

THE ULTRAVIOLET GRASSLAND



THE BLACK CITY

2 / 8

a heavy metal rpg sandbox
for a group of blundering PCs visiting the depths of the Ultraviolet Grassland
in search of wealth and booty to pay back their adventuring loans.

For the OSR, the New Edition,
AND SUNDRY OTHER ROLE-PLAYING GAME SYSTEMS

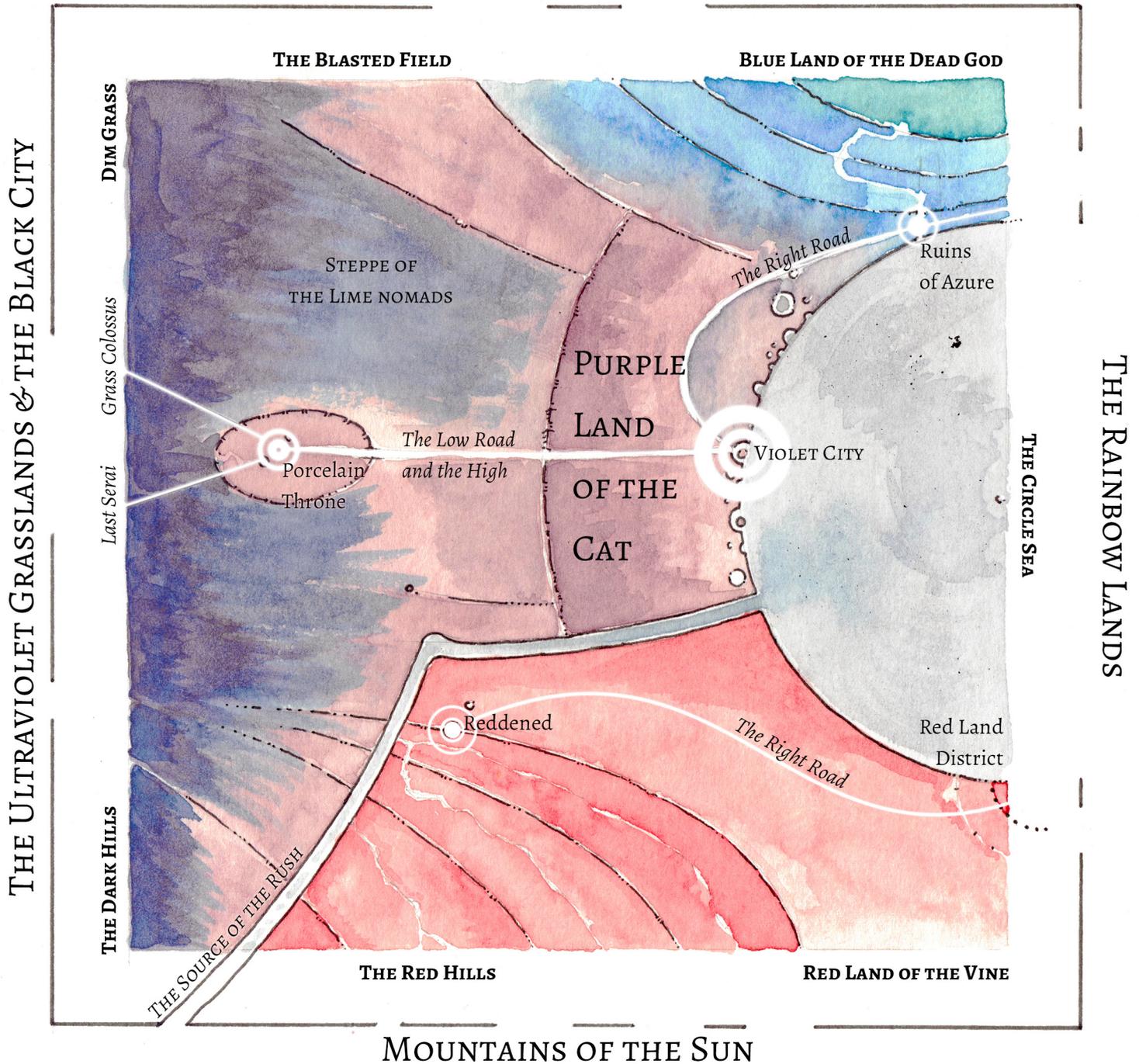
by

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a Patreon exotic

MOUNTAINS OF THE MOON



Who were those odd folks and gods that built the world? Who carved the Source and broke the hills? How did the Blue God die? What is at the heart of the Circle Sea? What blasted that blasted field?

Good citizens do not ask and Father-Mother of the Hammer and Cross does not tell.

The past sleeps in the Forgetting for good reason. But do the cats know or care? No, the violets are shameless. Corrupted by the Black City. Forbidding the Kinder Inquisition, digging into the Old Accounts. They hate the joy-liberty of Metropolis.

