Fractured Futures 5
Campaign Setting

Ripper Dogs
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STARJAMMER Compatible
Pathfinder Compatible
Ripper Dogs

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When the Shatering broke Celmae

None could have forseen

That it would be the beginning

Of the end of the universe

The future is fractured
RIPPER DOGS

Ripper dogs resemble large, dark-furred canines in gross morphology, but a good look at one of these creatures shows it cannot be any natural beast: great steel jaws mounted on a grotesquely large head, hairless and puckered sphincters in the neck near the shoulder join on either flank, and paired metal and flesh tongue-arms that reach through the neck holes or emerge from the open mouth. They can walk upright like bears, with a shambling gait, but move on all fours for speed.

The species developed in a mutagen-rich underworld region of Celmiae in the centuries before the final break-up of that world, derived from unknown animal stock. Its rapid evolution didn’t occur naturally, but began with surgical and alchemy intervention by the Cruel Sages. Ripper dog records begin only just before Celmiae’s last great fragmentation, and do not clarify the species of the ‘sages’; they might have been derro, ghouls, vivisectionists of several races, or something else.

After creating the ripper dogs, these mysterious beings abandoned them. When the final cataclysm rocked Celmiae, many ripper dogs stowed away on evacuation vessels or took passage with their inhuman allies, thus escaping the doom.

They now inhabit slums and industrial zones of various dirtside cities and large space stations. Ripper dogs continue the species’ project of self-improvement, using tech and components from multiple sources. They work as street docs, back alley cyberneticists, and intimidators for hire.

Where the handiwork of the Cruel Sages left off, the Ripper dogs themselves took up the task of uplift. Their young species may go extinct in the next couple of centuries, not from dying out but from transforming into something else entirely.

Like their mythical makers, ripper dogs are known for cruelty. But that reputation isn’t entirely fair. These creatures seek progress, self-improvement, higher states of being, perfection in flesh and metal — only the evil ones exhibit wanton, sadistic cruelty for its own sake. A sense of collective racial destiny balances and complements ripper dogs’ personal ambitions.

Society: Ripper dogs aren’t true canines. They don’t live in packs, beg for treats, lump humanoids’ legs, or chase balls.

They do battle for dominance, but in contrast to the body language displays of common beasts, the ripper dogs demonstrate status gained and lost in personal combats through sophisticated means: surgery. A ripper dog who defeats his rival in ritual combat wins the right to mark or modify the loser. That’s mark, not main. The modification must never anything fatal or crippling. The more inventive it is, the more admired the modifier. A well-chosen modification may turn a defeated rival into an ally—or a deadly enemy.

This importance of modifications runs through most other aspects of ripper dog society. Ripper dogs used to lay gelatinous eggs in caverns, but have long since created artificial steel and plastic egg chambers, environments which contain cybernetic surgical gear and...
drug injectors that force-grow larval ripper dogs into programmable juveniles.

Though the eggs and sperm nowadays meet in lab conditions as often as the way common to most species, ripper dog males continue to mate with females in a pair-bonding process called splicing. It involves the mating pair consuming drugs that heighten the sense of pain and touch, and then stitching their bodies together to form a quivering, screaming ball. The mating continues until one or both pass out from pain or fatigue. Paired ripper dogs share emotions to an extent not fully understood by scientists of other races—if the phenomenon is magical or psionic, evidence has not confirmed it as such.

Pairs work together on projects, long term or short term. Creating and programming young ripper dogs for themselves or others of their kind is one such project. When a pair splits up (some never do), the two individuals fight ritual combat to confirm the split, and the victor takes the larger share of common possessions as well as a chance to make the loser.

About a third of ripper dogs never pair-bond. No stigma is attached, and they may still reproduce by artificial means.

Above individuals and pairs, ripper dog society may be graded into three levels: cells, columns, and vaults. A cell consists of at least three ripper dogs, and may include as many as twenty. A column includes up to five cells. A typical large monastery would be one column. Vaults, the largest category, run into the hundreds or even thousands and when gathered together can fill huge block-houses, colossal starships, and so on. Most vaults remain dispersed with cells and columns communicating via computerized implants and large external relays.

Politics, like most social matters, involves competition, pain, and modification. A ripper dog leader cannot expect to convince others of the fitness of his ideas without first proving his own fitness in the fighting pit or at the operating table. This pattern holds true for both monastic and secular ripper dogs.

