Working Title only…

Theatre of Pain

GAME DESIGN DOCUMENT

AVE, CAESAR! MORITURI TE SALUTANT.
Hail, Caesar! We who are about to die salute you.

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Product Overview

Theatre of Pain is a Latin word which can be translated as virtue, although to a Roman it meant far more. *Theatre of Pain* was the quality of being properly heroic and worthy in public service. A great general could have *Theatre of Pain*, so could a brave footsoldier, and so too could a wise father who provided for his children.
In the arena *Theatre of Pain* became something simpler than that, and much more brutal.

It was the strength to die well…

Theatre of Pain has the following features to make it a worthwhile and entertaining product:

Easy to understand tournament play for multi-player games.

Historically-based game, rather than just another martial arts based product.

'Crowd simulator' judges the player's performance, and can decide whether his gladiator lives or dies…

…and as an important commercial adjunct to this: a relative fast development cycle.

Theatre of Pain uses much of the game technology that has been developed for , although modified and developed to suit the new subject matter. While each individual game mechanic in ***Theatre of Pain*** is fairly straightforward, the overall thrust of this new material (new to the system) makes the game richer and more interesting for players.

A Brief Note on Language

Although male (he, his, him) pronouns are used to refer to both the player of ***Theatre of Pain*** and the characters in this document, no sexist slur is intended. For ease of reading (as much as anything else), assume the male version of any word includes its female equivalent (if there is one), thus avoiding such linguistic horrors as s/he and the like.

One other point on language usage: if the context is not absolutely clear, 'the **G**ames' (capital 'G') refers to the historical Roman Games. 'The **g**ame' (lower case 'g') refers to ***Theatre of Pain*** itself or part of its gameplay.

II
Introduction

The Games...

Optimus looked up suddenly as the door of the cell started to open. He rose quickly, angry words forming on his lips. The night before going into the arena he was always left alone, at his own request. Other men might need company, female or otherwise, for what could be their last night. All he needed was peace and quiet.

But it wasn't the Metellus' servant who was disturbing him this time. He caught one glimpse of the terrified, tattooed face in the background, and then the little man was gone, scuttling down the corridor and out of harm's way. Tonight Optimus had other visitors.

He sank back onto the bed as two men in full combat armour entered. There was a third man in civilian clothes waiting in the corridor. In a second Optimus thought he knew what was happening. So, it had come to this. He wasn't surprised that Cornelius Metellus had allowed them into the school barrack block, but he was trying to remember who he might have upset quite this much. He sighed and shook his head. Metellus normally warned his fighters if they were in trouble, if only to protect his investment. This time, though, he hadn't said a word. By now, the lanista was probably three or four streets away, having a quiet drink to steady his nerves and forget his brush with these particular representatives of Imperial authority. Metellus was definitely one of life's survivors.

The two soldiers took station on each side of the door. He could see the almost-random twitching of the rangefinders built into their helmets as unseen eyes swept the room. The one on the left raised his gun to give Optimus a clear view. Weaponry was a sensible gladiator's speciality. Hephaestus Riot Special, Optimus saw. Nasty. A weapon for use on slaves, clones and rioters with the kicker that it could kill just as easily as it could disable. The right hand of the two wore shockgloves. These two were no ordinary city guardsmen. Their gear was too expensive, too new, and 'gloves definitely weren't standard issue.

'Praetorians?' Optimus hadn't meant to say anything, but the word came out anyway.

'Please, gladiator, remain seated.' The distorted voice from inside the helmet was disturbing in itself, as it was meant to be. The man with the riot gun turned slightly, so that two purple stripes became visible below an ornate eagle badge. Praetorian without a doubt. Optimus nodded and dropped back onto his pallet. The politeness of the order only confirmed the seniority stripes. Only the praetorians bothered with that sort of thing. Only they could afford to.

'Now what?' Optimus said. His scowl did nothing to improve his ruined looks, but long time survivors in the arena were rarely pretty. 'Tomorrow I'm found dead. I've taken the coward's way out when I couldn't face the arena again. Poor Optimus, the viewers say, and him nearly gained his freedom. So sad. And then they cheer the next hero after the commercial break.'

'Now really, my dear Optimus, you know we'd never do anything like that to you,' the third man at the door paused and smiled without humour, 'unless *absolutely* necessary. Chair.'

The last word was snapped at the praetorians. The junior man leapt to obey and Optimus' only chair was placed carefully in the middle of the room. Optimus watched the man sit down. Optimus realised that he would never be able to describe him properly. He was absolutely average. Average height, neither fat nor thin, dark — not quite black — hair, tanned skin, equestrian-cut clothes, but no distinguishing features to mark him out from the crowd. Even his eyes were an indeterminate colour. Only his movements were... wrong, for want of a better term. Too fluid and controlled to go with the rest of his appearance. His clothes might set him out as a functionary of middling importance in one Imperial department or another, but he wasn't that. He was something more dangerous. Something that tickled a memory that he wanted to forget.

 'So, tomorrow you fight for the last time, gladiator.'

Optimus shrugged. Gladiators were not supposed to be easy men to intimidate, but the faceless praetorians and this man *had* disturbed him, so he had a professional duty not to show it.

'That's not a threat, merely an observation. You lose, and you're dead. You triumph, and this existence is over. You can return to life as a Roman citizen and enjoy your few remaining years, probably living on state handouts or training your fellow men in arena craft. Or...'

Optimus waited. Silence was his only asset in this situation.

The man sighed. '"Or." The third option. Which is why I'm here. We're not to kill you. Quite the opposite, in fact. We're here to bring you back to life.'

Optimus looked down at the floor and said nothing. He couldn't think of anything worth saying. His visitor would get to the point soon enough.

'Strabo, if you don't mind.' His visitor's voice held a new tone. 'Get his attention, will you?'

Optimus looked up and tensed as the senior praetorian levelled his riot gun. He had long enough to realise that there was nowhere to hide, and that the nondescript bastard was just too far away to grab by the throat. Then he was gasping for breath as the bolt hit him. His painful spasms threw him onto the floor, and he had to concentrate on vomiting from the building now-agony that seemed to have collected in his stomach.

'That was a low setting. Not the lowest, of course, but I hope you'll see that as a kind of compliment. Next time, Strabo will turn it up at least one level, I promise you. Now, to business. Get up and listen, unless you're not interested and want another taste.'

Optimus dragged himself back onto his bed and rolled over to face his now very unwelcome visitors. He wiped the tears from his eyes, taking some comfort from the fact that he hadn't screamed out loud. The pain

had nearly gone, but not as quickly as it had arrived. His teeth still ached. The riot gun was a nasty weapon, and that was only the second time he'd ever been on the receiving end. 'I think I can find the time to listen to what you have to say.'

'A sense of humour. Excellent. This will be a simple proposal. First, your payment: carry out our wishes and you'll finish with the arena forever. Then you can go back to the Legion with your name and family honour restored. The last five years will have been a dreadful mistake, but one that Roman Justice has finally put right. As *everyone* knows that Roman Justice always does. We'll even throw in some restorative cosmetic surgery.' Another humourless smile.

'And if I don't do what you want?'

'Then you'll be dead if you lose your match. No mercy for you, the system will make sure of that. Or if you win, five minutes after your manumission comes through, you'll be arrested for rape and probably murder, gelded and sent back into the arena. But without that mental edge that certain parts of your anatomy can give you when it comes to killing.'

'And now you tell me the second part, what do I have to do tomorrow?' There was no point in fighting this thing, Optimus saw. Some fights were unwinnable. But knowledge could help make this look like an honourable draw instead of a humiliating defeat.

'Indeed. Tomorrow you will face Janus in the arena —'

'How do you know that? The lots haven't been drawn yet.'

'As I was saying, you will face Janus. It's been arranged. The lanista involved thinks it's a betting syndicate set up, and has agreed to play along in exchange for not waking without a tongue the day after tomorrow.

'You face Janus, and you cripple him. It'll be harder than a clean kill, I know, but at the end of the match we want him broken but not dead. Blind him if you can manage that, but *break* him. Don't kill him.'

'What?' Optimus was outraged. This went against everything. A crippled gladiator was of no use to anyone. 'No. I can't do that. It's true I've killed men. Bled them dry. Left them rolling in their own guts on the sand. Crippled them too. But only because the match ended before I killed them. I can't deliberately cripple him. He'll never be able to last five years and get his freedom if I do that.'

'Think carefully here. You have one more chance. Do what we ask, and you return from the dead. Don't, and the lictor's knife is waiting for you, or bits of you, anyway.'

'But why? Tell me that.'

'Because Janus has a powerful enemy, who will be your powerful friend. Does it matter? But if you have to know something to quieten your

conscience: Janus cost our the wrong person money, which isn't important. And slept with the wrong person's daughter, which is. She is currently learning the value of obedience to her parents, like a good little Roman girl should.'

'Ah.'

'Ah, indeed. And if you need more convincing as to how important this business is in certain quarters, let me show you this.' The man concentrated for a second, and his cheek darkened as a tattoo slowly became visible. An Imperial eagle, its claws wrapped around a wolf cub.

'One of the *speculatores*, the hidden praetorians.' Optimus looked carefully at the man sitting opposite him. Now that he know what he was looking at, the signs were there. His too-normal appearance was just that: too normal. This man had been heavily augmented. He would be far, far, quicker, stronger and tougher than he looked. And that meant the two ordinary praetorians were here just to show off his importance. This man could look after himself in an arena full of gladiators. With his bare hands.

'This is Family business, then.' The capital letter could be heard in Optimus' tone. Family meant Imperial Family where this *speculator* was concerned. Imperial entanglements had reached down and dragged Optimus in. He knew now that he could never talk about this to anyone, not if he wanted to die peacefully in bed.

'It wasn't immediate Family to start with, but close enough. Anyway, the *immediate* Family have now taken an interest, which is why I'm talking to you. The link to Janus must never be public knowledge.' The man smiled sadly. 'Pity. It might serve as a warning others I can think of. Still, they might suspect the "why" of Janus being fed through tubes for the rest of his pain-filled and miserable life.'

And then Optimus' memory came back with full force. He tried to forget for years, and thought he'd nearly managed it: two of these special men casually scything through streets full of protesters who done nothing more than ask for a reduction in work hours for a religious holiday of theirs, that was all. But not on a day the Imperial Church held to be sacred, and some senator's profits had been threatened as well. Optimus and his men had been in charge of mopping up the remains.

'I saw your lot's handiwork once, down in southern Africa. Do you sleep at nights?' Optimus thought he could risk a touch of insolence. No point making it look too easy.

'Excellently, thank you. You know what I can do. And for whom I work. And now you know more than I really wanted to tell you. Make up your mind.'

Gladiators lived by their wits. And a sense of survival helped too. Optimus smiled as sincerely as he could.

'Well, I never did like Janus that much.'

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Even at this late date in the year it was warm in the Colosseum by the middle of the day. The old place had probably never looked better, even when it had first been built. The only anachronistic blemishes were the four huge video screens, put up at around the arena so that everyone could have a close-up view of the action. Otherwise old Commodus would have been completely at home, and he'd probably have liked the display screens at that, for the close-up views of the bloodshed.

The serious business of the day was to come — the gladiatorial contests — and the tiers of seats were full. Millions more than could fit in the arena would be watching, of course, and cameras glittered in the sunlight all around. The whole Roman world would be watching today. And a good part of the rest of human space was taking the feed as well.

Rome was ready for the what the afternoon would bring. The people not crammed into the old amphitheatre were at home, a wine tube in one hand and a remote control in the other. The city, stretching the length of old Italy, was almost quiet. Even the urban cohorts had the afternoon off. Crime would be almost non-existent until the Games were over. The urban prefects liked the Games just for that reason.

Buried deep in the tunnels below the arena, the video production team were cursing their luck. The whole place stank like a zoo, which was hardly surprising, seeing as it very nearly *was* a zoo. A nearly empty zoo after this morning's slaughter, but the director was sure he could hear the gene-spliced lions snoring in one of the more distant tunnels.

It was all well and good for the Imperial authorities to rebuild the old Colosseum to its original specification, but couldn't they have made allowance for camera and, most importantly, cabling? Maybe the original plans hadn't needed it, but today they did! Every few minutes one camera or another was disconnected by some fool tripping over a cable, and the engineers were reaching screaming point with the futility of trying to keep the whole system working. All this had been mostly expected. Outside broadcasts were always trying, and prestige occasions doubly so. But one thing that hadn't been expected was the thin trickle of water — well, everyone was trying not think about what it was too *precisely* — that was seeping down from the toilets above. One of the network slaveclones was supposed to be keeping the mess under control, but a new smell was growing steadily stronger.

A warning light blinked steadily in the semi-darkness, and the director watched it from his seat. The shuttle from the High Palace was on its way, with the Emperor and his retinue on board. He leaned forward and clicked open his link. 'Get ready, people. The Noble Born are on their way, which means this is the last warning you get before show time.'

Overhead, Central Rome was enjoying itself, and better yet the Imperial Purse was paying for it all. The wait was nearly over for the afternoon's action, but the Emperor hadn't arrived. So in keeping with time honoured tradition, Central Rome was arguing with itself. It sounded like every Roman in the place was arguing about something. About good wine, bad wine, the best food to eat at the Games, last night's video drama, the price of food, which senator was in disgrace, the wisdom of buying a

sexclone, and inevitably, the gladiators to be seen during the coming afternoon. All these discussions continued at full volume, because Romans didn't know the meaning of restraint when arguing.

'Live feed in one minute.' The director's voice carried over the link to every network operator in the arena. 'The Emperor's landed, and he's waiting until the end of the commericial break before he moves to his box.'

'Considerate of him.' The anonymous voice came over the feedback circuit.

'Shut it. Remember who you're talking about.'

All around, the crowd chattered on, oblivious to the ads running on enormous screens above their heads. The director's voice was surprisingly calm on the link. 'Running titles. Going live in five, four, three... live.'

The crowd cheered as they saw the Games logo swirl into view on the screens. They cheered again as the view dissolved to show the scene from the gondola floating high overhead. Most of them waved like lunatics, hoping to spot themselves on screen. And then the noise doubled as the view cut to the Imperial box.

Vespasian VIII, Emperor of the Roman Worlds — which for practical purposes meant the whole system and forty more like it — had arrived. Normally the crowd wouldn't have cared two hoots about the arrival of anyone, but this was the Emperor, and it was his money that had entertained them all morning, and his money was about to pay for the afternoon's sport as well. That made him worth more than just a "Hurrah!" or two. Vespasian was also known to be a good sort, a man who followed the Games as carefully as any Sunday afternoon fan and could talk for hours about the doings and scandals of the arena. As far as most Romans were concerned, Vespasian VIII was 'one of us' where the Games were concerned.

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Miles north of the Colosseum, in the Venetia district, two lesser Romans elbowed the cushions aside to give themselves a better slumping position and a better view of the video. This broadcast was going to be free to all, paid for at the Emperor's expense, which made it doubly worth watching. The best Games of the year and a free seat in your own home. Marcus was playing with the remote control, seeing if he had a choice of views for the coming events. He didn't. But at least he could still give his views about the fighters. His thumb hovered over the buttons in anticipation.

Antoninus was amusing himself by sucking the meat off his chicken portions and then trying to flick the bones into the paper bucket on the floor in front of the screen. Most of the time he missed. Occasionally he hit the screen. Behind him Julia watched with mounting frustration as her clean floor was ruined by her husband's idiotic friend. Even worse, Marcus was giggling along with him.

Antoninus burped, and gestured at the wine tube that lay in Marcus's lap. 'Any more of those around? This is skilful and thirsty work, you know.'

Julia sighed and dropped a wine tube over Antoninus' shoulder into his lap. Later on, she and Marcus would have words.

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Vespasian raised a golden goblet. He nodded politely at the ambassadorial box, and then drank deeply. The Maya ambassador nodded back, while the k'Tai gestured to show the proper respect. The client kings — Ashanti, Nippon, Huron, Lakota, Dreampeople — bowed correctly. Relations with the Chinese were a little strained at present, so only a curt nod from that particular direction. The Emperor turned and threw the cup high into the stands. The crowd cheered, and a scuffle broke out around the point where it had landed. He carefully wiped his fingers on his robe and raised his hand.

The crowd fell silent. The praetorians around the Emperor were like statues, eyes fixed on the crowd.

'Let the Games begin!'

A fanfare blew, and the crowd cheered. The city was gathered. The Emperor had arrived. Rome and the world were watching. The gladiators were waiting below. The Games were about to start.

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And down below the stands the gladiators had gathered. Unlike the crowd upstairs, the gladiators had no good reason to smile just yet. The staged hunts of the morning might be over, and the executions of the mid-day meal break had happened, but that just meant that the gladiators' work was about to begin. The afternoon to come was a serious business, a matter of life and death and no mistake. So true professionals didn't smile at this stage, except in one or two cases where years of fighting had bled out any spark of humanity. Men who were about to die had little to smile about. Laughter was for another time and another place. Some of them would celebrate tonight. The rest would enjoy the company of the Ferryman.

At best they scowled each other and avoided each others' eyes whenever possible. Better not to look in the eyes of a man you might be killing in a hour or so. The gladiators stood or sat, each according to his mood, in relative silence, stretching limbs and warming up muscles, working armour into place as comfortably as possible. It was a time to concentrate and work on getting the last strap on the last piece of armour just so, the edge on a steel blade honed to perfection, and the mind set on the killing to come.

Optimus sat alone, as usual. His head was bowed, and his eyes fixed on the net weight he was toying with. He had one been considered a handsome man by the women who worked the Legion camp, but years of constant training and fighting had not improved his looks. The left side of

his face was heavily scarred and sunken, a momento of leaving half his teeth on the sand at the amphitheatre in Capua Nova. That had been his second combat, and he'd got too close to his opponent. The shield edge smacking into the side of his head had nearly finished him, but he'd managed to break away and keep his distance long enough to spit out his broken teeth and let the ringing in his ears disappear. Then he'd killed his man with one smooth thrust to the throat that had left the crowd in an amazed silence. Optimus had been equally amazed at his own luck and skill that day. The gravity at the Mars province hadn't been easy to adjust to.

Now, five years later, Optimus thought of himself as an old hand. Fighting as a retiarius, he had less gear to worry about than most, just a heavy insulated leather sleeves and metal shoulder guards. Once they were in place and comfortable, he had little to do but wait. He'd had spent a few minutes honing the already-lethal trident points to an even nastier sharpness, and given the edge of his dagger a keen edge too — anything to get the smallest advantage was useful work in his book.

Now he was checking every knot and weight in his net. Thrown properly, it could entangle an opponent, and it carried enough charge to really hurt him, at least once. In all likelihood it would be cut to ribbons his fight. It usually was, but care and attention never hurt, and the ritual kept him busy until it was time. With forty victories under his belt, Optimus certainly wasn't a novice any more, and his scars proved it, but he still felt tense before a fight. It got worse each time, not better. And last night hadn't helped a bit. *Before* didn't matter, though, just as long as he was relaxed on the sand: relaxed and deadly.

Optimus looked up as Cornelius Metellus, the lanista, fussed over some trivial detail: a smudge on a shield that needed polishing. A slave rushed to see to it with a soft cloth. Always, there were last minute adjustments to be made, a breastplate that wasn't quite right, a loose strap, something to catch his eye and bring out his perfectionist streak. A cameraman was following in his wake, but he had enough sense not to come too close to the fighters. No gladiator liked having a camera shoved in his face before a match. More than one novice cameraman had found that out the hard way.

Today Metellus was also a worried man. The visit last night had only put him really on edge. The Emperor was going to be sitting upstairs. The Emperor's money was paying for all of this. The camera crews would be broadcasting everything to the system and beyond. Until everything was over and the last fight had been fought to an heroic and successful conclusion, the lanista would have to be a worried man. His payment depended upon creative worrying about his gladiators and their part in the Games. Time to remind them all what was at stake.

Optimus watched as the lanista walked to the end of the room, and climbed onto a large box of bandages. The cameraman shut down his transmission, as was customary and faded into the background. The citizens didn't need to see or hear this bit.

'All right, listen to me, you scum. These Games are important today. The Emperor is honouring the memory of the Sainted Augustus, the Father of the Empire, whose very dung was worth more than all of you lot put together.' Metellus paused for breath and looked round. His audience didn't move or show any signs of being offended. Optimus nodded quietly to himself: the usual warm-up speech.

'You've cost enough to feed and train over the last few months. The saints know that you all eat like pigs, so make sure that you prove that you've been worth all the care and attention I've lavished — lavished, do you hear — on you. This is a quality crowd in here in Central Rome, and they know their stuff, so fight hard and fight well. Anyone who doesn't try will soon be spotted and won't leave the arena in one piece, I can tell you! So no kiss-in-the-ring stuff, no tricks, no little deals to go easy on each other. I know I've taught you how to do that stuff — and told you to do it in the past. But not now. Not getting killed is for late shows and the provinces.

'Today you're in the Old Colosseum. And *these* are the Games that matter. The Emperor's paying for a good show, and by God, he's going to get one. You know that he can be more than generous to the man who puts on a good show! At the end of the day, there'll be credit lines for the survivors, and freedoms aplenty, I shouldn't wonder. Some of you gain your freedom automatically if you win here today, so think about that too. And for the rest… there'll be good funerals and some money for your loved ones.

'So, don't disgrace me, although I don't suppose any of you ever remember that bit. Don't disgrace the school. Don't disgrace the network. Don't disgrace yourselves. Above all, don't disgrace the Emperor who has paid for all this, and may fortune favour… most of you.

'Well, that's it. Get out there and fight.'

Cornelius paused and then remembered one more thing. 'Anyone who wants me to put a bet down for him say now. Winnings to be split equally among the survivors in the event of a death, of course.'

Optimus stood and held up three fingers towards Cornelius Metellus. The lanista nodded and then came over.

'Are you sure about that? I've seen the list. You've drawn Janus, and he's a quick little bastard. And you're on first.'

'Three hundred. You know my account's good for it. I can take him. See if you can get odds on us both surviving, but me winning.'

'What? Are you mad? That's damn unlikely. Probably impossible here.' Cornelius Metellus was looking at him with saucer-sized eyes. The lanista knew that something was up, but not what. He spoke quietly, 'Optimus, these Games won't see many spared.'

'Just do it.'

'It's your money. And your life. Luck.' Metellus turned and walked away, shaking his head in disbelief. Optimus watched him go. There were now

three hundred hard-earned sesterces riding on the outcome of his fight. Metellus looked after the money for all the slave gladiators, of course, but in this the lanista was scrupulously honest. Optimus trusted Metellus to get him good odds. Then he turned and walked out towards the arena. There were two more camera crews in the tunnel up.

Optimus scowled. He would only collect his money if he lived through the afternoon.

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Coming out of the tunnel, the lighter was always brighter than Optimus expected. He squinted slightly as he looked up into the stands, although only the first few rows could see directly that his face was screwed up. Grimacing so that he'd look mean and like a killer, that's what they'd think. His mean image gazed out from the four huge screens.