—*The Green Tourist: Lesser Lands of the Rainbow, vol.2*

A last eerie house

This is the end of the Road. Humanity's dominions wind down in the purple haze that wreathes the sunrises of this western reach. No roads, but caravans brave the Ultraviolet Grassland into the eternal sunset of the Black City. Porcelain Princes and Spectrum Satraps oversee great herds of biomechanical burdenbeasts that bring the odd fruits, the black light lotus, the indigo ivories, the rainbow silks, and the sanguine porcelains so popular among the meritocrats of the Rainbow Lands. Violent mechanisms take many voyagers, others are eaten by the vomes, but nobody talks of those lost to the ultras.

WEATHER: The sun rises through a violet haze, slowly, reluctant to give up the shimmering phantoms of predawn to the dusty day.

MISFORTUNE: Unlucky visitors picked up the (1) running blues, (2) tendril tapeworms, or (3) an infected sore on the muddy road through the Blue Lands. Others were (4) pick-pocketed, (5) fell in love with a swamp wisp, or simply (6) ruined their nice shoes in a deceptive bog.

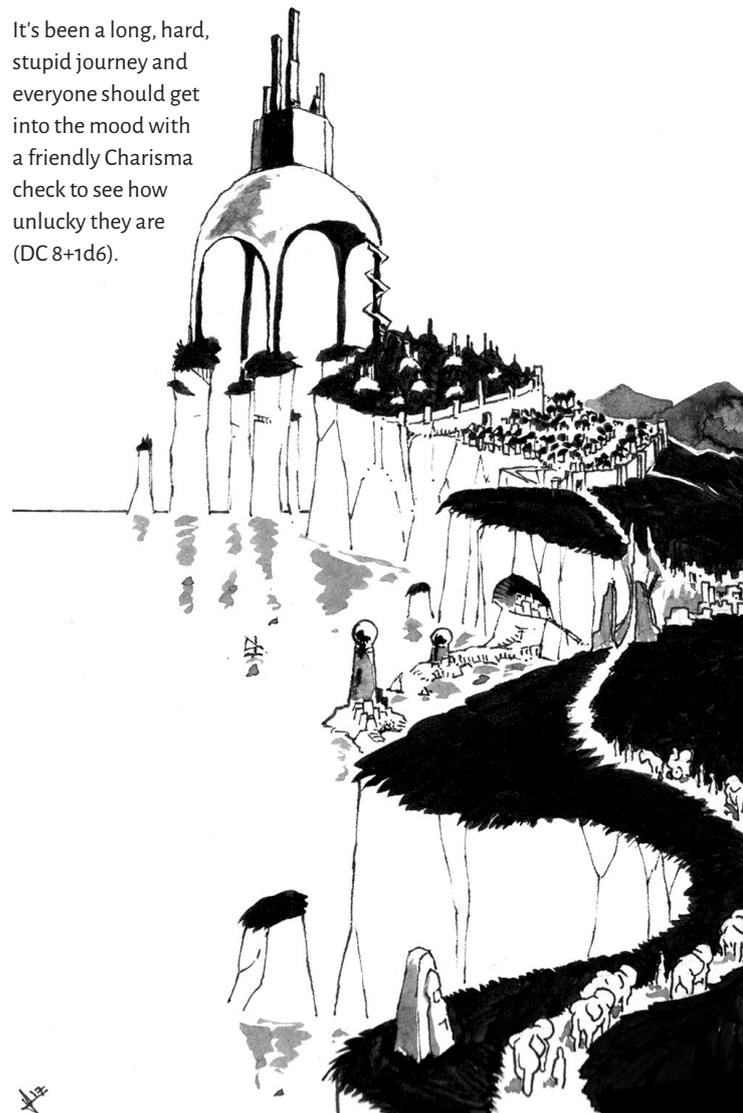
Where now, Brown Cow?

TOWNSHIP: administered by the Catlords of the Violet Citadel for the good of the no-good traveling strangers visiting their palace of knowledge, learning and sanctimony. (p.XX)

WEST: both the Low Road and the High are rutted jokes. Both lead to Porcelain Throne, the neutral hole at the edge of Viomech 5 territory. (p.XX)

OFF TRAIL: flocks of cat-eared sheep and the odd transplanted limey nomad clan makes this area of the UV Grassland relatively civil. (p.XX)

It's been a long, hard, stupid journey and everyone should get into the mood with a friendly Charisma check to see how unlucky they are (DC 8+1d6).





CATS, CATS, CATS

Cats are the priests of the Purple God(dess). The high magi of the University of the Citadel are changeling cat-people. They eat traveler babes. There are hidden horned rat masters who secretly dominate the cats. The cats have little, manipulative human hands.