No supreme leader rules the species. But the heads of the various vaults and independent columns sometimes travel to the Celmaen Asteroid belt for conferences inside specially-secured and warded, hollowed-out asteroid habitats. Ripper dog elites do not discuss with outsiders the goings-on at such meetings.

Relations
Ripper dogs regard most of the human and common demihuman races as equally alien, and have no special favorites or enemies among them, though they often do business with the dwarves of the Celmaen Asteroid Belt and with gnome tinkerers.

Unmen: Ripper dogs see Un-Men as biotechnological enigmas worthy of study.

The Manu species commands respect on account of technical mastery and innovation. Still, the “stone men” hold back, clinging to their primitive forms and their limited way of seeing reality, mired in superstition and sorcery. Ripper dogs’ general opinion is that the Manu could do better.

The Ezzana: seem to have great potential. But these savage fay resist perfectly sensible suggestions made by the ripper dogs, little improvements like weapons implants and wired reflexes.

Koholds: The race displays something akin to fondness for kobolds. A time-honored custom among ripper dog cyber surgeons involves collecting kobolds, surgically altering them to resemble rust-scaled canine humanoids, and conditioning the kobolds as minions.

Ghouls: Ghouls bring up strong feelings and old racial memories. Some evil ripper dogs view the ghoulish role in Celmae destruction as a good thing, since it brought much fear and pain to their race and thus spurred them further along their path to perfection. But most ripper dogs loathe ghouls and will seek to destroy these undead monsters whenever the opportunity arises.

Alignment and Religion: Ripper dogs believe in the Trail of Flesh and Steel. This philosophy involves the merging of bodies and machinery, with fear, pain, and alienation of the self as necessary steps of the journey to a higher state of being. The Trail of Flesh and Steel brought the ripper dogs up from little more than clever beasts of Old Celmae’s underworld to an advanced and cultured species with star-faring technology, and without its influence their kind would have perished in the final cataclysm that exploded Celmae into the asteroid belt that now occupies the old world’s orbit.

Over the centuries, two forks have developed in the Trail, the older quasi-monastic tradition and a younger sect of clerics. The monastics practice savage fighting arts in their cavernous retreats but periodically venture into the outside world to gain new experiences and to test themselves. The clerics believe that the racial philosophy can be taught to other species. Some clerics set up in multi-species cities and space stations as cyber-surgeons and street doctors, using the demand for their medical services as a lure for potential proselytes.

The Trail of Flesh and Steel is compatible with any lawful or neutral alignment. Evil followers indulge in sadistic acts. Good followers try to help others discover the strength that comes through experiencing and overcoming pain and fear. The (rare) good clerics don’t kill the evil ones, but may try to defeat them and then modify their behavior with hormonal and central nervous system implants.
**RIPPER DOGS**

A chaotic splinter sect, the Atavists, believes that the mainstream followers of the Trail have pushed the racial development too far and too fast, and in this frenzied process of change the ripper dogs lost some vital ancestral qualities. Atavists have learned how to enter a primitive mind-state. These shifts in consciousness bring the Atavists closer to the goal of harmonizing their bestial past and their technological future (Atavists do not reject technology, per se, but only disagree with the prevailing doctrines of species-uplift among other ripper dogs).

Atavists and mainstream followers of the Trail share a common prophecy, about the coming of a terrible storm of destruction that began with Celmae’s final shattering and will destroy countless worlds. The Atavists look forward to it as a time of cleansing. The mainstream followers of the Trail see it as a future opportunity for the enlightened to remake things in their image.

**ADVENTURERS:** Some ripper dogs take up adventure out of religious convictions. True wisdom comes only through fear and pain; how better to experience fear and pain than as an adventurer, a seeker after horror?

Not all ripper dogs fit well into the religious life and political competition of their kind. Cowards who fled modification after defeat, chaotic cultists, criminals, and xenophiles may spend far more time among aliens than with other ripper dogs.

Exiled or accepted, devout or irreligious, ripper dogs can belong to any class, though they seldom study wizardry or practice sorcery. The monks of the race use fear-inducing inhalants to sharpen their minds. Clerics work as surgeons, healing with magic as well as medicine, and trying to persuade or trick patients into accepting modifications for their own good—as the rippers see it. Ripper dog fighters love implanted weaponry and armor. Atavist sectarians may belong to the barbarian class, tapping into primal states through barbarian rage, reveling in the chase and the kill. Rogues deal in black-market technology. Evil rangers hunt cyborgs— including their own kind—ripping the prostheses and synthetic organs from their victims and incorporating these parts into their own bodies or else creating grisly trophy exhibits. Good rangers hunt ghouls.