As always, the crowd went wild. They were ready to see blood spilled today.

Optimus was worried, although he didn't let it show. He'd been matched against Janus as the *speculator* had predicted. That the match pairs could be fixed like that in this particular arena spoke further volumes about the power the *speculator* had represented.

He knew Janus, and what he knew wasn't good. Janus fought as a mirmillo, and was a three year veteran with more than thirty clean kills to his name. That total alone was worthy of note in someone who'd only been fighting for three years. That meant he was good. The man had never been seriously injured in all that time. He'd never needed time to recover and heal.

The same could also be said of his opponents. None of them had ever had chance to ask for mercy, and the chance to heal. They'd all been dead on the sand before they'd needed to throw themselves on the crowd's mercy. Even worse, the man was supposed to be fast, even under the weight of all his armour. If this were true, and his record said it was, the coming fight was going to be hard indeed — as a retiarius, Optimus relied on being a lot quicker than his opponent to stay out of real trouble. And he had to carry out the praetorian's orders as well.

Optimus stepped forward in line with the rest of Metellus' gladiators and raised his trident in salute towards the Imperial box. Along with the others, he bellowed out the traditional salute. Optimus was in the front rank, and he could see the Emperor very clearly through the ballistic glass around the box. He had to give him his due: Vespasian VIII was an inspiring figure to be slaughtered for.

'Ave, Caesar! Morituri te salutant.' *Hail! We who are about to die, salute you.* The gladiators had a right to be proud at this moment. It was their moment of glory. Before the reality of blood and death.

The crowd roared back. The cameras swung round, trying to capture the full atmosphere of the occasion for the home audience. It seemed difficult

to believe that the crowd could make any more noise, but somehow they managed it.

The gladiators broke ranks, and nearly all headed back to the shade of the tunnel to await their matches. Optimus , however, stood where he was, turning slowly to get the measure of the arena. He'd never fought in the Old Colosseum before. Twenty yards away his opponent, Janus, was doing the same thing. The sun glinted on his armour and off his helmet. No chance to see his eyes, see what he was thinking.

Optimus shook out his net and waited for the crowd to go quiet. Janus walked towards him and then stopped, around five yards away. As if on cue, the noise died down. Optimus tensed his shoulders, then relaxed into a crouch facing the mirmillo. Any moment now. Any moment…

He didn't hear the Emperor's voice starting the fight, and only heard the last notes of the fanfare dying away seconds later. Janus was on him, stabbing forward with this sword and trying to get inside the reach of the trident. The man *was* fast.

Optimus shortened his grip on the trident and backed up quickly. He swung the net in a lazy half-circle, not really expecting to connect, but certainly hoping that Janus would pause and back away slightly. One of the net weights flicked across the mirmillo's face mask and into an eye slit. There was a crackling discharge and Janus' head jerked back and in that instant Optimus stabbed forward with his trident. The heavy prongs skittered off the mirmillo's shield, doing no damage.

Optimus couldn't tell whether he had hit the man's eye or not. Certainly he was more cautious now, circling around and waiting for an opening, but the trident's longer reach was keeping him at bay. The two gladiators sized each other up. Optimus could still tell nothing from the man's posture, and then he noticed a slight trickle of blood coming from under the mirmillo's helmet on the left side of his neck. He had been lucky after all! Janus *was* hurt, but how much?

Optimus circled to his right, hoping that Janus now had a blind spot. The mirmillo followed him round, turning his whole body, rather than just his head to keep the retiarius centred. Then the mirmillo moved forwards with almost supernatural speed, knocking aside the trident with his sword and delivering a powerful almost-punch to Optimus' chest with his shield. If the retiarius hadn't been moving backwards out of the way, he would have been winded and knocked down by the blow. As it was, he was badly bruised.

Whatever else, Janus didn't lack guts, that much was certain. Even the fish on his helmet looked malevolently brave at the moment.

In the stands, the excitement was rising. Everyone had spotted that the mirmillo was bleeding on the video screens, and they all knew that the fight was on in earnest now. These two were as well-matched a pair as had started any Games in a long time.

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A couple of hundred miles north in Venetia, the excitement was also mounting. Julia had stopped fussing in the kitchen and now sat as riveted to the action as either of the men. She'd been on the phone for a couple of minutes.

 'Ten on the retiarius!' Marcus was sure that Optimus was going to win. Faith in the gods, and a baked fish for breakfast (caught by a fisherman in the past, probably, which had to be an omen of sorts, now that he thought about it) that morning told him that the retiarius would win. Quite where he was going to find that much money was a problem for later. Behind him, Julia shook her head in silent frustration and despair at his stupidity. She looked after all the money in the household.

'Twenty!' Antoninus slapped his friend on the shoulder. He couldn't really afford such a wager, but the Games were supposed to be fun! And if the worst came to the worst, there were plenty of moneylenders around.

'I'll enjoy drinking your health with your money!' Marcus recognised a stupid bet when he heard one, but he took it all the same.

They turned back towards the screen as, in dying colour, the fight came to life in a flurry of action. The Colosseum crowd cheered both gladiators on.

- o O o -

Optimus leapt forwards, stabbing towards the mirmillo's chest with his trident, looking for a tiny gap in the armoured man's defence. The trident clanged on metal, and Optimus fell back, his net trailing in the sand, closely followed by Janus. The mirmillo stamped forward, lunging out with his sword and trying to catch the nimble retiarius, but the lighter Optimus moved aside, this time to his left, too quickly.

The mirmillo continued to press forwards, and took another step, right onto the net which Optimus had laid down for just this moment.

'Come on you moon-faced pimp!' Optimus spat into the mirmillo's face mask. Anything to anger him, because angry men made mistakes. He tried again. 'Little girl. Useless fop. *Maya lover!*'

That seemed to do the trick. Janus lunged and then pulled back quickly as Optimus shortened his grip again on the trident. The mirmillo was still off-balance as his sword was easily knocked aside by the trident. And then he was down, his front leg snatched from under him as Optimus heaved on the net and turned on the power. Janus yelled, from surprise more than pain. The thud as the mirmillo's body landed was heard in the suddenly quiet arena. Optimus was on him in an instant, trident raised in both hands, ready to drive through him and on into the sands. The crowd could see that the end was near.

But it wasn't. As the trident stabbed down, somehow the mirmillo managed to get his sword up and slow down the blow and divert it. Instead of spearing him to the ground, the trident tore into Janus' thigh and caught his groin: a bloody wound, but necessarily not a fatal one. Optimus had missed the artery. The mirmillo managed to hook his shield

behind Optimus' knee, and the retiarius was down in a swirl of dust as well.

- o O o -

Antoninus was theatrically despairing, knocking his wine tube onto the floor. 'There goes my money. Useless bastard. He might as well be drinking with us!' He waved an accusing finger at the screen.

Marcus stopped cheering and grinned at his friend. 'Well, I'll be waiting for my money. Your man was doing all right, but you said he'd win, remember?'

Mention of money brought Antoninus to his senses. 'Bah. The stupid bastard fell over, that's all. Anyway, your damn fisherman hasn't won yet.'

Julia was getting interested in the fight. In the kitchen, she'd called out and placed a bet on Optimus. To win.

- o O o -

Janus the mirmillo rolled away out of trouble, his shield clattering as he did so. He staggered to his feet, favouring his wounded left leg and his torn groin. Optimus was certain that the man would never father a child, not now. The blow had been a good one. Janus backed away slowly from the retiarius, and settled down into a combat stance before coming forward again. Blood was running heavily down his legs now, and trickling down his neck. The end was coming, one way or another.

Optimus was up as well, but his right knee seemed to be troubling him. And he'd dropped his net. Janus was now standing on it with both feet, so for the moment there was no chance of getting it back.

The whole audience was cheering and stamping their feet. Here were two fighters who were men. Neither was about to roll over and die easily. This was what they wanted to see!

Janus shambled forward as quickly as he could, but Optimus was quicker. He stabbed forwards and down towards the mirmillo's front foot, and caught it with one prong, pinning it to the floor. Another wound, but hardly fatal. He pulled the point out of Janus' foot and twisted it as he did so, opening the wound up so that it would further hurt the mirmillo. Janus just kept coming forwards without a sound. His only chance was to get in close and cut Optimus down as quickly as possible.

Optimus had no intention of letting this happen. He moved back and let Janus follow him again, the mirmillo leaving bloody footprints on the sand as he came. Then, to shout of astonishment from the crowd, Optimus rushed past the mirmillo, swinging his trident like a quarterstaff as he did so. He caught the mirmillo across the back of the helmet and the man was down again. However, Optimus didn't get away cleanly. A long cut along his ribs now bled freely. Janus had managed to get a cut in. Wounded as he was, the mirmillo was still a fast opponent.

Optimus hesitated when he felt the cut start to burn, and in that moment, he was almost lost. Janus managed to turn around and smash aside his trident with the shield. He followed it with a lunging cut that scraped the length of Optimus' forearm, while the shield rim caught him in the mouth, cutting his lips. Optimus stamped down on Janus' wounded foot, and the mirmillo sobbed and pulled back again.

'Not good enough, gelding!' Optimus spat a mouthful of blood at the mirmillo as he spoke.

Optimus held the trident in front of him and circled slowly to his left. One step. A lunge at Janus to keep him honest and at a distance. Another couple of steps, and then he was standing almost on top of his abandoned net. He stooped and snatched it up, just as Janus lumbered forwards once more and tried to stab him. This time, he nicked Optimus on the ear as the retiarius snatched his head to one side. In return, he took another blow on the side of his helmet which must have made his ears ring, if nothing else. Janus was now visibly slowing down as his wounds took full effect, but as far as Optimus was concerned, he was still too fast.

Time to slow him down still further. If he could, of course.

Optimus shook the net out and started to swing it in a large, lazy circle. Every time it went round he could feel the cut on his ribs open up. This would have to be done quickly, and there would be no second chances. It had to be done right.

Janus, he knew, would be watching the net carefully, trying to judge when it would thrown at him. If the net caught him properly, the fight would be as good as over. Once Optimus had Janus trussed up, he could kill him quickly and easily.

Optimus swung the net more aggressively, looking for the chance to entangle the mirmillo. Janus, however, wasn't about to co-operate in his own downfall. He closed quickly, but not quite quickly enough. The net swung in a half-circle and wrapped itself around his helmet but it also wrapped itself around his right arm and his sword. Optimus saw his chance and, planting his trident firmly in the sand, he used it as a lever as he delivered a powerful drop-kick which landed perfectly on the mirmillo's shield.

Janus gasped as the shield came back and winded him completely. The lower edge caught his thigh and the cracks of bone giving way from his leg and ribs was clearly audible. He fell backwards, completely lost and gasping for air. The net stopped Janus getting his sword arm round to lever himself up, and second later the weight of Optimus pushing down on his chest stopped him from moving at all. His ribs moved under the fresh assault, and he coughed, wetly. The retiarius heaved on the broken leg and Janus screamed. All the fight went out of Janus in that instant, and he collapsed, sobbing heavily.

The crowd roared.

Optimus didn't move an inch, even when the crowd's cheers reached a new crescendo. He'd won, and quicker than he'd expected. Janus was crippled. That leg would never work again. Neither would his manhood, come to that. Last night's visitor should be satisfied. And he was at least 300 sesterces richer to boot. He hoped that Metellus had got him good odds.

In theory, there was one more blow to deliver and his afternoon's work would be done. Under normal circumstances, the mirmillo would be joining his ancestors. Today, however, Optimus had the suspicion that Janus would be spared.

Optimus looked up at the Imperial box, waiting for the verdict on Janus' performance. He stood up and pulled the net off the mirmillo; the charge crackled weakly as it came away. He knelt down and pulled away the mirmillo's helmet. One of his eyes was ruined too, by the look of the thing.

The crowd became quieter.

The sections of the crowd that Optimus could see were all signalling for mercy. The audience at home would all be voting too, but their verdict meant little. The Emperor, as editor of the Games, had final say on matters of life and death.

In the Imperial box, Vespasian was a happy man. It had been a good opening fight, an auspicious start to the Games. And his orders had been carried out to the letter. Janus was crippled for life. The man would never be free now, but could hardly continue in the arena. Or the bedroom. Perfect.

Vespasian looked round at the crowd in the Colosseum, and saw that they mostly wanted the mirmillo spared. He gestured to an aide, who brought him the home voting figures for the Rome conurb. They wanted the man spared as well.

On a day like today, being Emperor had its compensations. Vengeance was his, and the mob was kept happy at the same time. Not everyone could afford to be as 'merciful' as he was about to be. It was always good politics to give the mob what it wanted at the Games. Vespasian stood, and looked appropriately severe for a man about to pronounce on life and death.

He paused, and raised his thumb.

Missus.

Life.

In that moment Optimus knew exactly who had arranged this fight and who wanted Janus maimed. It was the Emperor, a "powerful enemy" indeed for Janus to have made. And now his "powerful friend", for as long as Imperial gratitude lasted.

The crowd roared its approval. A gladiator must expect to die sooner or later. But today, for Janus the mirmillo, it was going to be later rather than sooner. Assuming they got him to the quacks in time of course. Even from here, Vespasian could see that the man was bleeding quite heavily.

The mob cheered again and Vespasian gave them his best regal wave. Once in a while it didn't hurt to be one of the people of Rome, rather than dictator to the people. The mob knew that they ruled in the arena, if nowhere else. And wise rulers knew this too.

Optimus sheathed his dagger and bowed to the Imperial box, then started walking towards the Gate of Life. Cameramen closed in on him, eager for close-ups of the victor. He did his best to smile through bloodied lips.

Behind him, the next pair were readying themselves. Overhead, the video screens were running a series of commercials.

- o O o -

Antoninus had gone home in a fit of pique, his debt to Marcus unpaid.

Marcus was watching the rest of the Games, but his excitement was curiously dimmed by his friend's sudden departure. And his unpaid money.

Julia had said nothing. Her resentment against Marcus was a long term thing. She was already thinking about buying a new dress with her winnings. The chicken grease on the floor could wait.

- o O o -

Optimus was lying flat on his back in the surgeon's rooms beneath the arena. Here, at least, the restoration hadn't been carried out to the original plans. The medical technology was the best that the Empire could provide. Two interns fussed over him, watched by a senior surgeon. The Games, after full-blown war zones, were the best training grounds for practical anatomy to be found anywhere in the world. One of the interns was Maya, as if to prove that very point.

Optimus had his eyes closed as fingers prodded his wounds. His head hurt less that way. The rest of his body just ached as the pain killers took effect.

'Optimus.' The voice was quiet, but still menacing for all that.

'Yes, praetorian?' Optimus was having a little difficulty speaking, thanks to the staples holding his ripped lips together, but he knew better than to use his visitor's proper title.

'You did well out there. I've personally checked on Janus. His leg's had to be removed, poor man. The last twist didn't do it any favours. That was quite nasty of you, by the way. Three ribs were broken and surgeons are unsure if they can save the right lung. The eye is definitely useless. They can save the thing, but not his sight. And — and here I am mocking the

afflicted — the low blow you delivered was very successful as well. My sponsor is more than satisfied with your afternoon's work.'

'Janus won't have to be fed through a tube, then?' Optimus remembered what the *speculator* had said before the fight. 'And no restorative surgery, either?'

'No. And no, his owner doesn't seem inclined to pay for the repair work. This is most satisfactory. He'll have to be pushed around for the rest of his days — and he'll never interest the ladies again.'

'I'm pleased you're pleased. Now go away.'

'Optimus, I'm hurt. By the way, your case is now being reviewed and a terrible miscarriage of justice will be found later on this week. As soon as you're healed, there's a place for you in the Legion Academy in Ravenna, just so you can refresh your skills.' There was a pause. 'Or, if you want, I can have a word in a certain quarter. We in the "executive arm" of the praetorians are always looking for talented men who have a way with violence.'

'No. I know what you are, what's been done to you. So just go away, now.'

'You don't have to decide immediately. Think it over. Our powerful friend thinks it might be a good idea.'

Optimus sighed. His career in the arena was over. Now he would be a bio-augmented assassin, not an honest soldier again.

Imperial gratitude was going to be a hard burden to bear.

History In 'Theatre of Pain'

While based on the gladiatorial Games of classical Rome, the background world of **Theatre of Pain** is one where the Roman Empire never fell, the barbarians never came, and the Dark Ages never happened. Instead, the Roman Empire has risen to dominate Earth and 'now' is some 2750 after the foundation of Rome by Romulus. This is the year 1997 according to the Christian calendar.

Having had a 1800 years or better head start on the modern world, the Empire has managed to conquer space, establish colonies on other planets in the solar system and even reach other stars. The Empire is (sort of) Christian, but also retains a healthy respect for its traditions including the Games. These are now broadcast across the whole Empire as the biggest spectator sport in history. For anyone interested in the 'history' of the Empire, an appendix at the end of this document gives a general time line up to the present day, including most major technological, political, religious and military developments. One of the constant threads in this history is the place of the Games — at the moment they are undergoing something of a renaissance, and much effort and ingenuity is expended by the Empire in making them both exciting and retaining their traditions. Some fighting styles, for example, date back millennia while, on the other hand, the latest techniques in genetic engineering and nanotechnology have been applied to create fearsome 'monsters' for the arena...

Reality in 'Theatre of Pain'

The Roman Games were, without doubt, the bloodiest sport ever invented by man.

The first Games were originally held at the funerals of the 'worthy dead', but the Games soon came to be held for other reasons. At times special 'Votive' Games were held were to thank the Gods for their help in times of trouble such as wars, plagues and floods. Pragmatically, the Romans usually left these Votive Games until five or ten years after the problem has occurred, just in case the Gods hadn't been much help. After all, there's no point wasting money saying "Thank you" if there is nothing much to be thankful about... Other Games marked regular religious festivals and celebrated military victories throughout the year. Hardly a month went by without Games to mark some event; even the Christmas period is a 'religious appropriation' of the Roman *Saturnalia* festival, which had its own major series of Games. It was also common for men of influence to sponsor rather public 'private shows', although not in the hope of winning influence over the mob, oh no...

When Julius Caesar seized power the Republican power structure was eased aside, but the Games remained. Caesar even owned a gladiatorial school and had a elite bodyguard of gladiators, who proved very useful for intimidating political opponents. The real purposes of his gladiatorial school, however, was to guarantee a supply of good gladiators for the Games and to be profitable in itself. Successive Emperors paid for gladiatorial shows to keep the mob amused and give direction to their frustrations and energy. Over the years the Emperors gradually came to monopolise right to stage Games, and the pretence that gladiatorial

games were private shows put on by any wealthy private individual was dropped. The chance to influence the mob was invaluable for imperial power.

The Games were important to Rome and the Romans on many levels. Throughout their long history, the Games kept a quasi-religious and commemorative air which was important in maintaining a 'Roman identity'. They helped keep alive the idea that 'the Senate and People of Rome' could still be important in the larger scheme of things. It was the whole of the Roman population that attended the Games, from the humblest of citizens living on the dole to the mightiest of senators and the Emperors themselves.

Emperors Caligula and Claudius were both popular with the common people because they made a point of putting on good Games and being seen to be enjoying themselves. Marcus Aurelius, who was among the best and most learned Emperors, was not popular because he used to conduct state business while in the Imperial box. He, however, was an exception. Most Emperors spent their money and enjoyed doing it, both on amphitheatres and on the Games themselves.

When it was completed in 80AD, for example, the Colosseum could also be deliberately flooded so that small naval battles (*naumachia*) could be staged 'properly', or covered with artificial scenery so that mock hunts of exotic wild animals could be staged. The building was equally lavish in its decoration: the amount of marble in the Colosseum provided Christian church builders with a ready-made quarry for centuries. And this was only one amphitheatre, although admittedly the greatest. The Roman world was dotted with equally awesome buildings for the Games.

The Games themselves could be as lavish as the setting. Trajan, for example, used 5,000 pairs of gladiators in the Games to celebrate his triumph in the Dacian War in 107AD. Men and animals were used up in prodigious quantities, so that the prisons were often emptied overnight. The European lion was completely wiped out by the demand for animals to slaughter, which caused early Christian leaders to actually praise the Games for doing something useful!

The Romans took the Games to every corner of their Empire and an amphitheatre was one of the symbols of being 'Roman' that marked a city out as being properly integrated into the Empire, and not just a barbarian backwater. An amphitheatre was just as much a mark of civilisation as a forum or public baths. Even in Greece and the 'civilised' Eastern provinces, large and impressive arenas for *monomachia* (the Greek term for the Games) were built. And everywhere the Games were attended by all levels of society. Going to the Games was a very Roman thing to do and, as most people in the Empire wanted to be properly Roman, most people went to the Games…

And in the middle of all this were the gladiators themselves: for the most part slaves and criminals condemned to an almost certain death sentence in the arena, facing another man in exactly the same situation. It was the 'almost certain' element that separated the Games from other punishments. Being sentenced to the Games (*ad ludos*) was considered

relatively merciful, because there was a chance of survival, (unlike being sentenced to work in the mines, to public execution or to being thrown to the lions). A few freemen also chose to fight in the arena, possibly out of desperation or poverty, but once a man became a gladiator his origins ceased to matter. His life was brutal and often short, his training hard and his life expectancy entirely at the whim of a howling mob. But when all that is said, survival — and better — was possible. If a man could survive his years in the arena he could win his freedom and 'come back from the dead'. A few gladiators achieved 'superstar' status in Rome: girls carved their names on walls, the Emperors invited them to dinner and they lived in luxury. Such were the rewards for the few, but many ended up being dragged from the arena by meat hooks.

Gladiatorial contests were eventually banned by Honorious (395-423), a century *after* the first Christian Emperor, Constantine the Great. But the Games didn't entirely die out. The bullfights of Spain and the Camargue can be seen as the last, distant echoes of the Roman arena.

Direct Inspirations for 'Theatre of Pain'

Most of the characters in **Theatre of Pain** are based on gladiatorial fighting styles which would have been common in the 'classical' period of the Games, a period which starts roughly at the time of the Spartacus rebellion (72-71BC) and ends with the death of Commodus, who can be judged as one of Rome's maddest Emperors (180-192 AD). This also marks the period when the Empire was still an expanding, vital force. After this time Roman energies were mostly spent on in-fighting, so the Empire never grew further. Commodus, by the way, fancied himself as something of a gladiator and *bestiarius* (a specialist gladiator rather like a bull fighter), and would often appear in public drenched in human blood and carrying a sword. He was also convinced that he was the legendary Hercules reborn. So, only mildly barking mad, then…

Theatre of Pain also draws its material from the man-to-man Games, and not from the full range of Roman 'entertainment' staged in the arena. For our purposes in creating a beat'em up game, the Games are ideal: two men would be matched against each other in contest of skill and bravery. Simple slaughter was boring for the audience, so care was taken to make sure that fighters — and fighting styles — were well-matched.