Horned Cats silently monitor the townships around the Violet Citadel and all the townsfolk treat them with great kindness and respect. AC 13, HP 2 (1d4), +1 Claws 1, Powers: *Feline Telepathy, Ventriloquism*, Spells: *Enthrall Human*.

Black Cats are the silver-tongued mistresses of the townships, with serpents in their tails. AC 13, HP 2 (1d4), +5 Serpent 1, narcotic DC 10. Spells and abilities as horned cat.

Bad Cats are half-glass, walk through corners and curse with a purr. So they say.

Townships of the graceful cats

“*Soyez tranquil*,” murmurs the dead-eyed lady in P.T.’s mind. Horned cats creep from hazy alleys and examine their baggage. The citadel looms, eerie and obnoxious, beyond the haze layer. A black cat nods, the lady steps aside. The townships beckon and the party strides into the stall-strewn streets.

1. Green-blood shock-peddler Mencia pays for tales and pictures of the “Wonders of the West” (double exploration XP (e-xp) for well-written, illustrated accounts)
2. Woger de R.F.D., a reputable mustachioed free-merchant, is sending a free caravan of vampire wines and livingstone bricks to the Last Serai to trade directly with the Spectrum Satraps (200 XP and cash on safe arrival).
3. Natega the Kind sells original ointments, shoddy shoes and downright dangerous gear at reasonable prices, but her Red Cat meows *Charm Person* at travelers (her supplies are -1 on checks, but she won’t admit it).
4. A scared urchin runs into the street, shouting “a cat tried to worm into my mouth!” She will integrate into society and become a cat pet soon. Her name is Uda, for now.
5. A sunburned man with pink hair staggers out of an inn, cruelly stabbed, sprays crimson bubbles and groans “a behemoth’s pearl for dear Cubina.” He clutches a map to Behemoth’s Shell (advantage on encounter checks, *d6). If healed, his name is Vorgo and makes a shifty, cowardly, but loyally incompetent henchman. Who stabbed him? It was dark, he was drunk. (p.XX)
6. In Charming Square carriages cram into a meowing mob as confiscated traveler dogs are thrown into pit fights against trained sewer rats. Bookies take bets of up to 10 cash per bout (check Charisma to win). Saving a lucky dog costs 1d6 x 50 cash. Cheering the dogs draws glares from cat people.

CAROUSING, DRUGS AND EATERIES: fun for all ages. (p.XX)

SUPPLIES: and other nonsense. (p.XX)

Carousing violently

“*Voi, pâle-couleur, pren an-tour!*” shouts the tout in pasty Purple patois. Others chime in, mottled capes flutter, papier panels advertise “*the last partie before lanotte.*” Lips smack. The plebe churls crowd in to sell good time, forgetting or just a steppe-style rat sausage surprise. P.T. grins.

D12 VIOLET CITY CAROUSING MISHAPS

1. kicked out of town as a dirty dog. No xp and a *reputation*. Possibly also a case of canine cooties or lycanthropy.
2. the odd fruits were odder than usual. An extra (1) ear, (2) nose, (3) wrinkle, (4) pearl, (5) tentacle, (6) cat grows.
3. now addicted to *cat snip*. You're welcome. A weekly supply costs 50 cash. No cat snip = halved Charisma.
4. that cheap black light lotus? You now phosphoresce in ultraviolet light. UV creatures hit with advantage.
5. ingested a *magic cat spirit* and became a cat pet. Your hero becomes a henchman/familiar of your new character: a horned cat named **Twinklestar**.
6. got into a staring match with an eyebiter. Lost an eye.
7. found the anthropic fighting pits. Lost half hit points. Succeed in a Str save to win 1d4 x 100 cash.
8. acquired bananas. A whole cart of bananas and an ape.
9. mind blown. Permanently gain 1 Wisdom and a case of (1) the shakes, (2) demonic possession, (3) split personality, (4) fine wine, (5) corruption, (6) brain worm.
10. the bloody flux. Require double supplies (toilet paper). Con save to recover at the end of every week.
11. dreams of porcelain-faced shadows, a fear of the dark, a missing tooth and a straw doll of yourself.
12. wake with a bag of strangled cats drained of blood, a hundred ominous pieces of silver and a sense of foreboding. Hours later an (1) inn, (2) cat house, (3) opera shack, (4) general store, (5) political café, (6) mansion collapses in a whisper of necrotic decay.

CAD: 'Errie Tree, necroambulist and procurer of fine motile work-corpses for the CAT construction company. Loan shark to the corpse-in-making. Fancy a body-snatching gig?

Carousing was first invented by Jeff Rients of <http://jrients.blogspot.com/> and lets the Referee easily and simply separate heroes from their treasure. The system I use is similar:

(1) Hero blows 1d6 x 100 cash on a week of hard partying and gains that amount of xp.