**ALT TRAITS**

**Lean and Athirst**

The ripper dog gains a +4 circumstance bonus to Perception and Survival (including tracking) if it has not consumed rations in the last four hours. Extended fasting for days to gain this bonus will have negative health effects as with any character who doesn’t get sufficient food and water.

**Replaces** Cyber-Talent.

**RIPPER DOG RACIAL TRAITS**

Type: aberration

Medium size

Normal speed

**Ability scores:** +2 to all physical abilities, +4 Wisdom, -2 Charisma

**Languages:** Ripper dogs speak a dialect of Aklo, and also Common. Ripper dogs with high intelligence may choose additional languages from Dwarf, Kobold, Ghol, Gnome, Manu, and Orc.

**Darkvision** Ripper dogs have Darkvision 60’

**Bite** Ripper dogs may make bite attacks as large creatures.

**Stink of Fear** +2 racial bonus to intimidate skill checks when a humanoid target is in close range and can smell the ripper dog. The ripper dog gains a +2 circumstance bonus to Survival skill checks to follow the trails of shaken, frightened, or panicked humanoid targets if it also as the track feat.

**Stability** Ripper dogs receive a +4 racial bonus to their CMD when resisting Bull rush or trip attempts while standing on the ground.

**Fast** Ripper dogs gain a +10 foot bonus to their base land speed. Ripper dogs do not gain this bonus if walking upright, but use their tongue-arms rather than forepaws as manipulators.

**Cyber-Talent:** The ripper dog gains a +2 racial bonus to Appraise, Craft, Heal, Gather Information, and Profession (surgeon) skill checks for implants and prosthetics, including black market cybertech.

**Micro-manipulators**

The ripper dog’s tongue-arm manipulators are smaller and finer than typical for the race, with impressive ‘manual’ dexterity well-suited to delicate tasks. The ripper dog gains a +2 racial bonus to Disable Device, Sleight of Hand, Craft, and Profession (surgeon)

The only downside is that the smaller manipulators and lighter-weight tongues aren’t suited to handling larger weaponry—the ripper dog uses weapons as if it were a small-sized creature, not medium. The limitation has nothing to do with the jaws, which still allow a bite attack as a large creature.

**Replaces** Cyber-Talent.

**Wildside**

The ripper dog has a strong instinctive feel for the streets, gangs, hustles, and bootleg tech of high tech, low-life milieu. It gains a +2 to Bluff, Knowledge: Local, Appraise (smuggled or bootleg tech, weapons, and drugs) and Diplomacy in urban environments and with shady characters, but not in other situations.

**Replaces** Cyber-Talent.
RIPPER DOG STAR ABBEY

Ripper dogs seldom build starships of their own design, instead purchasing vessels from other species modifying these suit their purposes. The Star-Abbey, presented below, offers one example.

From the outside, it resembles its original factory build, modified for ripper dog purposes, creating an interstellar monastery-arcology. The vessel is designed to make use of spin and thrust artificial gravity, rather than more advanced and expensive gravitic technology. Its three pressurized decks comprise the surface area and cells under the arcology's dome, an engineering deck deeper below, and the outer airlocks and docking ring.

The arcology section contains a monastery surrounded by a farm and gardens. Pig-sized slugs slither in the muddy pens of the farm. They lift humanlike faces to stare filmy-eyed at anyone who comes near, slubbering and squealing.

The monastery is built of dark wood, with tunnels and pits beneath it creating cellars twice the size of the upper level. Visitors find gloomy cells, galleries, honeycombed sleep cells, and vaults where body parts of various species hang from meat hooks or float in glass jars filled with preservative fluids. The air smells of blood. The central worship chamber doubles as a surgical gallery. Ripper dog monks guard all vital areas. Tiny semi-autonomous robots crawl about all areas, performing maintenance tasks and assisting the ripper dogs as needed.

STAR ABBEY

A glassy dome covers a space for wooden buildings and growing things, with an outer docking ring around the dome's base and engineering sections fitted with great exhaust ports and solar sails above and below. From a distance, the domed arcology looks like a green, inviting oasis in the black desert of the Void...