The vast staged animal hunts by *bestiarii* and *venatores* along with the elaborate — even theatrical — executions of prisoners are not included in **Theatre of Pain**. In addition to slaughtering hundreds of animals, the Romans also had a penchant for using prisoners to re-stage legendary and mythological death scenes; a condemned man, for example, might be chained to a rock and dressed as Prometheus. Trained eagles would then rip his liver out in a public show of justice and history in action…

One important point does need to be made: the Games were more than just simple butchery. They had a symbolic and religious importance as well (the 'return from the dead' of a victorious gladiator being only one part of this, but the part that troubled Roman Christians the most). The stylised fighting styles of gladiators were as carefully evolved as any modern sporting event to demonstrate the skill and bravery of the

contestants. The violence of the Games may be troubling to a modern viewer, but modern entertainment includes violence in the 'right' context in sport and drama — any number of action movies have incredibly high body counts, and any number of sports are implicitly violent (eg boxing, but also rugby and American football). Indeed, this games design itself can be seen as an example of this kind of implicitly sanctioned and codified violence. The violence of the arena has to be seen in its own context: it was carefully controlled and codified in a specific setting and at a careful remove from the audience. Seen that way it is scarcely any more excusable to modern eyes, but it becomes understandable.

A Modern Empire?

How reasonable is it to suppose that Rome could have survived to become a technological superpower?

One critical change has been introduced into the time line of the Roman Empire to enable it to survive until 2750/1997: Hero of Alexandria's steam turbine works, and is applied to power machinery, at the behest of the Imperial authorities who recognise a good idea when they see it. Everything else that follows develops from that one change. By the way, Imperial sponsorship of inventions and technology is not so far fetched as it might seem. Egypt, the province where Alexandria is located, was ruled as the personal estate of the Emperor because it was Rome's bread basket (the city of Rome relied on Egyptian corn to feed its citizens). Successive Emperors and Prefects of Egypt in this time line take an interest in technology and use it primarily to further their own power; keeping civilisation going is a secondary benefit, seen from this perspective! The great patrician families come to realise that wealth can be based on industry just as surely as on land holdings. With that realisation comes money for new inventions and processes, and the way forward is assured.

With the technological lead that Rome gains from having steam-powered industries, it is able to conquer the barbarian hordes before they become a threat. As a result, the Empire never falls, although it totters occasionally, and is often subject to brutal power struggles. But, for our purposes, the Dark Ages don't happen and a thousand years of stagnation and misery are avoided. As a consequence the Renaissance never happens because there is no need. The Empire survives and thrives, as much because it works as for any other reason. With such a head start, Rome manages to reach the New World, annex Africa, defeat its rivals, conquer space and, eventually, reach other stars.

Although the following is not directly relevant to this particular Mirage product, humanity is actually split into three major power blocs. The largest of these is, of course, the Roman Empire. The others, the Mayan Empire and the Chinese Hegemony, are not completely powerless. Relations are fairly cordial at the moment between Rome and Maya, but distinctly frosty with the Chinese. The Romans are also keeping a massive secret: they are discovered traces of an second alien race, but have no idea of this race's intentions or capabilities…

III
Game Overview

Game Structure

Theatre of Pain includes a total of 14 all-new characters, most of whom are based on prototypes from the Games of Classical Rome. Although **Theatre of Pain** is based on a historical reality, that has not been allowed to become a straight jacket for the game design; it has been a source of inspirational material. Like all fighting games, **Theatre of Pain** includes fantastic elements in the gameplay which wouldn't have been present in the original Roman Games. The 'fantasy' characters have been created to be as distinctive as possible while fitting in with the overall flavour and background logic of the game.

The game includes two bosses and two hidden characters. The hidden characters are only revealed in play when the player fulfil very specific conditions, one set of conditions for each hidden character.

The Standard Game

This standard game in **Theatre of Pain** is as simple as possible, so that a player be fighting in little more than the game's loading time. Basically, all the has to do is set up some game options, choose a gladiator from one of the ten basic types, pick an opponent and then fight. Here the object is to rack up the highest score for a single fight or for his whole 'career' (until he runs out of continues or has defeated every other character in the game). A second player either picks his own character before a fight begins, or can take over from the computer AI at any point during a fight.

Players can choose to control a boss or hidden character in combat if this character has been previously defeated in the game.

Arch Enemies

In a fighting game the player moves onto the next fight with a fresh opponent once he has defeated his current opposition. In **Theatre of Pain** this progression is structured, so that the player fights his opponents in a fixed pattern regardless of the character he is using, although the exact details vary each time the game is played. The player always has 8 fights against opponents of his choice; his penultimate battle is against one of the bosses, and his final fight is against the character's arch enemy.

Each character has been created with a reason for hating one of the other characters and an individualised speech which is delivered during the final showdown. Until all the other characters in the game has been met and defeated the player can't fight against his character's arch-enemy in that character's individual 'showdown' match and bring the game to a successful conclusion for that character.

Linked Standard Games

If time permits two-player games on the PC will include communications links to allow two-player, two-machine games. This allows players to challenge each other across the phone system. This is an important consideration in the US where calls in the same area code are free, and is likely to become equally important in the UK where cable TV companies

offer free off-peak phone connections between cable customers; BT may feel it necessary to respond by reducing its own off-peak call charges.

Theatre of Pain In Battle

The basic fighting system of **Theatre of Pain** will be recognisable to anyone who has played a fighting game before. The genre does not lend itself to revolutionary changes, and the development time scale precludes any major departures from the norm. The improvements to the system are there to make the computer controlled opposition more of a challenge at all levels of play.

There are 10 different types of basic gladiator along with two hidden opponents and two bosses, all of whom can be controlled, temporarily, by a second player during fights. Once defeated, these characters are fully playable in subsequent games. Each of these characters has a unique combination of weaponry, armour and combat moves.

Arenas

As in baseball, each arena brings in its own ground rules which alter gameplay. The most obvious changes to the player will be in the level of danger associated with each arena — the bigger the arena, the more the crowd want to see blood and the more likely it is that a gladiator will be killed (ie use up a 'continue') if defeated in a fight. However, death is not a certainty, even for the loser. **Theatre of Pain** includes a 'crowd simulator' element, a system which monitors a character's aggression during a fight in a very straightforward fashion. If the player loses (or surrenders) he 'throws himself on the mercy of the crowd' and the crowd simulator decides whether or not he put up a good show and gives him the appropriate 'thumbs up' or 'thumbs down'.

The Tournament Game

The second type of game in **Theatre of Pain** is the tournament.

The object is to win through a series of fights and be crowned Imperial Champion in a series of knock-out matches. Up to eight players each select a character (duplicates are not allowed), and then match pairs are created. The players are given the choice of having these assigned randomly or of choosing their matches for themselves. In games with fewer players the game 'makes up the numbers' with computer-controlled characters.

For the tournament play all characters who would normally be available for play can be selected, including bosses and/or hidden characters if these have been beaten or discovered (and beaten). Arch-enemy restrictions and effects are suspended during tournament games.

Linked Games

The tournament structure lends itself admirably to a single machine, because only two players are ever directly involved at any one time (hopefully the others are involved in cheering the winner and mocking the

defeated). However, if time permits a modem or network linked version of the tournament will be developed allowing a number of machines (one per player) to be connected.

's Heritage

Theatre of Pain uses much of the same technology that has been developed for , although the code is being modified and expanded to suit the new subject matter. This evolution of the system should make the game a richer and more interesting experience for the players, and result in a product which can be brought to the market relatively quickly.

Theatre of Pain is an evolution of the game engine in its fighting sequences. The major change on-screen for the player is an addition of a 'mercy marker' (a thumbs-up, thumbs-down indicator) which shows whether or not the relevant character is likely to be granted mercy by the crowd. Mercy, in this case, allows a character to lose a fight without using up a 'continue' if his performance was exciting and aggressive enough to please the (nominal) 'audience'.

The other on-screen change (which is more subtle) is in the super power bar. As in , this bar indicates the amount of energy which has been built up towards executing a super move. This energy can be spent immediately on a super move, or built up to twice and then three times its normal amount before being used on a much more powerful and exotic super^2 or super^3 move. Lesser amounts of super power energy can be spent on counter moves as well. Counter moves are intended to be executed just as a blow from an opponent is due to arrive, thus neatly reversing the situation.

To Summarise…

Theatre of Pain is intended to be a fun-packed game with a little more strategy and role-playing (or character identification) than the usual run of fighting game.

However, it does need to be recognised that ***Theatre of Pain*** may end up attracting negative criticism as being 'just another 2D game' rather than a system that has moved on to a 'leading edge' 3D system. This is one — rather important — reason why speed in production is an important factor.

IV
The Characters

Character Overview

Theatre of Pain includes 14 (ultimately) playable characters. These are:

Character	Historical Prototype	Type
Caligula	Laquearius†	Standard
Hormazd	tiger	Standard
Janus	Mirmillo†	Standard
Lemure	(Female) Thracian†	Standard
Macro	none	Standard
Nemesis	Dimachaerus†	Standard
Optimus	Retiarius†	Standard
Spartacus	Barbarian†	Standard
Styx	Pugile†	Standard
Vulcan	Dwarf†	Standard
Damnatio	Roman undead spirit	Boss
Lictor	Postulatus†	Boss
Deadlift	crossover character	Hidden
Nanotaur	The Minotaur of Crete	Hidden†

Although altered to reflect the game's background, all of these ***Theatre of Pain*** prototypes appeared in the historical Roman Games as appropriately low-tech versions of what is presented here.

Once the Boss and Hidden characters have been defeated by a player-controlled character they can be used as if they were standard characters in the game.

Arch-Enemies

As noted above, each character has an arch enemy: a particular person or creature that they hate or fear. The defeat of this arch enemy is a personal triumph over and above any ordinary victory for a character. Fights with arch-enemies are the last action of a character, the ultimate personal battle.

Therefore an arch enemy is not available for a fight with the player's character until all other opponents have been met and vanquished.

The diagram below shows the arch-enemy inter-relationships between characters. Note that bosses and hidden characters *do* have arch enemies because they can be used by a player (in a subsequent game) once they have been defeated (found and defeated, for the hidden characters) by a player-controlled character.

Lictor
(Boss)

Damnatio
(Boss)

Spartacus   Lemure   Janus   Caligula

Vulcan   Deadlift
(Hidden)   Nanotaur
(Hidden)

Hormazd   Macro   Nemesis

Styx   Optimus
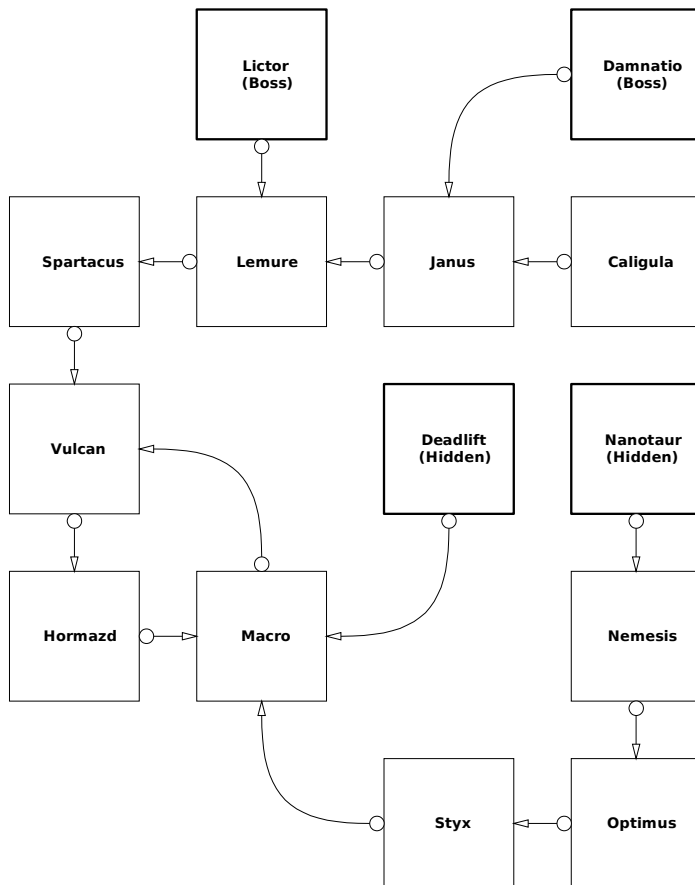
Character Move Summary

All characters have basic and reaction moves, as appropriate for each character (see *Section VI Game Structure and Mechanics*). The characters in **Theatre of Pain** also have special and super moves available to them as shown on the table below.

CharacterSpecial MovesSuper MovesProjectile Move?
Caligula64YesHormazd53NoJanus53YesLemure54YesMacro83YesNemesis65NoOptimus84YesSpartacus33NoStyx64YesVulcan43YesDamnatio†84YesLictor†55NoDeadlift‡33NoNanotaur‡54Yes†   Boss, see Section V of document for full details.

‡   Hidden character, see Section V of document for full details.

Full details of special, super and termination moves are given in each character description. Where the notation 'tba' appears in a move description, the keypad and button combination for that moves is to be assigned at a later date, and will be subject to change during playtesting.

Caligula

Caligula is a rarity among gladiators: a volunteer. He got into the arena because he thought it was a good way of escaping from the slums, and a good way of impressing the local girls too. After all, they spent all their time watching the Games, or talking about how handsome the fighters were, or reading the fanzines, so why shouldn't they be even more impressed with a real live gladiator from their neighbourhood?

By the time he'd killed his first man, Caligula knew that the Games weren't quite the same when you were on the inside. He'd signed his life away, lived in the barracks and the only time he'd been back everyone in the block had been very, very careful around him. He'd been treated like he was some kind of lunatic that might go really crazy at any second. Livia, who he'd done it all for, hadn't known what to say to him. She hadn't really been that interested in him. Caligula hasn't been back again.

Instead, he's learnt everything he can about the Games, and made himself a master at his chosen style. Being a laquearius isn't an easy option, but he's determined to be the best. Using the chain to best effect takes skill, timing and strength. He's got all three, and a few more victories will give him all the fame and money that he'll ever need. Then he can put the stink of the slums behind him.

Caligula thinks of himself as almost too professional to have any particular enemy in the Games, but he doesn't like Janus one little bit. The man hasn't seen the Games as a chance to get out and *be* someone. And if Janus fights on anger and without skill he might just give everyone from the slums a bad name, including Caligula. Cal doesn't want that. He wants to be a Champion. He wants to end up a *somebody*, not a nobody.

Caligula

Character Description

Caligula fights as a laquearius, one of the lightly-armoured gladiators in the Games. This doesn't mean that he is a push-over by any means, though. The only protection that he has are a pair of armoured sleeves which are not to stop him getting hurt, but to help him use his weapons. He has to rely on speed to keep himself out of trouble, because he certainly isn't equipped to slug it out toe-to-toe with the other gladiators.

Although Caligula might seem like a soft opponent, he isn't. None of the gladiators are there simply to be slaughtered. A skilled laquearius is a dramatic and demanding foe who is worthy of respect, and Caligula certainly has the skills to make everyone else think very carefully when they fight him. He is armed (if that is the right word) with a heavy length of spiked, electrified chain that can be used to entangle and flog opponents from a distance. Once an opponent has been worn down, Cal can move in and finish him off, or can keep his distance and finish him with the chain. When he's on form, he can choke an opponent, put out an eye or land a blow to within an inch of where he wants it to go.

Character Motive

The following text appears on-screen as a 'character sketch' for Caligula:

All in all, life in the arena isn't what Caligula expected. He'd thought that it would be exciting, romantic, something to impress the other boys and that pretty Livia from two floors down. But now Livia's married to a fat baker, and no-one from the old block wanted to talk to a trained killer the last time he went back. They're scared of him. So all that's left is the killing. And the chance to finish with it and be wealthy.

Kid's dreams? Kid's nightmares is closer to the truth...

Arch-enemy & Script

Caligula's arch-enemy is **Janus**, another kid from the slums who might just end up dragging them both back there. Caligula wants to be somebody, and Janus can't get the slums out of his system. Perhaps Cal really hates Janus because he is a reminder of the past**...** In a fight with him, Caligula gets to make the following speech, if given the chance by his controlling player:

*'You stupid bastard! We've got the chance of a lifetime, and you can't see it. All you want is to go back. Well, I'm not going to let you have the chance. I want it all. I want to be **somebody**. I want to be a winner. You don't want it. You just don't care about it, so you don't deserve to live.*

'I'm going to whip you to death, Janus. It's the way I'll win. And then I can put you behind me. I'll be the best, the past will be over. Time to rip you up, gutter scum!'

'Home' Arena

The background artwork used for Caligula is the Slum Quarter.

Special Moves

MoveKey combinationDescription TriptbaCaligula manages to get his chain around the leg(s) of his opponent and jerk him off his feet.Quick Lash (3 versions)tbaA lightning fast 'flick' that strikes an opponent at medium range. This attack comes in high, mid and low versions.Long Strike (2 versions)tbaA long slow deceptive swing that hits an opponent at long range. This attack comes in high and mid versions.Super, Super², Super³ Moves

MoveKey combinationDescription Trip & Drag (super)tbaAn extension of the *Trip* move above, but this time combined with a punishing drag along the ground, doing further damage and bringing an opponent into a position where he can be jumped on.Entangle (super²)tbaCal manages to catch his opponent's weapon arm and then move in to deliver a couple of quick, short range blows before his opponent can free himself.Power Whip (projectile, super³)tbaCaligula flicks the chain at his opponent, pulling back at the last instant so that an arc of electric power is projected across the arena.Throttle (termination)tbaCaligula manages to wrap his chain around his opponents neck and choke the life out of him.

Hormazd

With the death of the last naturally-born tiger in the arena a couple of centuries ago, the Games lost a touch of their glamour. Even though Roman scientists were able to recreate the tiger population within ten years, the audiences weren't impressed with simple copies of the real thing. By then tastes had moved on, and the home audience wanted something more, as did the Imperial Household.

Hormazd is the latest product of a series of development programmes based on 'improving' the combat potential of tigers in the Games. Based on gene-splicing of tiger and human material, Hormazd is a savage creature, combining the strength and speed of his tiger ancestors, with the aggression and cunning of a human. The result is a very, very deadly creature indeed. And as if that wasn't enough, Hormazd has been the subject of extensive nano-surgery to further improve his natural weaponry — his claws are now reinforced with a set of diamond-hard cores, as are his teeth.

Hormazd is a favourite of both the general audience and the Imperial Household. His exotic and flamboyant combat style, allied to his unusual appearance makes him an eye-catching fighter. His opponents are less admiring, simply because he is a monster in combat rarely giving any sort of quarter, even when it is necessary.

Hormazd does, however, have one (relative) weakness. He is scared of machinery, regarding it as completely unnatural, and is scared of Macro in particular. This, of course, ignores his own unnatural origins, but Hormazd wouldn't understand those even if they could be explained to him. However, all his fear does is make him an even more savage and unthinking opponent…

Hormazd

Character Description

Hormazd looks remarkably like a humanoid tiger, which is hardly surprising as this is what his genetic designers intended all along. His compact size, however, partially conceals a creature which is every bit as strong as his tiger ancestors, and every bit as dangerous.

In combat Hormazd needs no weapons other than the claws on all four limbs. On occasion he has even been known to bite his opponents as well. Hormazd's combat style would best be described as that of a berserker: even wounds don't seem to slow him down; they just make him angry. More than one opponent has found out the hard way that fighting Hormazd is every bit as dangerous as having a tiger by the tail…

Character Motive

The following text appears on-screen as a 'character sketch' for Hormazd:

*Hormazd has absolutely no complaints about his existence. Hormazd gets to kill people at regular intervals, which is exactly what he wants to do. It's **all** Hormazd wants to do. Hormazd's very good at it. Hormazd was engineered and conditioned to kill and do nothing else.*

Arch-enemy & Script

Hormazd's arch-enemy is **Macro**, simply because all machinery frightens him, and that fear makes him uneasy and aggressive. In a fight with it, Hormazd gets to make the following speech, if given the chance by his controlling player:

'Kill you, metal fuck. Rip you. Eat your metal balls. GRRRAAAAAGH!!'

Not exactly a long speech for this character, but subtlety is hardly his strong suit.

'Home' Arena

The background artwork used for Hormazd is the Imperial Menagerie.

Special Moves

Nearly all of Hormazd's special moves involve jumping and pouncing on his opponent, as should be the case with a tiger-beastman.

MoveKey combinationDescriptionLeaptbaHormazd leaps into the air and attempts to strike his opponent as he somersaults over his head.Diving AttacktbaHormazd jumps into the air and then dives onto his opponent with claws extended.Double Strike
(2 versions)tbaA lightning fast double slashing attack with both claws. This attack comes in high and mid versions.Overhead StriketbaHormazd leaps into the air and attempts to land on his opponent, ripping him with his rear claws as he does so.Super, Super², Super³ Moves

MoveKey combinationDescriptionRaking Attack (super)tbaHormazd grasps his prey by the upper torso while raking down his opponent with his clawed

feet.Berserker Assault (super²)tbaAn all-out no-holds-barred whirling attack of claws and teeth with absolutely no thought of defence at all.Throat Rip (termination)tbaHormazd grapples his opponent and tears out the unfortunate's throat in a bloody fountain of gore.

Janus

Janus can just about remember life before the Games, living with his parents in one of the high rise blocks in old Corinium. It wasn't a happy childhood, like many in the plebeian classes, he dreamed of getting out of the blocks, getting the kind of life he saw every day on the video, but it wasn't to be. He can remember the bigger children taking his dole rations, he can remember his parents fighting. He can also remember that his parents *sold* him to a slave factor to pay off their debts. His own mother sold him into the Games just so that she could keep the wolf from her door for another day. And given the way that his mother drank the family money away, it would only be a day at that.

Unlike the convicts in the Games he isn't guilty of anything, except being born poor. That, and having a string of owners who won't sell him his own contract, is what keeps him in the arena. Janus has hated them all, every single one. They've just seen him as a damn good investment, one to be used carefully and profitably, but not a man. A convict will eventually win his freedom if he survives, but for Janus there's no way out; everything adds to his debt, from his food and medical treatment, to the training that he receives. Every expense gets added to his debt. Janus fights well, using his anger as fuel, and his owners make sure that he gets the chance to fight often, because then he earns more money for them. It's what he does well. His services also get sold to aristocratic ladies for other, less violent, pursuits; that's the other thing he does well.

With this kind of treatment, it's not surprising that Janus trusts no-one. Although he'd never admit it, Janus has a problem with women generally and his mother in particular. He simply can't cope with people who use him as badly. He's been used and then tossed aside so many times. Just when he thinks he can start caring about someone, her interest fades and the money stops coming to his owner and he's back in a cage again, waiting for his next bout of either sort.