(2) Rolling more cash/xp than the hero has available means a nasty debt to a local cad.

(3) In any case, the hero makes a Charisma save. On a fail, they roll on the Fun Fun Table.

Bonus: a critical success on the Charisma save lets the hero carouse harder and party away another 1d8 x 100 cash. A critical fail means an extra roll on the table.

Twinklestar is an ambitious sixteen year old cat seeking the *Rat Rod of Immor[t]ality*. Roll stats with an extra d6 for Dex and Int and a d6 less for Str and Con. Advance as wizard.

AC 13 (base), HD 1d4, keen smell, +2 claws 1.

Powers: *Feline Telepathy, Ventriloquism, Purr*
Spells: *Enthrall Human, Hold Portal*.

Weaknesses: dogs, balls of yarn, thunder

TRIPPING

Drugs are an experience. Heroes gain (1d6 + Wis mod) x 10 xp when they try a new one.

Tracking durations is annoying. Assume effects last a few hours, so give Heroes a *d6 to roll after every encounter. When it runs out, the effect wears off.

BUT DRUGS ARE BAD, M'KAY

Every time a hero takes an addictive drug they roll a Constitution save (DC 3 + 1d10). If they fail, they're hooked. The player takes a pen and writes the addiction and a drug supply tracker on the hero's character sheet.

From then on, the hero rolls a drug supply die once a week to stay functional.

Additionally, the hero rolls a drug supply die every time they want (need) a hit.

If the hero runs out, the hero suffers until they get a nice strong hit.

Curing addiction takes a long time. Role-play the struggle or use *Cure Disease*. There are no rules beyond that. It's hard, figure it out.

Though cured, the hero has sipped at the teat of transcendence and a fresh taste of the Milk of *M'le Maiku* (or whatever) restarts the addiction.

Long-term effects tend to be harsh and lethal, but so are monsters. Ignore the long-term. Heroes die.

Weakly addictive means what it says (DC 1d6).

Drugs in a purple haze

P.T. stumbled into a small shrine garden and vomited copiously over the frog altar. Luminous animalcules burst into song and dance. He stared. Satisfied spirits or hallucination, he could not tell.