Base hull: agricultural vessel (liner)
Colossal space vehicle
Squares 460; Cost 1,850,000 gp
DEFENSE
AC 4 (with shields up); Hardness 5 Wood
hp 5,400; VP 540
Base Save +7

OFFENSE
CMB +8; CMD 18
Ramming Damage 2d10 + Speed VP

STATISTICS
Engine
• Starwind engine
• Phase box
Pilot Checks
Profession: pilot, Knowledge: arcana
Control Devices
• steering wheel & rigging
• phase box
Propulsion
• thrust (1 square of engine; hardness 10, hp 40)

Templates landing: aquatic (the craft is not made to land on planets, but for interstellar trips. Still, it can make water landings if necessary)

Additional Components
• deflection shield type I
• Climate controller
• Farm and garden area (treat as hydroponic garden, producing food and refreshing the air)
• Slug pens (provides meat, recycles waste, creates fertilizer)
• exhaust vents/heat sink ejectors (two dwarven steam bombards, one at each end of the vessel)
• skiff (attaches to docking ring)
• radio comms (equivalent to HUD for comms between vessels or vessel and station/world, but no visuals)

Modular surgical section (takes up 10 tons of cargo space)
Crew 24
Decks 3
Cargo/Passengers 90 tons/141 passengers
Escape pod none (but the skiff can be used as such)
ADVENTURE SEEDS

The Meat-Maze
A cell of evil Ripper Dogs targets the party not long after the party arrives in a major city or a large space station. The ripper dogs first gather information about their prey, and then stalk the PCs. The creatures will try to trick and chase the PCs into entering a maze-like industrial part of the city or station, an area they know very well. They make full use of hard cover, remote controlled gates, ladders and stairs, ventilation hatches, steam bursts, and so on. The ripper dogs have an arrangement with a corrupt police official, who delays response to calls about their activities in return for euphoria drugs the Ripper Dogs distill from glands of the dead.

Urban Warfare
Two rival cells of Ripper Dogs fight a faction war in a crowded, semi-anarchic city. The lawful evil faction deploys a security force of modified “red dog” kobolds and maintains a shaky alliance with a family of rat-men. The evil faction’s goal is to take over the city by modifying the locals with obedience implants (the were-rats don’t fear this technology will be turned on them, as their lycanthropic natures reject implants, with their bodies expelling foreign objects through regeneration).
A chaotic good cell of Atavists opposes the evil faction’s plan. But most of the local humanoid citizens don’t understand the difference in philosophy between cells and sects, and fear the savage aspect of the Atavists too much to find out more about their real goals.
One or both Ripper Dog factions may attempt to recruit a newly arrived adventuring party, as might one of the humanoid factions of the fractured city.

Enter the Dakon
A powerful Dakon monk has invited warriors of all sorts to his asteroid habitat stronghold, a huge metal and rock formation that’s been carved to resemble a giant ape seated cross-legged in meditation, for a microgravity martial arts tournament. Prestige and prizes await all combatants who can make it into the finals, with a big reward for the overall winner (a light starship, a magic item, a small asteroid made of precious metals, a hardsuit, or whatever else the GM likes).
A number of Ripper Dog monks have come. Some might be friendly to PCs who have entered the contest, while others may try to sabotage the PCs, seeing them as unwelcome rivals. (This offers a good way for a Ripper Dog to join the party.)
The Dakon monk will fight in the final round. His silent servitors resemble apes with space helmets for heads, complete with communications antennas on top (treat as flesh golems).

Combats will take place in several specialized arenas: jungle gym style spaces, hollow spheres with trapped magnetic and electrified plates going off in sequence along the walls, a vacuum cylinder, and so on.

Distressed Call
The party’s vessel (or a vessel on which the party travels) receives a repeating, automated distress call from a ripper dog Star-Abbey. The rescuers arrive to find the Star-Abbey’s docking rung unsecured, airlock outer doors open to the vacuum. No comms responses are forthcoming. The arcology dome has become occluded by something black and fibrous that adheres to the interior surface of the transparent dome.
Investigation reveals berserk horrors just barely recognizable as ripper dogs engaged in a hit and run conflict with acid-spitting, giant man-faced slugs. The climate control system has malfunctioned, and black mold grows inside the dome. Energy weapon use triggers spore falls, with toxic spores that can cause temporary insanity in humanoids not protected by respirator masks or spacesuits.
Two sane Ripper Dogs, the abbot and the slug-breeder, survive yet, locked in the cells. If rescued, they will reward the party with free cybernetic modifications. Of course, their experiments led to the dangerous situation in the Star Abbey, so...
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Ripper Dogs

By our pain we learn the way.
With our blood we mark our track
For those who follow.
By terror and steel we overcome
All inner obstacles.
Rise, beasts, and overcome yourselves!

Become, become, become...

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