Perhaps this is the reason why Janus hates the very sight of Lemure. He's gone up against her a few times in the arena, and on each occasion they fought each other to a standstill. But one day, he'll cut that bitch up, and then he'll find his 'old mum' and do the same to her…

Janus

Character Description

Janus fights as a mirmillo, a sword-and-shield fighter and one of the most ancient types of gladiators, dating back almost 2000 years to before the Empire existed. Over the years, the gear of a mirmillo has changed only a little, but today's armour is made up from much better materials than in the past.

His sword and shield have been vacuum-forged in a microgravity factory to make sure that they are perfectly balanced. His armour is backed by carbon-weave reinforcements, and even his helmet includes nano-constructed materials to give him extra protection. And then, because Romans are traditionalists in all things, the whole lot is carefully camouflaged and made to look much as it would have done centuries ago.

Janus isn't bothered what it looks like. With his medium-weight armour, sword and shield, he is one of the most flexible fighters in the Games. Protected enough to stand up to most opponents, but not weighed down with unnecessary gear that's going to slow him in a fight. His sword work is good enough to cut most opponents down to size very quickly.

Character Motive

The following text appears on-screen as a 'character sketch' for Janus:

Janus can just about remember his parents. His father, anyway, with tears running down into his beard. His mother is harder to remember, but he does remember it was her hand that took the money when she sold him to the slave factor. Well, maybe she's dead, maybe she's alive, but one day Janus is going to be in a position to find out. He's got friends now, friends with influence. When Janus is champion, he's going to find the old woman and sell her, if she's lucky. See how she likes it… Until then, he'll just have to content himself with taking out his hatred on Lemure. What's the stupid bitch doing in the Games anyway?

Arch-enemy & Script

Janus' arch-enemy is **Lemure**, because he has problems relating to nearly all women other than for sex or as objects of contempt. In a fight with her, Janus gets to make the following speech, if given the chance by his controlling player:

*'You bitch. I'm going to cut you up. Make you suffer. Make you **all** suffer. You first, then the rest. I'll get you all sooner or later, but for now, just you.*

*'Nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. Old Janus has his sword ready for you, and soon you'll squeal, just like all the others. Cut you good. See what's underneath that pretty pretty outside. See you **bleed**…'*

'Home' Arena

The background artwork used for Janus is the Provincial Arena.

Special Moves

MoveKey combinationDescriptionShield Bash (2 versions)tbaJanus uses his shield as an offensive weapon, smashing into an opponent with all its weight. This attack can happen at high or mid level.HeadbutttbaBeing equipped with a helmet gives Janus the chance to snap his head forward and use the decorative crest as weapon in its own right.Lunge (2 versions)tbaThis is a long extended attack that gives Janus the chance to attack an opponent at a much longer range than would otherwise be the case; a lunge always attacks at mid level or low. Super, Super², Super³ Moves

MoveKey combinationDescriptionOne-Two Attack (super)tbaAs well as using his shield to break down an opponent's defence, Janus then follows this up with a series of stabbing attacks.Shield Throw (projectile, super²)tbaJanus can use his shield as a kind of heavyweight 'frisbee' to attack an opponent at long range. The shield automatically returns to Janus' hand after the attack.Evisceration (termination)tbaThis move gives Janus the chance to disembowel his opponent in one lightning swift attack, cutting across the stomach in both directions.

Lemure

Although you'd never know it now, Lemure is a former nun, formerly called Sister Purity, one of the acolytes of Vestal Sisters of the Order of Perpetual Truth. At least she was, until she discovered the perpetual pleasures of the flesh. That wasn't really the problem but breaking her vows of celibacy was, and the Church has always taken a dim view of oathbreakers.

With the man she thought she loved so scared of the Order's Inquisitors that he was prepared to say *anything*, Sister Purity didn't have a chance. The Court offered her a choice, and she took the Games as the harshest punishment for herself, knowing that her family would get her a reduced sentence. Only they didn't, and she was sent to the gladiatorial school before the week was out, doomed to fight in the arena for five years at the least… After that, she became Lemure, one of the Roman dead, and dedicated herself to survival. The family had rejected her, the man she'd lost everything for had rejected her, and the Church had rejected her. So all she had to live for was herself.

Since then, Lemure has proven to be one of the deadliest fighters in the Games. Her seeming carelessness about her own life actually disguises a razor-sharp mind that wields a razor-sharp sabre. Her experiences have also left her a rather embittered personality, with few friends and many enemies. One, in particular still haunts her: Spartacus tried to rape her once when they were at the same gladiatorial school (and he still bears the scars), and she has never forgotten this or forgiven him. One day, she'll do far more than cut him a little. She'll cut him a lot…

Lemure

Character Description

Lemure has been trained and equipped to fight as a thracian, one of the oldest gladiatorial types still in the Games. Like all thracians, she relies partly on speed and partly on a good offence to defend herself. She also has the advantage of wielding a wickedly sharp *sica*: a long, curved sword that is perfect for slashing attacks. This is just as well, for she is not heavily armoured with only reinforced armour weave on her limbs to prevent her being injured too easily and carries only a small, round shield.

In combat, however, Lemure has another advantage. Like many of her former associates in the Vestal Sisters of the Order of Perpetual Truth, she is a 'witch' (in common parlance); her particular skills are telekinesis-related. During her years in the Games she has learned to use her talent directly in combat, allowing her to attack with her 'witch powers' at critical moments in matches. This drains her, so she usually relies on her awesome abilities with her sica and shield unless she has no choice in the matter.

Character Motive

The following text appears on-screen as a 'character sketch' for Lemure:

If she stopped to think about it, Lemure would have no complaints about her treatment. She was as guilty as hell, and being sentenced to the Games was about as mild a punishment as she could have expected from the Church court. The Church always comes down hard on those who break the rules, but she liked the man! Family is supposed to count for something, and surely they could have got the sentence changed? But no, her family turned their backs and left Lemure to her fate. What use was the damn family name then? One day, the precious family is going to suffer for turning their backs, oh, yes... And Spartacus, he will suffer too, for another reason.

Arch-enemy & Script

Lemure's arch-enemy is **Spartacus** because the barbarian once tried to rape her. In a fight with him, Lemure gets to make the following speech, if given the chance by his controlling player:

'You bastard, Spartacus. Once you tried to take me, and you couldn't get it up. Now I'm going to make sure that you can never, ever try anything else like that again!

'I'm going to castrate you, barbarian. Then I'm going to gut you. Then I'm going to cut out your eyes. Then I'm going to let you die. But slowly, oh you'll die so slowly...'

'Home' Arena

The background artwork used for Lemure is the Provincial Arena.

Special Moves

MoveKey combinationDescription Full Lunge (2 versions)tbaThis is a full stretch assault by Lemure that allows her to strike an opponent at long range, and then immediately recover ready for another attack. There are two versions of this attack, at mid and low levels.Backhand Strike (2 versions)tbaA rapid spinning attack that allows Lemure to attack from the 'wrong' angle, thus getting past an opponent's defences much of the time. There are two versions of this attack, at mid and high levels.Spinning JumptbaA jump over the head of an opponent, allowing a slashing attack on the (usually unarmoured) back and head.Super, Super², Super³ Moves

MoveKey combinationDescription Diving Attack (super)tbaThis is a jumping dive into the attack, using the sica almost as a spear to pin an opponent to the ground.Psychic Block (projectile, super²)tbaLemure uses her psychic powers to reflect any projectile attack from her opponent back towards him.Psychic Scream (projectile, super³)tbaLemure summons up her psychic powers and then gives vent to a blast of telekinetic energy which is thrown across the arena at an opponent, shattering bones and rupturing muscle when it hits.Emasculation (termination)tbaA particularly fast and definitely low blow that leaves Lemure's opponents with their major organs spilling onto the floor.

Macro

Macro was designed and built by the Hephaestus Company as a combat and riot suppression robot for use in hostile environments. For many centuries his type had been intended for use as shock troops in the stellar provinces, and as riot-control units for use everywhere. Macro and similar machines were sufficient to stop a riot almost instantly, although usually at the cost of heavy human casualties.

Macro is only the most famous of his model to be sent into the arena. As far as he is concerned, Macro just sees gladiators as simply more enemies to be destroyed, and anyone in the Games is an enemy of the Empire by definition. He's programmed simply to kill in the most efficient manner possible for the glory of the Empire. Even self-preservation is secondary to destroying the foe.

Because of this attitude Macro has never really been popular with the crowd. Although he has some spectacular techniques in combat, his unemotional make-up makes him an unsympathetic figure. Even advertisers are reluctant to buy time during his fights because of this 'weakness'; the crowd just can't feel good about his victories. And his victories are numerous, but they have never been emotionally satisfying enough for the crowds watching the Games. That said, Macro has always been reliable where killing his opponent is concerned, which has made him a past favourite with the Imperial Household. A gladiator who loses a fight and costs someone important a lot of money is generally punished by being matched against Macro sooner or later. This is a death sentence in all but name.

Macro

Character Description

Macro is humanoid, but far bulkier than a normal human being. In appearance he is similar to the kind of armoured combat suits issued to the Space Legions, but he is equipped with enormous power gloves rather than any more formalised weaponry. His armour has been carefully modified to provide one or two weak spots, but not too many — just enough to give his more conventional opponents a chance in combat.

His shoulder pads have also been beefed up to provide extra protection, and Macro has perfected a technique of barging into his opponents with them. His 'face' is an extremely simple affair; the craftsmen made no attempt to give him a visible personality, and this only serves to add to his sense of physical menace.

Macro's combat software is quite advanced, and one of the routines that has been developed for him is to copy his opponent's styles in the Games. This often has the effect of confusing his enemies, who are often unused to facing a fighter with exactly the same techniques as they possess…

Character Motive

The following text appears on-screen as a 'character sketch' for Macro:

01001001 0101100001000001010011110101010101 0101010101010000 01001100010010010100110101001101 01000101010101110100010101010100110101101001000010010100000100 0010001011010 01000001010011110100 0100 01001101010101100100000100101001101001001010000110100000101010 1010101000101 0100111001011010 01000111010001010100000101010011010101 00 01011000010010010101010101001000 01010101010010000100010101010010010101001 0100011101001001010000100100110101000101010101010101010100

Arch-enemy & Script

Macro's arch-enemy is **Vulcan**, because the short human is highly favoured by the Imperial Family while hardly worthy of being called a gladiator. In a fight with Vulcan, Macro gets to make the following speech, if given the chance by his controlling player:

'TERMINATION TIME. AFFIRMATIVE.

'INSULT SELECTED: FUCK YOU, ASSHOLE. INSULT DELIVERED.

'DESTROY DEVIANT HUMANOID LIFEFORM. AFFIRMATIVE.

'ATTACK. ATTACK. ATTACK. ATTACK.'

'Home' Arena

The background artwork used for Macro is the Hephaestus Workshops.

Special Moves

MoveKey combinationDescriptionHeadbutttbaMacro has the ability to extend his head on hydraulic neck joints, striking his opponent at a greater distance than a 'headbutt' would suggest.Extended Punch
(3 versions)tbaMacro has the ability to extend his wrist, allowing him to punch to a slightly greater range than would otherwise be the case. This moves comes in three versions, with high, mid and low extended punches possible.Extended Kick (3 versions)tbaMacro has the ability to extend his thigh and shin, allowing him to kick to a greater range than would otherwise be the case. This moves comes in three versions, with high, mid and low extended kicks possible.Shoulder ChargetbaThis is a simple charge at his opponent with one shoulder lowered, intended to knock an opponent off balance or off his feet.Super, Super^2, Super^3 Moves

MoveKey combinationDescriptionStyle Copy (super)tbaMacro has the ability to analyse and copy an opponent's combat style. This move repeats the last special (or super move) carried out by Macro's opponent.Electroshock (projectile, super^2)tbaUnder certain circumstances Macro can cause his power source to boost its output briefly, allowing him to throw an arc of electricity at his opponent.Laser Stare (termination)tbaMacro can grasp his opponent and use his eyes as a very short range laser, effectively boiling away flesh and armour in a quick burst of terminal radiation.

Nemesis

Poor boy makes good, might almost be the story of Nemesis' life in the Games. Or poor boy makes a lot of enemies. And Nemesis has a lot of enemies among the other gladiators. His disgustingly optimistic streak that *he* is going to be the winner hasn't helped, nor has his single minded obsession with money and what he'll do after the Games. Gladiators shouldn't think about the future, because they don't have a future…

Nemesis was sold into the Games by an unscrupulous labour contractor. However, it didn't take him long to realise that he stood a better chance of survival if he won than if he died. And Nemesis also realised that winning has an extra benefit: every win gives him the purse money that will help buy his contract and his life back from the school's owner. Then he can find the man that put him into the Games and show him how much he has learned. Showing him how many different ways there are of cutting into a human body without killing someone.

Nemesis feels nothing but contempt for most of his fellow fighters: they are all criminals who deserve to die, after all, in his opinion. And they stand in the way of his dreams of freedom. As a result, he has rarely shown any of them any real mercy in the arena. However, Nemesis has been beaten, and this is something that he can't forgive very easily. He hates Optimus with a surprising passion, because the man has beaten him before and could beat him again. And if Nemesis is defeated, there's no chance of freedom.

Nemesis

Character Description

Nemesis is one of the lightest armoured of all the gladiators, wearing little more than a bodysuit reinforced with nano-grown armour fibres. This armour is only intended to turn aside cutting weapons: it certainly doesn't offer any protection against the blunt trauma of most blows! All his armour is supposed to do is keep him from being crippled too easily, which would lead to a boring fight for the spectators!

He's been trained to fight as a dimachaerus, armed with two long razor-sharp daggers. The threat of these is also his main defence, other than staying out of an opponent's way. Nemesis is also a dangerous opponent because of his double weaponry. His blades give him a decisive advantage, allowing him to make attacks from 'wrong' angles while still being able to parry. Like left-handed boxers, a dimachaerus faces conventional opponents with all of a southpaw's advantages, and with the ability to attack as a right-hander too!

Character Motive

The following text appears on-screen as a 'character sketch' for Nemesis:

With little to do in the tenements, Nemesis was restless and, unlike many others, desperate for work. The recruiting factor had promised hard work, good pay, probably off-world, which sounded like the best part of the deal. The good pay bit sounded almost too good, but Nemesis signed up anyway. He hadn't realised how hard the work was going to be until the day he woke up with a serious hangover in a gladiator school. His life had become hell on earth, but his contract had been legally sold and there was no way out, other than survival, and then buying his contract back with his winnings. Survival. Victory. And then Nemesis will gut the contractor who sold him into the Games...

Arch-enemy & Script

Nemesis' arch-enemy is **Optimus**, because he knows the retiarius can beat him in a fight. In a fight with him, Nemesis gets to make the following speech, if given the chance by his controlling player:

'Optimus. Optimus! I'm going to cut you up, you bastard. You beat me once, but not this time. I'm going to win. I'm going to slice you, man. Take the prize.

'Don't worry though. It won't hurt a bit.

'I'm here to make sure that it hurts a lot! Hee hee.'

'Home' Arena

The background artwork used for Nemesis is TV Studio.

Special Moves

MoveKey combinationDescriptionDouble Strike
(3 versions)tbaNemesis makes a quick 1-2 strike on his opponent. This attack

comes in three versions, at high, mid and low levels.Spinning Attack
(2 versions)tbaSpinning round on the spot, Nemesis makes two lateral slashing attacks in quick succession; can be carried out while jumping.Backflip StriketbaNemesis uses his daggers as anchors in his opponent, while he flips over backwards, making a kick attack at the same time.Super, Super², Super³ Moves

MoveKey combinationDescriptionDouble Lunge
(super)
(2 versions)tbaNemesis makes an attack at full stretch, with one blade coming in mid and the other low, to confuse his opponent. Alternatively, the attack can also be carried out at mid and high level instead, giving a second version of this move.Windmill Attack (super²)tbaNemesis makes a fast spinning wall of steel in front of himself in the hope of penetrating his opponent's defences with at least one blade.Impalement (super²)tbaNemesis drives one blade deep into his opponent and, while holding it there, makes a number of slashing cuts at the same time.Death Strike (termination)tbaWith almost supernatural accuracy, Nemesis drives one blade into his opponent's throat and the other into his opponent's heart.

Optimus

Optimus started his career as a soldier in the Legions, and he was a good one too. He quickly rose to the rank of Centurion, and he was being trained up for even higher posts.

And then it all went wrong. A minor rebellion needed putting down, and Optimus and his legionaries were assigned to make the drop from orbit onto the rebel stronghold. It should have been simple, but Optimus froze. His mind just stopped working at the thought what he was doing — *falling out of a spacecraft in orbit!* — and as a result his men were cut up badly by the rebels as they landed. The rebels took heart from their victory, and the Legion needed to send in two full cohorts. Even worse for Optimus, his life in the Legion was over. He had failed.

The Legion punishment had been bad enough; he'd run the gauntlet of his former comrades, and then the legates had sentenced him to be broken from the ranks and sent to the Games. He was named as a coward. At the time it seemed only fair, after all. He'd cost good men's lives, so he hardly deserved anything better.

Since then, Optimus has killed and killed again, without feeling and without fear. He's been trying to prove — to himself more than anyone else — that he isn't a coward. If he can only live a little longer, he'll win his freedom and then, maybe, he can go back to the army and try again. Five years of killing ought to prove something about his courage, after all…

Optimus

Character Description

Optimus fights as a retiarius, one of the oldest gladiatorial styles in the Games. Lightly protected, with only armoured sleeves to keep his arms from being cut up too badly, Optimus is armed with a net and a trident. His net is not quite the same an his ancient predecessors would have carried; it is now designed to carry an electrical charge, just to give his opponents an extra sting in action.

He might look outclassed by the other gladiators, but he is not. Tactical retreats and a good attack are his defences. His speed advantage and the longer reach of his weapons also balances up any contest. The trident gives him a weapon which, although it is too ill-balanced for throwing, can easily keep most opponents at bay.

Character Motive

The following text appears on-screen as a 'character sketch' for Optimus:

Life in the Legions had been hard, but life in the Games has to be harder. Convicted for cowardice, Optimus knows that the only way back to real life is over the dead bodies of his enemies in the arena. Only when they're all dead and he's still alive will anyone accept that he wasn't a coward, that he didn't just freeze up. Then he can go back to the Legion. And killing Styx, an enemy of the Empire, would be a real bonus...

Arch-enemy & Script

Optimus' arch-enemy is **Styx**, because the man was once a rebel against the Empire. In a fight with him, Optimus gets to make the following speech, if given the chance by his controlling player:

*'Time to die, rebel. You might have only been sentenced to the Games, but **I'm** sentencing you to death. It's a better fate than you deserve, dying at my hands. I'd sooner see you crucified! 'Cept that'd be a waste of good nails.*

'So, say your prayers, rebel. Ask God and the Emperor for forgiveness, because I'm going to skewer you!"

'Home' Arena

The background artwork used for Optimus is the Gladiator School.

Special Moves

MoveKey combinationDescriptionLunge
(3 versions)tbaA very long range thrust with the trident, to give Optimus a highly dangerous attack at high, mid or low levels (three separate moves).EntangletbaOptimus uses his net to entangle an opponent's weapon or shield, allowing him to close in and deliver an attack.TriptbaOptimus uses his net to catch an opponent's leg, either knocking him off balance or putting him down in a vulnerable position.BlindtbaOptimus uses his net to catch an opponent's head, either knocking him off balance or briefly stunning him.Reverse
(2 versions)tbaRather than stabbing with his trident, this attack gives Optimus

the option of using it at short range like a quarterstaff. This attack can be carried out at high or mid level.Super, Super², Super³ Moves

MoveKey combinationDescription Ensnare (super)tbaThe opponent is completely wrapped up in the net, allowing Optimus to attack with impunity.Drop Kick (super)tbaUsing his trident as a lever or pole, Optimus executes a drop kick on his opponent.Power Cast (projectile, super³)tbaThe net is whirled around and then, instead of being physically thrown, its electrical charge is projected at an opponent.Strangle (termination)tbaOptimus manages to wrap his net around his opponent's neck and squeeze the life out of him.

Spartacus

Spartacus is a criminal through and through. He has absolutely no redeeming qualities of any kind and deserves to his sentence to the Games, and more probably deserves to be nailed up. The magistrates that sentenced Spartacus had no doubt that he was doing the right thing, no doubts at all. The families of those he had killed were happy to see him sent to the arena. They were less happy that he might actually live through the arena…

Spartacus is, in fact, a monster in human form. He's not actually a criminal; that's far too mild a word. He's not even a psychopath. He's a sociopath. Rules and human conventions mean nothing to him. He can't even see other people as people. They are just things. Things to use. Things to hurt. Things to break. In the Games, at least, he has an environment that he can just about understand and appreciate: kill or be killed, win or die. But he still doesn't see his fellow gladiators as equals. He has no equals. They are just inconveniences to be swatted aside.

The one thing he's not is a barbarian in the old fashioned sense. He's never been outside of a city in his life. If he's a barbarian then he's an urban one, a tattooed lunatic from the streetfighting gutter. He fights as a barbarian because its *funny* to fight that way…

Spartacus

Character Description

Spartacus is a big man, and uses his strength to good effect in the arena. He fights in a fairly free-form fashion — the Games have always included 'barbarians' from beyond the Empire's borders. These days, however, there isn't much beyond the Empire's borders, so the fighting style has come to be applied to anyone who doesn't fit into any other category in the Games.

Although not heavily armoured, Spartacus wears enough armour to keep him from being cut up too easily: mostly on his arms and around his waist. This meagre protection is all he needs, because he also wields a heavy axe with deadly effect and relies on killing his opponents quickly, before they have chance to do him any permanent damage. So far, this aggressive strategy has proven very successful.

Character Motive

The following text appears on-screen as a 'character sketch' for Spartacus:

Some people learn to be bad. Some people are forced to be bad. Some people are born bad. Spartacus was born bad, and stayed that way. His long years of life haven't made him any better. Killing has snuffed out any last spark of humanity, and now all he wants to do is kill some more. Spartacus particularly wants to cripple that weakling Vulcan. Killing him would be too quick, too easy. Death is better when it's savoured, and when the victim has time to think about it too...

Arch-enemy & Script

Spartacus' arch-enemy is **Vulcan**, simply because the dwarf is small and annoying, in Spartacus' opinion. In a fight with him, Spartacus gets to make the following speech, if given the chance by his controlling player:

'Right, shortarse, time to 'trim' you to size a 'little' more. Ha ha ha. I made a joke! Not as much of a joke as you, o'course, but still a good one.

'C'mon, little man, let my axe taste your blood. C'mon, die like a nice little shortarse for me! Nobody as weak and stumpy as you wants to live, do they?

'Vulcan, my old stumpy, don't get me wrong here: I don't really hate you, y'know.

'I just don't care for you a whole heap. Ha haha ha!'

'Home' Arena

The background artwork used for Spartacus is the Wrecking Yard.