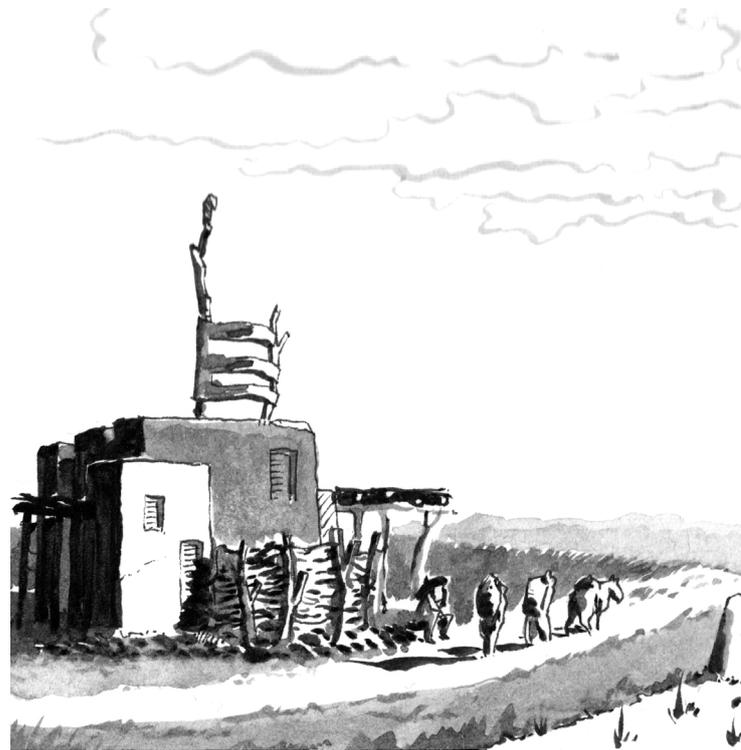
D8 FUN-TIME VIOLET CITY DRUGS

1. Black light lotus glows in the dark and cats love it. Eaten, it cures mental afflictions for a week. Smoked, it brings deep sleep and restores 1d6 hit or ability points. Smears on skin, it exudes fragrant mind-altering pheromones, boosting Cha by 1d4 for *d4 days. *d4: 50 cash.
2. Cat snip is a powdered puff mushroom. It brings euphoria and *d4 bonus actions. *d4: 50 cash. Addictive. Run out: halved Charisma.
3. Ultra jay are crystal needles of a fabulous UV bird. Inserted, they give advantage on social skills and reduce Dexterity by d4 for a week. *d4: 250 cash.
4. Cat coffee is a narcotic made from black cat droppings. A pot induces sleep and restores 1d4 mental ability points. *d4 20 cash.
5. Whiskers expand the mind and give advantage to perception and intuition, a weak levitation effect and disadvantage on physical activity. *d4 100 cash. Addictive. Run out: halved Dexterity.
6. Felix whizz is a popular energy drink the catipedes peddle. A cup grants 1d4 temporary hp and disadvantage on social checks. *d4 10 cash. Weakly addictive. Run out: pissy, disadvantage on Cha and Int checks.
7. Purple haze is the toke of choice for manly men. The aromatized "*essensa de mors*" numbs pain and emotions. A long spliff gives advantage on saves against pain, grief, fear and hurt, and disadvantage to Dexterity and Wisdom checks. *d4 20 cash. Weakly addictive. Run out: cotton mouth, lose 1d6 Int and Wis.
8. Dog's tail is a chew root that is used to boost concentration, giving advantage on cognitive tasks. *d4 75 cash.

The last gastrognome: food and dining

D.W. and Poncho sat on the bench-gargoyle munching their sandwiches. The lithic ornamental sighed and hoovered crumbs. It was going to be another one of those days.

1. *Pér Slaji* - the grimmest dining experience in the township. Poison saves (DC 1d8) are *de rigueur*, advantage finding cads, cutpads and pursenapes. Regular: 1 cash, poisoned by Pér: 50xp.
2. *Shéh Shah* - premium water-pipe and cat café, hub of a feline franchise stretching from the RLD to the Porcelain Throne. Cool cats get good drugs here, dopey dogs not welcome. Regular: 10 cash. Get a gig with the purple hazer body snatchers: 50 xp.
3. *Le Pesquemanceur* - Seka the summoner is the sharpest shark slicer south of Azure. Won't find a better source of black market fishing scrolls and amulets. Regular: 20 cash, Learn *Attract Fish*, *Early Worm*, *Net Trick* or *Seka's Spear of Slicing*: 100xp.
4. *Le ultim Gastrognôme* - the peak of piquant cuisine, catering to black cats and their cat pets, foreign emissaries, princes and satraps of the caravan kingdoms. Getting is hard, but prestigious (advantage interacting with the local nobs and snobs). Regular 200 cash, anointed by the gastro-gnome: 100 xp.
5. *Al flogon* - drinking dive of the abnegators of the Rainbow Pantheon. Only visitors with less than 10 Charisma can enter without a Blasphemy save. Intelligent visitors can learn about the biomechanicum here. Regular: 5 cash, biomechanicum: 200 xp.
6. *Nul sanctimons* - a holy water and cat whizz bar, where the *rafiné* meet, take cat coffee and comment on the empresses' wonderful new clothes. "Sé très il-decadént, néy?" says the low-cut eunuch. It's not. The food nourishes the soul, but not the body. Regulars regain half hp and a bonus spell slot. Regular: 100 cash, fashionable but ineffective new habit: 100 xp.



LAST CHAIR SALON

Last place to stock up on yellow beer, felix whizz and cat coffee before the low road and the high split on their two ways to the Porcelain throne. Only double price, great deal!

Owner: Marsa Vinoble, hates blues.

Nemesis: the local *pastorales* hate the tough business-heroine selling Violet drugs to their children as is her free market right.

Secret: a vome nest-mother is chained in the cellar, hooked up to a fermentation golem.

Blasphemers automatically fail their next *d8 Charisma saves. A silly and expensive penance removes the divine sanction.

Wisdom save (DC 8+1d6).

SURVIVING THE UV GRASSLANDS

The Black City is really far away. So far, that every steppe in the point crawl takes a week. This requires some new rules, I made a whole damn appendix for them. **Check it out.**

Tracking supplies the classic way is time consuming, thus: usage dice. Here's the low down:

Usage dice are a polyhedral dice chain and drop to the next lowest on every 1–3 rolled.

*d12 -> *d10 -> *d8 -> *d6 -> *d4 -> screwed.

Roll to use supply once per week per person. Running out of supplies kills fast. Nomads target pack and draft animals.

ENCUMBRANCE

Encumbrance is usually a pain. This is now fixed. Each hero has **one** inventory slot. Adventuring gear takes one slot. *d4 supplies also takes one slot. Any hero carrying more than one thing is encumbered. That is bad.

Heroes should have baggage trains and shit.

GUNS

It wouldn't be a silly pseudo-colonial-apocalyptic savanna-crawl without guns:

(1) Prince pistol, 2d6, mid range, reload *d10, 200 cash; (2) Cat rifle, 2d10, long range, reload *d8, 300 cash; (3) Satrap gun, 2d12, long range, reload *d6, 900 cash; (4) RLD SMG, 2d6, mid range, burst, reload *d20, 400 cash; (5) Vome slagger, 3d6, long range, frag, reload *d4, 900 cash; (6) Ultra blaster, 3d6 radiant, mid range, blinding, reload *d20, 900 cash; (7) Blue blaster, 4d8 necrotic, short range, burst, *d6, 900 cash; (8) Inquisition squirtgun, 1d6, mid range, intravenous, reload *d8, 200 cash.

