that can damn your soul or lose you your life. Die a martyr, or live.

If you're guilty, you're guilty: there's no way to become innocent. But if you're innocent, you can become guilty. If you're innocent, you have to ask yourself: what are you willing to do to others and for what reasons? What are you willing to become guilty of, or can you excuse yourself and for how long?

*"Ketch and Grav scuffled, the two men throwing each other around like ragdolls, until Ketch slammed the brute into the hard concrete floor and managed to grab the pistol. Grav, lying on his back on the floor with the pistol pointed at him raised his hands in surrender, 'Alright, you sonofabitch, I give.' Grav had betrayed them, would do so again, had no concern for the rest of the team. He'd killed Arcis in cold blood and smashed that android unit for no good reason except to watch it scream and short out...and all the girls he'd raped and killed...Ketch pulled the trigger."*

The more Guilt you have, the closer you get to being the one who dies when the shit hits the fan. The benefit of being Guilty? You're harder to kill and overall tougher. Note, however, that guilt does not entail *feeling* guilty. The Guilty are unrepentant and simply don't care about what they do. They keep doing what they always do and do it without remorse. It's when you grow a conscience that things like guilt and innocence start to matter to the character.

Mechanically, however, Guilt leads to death, but repenting can save you.

Ideas for what creates guilt and innocence should be decided by the group, but given the nature of the

game, these ideas should remain standard: Killing another human being always creates Guilt. Stealing creates Guilt. Greed creates Guilt. Abandoning others to die creates guilt. Mercy is a trait of Innocence; there is no such thing as Righteous Justice. Trust is a trait of Innocence; you do not gain Guilt from being Cautious, but you don't gain Repentance, either. Defending another is a trait of Innocence.

An Innocent interacting with a Guilty has one less die to use, because they're less willing to do the things the Guilty would. They haven't crossed that line, so the Guilty gets a bonus, because -- psychologically -- he's the bigger bitch in the pen. Of course, the Guilty also gets his come-uppance sooner.

BTW, you don't gain points of Guilt for performing actions of Guilt. Guilty is guilty. You can only gain Repentance. However, note that one act of Guilt removes all the Repentance you might have earned up to that point.

### **Skillz**

What sorts of skills do you have? That is, why would the government want you in the eXpendables program?

Are you a Hacker? Doctor? Inventor? Grunt? (hey, they need canon fodder, too -- big, strong, dumb, and violent isn't a bad thing in their line of work)

What else were you? Father? Priest? Dock Worker? Marine? Scientist? What was your day job?

Here are some reasons the government might want you: Communications (Tech), Electronics (Tech), Computers (Tech), Pilot (Tech), Medicine (Med), First Aid (Med), Drugs (Med), Biology (Med), Heavy Weapons (Tac), Knives (Tac), Firearms (Tac), Tactics (Tac), Communications (Per), Psychology (Per), Negotiation (Per)

Take an eXpendable skill, give it 3 dice. Take another skill related to what you were rather than what you were wanted for, give it 2 dice. You may take up to three other skills with 1 die ratings. You can add skill dice to any rolls you make as long as the skill is relevant to the outcome of the conflict.

### **Attributes**

These are what define your character's abilities, mental, physical and otherwise. Attributes are rated in number of dice, from 2 to 5. You gain bonus dice from a high skill. You get to assign one attribute 2, one attribute 3, one attribute 4 and one attribute 5. Any time you roll, one of these applies.

**Movement:** Getting away from stuff, running, used for withdrawl tactics and so forth.

**Stamina:** Strength, physiscal wherewithal, overall buffness -- how much time you spent in the pen's weightroom.

**Clarity:** Keeps you from being confused, outtalked, outmanuevered, and terrified.

**Smarts:** The brainiac category, used for tactical planning, tech stuff, and repeating sections of the Encyclopedia Galactica.

Here's the thing: you don't have to use the same attribute your opponent is using, unless the situation calls for it. You can out-think the brute who is trying to pummel you and roll Smarts when he's rolling Stamina.

### **Mechanics**

When making opposed rolls, you lose dice from your Attributes equal to the number of losses you suffer. Yep, this means big wounds are fairly standard, and death comes pretty quick without something to mitigate it. Injury can happen to any attribute, and this is real injury: broken leg, gunshot wounds, shock and trauma, psychotic breaks. There is no rest and heal a certain amount of wounds overnight. Like hell. It

takes weeks to heal wounds.

Medics, however, can treat you and reduce the number of injuries done to you, but not past one. They're healers, not magicians. This is a typical opposed roll, which determines whether the treatment is successful.

You can use Guilt to force a reroll of *any* conflict. You can only reroll a specific Conflict ONCE, but you can do it for any Conflict you are involved in if you don't like the outcome.

You can use Repentance to get extra dice to roll or drop losses. You can't turn a failure into a success, but you can make it negligible. Zero losses means you fail but don't suffer any injuries. Repentance doesn't "go away", you have it to use again later.

When rolling and tying your opponent, you (and they) take penalties equal to the other's number of tying dice.

### **Fallout**

Guilt can be used for one other thing, you can make Fallout happen. That means the damage you would have taken from the Conflict affects someone else either nearby or whose situation is clearly linked to your success or failure at your task.

Note that neither Innocents nor the Guilty can be the victims of Fallout.

*"The wheels of the six-rig screamed on the metal. The alien horde was tearing through the armored roof with while Grav tried desperately to maneuver the six-rig to throw or scrape them off in the narrow corridors. His passengers slammed around, back and forth, shouting and cursing at him. Suddenly, one of the passengers was grabbed through a hole in the roof and dragged out screaming. A fanged face dropped onto the windshield. 'Damn it I'm going to die this way!' Grav screamed to himself and slammed on the accel. The six-rig leapt forward and tore through a narrow corridor, the metal screamed and showered sparks and the monsters were scraped off what remained of the hull."*

### **Equipment**

Equipment can grant bonuses to damage. Big, heavy guns in particular. You want these when fighting nasty, evil, horrible monsters or just well-armed rebels and etc. Equipment can have other effects, too, like reducing Movement, because massive hardware makes it more difficult to maneuver and such, and that can be just as bad.

Equipment is rated in dice. It can take damage instead of you, if you're lucky, and thus become less reliable or useful when damaged. Equipment takes damage -- locks up, gets smashed, kicked around, etc. -- if the player decides to move some of the damage off himself to the equipment instead, or if the opponent is attacking the equipment.

Examples: Heavy Gat: Bonus: 5 Reduces Movement: 3; Plasmer Pulse Rifle: Bonus: 4 Reduces Movement: 2

### **Sample Scenario Suggestions**

**Colonize:** A new world to carve humanity's footprint on, to test and report on. Survive and you can live there. Die, and your employers gain plenty of data to send a better equipped, better prepared team. Think wierd alien dinosaurs and savage, untamed wildernesses.

**Riot:** Riots have broken out on a prison world, and you're being sent in as damage control. Put the riots down and restore order in any way possible. Question is: do you do your job, or join up?

**Playing God:** You've been given a secessionist political target. Take them out by any means necessary. If

you are captured or killed, the government will disavow any knowledge of you or your actions.

**Seek-and-Destroy:** A deadly alien infestation has been discovered. If possible, resecuring the infested area is vital to galactic security. Otherwise, complete destruction will commence -- whether or not you live or die. Think "Aliens" (the second movie).