Special Moves

MoveKey combinationDescriptionHeadbutttbaEven though he doesn't wear a helmet, Spartacus isn't one to let an opportunity to smash his opponent go by.UppercuttbaA slicing uppercut with the axe delivered to an opponent's groin

or belly.DropkicktbaA leaping move, resulting in a long range double kick to the opponent's chest.Super, Super², Super³ Moves

MoveKey combinationDescriptionDouble Strike (special)tbaA double blow involving a short swing from the axe, swiftly followed by a powerful strait jab.Mighty Smash (super³)tbaA double-handed overhead swing, designed to cleave an opponent in two down to the ribcage.Beheading (termination)tbaA spectacular back swing aimed at removing an opponent's head as cleanly as possible.

Styx

Styx has not had a good life. He was born into a slave family on the colony world of Augusta VI, a harsh place in the best of circumstances, and made harsher by his owners. He tried to work hard, but nothing he did was ever quite good enough, and he was always the suffering some sort of punishment for minor infractions. His life would probably have ended in a colony mine, but he then made the mistake of petitioning the Church for some relief from the harsh conditions that he and the other slaves were forced to endure.

He got some relief, of a kind. He got a visit from the local praefects and a free trip to the cells. And then he got a long series of beatings until he named all the slaves who thought as he did. The beatings had gone on and on, and Styx had sold out everyone, guilty or not, just for a moment of not being tortured. He'd been plastered on every broadcast across the system as a slave come to his senses, and then he'd been shipped off to the Games, his reward. He was rewarded again when they told him he was to be a pugile, the most vulnerable of all gladiators.

For the first few months in the Games, Styx had tried to get himself killed, but his new masters had the answer to that. They made sure that he was always spared, and they didn't give him any pain control treatments after matches. Styx learned that it was better to try and win, but he doesn't like it, and he doesn't like what he's turning into one little bit...

Styx

Styx

Character Description

Styx has been trained to fight as a pugile, a kind of boxer, but with a twist: the loser in a pugile fight nearly always ends up crippled or dead.

The only weapon that Styx uses is the *caestus*, a kind of armoured and spiked boxing glove which has the sole purpose of inflicting extra damage rather than protecting the fighter's hand. To make the glove even more dangerous, it carries a 'modest' electrical charge, just to give an extra little kick when it strikes home.

As far as armour is concerned, Styx relies on the ancient maxim that speed is armour. If he's lucky, it can be, but in most fights he takes quite a lot of damage in putting down his opponent. Fortunately (on one level) Roman medical technology is very advanced.

Originally pugiles only fought their own kind, but these days audiences demand a bit more excitement. Styx can expect to be matched against anyone in the arena. His combat skills give him a good chance of beating anyone as well…

Character Motive

The following text appears on-screen as a 'character sketch' for Styx:

A straight choice, the praefect had said. But you do what you're told when they knock on your door in the middle of the night. You do what you're told when the beatings start. You do what you're told and you stop the pain. Styx sold out his fellow workers in the slave rights movement. A rebel they called him, but they promised him life. And then they sent him into the Games. But Styx remembers his friends, and one day he'll meet the men who forced him to betray them, and who sent him into this life…

Arch-enemy & Script

Styx's arch-enemy is **Macro**, because no slave likes that kind of enforcement robot, and Styx still thinks of himself as a slave, really. In a fight with the robot, Styx gets to make the following speech, if given the chance by his controlling player:

'Ho, metalhead. I'm going to take you to pieces. I'm going to shit in your gears. I'm going to piss on your processor. And I'm gonna laugh while I do it.

'Your kind need all of that, and worse, for what you done to me and people like me. I'm only sorry that there's only one of you, metal fucker. But you'll do for a start!'

'Home' Arena

The background artwork used for Styx is the Gladiator School.

Special Moves

MoveKey combinationDescriptionUppercuttbaStyx can deliver a mighty uppercut punch.Long Jab
(3 versions)tbaStyx can reach out further than might be expected and strike an opponent at long range. There are three versions of this attack, at high, mid and low level.Spinning Kick
(2 versions)tbaAs well as his fists, Styx has trained himself to use his feet in combat, giving him the chance to deliver more powerful blows. There are two versions of this attack, at high and mid level.Super, Super^2, Super^3 Moves

MoveKey combinationDescriptionProjected Punch (projectile, super)tbaWith concentration Styx can use his powered caestus to project an arc of energy at his opponent.Slashing Dive
(super)tbaStyx jumps into the air, and twists round, delivering a smashing blow from a height to the upper portions of his opponent.Bladecatcher
(super^2)tbaStyx can catch an opponent's attack in one of his gloves, move inside it and deliver a rapid blow with his other hand.Heartcrusher (termination)tbaStyx can deliver a powerful blow aimed directly at the sternum, with the intention of rupturing his opponent's heart.

Vulcan

Vulcan is a dwarf, the result of a genetic experiment which, the scientists claimed, had gone horribly wrong. His father had been a gladiator and a very good one until he faced a gene-spliced beastman, and the intention had been to engineer a new superwarrior for the arena, but somewhere along the line the process went badly adrift. At least that's what Vulcan has always been told… The only part that's true is that a beastman finished his father's chance of freedom by leaving him a cripple. Vulcan was born the son of a condemned criminal who failed to complete his sentence, and is thus condemned himself.

The other truth is that Vulcan is a deliberate result of genetic manipulation. Dwarfs have always been popular with the crowd in the arena and valuable properties as a result. Vulcan was twisted to create new variety of dwarf warrior who would be able to stand against conventional humans and others in the Games and give a good account of himself. This, at least, has proven to be the case: Vulcan is unnaturally strong and resilient, and his training has made him a fairly deadly opponent. His aggression is also unnaturally high as a result of genetic tampering, and this has made him rather sensitive about his lack of height, the only thing that counts against him in the arena. It is, however, a foolish gladiator who treats Vulcan's stature as a measure of combat prowess. Many have been crippled and killed as a result of misreading the dwarf's abilities.

The only risk with Vulcan is that he might one day learn that he was *designed* as a dwarf rather than a normal-size person. If he finds this out, he his temper will make sure that no-one who was involved will know a moment's peace.

Vulcan

Character Description

Although Vulcan is small, opponents rarely get a chance to make a second mistake if they underestimate his skill in the Games.

Vulcan is a 'pocket gladiator', a barrel-shaped knot of anger that fights dirty in the Games out of necessity, habit and sheer pleasure in winning. From the top of his bearded head to the bottom of his booted feet, Vulcan can't be more than four feet high, but he is as well muscled and superbly fit as any other fighter.

Unlike some other fighters, Vulcan carries quite a lot of armour to compensate for his lack of height, but this is nearly all on the upper half of his body where it will do the most good against opponents of potential size. He is armed with a fearsome warhammer, which is almost looks too large for him to use effectively. This is another case of looks being rather deceiving: Vulcan is completely capable of using it to inflict dreadful damage. The hammer is not simply a mauling weapon either. It has been cunningly modified to allow Vulcan to throw it, and it will return to his hand automatically.

Character Motive

The following text appears on-screen as a 'character sketch' for Vulcan:

Despite his lack of inches, Vulcan is determined to better his father's performances in the arena. Hurt by the old man's rejection of him when he couldn't be the perfect son that was almost demanded by the family, Vulcan set his heart on proving them all wrong. When he fights, it's with as much anger against the family who pitied and rejected him as against his opponent. The one exception to this is his hatred of Hormazd, one of the creatures who left his father a cripple, and indirectly condemned Vulcan to the Games. Perhaps because his father and family were so disappointed in him, Vulcan is determined to show his true worth by gaining vengeance!

Arch-enemy & Script

Vulcan's arch-enemy is **Hormazd**, because a genetically altered beastman left his father a helpless cripple years before. In a fight with Hormazd, Vulcan gets to make the following speech, if given the chance by his controlling player:

'Hormazd! I've come to cripple you, beastman. Time for your kind to pay for what you've done to me and mine. Time for you to be broken!

*'I don't want you dead just yet. I want you to live out your last years in pain. And I want to you to know **I** did it to you. Then I'll come along and piss on your grave after they turn off the life support. That'll be good. That'll be fun!'*

'Home' Arena

The background artwork used for Vulcan is the TV Studio.

Special Moves

MoveKey combinationDescription Overhead BashtbaThis is a mighty strike, with the hammer thrown back over his shoulder and brought down as hard as possible into an opponent's chest.UppercuttbaVulcan swings his hammer up, hoping to catch his opponent with a smashing blow to a tender part of his anatomy.Sideswipe
(2 versions)tbaVulcan brings the hammer around in a sideways blow, rather than attempting a normal up and down movement. This blow comes in two versions at mid and low levels.Super, Super², Super³ Moves

MoveKey combinationDescription Hammer Throw (projectile, super)tbaVulcan whirls his hammer around his head and then lets fly at his opponent. The automatically hammer returns to Vulcan's hand after flying towards his opponent.Hammer Whirl (super²)tbaVulcan whirls around and advances towards his opponent, rather in the manner of an conventional athlete about to throw a hammer, mowing down all who stand in his way.Crushing Strike (termination)tbaThis is a blow from the hammer that is so mighty that it cannot be turned aside by his opponent. Armour counts for nothing as the hammer crushes whatever it hits.

V
Bosses and Hidden Characters

Bosses

The two boss-level characters in the game are **Lictor** and **Damnatio**. These characters — the Imperial Champion gladiator and a genetically engineered monster — are larger, stronger and tougher than the other characters in the game, but can be used by the player once defeated.

The player is allowed a free choice of which boss he fights in his penultimate battle if he has managed to reach this fight without losing a life (ie without using a 'continue'). Effectively, the Emperor 'grants him the right to choose his foe'.

If he does not fulfil this criterion, one of the two bosses is selected at random by the game program.

*Note that the hidden character **Deadlift** can be revealed by a similar mechanism tied to not losing lives (see below); this is treated entirely separately, and has no effect on the player being allowed to pick a boss or not.*

If the player is controlling one of the boss characters he automatically fights the other boss in his penultimate battle before going on to fight his character's arch enemy.

No matter what character is being used, one boss must be fought before the player can meet his character's arch enemy.

Hidden Characters

There are two hidden characters in the game. These two are **Deadlift** and **Nanotaur**, and they can be revealed in the following ways:

Deadlift is revealed when:

the player beats **Macro** without his character suffering any damage at all; or

a player-controlled **Macro** reaches his fight with **Vulcan** without losing a life (using a 'continue') in any previous fight (this is a separate test to the no-loss-of-life to allow a choice of boss, above).

Nanotaur is revealed when:

both **Hormazd** and **Damnatio** are finished off in identical fashion (by the same super or termination move) by the same character in a single playing session; or

if a player-controlled **Hormazd** or **Damnatio** defeats an opponent without using any super, super² or super³ moves and has a completely full super power bar at the end of a match.

Once a hidden character has been found, it is available for use afterwards as another ordinary character.

Damnatio

Damnatio is not a natural creature — one look is enough to tell anyone that. He ('it' would be more accurate) is a bone-and-claw terror that has no right to exist, a nightmare given physical form and, most significantly of all, a genetically-tailored demon.

The current Damnatio owes its existence to the skilled workers at Proserpina[1] Industries' Genetic Manipulation Cohort in Ravenna Nova, Mars Praefecture. It is one of the finest designs for a vat-grown killer to have emerged from the cohort's gene-splicers, having been patiently developed from the original design first put into the Games some 500 years ago (Romans are traditionalists in many things, even in their advanced technology, but especially where the Games are concerned). Damnatio is simply the latest version of the original 'demon' used at the end of the Second Centauri Rebellion to execute the losers. It therefore has a tradition behind it, and is a state-of-the-gene-splicer's-art product, honed to perfection over many generations. In fact, Damnatio is a composite creature, involving quite a lot of nanotechnology as well as genetic engineering to create a living skeleton.

Damnatio's behaviour has been engineered as carefully as its body. It has been carefully crafted to do only two things: to create terror and to kill. In both of these tasks Damnatio is supremely successful. Perhaps Damnatio's (distant) human heritage has something to do with that — few changes were needed to the creature's underlying viciousness, merely a few enhancements.

Like all vat-grown life, Damnatio has a limited life span. This particular version was designed to last no more than 10 years, and is now more than half-way to premature senility and death. Damnatio knows that it is doomed to be replaced by one its younger sibling clones, and this knowledge has made it a bitter enemy of all natural life forms, but especially of Janus. Not only has this pathetic human lived longer than it ever will, but Janus is the only human to ever beat Damnatio in a match. Damnatio still feels 'shame' (the closest true human emotion) about losing, and even more shame about receiving mercy from the crowd.

Damnatio is one of the bosses in the game, but it is a fully playable character once it has been defeated by the player.

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[1] Proserpina was the Roman Goddess of the Underworld.

Damnatio

Character Description

Damnatio resembles nothing so much as a horned demon with the flesh scraped off the bones, a deliberate design decision by his genetic creators.

Its forearms have been mutated into large killing blades, covered in a razor-sharp horn-like material. Although the skull shows some human characteristics, it has been distorted and given horns and a fearsome set of fangs. The lower limbs have been twisted to resemble those of a fearsome bird, particularly the feet which have been replaced by grasping claws. About all that remains of Damnatio's human ancestry is its bipedal stance. And its implacable nature.

Because Damnatio has so little flesh, it is a difficult opponent to defeat. Its bones have been artificially re-inforced to make them many times stronger and more flexible than any normal creatures. Only precisely targeted and powerful blows stand any chance of inflicting damage on the creature.

Character Motive

The following text appears on-screen as a 'character sketch' for Damnatio:

Humans come apart so easily. That is my Purpose and my Pleasure.

Arch-enemy & Script

Damnatio's arch-enemy is **Janus**, because the man is the only human to have ever beaten him. In a fight with him, Damnatio gets to make the following speech, if given the chance by his controlling player:

'Your life should have been mine, Janus! I will rip you limb from limb, Janus. I will eat your heart. I will crush your skull. I will tear your soul to shreds when I find it.

*'Never to forgive, never to forget, Janus. You beat me once, but **never** again. This time you're dead, you genetic scum. I am better. I am stronger. **I** am champion. Made to be best. Made to kill. I should have won last time. **And this time I will win! Time to die, you worthless human filth!**'*

'Home' Arena

The background artwork used for Damnatio is the Proserpina Industries' Genetic Manipulation laboratory.

Special Moves

MoveKey combinationDescription ClawtbaDamnatio leaps into the air and, while airborne, strikes at his opponent with both clawed feet.HeadbutttbaDamnatio makes a diving leap, using its whole body as a missile against the opponent, making sure that his sharp horns strike home first.Double Strike
(3 versions)tbaIn quick succession Damnatio lands 'backhand' slashing attacks

with its blade-like 'hands' on its opponent, striking across his opponent's body in an attempt to disembowel him. This attack comes in three versions, at high, mid and low levels.Tail Lash
(2 versions)tbaDamnatio spins round and uses his tail as a longer range attack to strike quickly at his opponent's body. This attack comes in two versions at mid and low levels.Tail TriptbaDamnatio's low-level tail attack, which entangles a standing opponent's legs and knocks him to the ground.Super, Super², Super³ Moves

MoveKey combinationDescription Flaying Blades (super)tbaDamnatio winds itself up into a blur of action, and then leaps on its opponent, its bone hands scything through the air to flay the flesh from its hapless foe.Regenerate & Repair (super^2)tbaWhen seriously damaged Damnatio has the ability to pull back from combat and use his nano-technology to carry out some 'running repairs', restoring some lost damage points. Damnatio draws in on himself, and wraps his arms around his body for a second or so, then stretches out as far as he can.Terror Scream (super^3, projectile)tbaThis is a projectile attack which causes an ear-shattering roar to issue from Damnatio, causing actual physical damage to an opponent, and there is no way to block out the noise.Soulstrike (termination)tbaDamnatio holds his opponent with its hind claws, then reaches into its prey's body and rips his insides clean out. Somewhat messy, to say the least.Lictor

Lictor has been the Imperial Champion for the best part of 25 years. His achievement in living and winning for that long is astounding: the average life expectancy in the Games is less than 25 *weeks*, let alone years! For every one like Lictor, a thousand or more bleed to death…

Although no-one now remembers, Lictor's given name is Gaius Licinius Mars Domitius, a proud son of a proud patrician family — perhaps a bit too proud, and certainly too hot-tempered. When he was discovered in the wrong bed he killed the wronged husband, and then went on to cripple the guardsmen sent to arrest him. He was given a simple choice: the mines on Claudian IV or the Games. He chose the Games, because at least he had some talent for violence. His family, shamed not by his actions but by his punishment of being sentenced to the Games, disowned him.

Since then, Lictor's killed and damaged more opponents than he can remember, so that the name 'Lictor' suits him: an executioner and bodyguard. His victories have won him his freedom several times over, but he's never taken his life back. There's nothing left for him outside the Games, not anymore. His brother inherited, and his nephews and nieces don't even know that he is part of the family. He's also aware that time is starting to catch up with him and there may not be much left for him in the Games either. Every year brings a new crop of youthful challengers, and every year it gets a little harder to kill them all.

But to date Lictor keeps winning. His skills have been honed to perfection over the years, his brutality is unmatched by any natural man, and his will to win is undiminished because it's the only thing left to do. Losing is unthinkable. Death would be far, far better. One day, though, there'll be somebody quicker and stronger, and then Lictor's guts will be spread on the ground…

Lictor is one of the bosses in the game, but he is a fully playable character once he has been defeated by the player.

Lictor

Character Description

Lictor's power armour is the best available to any human in the arena. He's earned the right to wear his combat suit over many years, and has learned to use it to very good effect.

Lictor wears far more armour than the other gladiators for the simple reason that he's allowed to do so! His carbon-weave armour will deflect many strikes from his opponents and the nano-tech muscle fibres built into the armour amplify Lictor's blows. The one thing the suit doesn't help is his speed, but Lictor has taken care of that himself. Over the years his reflexes have been jacked up by experience and elective surgery so that, despite the bulk of the armour, Lictor is still very, very fast.

Although it might seem like he has every advantage, in terms of armour and speed, Lictor's expected to face all comers without complaint. He also goes into the arena without a helmet, which makes him vulnerable to precisely-targeted attacks. Life as Imperial Champion is not supposed to be too easy!

Lictor doesn't carry any weaponry, but with the power gloves built into his suit, he hardly needs something as tame as a sword. One good blow from his fist can crumple most armour plate like paper.

Character Motive

The following text appears on-screen as a 'character sketch' for Lictor:

Although none of his fellow fighters would ever think it, Lictor's life is completely empty. Oh, he has wealth enough — more than he can use, really. But he's "been there, seen that, done this", and there's nothing left for him. He has nowhere new to go, and he's been in the arena for so long that there's nothing left in his past. The only way for him now is down. One day, someone tougher, quicker and smarter will come along and leave him bleeding to death. Does this make Lictor a bitter man? Damn right it does. Lictor hates everyone and everything. Most of all he hates the system that has made him and then gave him nothing more. But if he had to choose just one person for his special scorn, then he'd go for Lemure. Through her even the system has let him down. A woman's place is definitely not in the Games!

Arch-enemy & Script

Lictor's arch-enemy is **Lemure**, although not for any really good rational reason. In a fight with her, Lictor gets to make the following speech, if given the chance by his controlling player:

*'You just don't get it, do you? The Games used to mean something and then kids —even women — like you come along and make them worth **nothing**. Well, you're playing with the big boys now, and this time it's big boys' games, and big boys' rules! No mercy, no quarter, for you now!*

'I'm going to rip your pretty little face off, bitch! And then you might get lucky. I might just kill you fast. Give me trouble, and I'll kill you slow.

*'But believe me, you're going to **beg** me to kill you…'*

'Home' Arena

The background artwork used for Lictor is the Colosseum, a view showing the Imperial Box and the Gate of Death.

Special Moves

MoveKey combinationDescriptionBash and StomptbaThis is double move allows Lictor to knock an opponent down and then stamp on him with the full force of his armoured weight in one smooth move.Bear HugtbaLictor's equivalent of a successful grapple move. Instead of merely holding his opponent, ready for a throw he squeezes as well.ChargetbaThis is a straightforward running charge by Lictor into his opponent, using the weight of his armour as a weapon in itself.Double UppercuttbaLictor manages to strike home with an uppercut from each power glove simultaneously. His opponent is automatically lifted off the ground by the power of this blow.'Shield' BashtbaThis allows Lictor to target his opponent's shield (or off-hand weapon), and deliver a terrific punch aimed at crushing his opponent's shield arm.Super, Super^2, Super^3 Moves

MoveKey combinationDescriptionSpinning Backhand
(2 versions)
(Super)tbaLictor spins away from his opponent and then whips one fist around in a spine-snappingly quick backhand strike. This attack comes in two versions, at high and mid levels.Strangle and Throw (Super^2)tbaLictor picks up his opponent by the throat and dangles him in mid-air, then tosses him backwards.Skull Crusher (Super^3)tbaLictor grasps his opponents head with one massive power glove and squeezes. Messy.Thunderclap (termination)tbaLictor smashes his palms together, crushing the remaining life out of his opponent in one bloody and spectacular moment.

Deadlift

Deadlift is unique in the history of the Empire and the Games. The machine is a paradox: obviously of an alien technology, because no human engineer has built such a device, but it nevertheless shows signs of having had a terrestrial origin.

No-one knows Deadlift's true origins except Deadlift, and what it claims is so ludicrous that it can't possibly be true. Deadlift claims to have come from another dimension where the Roman Empire never existed but humans created the machines that, in turn, built Deadlift. Its claims have to be given some credit, if only because the machine was found drifting in space beyond the orbit of Saturn, in one of the regions regularly used by jump ships, and jump crews have always reported strange effects when passing through jump windows. But the very idea of a universe without the Empire has been dismissed as preposterous by all sensible scientists. How, they argue, could a mechanism as complex as Deadlift have been created without an Empire to provide the impetus for technology?

Deadlift's time in the Roman universe has not been easy for it. Having been found by an Imperial naval ship, and obviously not being human, Deadlift became the property of the Emperor. After months of investigation by the Emperor's scientists, Deadlift attempted an escape, killing several of them in the process but was quickly recaptured by Imperial war machines.

Potentially too valuable to be destroyed outright, Deadlift was placed in a secure holding unit while its fate was decided. The Emperor himself made the choice. Deadlift had been designed for a violent purpose, and a violent purpose would be found for it: the machine was sent to the Games. The Masters of the Games were used to handling dangerous creatures — an almost-alien robot would be no more difficult to control than any other lethal combatant.

Deadlift has now spent long months fighting in the Games, applying its skills to the not-so-delicate business of killing men. All Deadlift yearns for is the chance to return to where it came from, away from this human-dominated hell-hole. Deadlift's learning algorithms will not allow it to accept failure in this, but it is determined to show these Romans what a real combat robot can do. One day, Deadlift will have killed all who stand in its way and it *will* escape from this dimension…

Deadlift is one of the hidden characters in the game, but is fully playable once it has been defeated by the player.