Burst: drop one usage die, then roll. Area damage in 10' cube, DC 15 or something.

Eight weeks and more: supplies

D.W. was inscrutable. Poncho looked peeved.

“We’re going to the Black City and we don’t care if it’s supposed to take eight weeks, we’ll make it in four and bring enough black-light to set us all up. Now, how many horses will you loan us?”

Inge and Ingot, the bearded ambiguously dwarfish merchants glowered and pointed to the large sign that read, “No Lones to Adventerers, Frybooters or Wagonbonds.”

The Violet Citadel is the last place to buy supplies and animals for the long crossing. Every salty old hand advises at least four beasts per traveler. Spicier hands wink and suggest it’s possible with just the two.

1. *d4 supplies of tinned meat, travel ale, disinfectant schnapps, novelty items, rough newspapers, socks, gum and prophylactics (10 cash).
2. UV Grassland Walker Kit: Toiletries, zinc sunscreen, tent, sturdy walking stick, colonial sombrero, mustache wax, kangaroo bag, schnapps and wineskins, and a backpack to carry *d4 supplies (20 cash).
3. Disposable encumbered slave, pony, mule or camel. 2 slots (50 cash).
4. Proper heroic damn horse. 2 slots, can charge (150 cash).
5. Steppe wagon, rickety coach or swaying cart. 3 slots of supplies or loot per draft animal (200 cash).
6. Biomechanical beast. 4 slots (600 cash). Only available if you know the right Satrap or Prince, otherwise dream on. These glass-headed beauties ain’t for tramps.

“Mount up! There’s wonders and silks and chem stims on that ultraviolet road!” P.T. shouted.

Who would hurt Vorgo?

Vorgo is healed and he snuffles mawkishly, “She’s a beauty, she is, and her father a chief, she says. A pearl is the bride gift he asks, she says, a pearl chiseled from a behemoth’s oyster parasite. So here I am, with my chisel and hangover, ready to enlist with the Princes as far as the Sarai, then on to the Behemoth ... I’ll manage somehow.”

1. In Vorgo’s wound is a sliver of silver. Does he smell a bit of wild beast?
2. Street urchins and cabbagewives would say he’d come to the township with a dog cage, but where is the dog?
3. Would the satraps stab somebody just to stop them from reaching their territory?
4. None of the cat people seem to care much about the map, they treat it as a joke. P.T. and the party would drop this annoying side quest here.
5. If pressed, the folks will ask, why go there? Only death and blindness await in that grassland.
6. Pushed further, they’ll mutter about mutilated travelers in the *Rue des Oiseaux et Morgues* (Cat-folk hostility +1).
7. At this point Violet detectives with fine white cats will start asking probing questions of strangers poking their whiskers in their jurisdiction.
8. After all, the bodies were just travelers, hardly citizens. But foreigners bothering the cat folk?
9. Yes, the doctor of mortices may have noticed the odd, parallel daggers used to mutilate the bodies.
10. Could those have been teeth or claws? Hah, only if someone had teeth like daggers!

Here, the trail would go cold (for now), nothing to indicate that any fantasy of vomes and ultra possession could have any basis in fact.

Vorgo the Were-Pug is shifty, cowardly, and foolishly loyal. But, if the truth is out, he also turns into a scruffy pug. This does not improve his combat or breathing abilities.

AC 13 (11 pug), HP 3 (1d6), keen smell, bug eyes.

Power: lycanthropic regeneration

Weakness: silver, oranges, endurance sports

Threat: is he possessed by an ultra scout beetle?



WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?

These are parts 1 and 2 of my first extended WTF Expedition - a heavy metal rpg sandbox module to take a group of blundering PCs into the depths of the Ultraviolet Grassland in search of wealth and booty to pay back their adventuring loans. Or some other reason.

The project is graciously supported by my patrons at <https://www.patreon.com/wizardthieffighter>.

Luka Rejec, 22/03/2017, 22/04/2017

WAIT! THERE'S MORE!

Attached is the appendix in progress, which collects the rules and content in more detail.

But, caveat, I haven't even started styling it yet. That will happen once it's done. You know. In months.

Luka Rejec, 22/03/2017, 22/04/2017

Hello, Referee, and welcome. I'm Luka, a gamer, just like you. Not an all-knowing author beyond the pale, just someone who wants to make the most fun games I can. In this appendix I'm going to break the fourth wall and address you as one rpg referee to another. You know, folksy like.