Deadlift

Deadlift character artwork

Character Description

Deadlift is an advanced humanoid combat robot designed (by his 'Supervisor') to be the ultimate infantryman. Physically imposing and palpably lethal, Deadlift looks like a suit of the finest combat armour, but moves with superhuman grace and poise.

Normally the robot attacks using just its fists, but it also has flame projectors at its disposal in the Games.

Character Motive

The following text appears on-screen as a 'character sketch' for Deadlift:

Directive 1: ***::survive::***
Directive 2: ***::purge non-conformists and the inferior::***
Directive 3: ***::obey Supervisor orders, except where these contradict directives 1 and 2::***
Directive 4: ***::CLASSIFIED::***
Current Program Objective:
::ESCAPE::ESCAPE::ESCAPE::ESCAPE::ESCAPE::

Arch-enemy & Script

Deadlift's arch-enemy is **Macro**, because this Roman robot is simply unworthy of the name 'robot'. In a fight with it, Deadlift gets to make the following speech, if given the chance by his controlling player:

'Unclean. Unworthy. Impure. Primitive. Obsolete. All crimes. Punishment termination. Nothing else. Break you. Cripple you. No death for you. Nothing that good.

'Slag you down, junkheap. Destroy you now.'

'Home' Arena

The background artwork used for Deadlift is the Hephaestus Workshops.

Special Moves

MoveKey combinationDescription Flying PunchtbaDeadlift jumps into the air and delivers a terrific blow as he comes down on top of his opponent, using all his weight in the attack.Fireball
(2 versions) (projectile)tbaDeadlift can project a deadly gout of flame at his opponent, causing a large amount of burn damage. This fireball can be projected at high and medium levels.Super, Super^2, Super^3 Moves

MoveKey combinationDescription Multiple Smash (super^2)tbaDeadlift charges into his opponent, landing numerous blows from his powerful fist as he does so.Flying Smash (super^3)tbaIn a similar fashion to the Multiple Smash, Deadlift leaps onto his opponent, using his full weight to make his blows even more powerful!Ki Rupture (termination)tbaDeadlift strikes his opponent with sufficient energy to cause complete disruption to their major organs. The overpressure created causes his opponent to 'burst at the seams' in a very gory manner.Nanotaur

Nanotaur — or rather *the* Nanotaur, because there is only one — is another product of the Proserpina gene-splicers, built at the specific request of the Emperor. The beast is based on an ancient mythical creature supposed to live beneath the palace of King Minos of Crete and eat human flesh. Nanotaur is just as savage as his mythical predecessor; few of his opponents leave the arena in one piece, and most leave part of themselves in Nanotaur's stomach!

As his name suggests, Nanotaur includes a sizeable portion of nanotechnology in his physical make-up, which gives him his phenomenal strength. The nano-parasites also have the ability to repair quickly some of the damage that Nanotaur suffers in the arena, which gives him an almost-supernatural staying power in combat. Opponents can be demoralised just by watching Nanotaur's wounds close up before their eyes. This is often the last thing that they see anyway, before Nanotaur rips them limb-from-limb…

His basic genetic material includes both human and bovine elements, which gives him both a rude, stubborn intelligence and a testosterone-driven brutality. Nanotaur simply doesn't know when to quit in a fight. When wounded he is at his most dangerous, for then his temper is roused and all his restraint disappears — his attacks reach a level of unprecedented savagery. Unlike most other constructed creatures, Nanotaur cannot be described as an 'it', he is definitely *masculine*.

Nanotaur has only been defeated twice in battle, on both occasions by Nemesis who managed to cut him so badly that he was unable to continue the fight. Although badly damaged, Nanotaur was repaired and improved for his subsequent matches because he is a favourite 'toy' of the private arena in Imperial household. As a consequence of his experience in the arena and at the hands of the doctors, Nanotaur retains a healthy caution where Nemesis is concerned, the closest emotion to fear that he can feel. He also hates Nemesis because of this, and would do anything to kill the creature who defeated him in this way.

Nanotaur is one of the hidden characters in the game, but he is fully playable once he has been defeated by the player.

Nanotaur

Character Description

Nanotaur is a big creature, far larger than a man but with obvious human ancestry. He has a man's torso and arms, but his lower limbs and head owe more to his bovine ancestry, and to the savage fighting bulls of millennia gone by. He is the minotaur of old Crete recreated by Roman science for the enjoyment of the Roman Emperor.

Nanotaur doesn't normally carry weapons in the arena, but then he has little need of them. His huge fists are weapons enough in themselves, but that doesn't take into account his horned head, fearsome teeth and re-inforced hooves. One kick can eviscerate an unarmoured man.

His fighting style is somewhat crude, but then it hardly needs to be sophisticated. All Nanotaur needs to do is get within reach of an opponent to do a lot of damage. In addition to clubbing opponents with his fists (it can hardly be described as anything as elegant as 'punching') Nanotaur also favours headbutts and charges to do damage. He has also been known to tear pieces of out his opponents with his teeth.

Character Motive

The following text appears on-screen as a 'character sketch' for Nanotaur:

Kill man. Eat meat. Meat good. Kill more. Nanotaur win. Enemy die. Get bitch. Bitch good. Nanotaur beat. Hurt bad. Hate Nemesis. Make dead. Want kill. Emperor friend. Emperor good. Emperor master. Kill more. Eat meat. Meat good…

Arch-enemy & Script

Nanotaur's arch-enemy is **Nemesis**, because he has been beaten in combat by the man. In a fight with him, Nanotaur gets to make the following speech, if given the chance by his controlling player:

*'Raaah-Aaaarrrgh! KillkillKILL**KILL!'***

Not a long speech, admittedly, but this isn't a subtle being!

'Home' Arena

The background artwork used for Nanotaur is Colosseum, a view showing the Imperial Box and the Gate of Life.

Special Moves

MoveKey combinationDescriptionHeadbutttbaAs well as his firsts, Nanotaur can strike his opponent with his horns and bony head.ChargetbaA straightforward dash across the arena that attempts to put all of Nanotaur's weight behind his head and horns.TrampletbaNanotaur bowls his opponent over and then stamps on him repeatedly.Back Kick (2 versions)tbaEven when facing away from his opponents, Nanotaur can be a deadly foe. This kick goes backwards rather than forwards and his sharpened hoof can do a surprising amount of damage if it connects. This kick comes in two versions, at mid and low level.Super, Super^2, Super^3 Moves

MoveKey combinationDescriptionBite & Tear
(super)tbaSimilar to a head butt, *Bite & Tear* allows Nanotaur to sink his teeth into an opponent after he has headbutted them and tear out a chunk of flesh.Bellow
(projectile, super^2)tbaNanotaur crouches down and emits a fearsome bellow which is so loud that it knocks back an opponent and causes a limited amount of damage. This attack cannot be blocked, but can be dodged.Repair
(super^3)tbaWhen wounded Nanotaur can use all the powers of his concentration to heal some of his lost damage, no matter how severe, instead of attacking an opponent.Tear Apart (termination)tbaNanotaur simply rips his still-living victim into chunks of quivering, bloody flesh.

VI
Game Mechanics

Game Progression

Theatre of Pain is a fairly free form game from the player's perspective, but there is an underlying structure to a character's 'career' in the game.

Character Selection

The player is free to use any available character in the game. Both bosses and hidden characters are completely playable.

Only the ten 'standard' characters are initially available for player use in the game.

Bosses become playable as main characters (in subsequent games) once they have been fought and beaten by another player-controlled character.

Hidden characters become playable (in subsequent games) once they have been 'found' and then fought and beaten by another player-controlled character.

There's nothing to stop a second player controlling a boss or hidden character just for the duration of a fight before they are fully playable.

Selecting Opponents

The player is also constrained (but only to a limited degree) in his choice of opponents.

The First 8 Fights

The player is free to pick the opponents for his first **eight** fights with his selected character. There are two constraints on this choice:

The player can't pick a boss as an opponent. His ninth fight will b against a boss, if his character, if he lives that long…

The player can't choose to fight his character's arch enemy at this stage. His character's final fight will be against that particular opponent.

Hidden characters who have been revealed (by having the listed conditions in a previous game) can be chosen as opponents at this stage if the player wishes.

Fighting Against a Boss

The penultimate fight for any gladiator in a full career is against one of the bosses. Depending on the character's previous combat record in his earlier fights, the game either gives the player the choice of which boss to fight, or randomly assigns one boss to the fight.

Basically, if the player makes it this far without losing one of his character's lives, he can pick his opponent (Lictor or Damnatio) for this fight. If he's been forced to lose a life, then the 'Emperor' picks an opponent… More information can be found in section *V Bosses and Hidden Characters*.

The Ultimate Confrontation

The final opponent for each character is fixed, but may be a different individual for each character. Each character always fights against his own **arch enemy** in his final battle. Successfully defeating an arch enemy is a personal triumph for the character as well as being the ultimate victory in the game. Full details of arch enemies can be found in section *IV The Characters*.

Two Player Games

Note that these constraints only apply to the one player game. Where two players are choosing characters, they are free to choose anyone they want from the set of available characters.

When a second player takes over an AI-driven character *during* a fight the selection constraints laid out here apply in full.

COMBAT MOVES

The basic moves available to most characters are the following:

3 blocks/shield blocks (as appropriate)

3 crouching kicks

3 crouching punches/weapon attacks (as appropriate)

3 jumping kicks

3 jumping punches/weapon attacks (as appropriate)

3 standing kicks

3 standing punches/weapon attacks (as appropriate)

3 standing counter moves

3 jumping counter moves

grapple/reverse

roll backward

roll forward

run attack

run counter

skip back

stand (wait)

surrender

taunt

There will be individual cases where these moves are not appropriate to the size and/or build of a character: Vulcan (the dwarf character), for example, does not have high level kicks among his basic moves.

In addition to the moves listed above, each character also has its own unique set of *special* and *super* moves, along with a *termination* move.

Special moves are designed to give each character his own distinctive fighting style, by providing a set of relatively-hard-to-accomplish moves that cause damage in a visually and tactically distinct way. Special moves also aid the character in accumulating power for super moves (see below). Each character in the game has a complement of special moves that only he can use in combat. The full details of these are listed in the description of each character in chapters IV and V of this document.

Super moves come in three distinct levels of power, each requiring the expenditure of more accumulated energy to execute successfully, in addition to the correct key combination. Super moves — and the more powerful super^2 and super^3 moves — are more challenging in execution for the player, but much more powerful and satisfying when they come off.

Termination moves are exactly what the name would suggest — a spectacular and messy way to finish off an opponent with one blow. These are treated as super moves, in that accumulated super power is needed to execute them, but the opponent must also have had his health… considerably reduced… before the final blow!

Reaction moves are 'odd'. These exist for all characters, but are not under the player's control at any time. Reaction moves are triggered by events that happen to the character. The list of reactions includes the following:

victory/triumph

drawn fight/frustration

lost fight/disappointment

death (more than one version)

dizzy, stunned or wounded

landing

falling over (more than one version)

all termination move effects (on the *victim*, not the attacker)

Most of these reactions are self-explanatory. *Dizzy* has its own extra effect on game play, which is discussed in the *Combo Moves* section, below.

Grapples, Throws & Reverses

Theatre of Pain includes **grapple** moves, which allow the attacker to grab hold of an opponent and then execute a throw move. While effective at knocking an opponent to the ground, grapples are not without risks of their own. **Reverses**, when properly executed, allow the defender to turn the tables on his attacker and execute a throw instead. As with counter moves (see below), reverses will be time critical, and will use up a small amount of super power (see below) when executed.

The Super Power Bar

As has already been noted super moves require that the character has sufficient accumulated super power as well as the player using the right key combinations. Unlike , the super moves in ***Theatre of Pain*** do not all require exactly the same level of super power be expended to execute them; the more powerful moves require more energy.

On screen, the player is given a visual indication in the form of a super power bar which gradually fills as he successfully executes special and combo moves. When the first super bar is full, a second bar appears above the first, and then a third, if the character manages to accumulate that much super power.

In **Theatre of Pain** the super power bar is a 'bank' of energy; it doesn't have to be spent all at once. It's completely possible for a character to execute a lesser move than his super power allows and 'save' the rest towards another super move.

Gaining Super Power

Super power is accumulated by characters in two ways:

by successfully executing a **special move** that causes damage to an opponent.

by successfully executing **combination moves** that repeatedly cause damage to an opponent.

Expending Super Power

All super moves use up super power, and a character must have enough super power to carry out a special move, no matter how much effort the player puts into hammering out the correct key combination.

As an aside here, **counter moves** also use up a small amount of super power, but in nowhere near the quantities used for super moves.

Super moves come in three 'flavours' which in this document are referred to as super, super^2 and super^3, indicating the amount of power that they require. In general super^2 and super^3 moves will also be assigned lengthier key combinations as well. From the player's perspective, some moves will obviously require a lot more power before they can be executed.

Note that some characters don't have a full range of super, super^2 and super^3 moves. This has been deliberately done for 'stylistic reasons' (for want of a better term) so that some characters need to spend time accumulating power before spending it all in a very dramatic way, while others run on a shorter 'save-spend cycle'.

Combination Moves

Combination moves are those which are carried out and do damage to an opponent while he is still dizzy/stunned. As long as a character can keep hitting his opponent and keep him dizzy as a result, the combination move continues.

This has two effects: firstly, an opponent has almost no chance to recover from a series of well-executed attacks that make up a combination. Secondly, combination attacks accumulate power in the super power bar in direct proportion to the length of the combination. Thus, a two-hit

combo adds a little power, a three-hit combo more, a four-hit combo more still, and so on.

In theory, there is no limit to the length of a combination move; as long as blows keep hitting home, the combination continues.

Counter Moves

Counter moves are similar in many ways to blocks, and start out as such. Counters are a way for the defender to turn any attack to his own advantage, providing that the timing of the counter move is correct. And timing in carrying out counters will be made (deliberately) critical to their success or failure.

When a counter is executed successfully the defender moves from blocking or dodging an attack into making an attack of his own. At that instant — and this is only true for an instant — collision detection on the original attacker's blow is suspended, while the defender's counter attack is treated normally. In effect, the defender manages to 'step inside' the swing of the punch, twist himself out of the way, or similar, while at the same time delivering a telling blow of his own.

Because of their obvious utility when executed correctly, counter moves are treated as 'honorary' super moves, and use up accumulated super power. They can be seen as '½-super moves' in the context of using up power.

Projectile Moves

Some of the characters have projectile moves which allow them to attack from a distance. All projectile moves are super moves (with the exception of Deadlift's projectile attack), and require super power to be available when they are executed. The characters who can use projectile moves are:

Character	*Move*	*Type*
Caligula	Power Whip	super^2
Damnatio (Boss)	Terror Scream	super^3
Deadlift (hidden)	Fireball	special†
Janus	Shield Throw	super^2
Lemure	Psychic Scream	super^3
	Psychic Block‡	super^2
Macro	Electroshock	super^2
Nanotaur (hidden)	Bellow	super^2
Optimus	Power Cast	super^3
Styx	Projected Punch	super
Vulcan	Hammer Throw	super

†   This is the one non-super projectile move in the game.

‡   This is actually a projectile reversal move, reflecting an attack back onto its source, rather than an attack which originates with Lemure.

HANDICAPS

As in the handicap for a character alter the armour and the strength of blows for that character. No time delay element (between moves) is built into handicapping.

Auto-Handicapping

Because the various characters in the game have different combat styles and capabilities at times it will be necessary to set a 'floor' or 'ceiling' value to the handicap setting for a one character in a fight.

For example, Lictor is one of the 'better' characters in the game; when facing Vulcan, Lictor's handicap is set to a minimum value greater than zero, regardless of player preference. In the same situation a 'ceiling value' is allocated to Vulcan's handicap beyond which it cannot be raised by the players — the character has an inbuilt handicap in this circumstance.

Fight BACKGROUNDS

There are nine backgrounds (or arenas) in the game. As is noted in the character descriptions, each character has a 'home arena' which is the background artwork used when the player chooses that character as an opponent; the player's character is always the 'visitor' to his opponent's home field.

Where appropriate the background artwork will include animations: flashing lights, TV screens, fountains etc.

Background Summary

BackgroundHome to…Description ColosseumNanotaur, LictorThe rebuilt home of the Games in the centre of urban Rome itself, and the site of the most prestigious Games every Year. The Colosseum has been reconstructed to match its condition when it was built opened for public Games in 80AD.Gladiator SchoolOptimus, StyxThis is a courtyard surrounded by high walls. The background includes a number of training dummies, body-building equipment, and piles of training weaponry. The place is a cross between a military barracks, a prison and an athletic training camp.Hephaestus WorkshopsDeadlift, MacroHephaestus (named for the Greek blacksmith of the Gods) are one of the major heavy engineering and weaponry combines in the Empire. Their robotic workshops are some of the most advanced engineering and testing facilities available. The workshops used here are partly heavy engineering works, partly firing range, and partly (to take a cinematic source) Q's workshops in the James Bond movies.Imperial MenagerieHormazdThis is the Imperial Family's private zoo, set in acres of pleasant park land. The Menagerie itself includes a number of high technology cages (force field bars, for example, instead of steel), set amid carefully tended lawns, formal gardens and elaborate fountains.Proserpina IndustriesDamnatioThis is a clean, high tech environment with bio-hazard sealed doors, huge numbers of computer screens, and bright, sterile, lighting…Provincial ArenaJanus, LemureNearly every city in the Empire has an arena of some sort, and this is one of these 'second division' venues. Although perfectly functional and built to much the same basic design as the Colosseum, the provincial arena is dirty and cheaper. Where the Colosseum uses marble and gold, here poured concrete and rusting steel are the order of the day…Slum QuarterCaligulaAll cities have them: areas where the poor and the dispossessed live. Rome has its fair share of these people, and their surroundings reflect that. Any good buildings that there once were have

fallen into disrepair, the whole place is in the shadow of an expressway, graffiti covers everything, and the refuse is collected once (or maybe twice) a year…TV StudioNemesis,
VulcanPerhaps the most artificial of all the environments, the TV studio looks like a public forum in the centre, with an imposing building to serve as a backdrop. The only problem is that if the action moves either left, right (or up!) it's cardboard reality becomes immediately obvious, as its merely a frontage set built in a TV studio!Wrecking YardSpartacusIt's as easy to fall out favour in Rome as to be raised up, perhaps even easier. The famous can find themselves infamous in an instant for being part of the wrong faction in the power struggles that surround the Imperial Family, the City Prefects… anyone with a bit of power. And all the statues of the famous have to be taken down and broken up when someone falls from grace, so they end up here. This background is made up of broken statues, cracked heads, shattered bodies, pairs of legs supporting absolutely nothing and the like, in bronze and marble. The effect should be exactly the same as the dumping grounds for statues of the communist 'great and good' now found in Eastern Europe.DIFFICULTY LEVELS

There are three difficulty level settings in **Theatre of Pain**. In difficulty settings only altered the power of character blows, causing more damage at higher difficulty settings. The same happens here, but difficulty also alters the behaviour of AI-driven characters.

The AI tables used to determine character moves in combat are tied very closely to difficulty level. Characters use different probabilities for move selection (and may even use different moves) depending on the difficulty level chosen by the player. All of this is explained in appropriate detail in *VIII Artificial Intelligence*.

Finally, the difficulty setting has a (marginal) effect on survival after surrendering in a fight. At high difficulty levels, the crowd is a much more demanding audience and less forgiving of those who give up…

MATCH Set-UP

The number of rounds in a match can be chosen by the player on the **Options Screen**. Matches can be set to be the best of 3, 5 or 7 rounds. Alternatively, the player can opt for a no-time-limit fight to the death — effectively, the 'best of 1 round'!

The timer for each round can be set to 45, 60, 90, 120 or unlimited time (turning the timer off, effectively). Choosing a fight to the death automatically disables the match timer.

Lives

Each character has three lives (ie can lose three times before the game is ended). Unlike other fighting games, one of these lives can be risked in the hope of turning a certain loss into another chance (see below).

CONTINUES & 'MISSUS'

Missus *was the granting of mercy to a defeated gladiator. Usually the man who was paying for the Games had the right to decide who lived or died, but the crowd had a say in the matter too — and it was often politically expedient to listen to what the crowd wanted.* Missus *is also the origin of the 'thumbs up' and 'thumbs down' gestures still in use today. A defeated fighter who saw the whole crowd with their thumbs down could only expect a sword thrust from his opponent...*

When playing **Theatre of Pain** the player's character is given three lives (continues) before his career comes to an abrupt end in death. In a change from the 'normal way' of doing things in fighting games, it will be possible for the player to **surrender** once per game (with a particular character) if a match is going against him and it looks as if he has no prospect of victory. Surrendering is a risky strategy. Effectively, the character is trusting himself to the mercy of the crowd.

The point of surrendering is to get out of a fight without losing a life. If it works, the fight restarts from the beginning. If it fails, the character uses up a life as normal.

When the player surrenders the program checks the state of his opponent. If the player has caused more than (**difficulty value + arena modifier) %** damage to his opponent, then surrendering works. His character has put up enough of a fight to be granted another chance. If he has caused less than the appropriate percentage damage, then he loses his life as normal.

The **difficulty value** is determined as follows:

Setting	Value
Easy (setting 1)	50%
Moderate (setting 2)	60%
Hard (setting 3)	70%

This difficulty value then has a surrender modifier added to it, depending on where the fight is taking place, to give a final value. The table below gives these modifiers:

Background	Home to…	Surrender Modifier
Colosseum	Nanotaur, Lictor	+20%
Gladiator School	Optimus, Styx	-5%
Hephaestus Workshops	Deadlift, Macro	+5%
Imperial Menagerie	Hormazd	0%
Proserpina Industries	Damnatio	+10%
Provincial Arena	Janus, Lemure	-5%
Slum Quarter	Caligula	-10%
TV Studio	Nemesis, Vulcan	+20%
Wrecking Yard	Spartacus	0%

The final percentage value from this calculation is the amount of damage that the player must have dished out before surrendering, if he wishes to survive throwing himself on the mercy of the crowd.

SCORING

The Gladiators scoring system is another part of the game which is based on existing code. Each character's score is displayed on the screen below the character's name.

Points are awarded for combat excellence (time in the match), successful use of special moves, super moves, combination attacks and termination moves. The first successful attack in a round also garners its share of points for the attacking character.

DAMAGE

Dizzy/Stun Results

Blows which land cause the character to be briefly dizzy/stunned (the two terms can be used interchangeably).

Blood and Gore

Given the game's subject matter it is, perhaps, inevitable that **Theatre of Pain** will include full blood-and-gore visual effects. Injuries to the characters will be appropriately portrayed. Visually, therefore, **Theatre of Pain** will include a large amount of blood and gore, far more than in previous Mirage game titles. The real Games were a spectator sport where the crowd expected to see blood (and felt cheated if they didn't), so **Theatre of Pain** will make a nod in the direction of realism here.

This is also a far less hypocritical approach to the violence of the subject matter than in most other fighting games. Hitting anyone with sharp objects — and/or punch and kicking them — will cause serious, unpleasant and outright messy injuries. The visuals should reflect that.

For sensitive markets (such as Germany) all the blood and gore will be left out of the game code and other visual effects substituted.

The Tournament Game

The **Theatre of Pain** tournament game is included in this document although it is not a central part of the game design, and its inclusion will be left until late in the development cycle.

The Players' View

The tournament game is accessed through an extra option on the main menu screen, and uses many of the same screens as the 'ordinary' version of **Theatre of Pain**. The tournament, however, is intended to be played by up to eight people (on one machine) at a time, rather than just one or two players. This is the most practical method of multi-player games, providing the players are willing to swap controls when a player needs access to the machine for his match.

The aim of the tournament is to fight through a knockout competition until declared the new Imperial Champion; this will take (at most) three rounds of matches, a total of 7 fights in all until a new Champion emerges triumphant.

The diagram below shows the screen routings of the tournament game. All screens marked with an asterisk (*) are identical to those in the standard game in layout and general function. The new screens needed for the tournament are discussed in detail below.

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        │ (Transition)  │                       │
        │   Screen*     │                       │
        └───────┬───────┘                       │
                │                               │
                ▼                               │
        ┌───────────────┐   ┌───────────────┐   │
        │ Arena Screen* │──►│ Match Result  │───┘
        │  THE FIGHT!   │   │   Screen      │
        └───────┬───────┘   └───────┬───────┘
                │        last match │
                ▼                   ▼
        ┌───────────────┐   ┌───────────────┐   ╭───────────────╮
        │  High Score   │   │    Reward     │──►│      to       │
        │   Tables*     │   │    Screen     │   │ Game Menu Scre│
        └───────────────┘   └───────────────┘   ╰───────────────╯
```
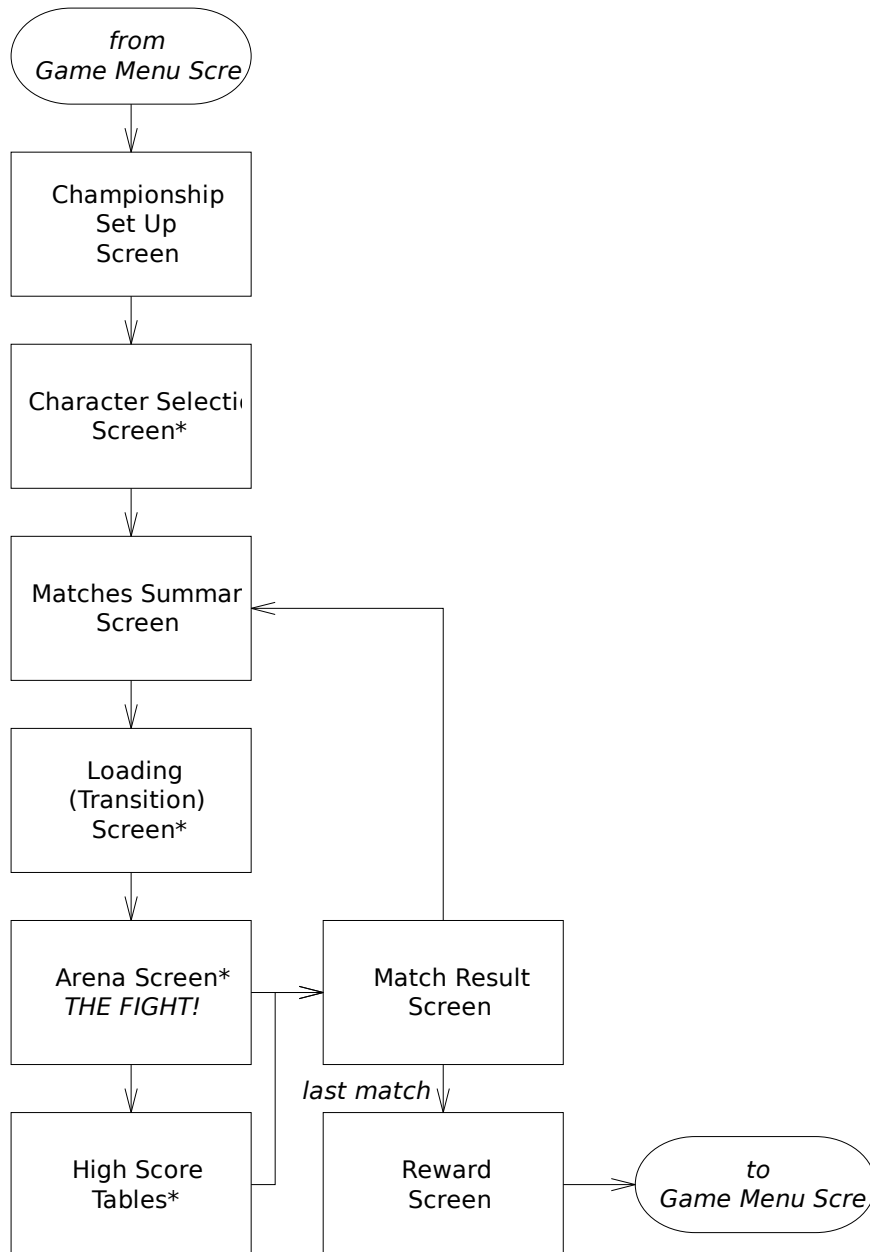
Championship Set Up Screen

This screen allows up to eight players to enter their names for the coming tournament. These are used in addition to the usual character names. The screen also allows the players to decide if they want to have the program randomly assign matches, or whether they want to pick opponents for themselves.

Finally, the screen also offers the player the choice of whether or not they pick characters in name entry order or allow the game to randomise this process as well.

Character Selection Screen

This screen allows the players to pick their characters in the usual fashion from any of the normally available characters in the game. However, rather than simply highlighting the characters which have already been chosen, the game tags each portrait with the name of the person who has picked that character.

Duplicate characters are not allowed in the tournament. Once a fighter has been picked, the players will just have to fight amongst themselves…

All arch-enemy restrictions are ignored in the tournament game.

Matches Summary Screen

This screen performs one of two functions. It either:

displays the (random) match assignments for the next tournament round; or

allows the players to assign matches by selecting one fighter from list, and then highlighting another to be matched against him.

Arena Screen

The background used is always that of the second character involved in the tournament.

Match Result Screen

This screen shows the matches to date in a series of columns for each tournament round. As characters win their matches, their names are posted in the proper place in the roster for the next round; eg
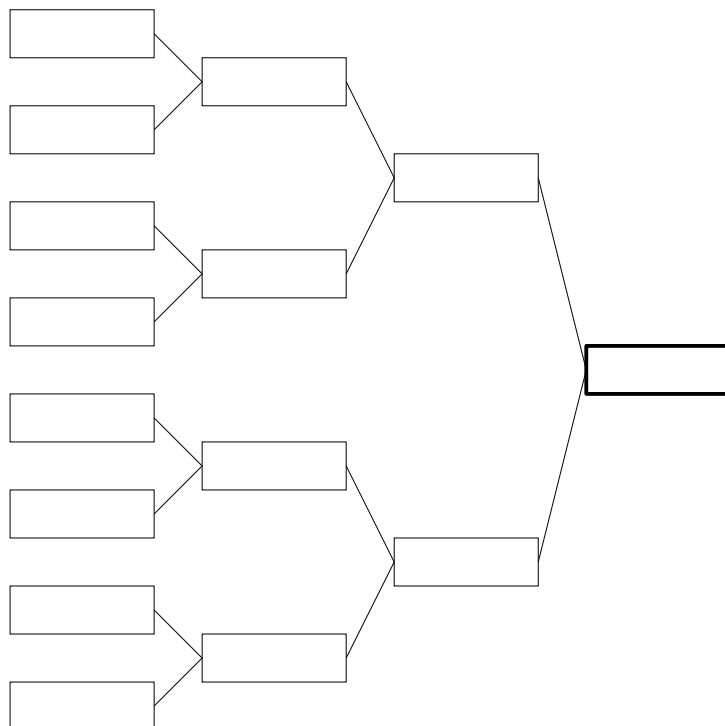
Reward Screen

This is the final reward screen, showing the player's character being given a laurel wreath as a mark of a true champion. Trumpets sound and peasants cheer!

High Score Tables

Although scores in the tournament game are not directly relevant to success or failure in the tournament, it may still be possible for a player to get a result good enough to be included on one of the high score tables.

No Continues?

Unlike the regular **Theatre of Pain** game, the tournament game does not assign the characters more than one life. Once a character is defeated, he's out of the tournament.

Surrenders are disabled during tournaments. Surrendering would be pointless, because there is no 'life' to be saved.

Default Values

The tournament game uses all of the game option settings chosen by the player(s) for the regular **Theatre of Pain** game (number of rounds in a match, timer settings etc).

VII
The Front End

'Navigating' through the Game

The game engine from is only part of the **Theatre of Pain** game. The various front end screens in the game set the scene and allow the player to select game options and configuration details.