I run most of my games these days with a 5E rules framework, but every game and adventure uses some bolt-on rules to make it tick properly. You know what I mean. Timers. Faction trackers. Resources that run out. But these rule hacks are often not explicit, which is a damned shame as I'm all for explicit rules and implicit setting.

This appendix of rules is aimed at making running the UV Grasslands a reasonably-not-horrible experience. All of the rules are touched on in the main text, but here I've collected them and elaborated on them.

Enjoy.
-Luka

Dramatis personay

BASS: that's you. You're refereeing a table-top role-playing game, probably some kind of D&D thing where you're called DM. But this ain't a dungeon, it's a steppe. Still, it's cool. We're buddies.

HEROES are the player characters. Don't call them PCs. They're not police constables. They're out for adventure, loot and revolution. Also don't assume they're good. Heroes are not good, they're excessive and over the top.

HENCHMEN are all the scruffy followers and hangers-on knuckle-dragging along with the heroes. Let them have all the henchmen they want. If players want to promote henchmen into heroes, let them. To keep things moving, don't stat them fully, just generate as required.

Usage dice aka. risk dice: *dN

Have you heard of risk dice or usage dice? They're a really cool concept that I first saw developed by David Black (*Black Hack*, v1.2, p.8) as the usage die and then expanded upon by Eric Nieudan (*Macchiatto Monsters*, MMZero, p.4) as the risk die.

I use it in the narrower Black Hack sense as a die heroes roll after using a consumable game object (ammo, food, torches, charges, magic eagles,) to see if it is used up. They form a neat chain and I use an asterisk to mark them as usage dice:

***d12 -> *d10 -> *d8 -> *d6 -> *d4 -> screwed.**

A roll of 1-3 means the supply is reduced and the die is downgraded to the next lower die in the chain. On a roll of 1-3 on a *d4 the supply is expended and the heroes are in trouble.

I wanted to call them consumption (or tuberculosis) dice, but I'll go with usage dice.

How many uses in a usage die?

Assuming you keep rolling them usage dice, you'll get this much juice out of each one. The total number sums all the lower usage dice, too.

1. *d4:	1.33 uses	
2. *d6:	2 uses	(2.33 total)
3. *d8:	2.67 uses	(5 total)
4. *d10	3.33 uses	(8.33 total)
5. *d12	4 uses	(12.33 total)
6. *d20	6.67 uses	(19 total)

A softer way to [usage] die

The original Black Hack usage die downgrades on a roll of 1–2, this makes for a softer decay curve. I prefer the harsher *d4 that says, “this is your last shot.” But, if you prefer soft, here’s the curve.

1. *d4:	2 uses	
2. *d6:	3 uses	(5 total)
3. *d8:	4 uses	(9 total)
4. *d10	5 uses	(14 total)
5. *d12	6 uses	(20 total)
6. *d20	10 uses	(30 total)

Long-distance gritty realism

The UV Grasslands are big. They’re mind-boggling and weird, sure, but first of all they are big. Vast and fucking empty. You know, like steppes are. And it’s that emptiness that kills heroes, because that emptiness means there’s no wishing well to drink from and no turnip farm to plunder.

Have you ever tried to run a hexcrawl from Jaca to Santiago de Compostella with 6-mile hexes? It’s like 80 of the bastards! Go on, try it. Roll for encounters in every hex. I bet you’ll be bored,

and so will your players. So how do you make the grasslands feel big, while not making crossing them boring? Glad you ask.

Time: weeks and weeks and weeks

Use the week as the basic unit of activity. This will drive home how far things are. Don’t worry about details like miles and leagues.

Also, use the gritty realism variant (5E DMG, p. 267). Use it. It is your friend. A long rest, that really heals up the heroes, should take a week. A short rest? A day.

If you want, you can tally extra days until they hit a week, but honestly, you can handwave extra days until you get into starvation / exhaustion territory.

Traveling between locations takes about a week. Heroes check their supplies once a week. You check for random encounters once or twice a week. Hunting and foraging takes about a week. The symptoms of dysentery last about a week.

Supplies: no rations or waterskins

Tracking supplies the classic way with pounds and packs, or even with slots, is too time-consuming and boring when the heroes are slogging across a giant savanna for months. I tried. It didn’t make for a fun game.

Use supply usage dice to track supplies as an abstract resource that represents everything keeping heroes alive: beer, food, bandages, tents, and toilet paper. Like hit points for traveling parties.

Heroes roll a supply usage die **once per week per party member** that isn't a quadrupedal ungulate.

Running out of supplies kills quickly. Roll a Constitution save instead of a supply usage die. Success: hero's physical stats are reduced by 6 and hero has disadvantage to all physical checks. Failure: hero is starving, physical stats are reduced by 9, mental stats by 6, hero is at disadvantage to all checks, movement speed is halved and hero needs to be carried over longer distances.

Repeat the roll every week without supplies. A hero dies when any stat reaches zero.

Cannibalising the expedition is the fastest way to get extra supplies. A human adds *d4 supplies, a pack animal adds *d8 supplies.

Foraging in the wilderness takes a week and each forager rolls Survival. Every success adds *d4 or *d6 supplies (50%).

Resupply in an oasis of safety takes a week and adds *d6 supplies per forager.

Making haste gives a +1 to the supply check, but also a -1 to the encounter check and disadvantage on the misfortune save.

Careful travel has the opposite effect. -1 to supply checks, +1 to encounter checks and advantage on misfortune saves.

Inventory: trucking is hard

Carrying lots of stuff long distances overland without a hover-wagon is horrible. That's why caravans trade in luxuries like silk and gold and slaves and drugs and tea and coffee. Lots of RPGs have stupid inventory systems, yet don't show how horrible carrying stuff is. So, I simplify things.

Each hero or henchman has one inventory slot.

Their adventuring or professional gear goes there. Magic skulls of memory for wizards, a year's supply of swordmaceaxes for fighters, whatever.

Supplies also occupy inventory slots. Each step on the usage chain takes one slot. So, *d4 supplies is one slot, *d6 supplies two, *d8 three. And so on.

Smart heroes have porters and pack animals.

Stupid heroes walk around in full armor and haul their supplies in sacks on their heads. A character can carry one extra inventory slot worth of stuff, but it is encumbered.

Encumbered heroes are fucked. They have a -1 to the supply check, -1 to the encounter check, have disadvantage on misfortune saves and cannot make haste or travel carefully. They also have the regular encumbrance penalties in combat. Also, from a social perspective, they look like poor people. This is bad for appearing heroic.

People, porters and pack animals

1. Human. 1 slot (1d4+1 cash per week)

2. Porters are tough-ass folks trained in the ways of packing and carrying stuff, preparing supply depots, and generally surviving in the wilds. 2 slots (1d6+7 cash per week)
3. Disposable encumbered slave, pony, mule or camel. 2 slots (50 cash).
4. Steppe wagon, rickety coach or swaying cart. 3 slots per draft animal (200 cash).
5. Biomechanical beast. 4 slots (600 cash).

People also need to eat supplies. Driving a slave with minimal supplies (saving the good stuff for the heroes) has a 60% chance of killing the slave every week. A slave that survives five weeks of this shit and isn't freed should run away with the help of some noble spirit and become some kind of wasteland paladin hunting the asshole heroes.

What about my loot?

So the heroes come across a series of beautiful crystal sculptures with diamond eyes? Why do they hack out just the eyes? Space.

Any time a treasure or item is described with fancy words, add a slot for every word. Add slots for heavy materials, fine workmanship, intricate mechanics, cyclopean architecture. Just pile it on.

A hero (looter) can **hack out 1d6 + Charisma modifier percent of a treasure's value easily**. This usually reduces the value of the rest of the work by 10x that amount in percent.

That statue of the *Metaphysical Insinuation of Being by the famous Jeerida the Artistique*? Six inventory slots of glorious marble and gold worth 6,000 cash

to a collector. Or, gouge out the gold bits for 300 cash. That's 5%, so the remaining defaced sculpture is now worth 50% less: 3,000 cash.

Yeah, looters are assholes.

Misfortune: because fuck your hero

The concept of Charisma comes from Greek, where it referred to grace and divine fortune bestowed by the capricious (asshole) Gods. This wasn't some lame approximation of "sexyness" or "leadership potential." Nope. This was straight up divine favoritism. A hero could be a complete dirtbag, but his divine mother dipped him in god ju-ju and gave him teflon skin. Others got the plague, he came through untouched. Others got scarred, he glowed with beauty and grace.

Charisma is utterly unfair, which is why I love to use it in games as a proxy for luck. You should, too.

In this expedition adventure, where each leg of the heroes' journey is a week of slogging through dull and unforgiving terrain, misfortune is that spike of pure annoyance or terror that kills unlucky travelers. Like scurvy or swamp foot.

When you spot a **Misfortune** section in the text, tell your players how it's been a harrowing week with horrible food, horrible company, rain and a couple of instances of worm-infested beans. Or whatever is implied in the misfortune text.

Then ask each player to roll a Charisma check or save against a relatively easy DC (I suggest 10 or 8+1d6). Each player that fails, gets to roll on the corresponding Misfortune table.

Yup, we're Oregon-trailing their asses.

Warn your players in advance that this kind of shit will happen in the adventure. If they take precautions, buy extra supplies, and generally take wilderness travel seriously, let them use their survival skills to help their roll or something, and explain to them that "the Gods help those who help themselves," or some nonsense like that.

Glossary of Items and Things

Whoah! What're you doing here? These are my notes! Go 'way!

a lucky dog

the biomechanicum

viomechs

vomes

ultras