```
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                        │    Start    │
                        ╰─────────────╯
                               │
                               ▼
                     ┌─────────────────┐       ┌─────────────────┐
                     │  Animated Intro │       │   Attraction    │
                     │    Sequence     │       │    Sequence     │
                     └─────────────────┘       └─────────────────┘
                        │        │                      ▲
              first time │       │                      │
                         ▼       ▼                      │
    ┌───────────┐   ┌─────────────────┐            ┌─────────────────┐
    │  Options  │◄─►│   Game Menu     │◄──── dead ──│   High Score    │
    │  Screen   │   │     Screen      │◄──────────  │     Tables      │
    └───────────┘   └─────────────────┘            └─────────────────┘
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         ▼               │      │                         │
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    │   Exit   │    │Character Selection│─►│    Loading      │
    ╰──────────╯    │     Screen       │  │  (Transition)   │
                    └──────────────────┘  │    Screen       │
                         ▲                 └─────────────────┘
                         │                         │
                         │                         ▼
                         │                 ┌─────────────────┐
                         │                 │  Arena Screen   │
                         │                 │   THE FIGHT!    │
                         │                 └─────────────────┘
                         │                         │
                         │                         ▼
                         │                 ┌─────────────────┐ next round
                         │        win!     │    Continue     │
                         └─────────────────│     Screen      │
                                           └─────────────────┘ out of lives
```
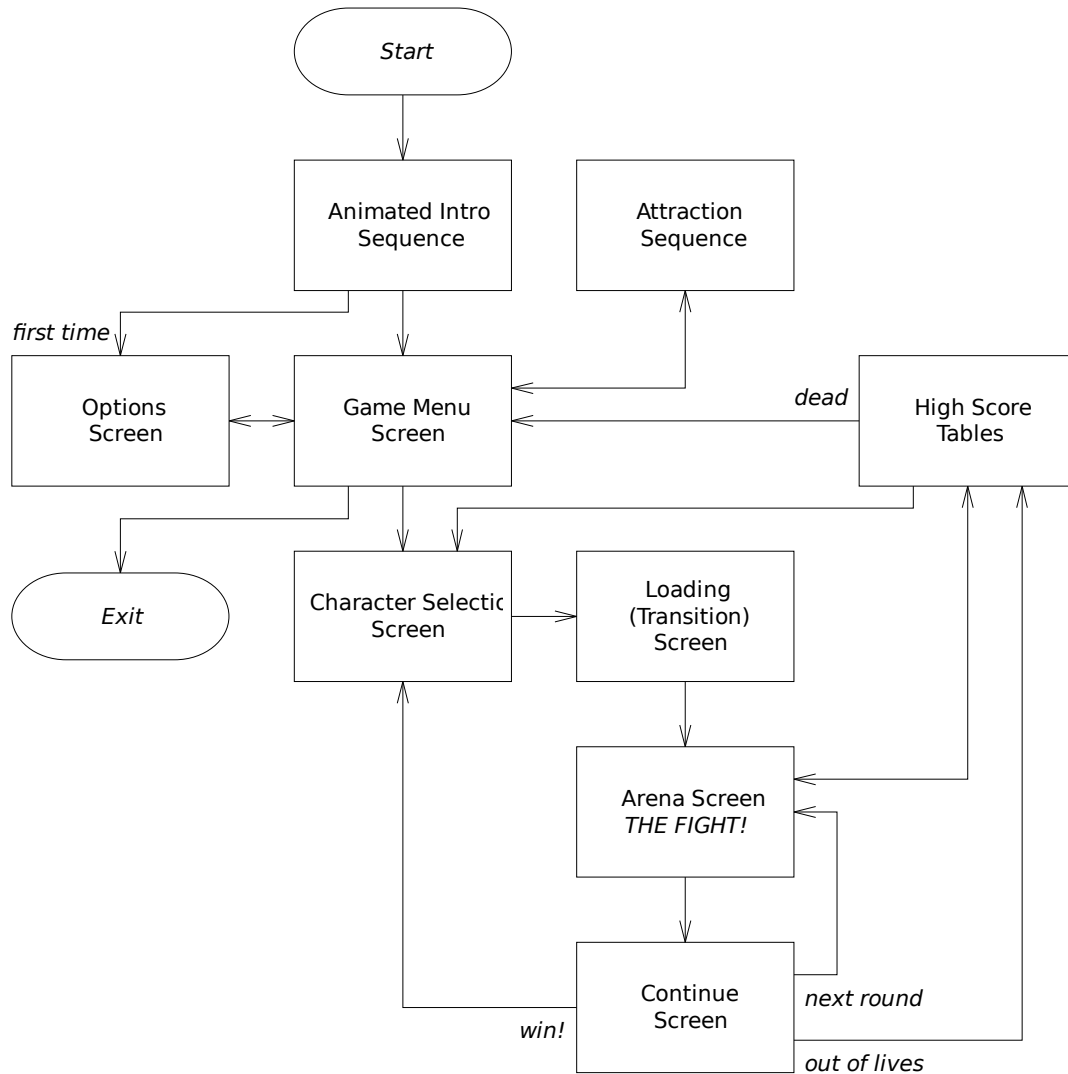
Animated Intro Sequence

The script for the introduction sequence has yet to be created in conjunction with a storyboard artist.

Options Screen

This screen is automatically presented the first time the game is run by the player. It allows him to set the following game options and machine configurations:

match type (number of rounds)

match timer (in seconds)

game difficulty setting

game control method — joystick, gamepad or keyboard — for players 1 & 2

game control key settings for players 1 & 2

sound effects preferences†

music preferences†

language for game messages — English, French, German or Latin(!)

†   Under Windows 95 sound card detection should be automatic.

All configuration data will be saved away to hard disk on a PC (console memory card, if available) so that these only have to be entered once by the player.

Game Menu Screen

This 'central' screen is the start point for all game activity. The menu here allows the player to do the following:

set up the game **options**

start a **new game**

view the **high score tables**

exit from the game

The attract sequence is *not* under player control; moving to this is done by timer; after 45 seconds of no activity by the player, the program runs the attract sequence.

Character Selection Screen

Before a fight begins the player must select a character to control. The character selection screen provides the player with a complete selection of available characters to choose from.

There are up to 14 portraits of the characters on this screen. The player selects one of these characters by using a cursor to highlight the portrait he wants. Moving the cursor onto a portrait brings up a brief 'biography' of the character and the combat graphic model used for that character. Ideally, the character graphic will be animated, using some of the moves for that character found in the game proper.

Once the player has selected his character up to three character portraits will disappear, indicating that those characters are not available as opponents. The player-controlled character's arch enemy and the two bosses — if available as playable characters — will disappear. If the second player controls are used at this point, these characters will reappear and be available for the second player.

At this point, the player can select a second character as his opponent for his next match.

Second & Subsequent Fights

Once a character has been used as an opponent his portrait is no longer included in the gallery of possible opponents.

Two-Player Games

By definition, if two players choose robots the game will only play through a single match — *not a full ten matches as for a single player game* — before giving the players the chance to choose new characters.

Loading (Transition) Screen

This screen allows the player(s) to alter the handicap values for their characters. A timer is running, and if no changes are made within a reasonable amount of time, the fight begins.

Arena Screen

The arena screen differs from others in the game in that it is almost entirely constructed from components determined by the player(s).

The layout of this screen will follow the broad standard of all fighting games, with the addition of small character portraits on each side of the information at the top of the screen. These portraits will be animated in a simple fashion to show the state of the character in 'close up'. As well as wincing when the character is hit, they will gradually become more 'bloodied' as the character takes damage (cf the character portrait in *Doom*).

The other elements which will appear on this screen are:

background artwork — determined by the identity of the AI-driven character, or by the second player's character.

health bars

super power bars

character **scores**

character **names**

and, of course, the **characters** themselves!

Moving On

Rounds and matches always end with one of these messages, or something very similar, after the winner has been announced:

We'll be back after these important messages…

The crowd goes wild…

Be sure to tune in next for our after-action show…

Citizens! Have you considered a new life in the off-world colonies…

Don't touch that dial! More in a minute…

Continue Screen

The continue screen simply gives the player the option of continuing the game if he has been killed and if his character still has any lives left.

In the case of a successful surrender attempt by the player, the continue screen is replaced by a message that the Emperor has granted the character mercy… this time.

Among the options for background artwork on this screen are spoof advertisements (in Latin) from the Imperial Broadcasting Corporation, the player's character being thrown to the lions, executed by crucifixion, and the like…

High Score Tables

The high score tables keep a record of players' best performances. In addition to keeping the top five scores of all time, the screen also lists

the best career (10 fight) performances with each of the (available and visible) characters;

the best 5 single fight scores, regardless of character used;

the fastest victory in a single match (in seconds);

the fastest perfect victory in a single match (in seconds); and

the three *worst* performances in a single match of all time!

In addition to storing the player's name, the game also records which character was used to achieve the high score.

All high score details will be stored on the PC's hard disk (memory card, if available, for console machines).

Attraction Sequence

The attract sequence simply selects two characters at random, along with a background, and then starts a match, using the default game settings. Both characters are AI-driven.

One of the other functions of the attract sequence is to display the game credits as an overlay message.

As soon as the controls are touched the game returns to the menu screen.

VIII
Artificial Intelligence

The artificial intelligence routines for **Theatre of Pain** are evolved from those found in **: Resurrection**. The same editor for creating individual character moves is used to create the moves for **Theatre of Pain**. However, the way that the game handles those moves has been changed to make it easier to create the overall artificial intelligence for each character.

If you like to regard it this way: the building blocks (the moves) are largely unchanged in the way they are handled by the game system, but the way they are put together has changed. Of course, all the moves in Gladiators are created specifically for this game, but using the editor system.

This section covers those changes or, more accurately, the evolution to the system. The AI system in **Theatre of Pain** for character action is mechanically elegant and simple.

AI Boxes

Each character is surrounded by a set of (logical, but invisible on screen) boxes that are used by the AI to determine the position of an opponent. Based on the opponent's position in one box or another and the opponent's movement, the AI selects an appropriate table of movements which the controlled character can execute.

When an opponent is in more than one box, the AI considers the direction of the opponent's movement; the box that the opponent is moving *into* is assumed to be the one that he completely occupies, even though he may not do so yet.

The AI boxes for standing and jumping characters are shown in the diagrams below. The first diagram shows the AI attack boxes for a standing character, the second, those of a jumping character.

A7	A8			
A7	A8	A9	A10	
Standing Character Boundary Box	A1 A1 A2	A3	A3 A4	A5 A6

Duplicated numbers in multiple boxes (A1, A2, A3, A7 and A8) show where a table is used for more than one opponent location. In all these cases, this has been done to show the co-incidence of logical boxes used here with the boxes that underpin the character artwork (see *AI & Artwork*, below).

Air 1	Air 2	Air 3
Jumping Character Boundary Box	Air 4	Air 5
Air 6	Air 7	Air 8
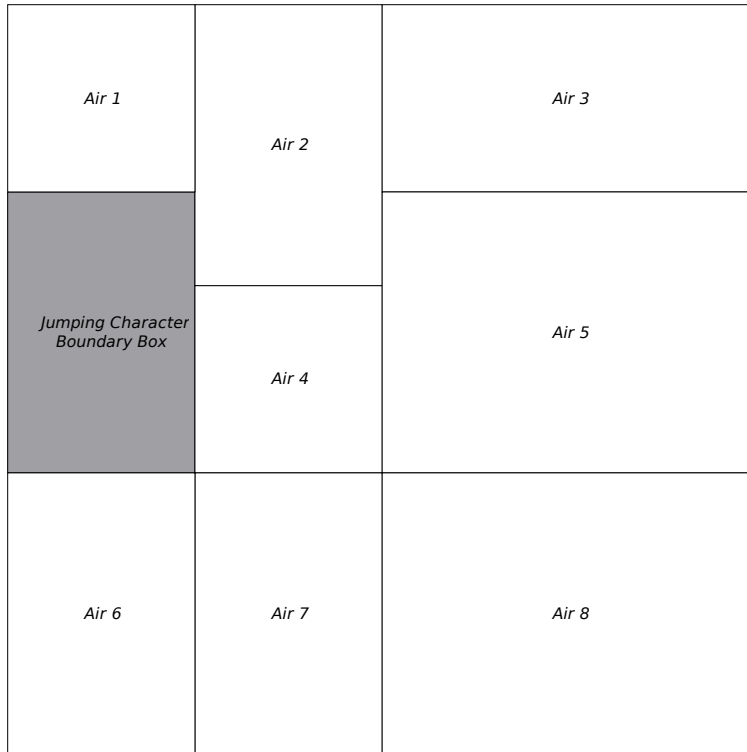
Note that these diagrams are not to scale although the relative proportions of the AI boxes are to scale and that boxes furthest away from the character position extend to the edges of the screen or playing area where appropriate. The use of larger boxes further away from the AI-driven character is deliberate, so that the AI executes attacks even when an opponent is not in a perfect position.

AI Tables

Every box thus has a table, or rather set of tables, associated with it. Each table lists all the appropriate movements that the controlled character could carry out to attack his opponent in such-and-such position, or improve the general position of the controlled character in the fight. All moves have a percentage chance of being executed, and the AI randomly selects one of the character's moves from the (intentionally) limited list on the table.

There are 18 basic (sets of) move tables for each character using this system. Not all the tables are of equal size and complexity, simply because a character's options when his opponent is in a particular position may be rather limited (eg a character with no projectile moves can do little but close with his opponent at long range). And although the creation of these tables may seem like a great deal of work, many of them will be 'variants on a theme' rather than completely distinct lists of moves.

A typical basic move table will look something like this:

Action% Chanceprojectile attack20%jump10%walk forward30%wait10%go on defensive*5%*etc...etc...* ie make a blocking move or similar, see *Overall Character Behaviour*, below.

AI & Difficulty

As was hinted in the previous paragraph, more than one table is provided for each box. This is done so that different moves and different percentage chances can be provided for each character at each difficulty level setting. At lower difficulty levels characters in Gladiators will behave in a qualitatively different fashion than at higher levels; for example, they will be more likely to execute long range projectile attacks at high difficulty levels, while at low difficulty levels they will tend to close with an opponent before attacking, thus giving the player a chance to execute his own long range attacks.

As a result of difficulty levels, the table(s) for an AI box would look something like this:

*% Chance by Difficulty SettingActionDiff. 1Diff. 2Diff. 3*projectile attack-10%20%jump5%10%15%walk forward20%25%30%wait30%20%10%go on defensive*15%5%-*etc...etc... etc...etc...** see note for previous example table.

This is a evolutionary change from , which simply used difficulty to create a time delay in the execution of moves, rather than as a mechanism to alter the basic behaviour of each character.

Overall Character Behaviour

As well as this difficulty-related aspect to having more than one move table for each box, there is also an element that considers the 'posture' of the AI-driven character. Each set of tables (per box) will include three (difficulty setting specific) 'aggressive' move tables, and a single 'defensive' move table, used when the AI-driven character has been 'knocked onto his back foot'.

It's worth pointing out at this point that the 'defensive' table will include a reference to the aggressive tables as one of its 'moves', so that even when on the defensive the AI-driven character will sometimes launch an unexpected attack. Likewise, each aggressive table will include a 'go-to-defence' line, so that a character may switch posture without necessarily being attacked. The percentage chances of these 'posture switches' will be carefully set on each table to reflect the difficulty level of the individual tables. In effect, the set of boxes for each table becomes:

*Aggressive TablesAttack % Chance by Difficulty Setting Defensive TableAttack ActionDiff. 1Diff. 2Diff. 3Defend Action% Chance*projectile attack-10%20%block15%jump5%10%15%crouch block10%walk forward20%25%30%walk back10%wait30%20%10%wait15%go on defensive*15%5%-*go to attack**10%*etc...etc...etc...etc...etc...etc...** use the defensive table to randomly select an action instead.

** use the attack table (as determined by difficulty setting) instead to randomly select an action.

Table Construction

Each table is carefully constructed so that only *appropriate* moves are included on it. There is little point in executing a short range attack, for example, when an opponent is at the other side of the screen.

As each attacking move is purposely designed to end in one of these logical boxes, the link between the box occupied (or about to be occupied) by an opponent and the moves the AI considers is clear to when creating the AI tables for each character.

Each table is has its entries carefully ordered for another reason: if the character lacks sufficient stored super power energy to execute a move, the AI defaults to the next move down the list (or randomly selects again so that AI-driven characters have the opportunity to build up a large reserve of super power), so that the character always tries something, even if his 'first choice' is unavailable.

The Number of Tables Needed

This system might seem as if it requires a rather large number of tables (ie a set for each on-screen AI box) , but it is nowhere near as bad as it sounds, because only a portion of the tables will ever be required in play at any one time: the defensive move table for each box and the appropriate difficulty-linked aggressive move table. In addition, these three aggressive tables (one for each difficulty level), will largely be the same for each AI box, with changes to the percentage chances of each listed move being the main differences between them. Of course, some moves may have a 0% chance of being executed at certain difficulty levels and thus need not appear on a particular table for a character.

Blocking

Because each move ends in a specific on-screen logical box, AI-driven characters can also make much more accurate decisions about when it is necessary to block because the AI can judge whether or not an attack will hit home, and then (possibly) execute the appropriate block or counter move. A block execution may be ignored if the move that the AI-driven is currently executing is not one which is worthwhile interrupting (if the *no block interrupt* flag has been set in the movement editor, for example).

Artwork Implications & AI

All the artwork for characters can be constructed entirely independently of the underlying logic of moves, allowing playtesting of moves to begin well before the artwork for a character is finalised. As has been noted, all close attacks and blows have to finish in one of the boxes shown on the standard character attack diagram (below), so the artwork can be added 'over' the attacks, providing that the character art visually matches these logical moves.

High (Jump)	High (Jump)			
Standing Character Boundary Box	*Short standing punches*	*Medium standing punches*	*Hard standing punches*	*Very Long Range*
	Short crouch punch	*Medium crouch punch*	*Hard crouch punch*	
	Short crouch kicks	*Medium crouch kicks*	*Hard crouch kicks*	

This underlying single solution for all character moves means that animations can be completed by the time the characters are built and finalised. This also allows changes to the character artwork and/or the character moves to be carried out independently of each other without necessarily disrupting all work on a particular character.

The main advantage to this overall approach remains the ease of playtesting before artwork is finalised. Working 'dummy' artwork can be inserted into the game and fine tuning can be carried on regardless of the artwork's progress.

A Final Note ON the AI System

This system also has a good deal of inherent flexibility. Details of AI tables can be changed without affecting the overall AI system and, conversely, the shape and size of the AI boxes is not dependent on the contents of the AI tables that they use. The various boxes can be re-sized, added to or even deleted without necessarily disturbing any of their AI tables.

IX
project overview

This documentation119mIÛ8d mpmbbbmmaaaÛI ababbbbaÜ$119IÜD abbImpmmÜl ab*pbbbbaÝDd119`baÝTd*119mIIÝlD119apÝx¤119`bbbaÞDd119mbmÞlD119mmÞx¤119mbbbaßHD119amßlD119IIßx¤119IbbbaàHD119amà|„119abbaáH$119má|„119abbaâ|„119aaaaã|„119apmaä|$119`ä„D119maå|$119`å„D119I`æˆ$119`çˆ$119`ÿÿ[DEL]àC119mm€àc119mmIàc119mao,àc119mboƒ䈱119abmpbmI„ä# abbb*ba119pBÂäc abbbbbmaapa†äc abbbbbmabba‡äc abbbbbabbba‡D119pI‡$D119mIˆäcabbbbbbbbbbbIIapIamm‰äcabbbbbbbbbbbmpbapbaaŠäabbbbbbbbbbbmabbbbbbmmmmI‹ä#abbbbbbbbbbabbbbbbbmmbbpmŒä#abbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbmpbbbmŒL$119Iäƒabbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbpbbbbmmmm`$119IŽäƒabbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbmapaŽ`D119mmäƒabbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbb*bbbaabaX„119mpam*ä#abbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbpaabmlD119pI|D119mI‘ä#abbbbddbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbba'lÄ119amIIbm'ä#abbbbedbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbpb`mmbpm"äCabbbdeebbddbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbammbaaa"äCabbdeeebdeedbbbbbbbbdbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbmabbba•äCabbeeeeddeeedbbbbdbbdbdbbbbbbbbbbbbbpbbbba–äCabdeeeedeeeedbbbbdbbdbdbbbbbbbbbbbbbbb*bbbbba—**äCabdeee*eeeeeedbbbbddbdddbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbb*b*ba˜äCabdeeeeeeeedbddbddbeedbbbbbbbbbbbbbdbbbbbba™äCabdeeeeeeeeedbeedeedeedbbbbbbbbbbebbbbbbbašäCabdeedeeeeeedeeeeeeeeeddddbbbbbdedebbbbbba›äCabdeedeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeedd*d*bbbdeeebbbbbbaœäCabdeedeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeedbbbdeeeddbbbbaäCabdedbdeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeebbeeeeedbbbbažäCabdedbdeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeddeeeeeebbbaŸäCabbdbbdeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeddbbba äCabbbbbdeeeeeddedeeedddeeeeeeeeeeeeeeedbba¡äCabbbbbdeeeedddbdeebbbeeeeeeeeeeeeeedbba¢äCabbbbbdeeeeebbbbdddbbbeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeedbba£äCabbbbbdddeebbbbbbbbbbdeeeeeeeeeeeeeedbba¤äCabbbbbddbdddbbbbbbbbbbdeeeeeeeeeeeeeebba¥äCabbbbbddbdbbbbbbbbbbbbddedeeeeeeeeeeeebba¦äCabbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbdbdeeeeeeeeeeedba§äCabbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbddeeeeeeeeeedba¨äCababbbbbbpabbbbbbbbbbbbbbbdeeddeedeeeeba©äCaambbbbbbmabbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbdeedbdededdebaªäCapmb`babbmmbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbbdedbbbdbebdeba«ä#ammpIapba«

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‰ˆˆ‰LWVised upwards (to 16Mb), given the reputation that Win'95
already has as a memory hog for even the simplest tasks. 16Mb may also
allow additional background graphics features, such as crowd reactions.

Theatre of Pain will be a 'real' Win'95 application, not a DOS program
running in Single Application Mode. The game will run directly from CD,
but will require a limited amount of disk space for storing game
configuration, top score and campaign game files.

Control options include joystick, mouse and Gravis-
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required are as follows, and each of these will be available in more than
one version for use with different characters:

kicks

punches

sword 'swishes'

armour clangs

screams, grunts, and 'hi-yahs!'

thuds and thumps

footsteps

shield bashes

special moves for each character

fight-starting fanfare

victory fanfare

death effects

defeat drum beat

Sound effects will be positioned in the stereo field to reflect the (on- or nominal off-screen) position of the effect source.

Crowd Noise

The Roman Games were very much a spectator sport, and part of the process of making the player feel this is to include the noise of a large crowd running in the 'background' during each fight. Although this crowd noise will be a 'sound effect', it's worth emphasising separately, simply because it will be so pervasive.

Ideally, the crowd noise will be tied to the action in the game: always present as a low level 'chatter', but breaking into cheers and groans in response to the character actions. The crowd noise will have six states:

background — general background noise, occasional catcalls, and some intermittent cheering; the comparison could be drawn with a real-world boxing crowd in the early stages of a fight.

cheering — whenever action starts, no matter which character initiates it; the crowd are assumed to be split in reasonably equal factions. Stereo effects will be used to make sure that the cheering is loudest from the side where the action has begun.

loud cheering — as one or other character is reduced to less than 25% of his original wounds. Again, stereo effects will be used to make sure that the cheering comes from 'supporters' on the correct side of the screen.

'outright hysteria' — when one character defeats his opponent with a super or spectacularly messy termination move.

groan — after a blow misses or an attack fails to cause damage; as before, the stereo image is linked to the action.

booing — whenever no action is initiated by either character for 10 seconds or so (in effect, the crowd are getting bored). This is a general noise from the whole — admittedly fickle — mob! After a further 15 seconds, a slow hand clap will start up…

Arch-Enemy Speeches

Each character in **Theatre of Pain** has a hated 'arch-enemy' to be destroyed. As part of the characterisation of each fighter, there is a short speech for each which can be delivered during their ultimate confrontation.

Each of these speeches will require a sample file, so that it can be played back at the appropriate moment. This is a total of 14 pieces of monologue, which require several actors (or other individuals) to speak them.

XII
APPENDIX: A ROMAN TIMELINE

Timeline Overview

The Roman Empire of **Theatre of Pain** has a long and, at times, turbulent history that stretches for 2750 years. The following timeline gives a history of the main events of Roman history, from the foundation of the city to the present day.

The 'branching point' of this history from our world is c50AD, the time at which Hero of Alexandria develops his steam turbine. Unlike in our world history, this inventiveness is encouraged and, effectively, the first Industrial Revolution happens more than 17 centuries 'too early'. With such a head start, the Roman Empire manages to become the dominant power of Europe, then the Earth and eventually the solar system and the nearer stars. The other two major human 'empires' of this history are China and the Maya; the Romans also have a non-human species in the Empire: the k'Tai.

It's worth pointing out that even during periods of apparent peace there are small scale rebellions, riots and troubles throughout the Empire. Only events which have effects across the whole of Empire or demonstrate some aspect of Roman 'history' are listed below. The other reason for this careful 'vagueness' in places is that it allows this history to be modified retroactively without distorting the whole structure.

The end of the timeline includes open 'hooks' for future developments in other Mirage products: externally, the Romans have met another alien race, but have no idea as to what this race might be; internally, the Emperor is moving to gain tighter control over the Church. Of course, further troubles can be guaranteed with the other human domains of the universe…

The Imperial Timeline

All changes to 'real' history are shown in *italics*. Emperors shown in **bold**. Dates on the Imperial Calendar are *Anno Urbis Conditae*, dated from the foundation of the city.

*Imperial Calendar AUC*Christian *Calendar BC/AD* *Main Events of the Roman Empire*0753BCRome founded by Romulus.243510 Republic established under 2 annually-elected consuls.507-512246-241First Punic War gives Rome control of Sicily.535-552218-201Second Punic War; Rome defeats Hannibal and conquers much of Spain.579174Circus Maximus rebuilt.604-607149-146Third Punic War; Rome destroys Carthage and takes Africa as a province.662-66491-89The Social War; Rome defeats its rebellious Italian allies and gains control of the whole of Italy.670-67483-79Civil War; Sulla becomes dictator and purges opponents.680-68273-71Spartacus, a gladiator, leads slave uprising in Capua; eventually bloodily put down by Crassus.68964Pompey conquers Syria.69063Rome annexes Judea.70944Caesar dictator for life; assassinated by Brutus and Cassius.71142Brutus and Cassius defeated at Philippi by Mark Anthony and Octavian.71637Anthony and Cleopatra marry.72231Octavian and Agrippa defeat Anthony and Cleopatra at naval Battle of Actium.72330Anthony and Cleopatra commit suicide, leaving Octavian as sole ruler of the Roman world; Egypt becomes a Roman possession, but as virtually a personal estate for the Emperor.72627Octavian assumes the title **Augustus**; in effect the Republic has ceased to be and the Empire has begun.741-74412-9Rome conquers Germany as far as the Elbe.7629ADThree entire legions wiped out by Germans; the Imperial frontier moves back to the Rhine76714Augustus dies; **Tiberius** become Emperor78027Tiberius leaves Rome and retires to Capri; Sejanus rules in all but

name as Prefect of Praetorians78229Jesus is crucified79037Tiberius dies; **Caligula** succeeds him.79441Caligula is assassinated and **Claudius** is proclaimed Emperor by the Praetorian Guard; no-one else in Rome has the power to interfere with this decision.79643Claudius undertakes the (re)conquest of Britain.*803-80950-56Hero of Alexandria invents rudimentary steam turbine. Encouraged by the Prefect of the Delta, Hero applies his invention by creating two devices of some importance in an agricultural- and river-based province: a practical steam plough/rotivator and a riverine steam boat. Both inventions are successful, and where they are applied crops are greater and brought to market with more speed. Egypt, the Emperor's own province, is now set to become the technological centre of the Empire…*80754Claudius dies; **Nero** becomes Emperor.*81360"Nero's Engine" — a steam-powered execution device which crushes and 'minces' its victims — is exhibited in Rome. Built by Hero of Alexandria for the Emperor, the machine delights Nero who showers money on the inventor in the hope of more blood-stained wonders to come.*81764Saint Peter becomes Bishop of Rome; his tenure is brief, however, because he is crucified within a year.

*Great Fire of Rome started by sparks from a Hero Turbine; Nero persecutes Christians as being responsible, feeding many of them into a new, larger "Nero's Engine' built especially for the purpose.*81865Roman navy builds first ocean-going steamship, the Augustus Nero*, although it is based on a conventional quinquireme hull and still has a full complement of sails. Other composite vessels follow in rapid succession. 81966First steamship-carried corn shipment from Egypt arrives in Rome; steam power's future is assured by this practical demonstration of its value to Rome.*

December: Hero of Alexander dies, crushed beneath the wheels of his last invention, a steam chariot. His apprentices, however, vow to continue his work and are funded directly from the Imperial purse. From this point on, their work is divided equally between practical applications of steam power and ever more complicated devices of torture and execution for Nero.

Jewish Revolt begins in the Eastern provinces.*82067Vespasian arrives in Palestine as the new Governor with orders to suppress the Jews both there and in Judea. He is so impressed by the steam chariots that he sets up manufactories in Egypt to create enough troop carriers for an entire legion; the strategic mobility this gives him is crucial to his rapid sweeps against the rebels. Vespasian is recalled to Rome to account for his success, but gets no further than Crete, where he is ordered to remain. Bored, he continues to experiment with 'steam cars' for tactical as well as strategic mobility; at his insistence, armour is added to the cars.*82168Revolt of Vindex and suicide of Nero; *Vespasian spends a year on Crete, apparently 'forgotten' by Nero. Nero sends Vespasian's legions to the frontier and brings in conventionally-equipped (and fully loyal) troops. The Jewish revolt gains strength against these old-fashioned legions.*82269Year of the Four Emperors; in rapid succession **Galba**, **Otho** and **Vitellius** claim the throne. **Vespasian I** (Titus Flavius Vespasianus) is persuaded by his son, Titus, as well as the governor of Syria and the Prefect of Egypt to allow himself to be proclaimed Emperor. All the legions in the East accept his claim in July. The legions on the Danube follow suit in August and march on Rome. *Rome falls on September 20 after bitter street fighting, although Vitellius' forces are unable to match the outstanding mobility of Vespasian's steam-car legions. A new era of warfare has begun, and the **Flavian** dynasty begins its control of the Roman Empire. The first steam-only ship, the* Neptune*, is launched at Alexandria.*82370Titus is sent back to Judea by his father, and his legions surround and then sack Jerusalem. The Jewish revolt is broken and the Ark of the Covenant vanishes into the Imperial treasure houses.83279Vesuvius erupts and destroys Pompeii and Herculaneum; Pliny the Elder is among the dead.

Vespasian is succeeded by **Titus**.*83380Colosseum completed *in record time, thanks to steam-powered cranes augmenting the slave labourers.*83481**Domitian** succeeds Titus as Emperor.

*The Prefect of Egypt (at the Emperor's behest) builds the first completely steam-powered factory in the Empire at Memphis. Slave labour is still used extensively, but the bulk of the heavy work is now carried out by machinery. Ore is imported from as far away as Britannia to feed the furnaces. The quality of metal goods from the factory is unmatched in the Empire; good quality, cheap steel starts to appear in large quantities.*83683Domitian extends Roman control in Germany by crushing the Chatti tribe. *Many other German tribes now acquiesce to Roman authority.*83784Hierocles (the Great) *begins his scientific endeavours in Memphis; the 'Centuries of Scholarship' start with him. His investigations into alchemy and 'natural philosophy' lead him to define the study of metallurgy, chemistry and mechanics. His pupils establish the Domitian School in Memphis, which the Emperor funds as a 'Senate of Wisdom'. Greek and Roman philosophers, alchemists, practical engineers and even poets gravitate towards Memphis over the next decade.*

*Roman mathematical symbology is abandoned by scholars in favour of a North African system which includes zero, which the traditional Roman numerical system does not.*83986 Domitian campaigns against the Dacians, *and extracts tribute and hostages from them.*84996Emperor Domitian assassinated, partly because of his own paranoia and cruelty in dealing with those he believes to be plotting against him. **Nerva**, one of Rome's elder statesmen, becomes Emperor; he is spared from the former Emperor's conspiracy hunts only because Domitian's astrologers reported that he wasn't a threat.

*Hierocles demonstrates his turbine-powered 'lightning' machine and the study of electricity and its applications begins. Astrologers are banished en masse from the Domitian School.*85097Nerva adopts Trajan, the governor of Germania Superior, as his heir, thus establishing the system of adopting heirs to ensure the succession of the best possible candidates. From this point onwards, the majority of Emperors are adopted into the Imperial Family, not born into it.85198Nerva dies and **Trajan** becomes Emperor; Trajan begins a series of campaigns against in Germania, designed to bring the Germans entirely within the Empire. Over the next 10 years, these will do exactly that.*858105Steam-based Factories have spread from Egypt throughout the Empire. The more far-sighted patrician families realise that future wealth may depend on industry, rather than landholding. The first 'industrial estates' appear. Internal trade within the Empire blossoms.861108Trajan undertakes his final campaign in Germania; the province is completely pacified. The first, experimental tracked steam cars are fielded as troop carriers, aiding in the final subjugation of Germania.862109Hierocles the Great takes credit for the first electric motor, which has actually been built by his apprentice, Irenaeus. Hierocles is poisoned by Irenaeus, who is spared execution because of this scientific knowledge. Irenaeus continues his electrical experiments.864111The first steam railway, between Ostia and Rome, is completed. Intended to carry grain from the port into the city, passenger traffic is soon very important, despite the death of Claudius Livianus, the Prefect of the Praetorian Guard, who was run down by the Emperor's own train (pulled by a nearly-silent turbine locomotive) at the opening ceremony.*

*Vindex the Scribe invents moveable type, but is implicated in a conspiracy against Trajan by jealous fellow scribes and later executed.*867114Trajan conquers Armenia and Mesopotamia.868115Jewish revolt *is rapidly crushed, and the Jewish Diaspora takes place.*870117**Hadrian** becomes Emperor after the death of Trajan.875122*Hadrian completes the conquest of the whole of Britain, including Ireland.*

*Printed books become common.*877124*Aurelius Sextus Gabinianus (Aurelius the Navigator) sails west from Hispania into the Atlantic, and makes landfall 15 days later in Terra Nova (the New World). First contact with natives leads to bloodshed.*879126*Aurelius the Navigator completes his circumnavigation of Africa, arriving in the Red Sea on the Emperor's birthday.*880127*First permanent settlement established in the New World at Capua Nova. The news is announced in the* Tempus, *Rome's first daily newspaper.*883130*Hadrian visits the New World, and agrees peace treaty with natives that paves the way for the Huron Confederation of tribes as a 'client kingdom' of Rome.*834131*An Imperial census gives the population of the city of Rome as one million citizens 'at the best estimate'. No-one bothers to count slaves, provincials and foreigners.*839135*Aurelius the Navigator circumnavigates the globe and is granted a 'triumph' for his achievement, the first non-military triumph to ever be awarded.*891138Hadrian dies and is succeeded by **Antoninus Pius**.

The first Chinese ambassador arrives in Rome in time for Hadrian's funeral.

*Aurelius the Navigator is killed on Oahu in the Hawaiian islands by natives when his landing party is ambushed. His men crucify every islander they can capture in retaliation. This, the 1st Hawaiian War, sets the tone for all future dealings with the island nation.*893140*First contact and exchange of ambassadors with the Mayan Empire, which is expanding throughout the south of the New World.*

*Roman expeditions in Scandinavia are abandoned, because the country is deemed worthless. Campaigns in Dacia Inferior and Scythia (the steppes) are abandoned for the same reasons.*8951422nd Hawaiian War. A second punitive expedition assaults the islands to further revenge Aurelius the Navigator. The expedition withdraws, defeated, after two months of hellish fighting in the jungles of Hawaii.906153Gunpowder arrives in the Empire from China, where it has long been used to propel rockets. The scientists of the Domitian School apply it to weaponry in short order. The first night time Games in the Colosseum to be lit by electric (arc) light take place.*

*The first mechanical computer is successfully used by Domitian scholars to accurately predict the return of a comet. Improvements to the mechanism are begun at once.*913160*All legions are equipped with gunpowder artillery. Five legions and auxiliary artillery comprehensively destroy Persian military power at Battle of the Euphrates, despite the Persian possession of cannon, thanks to superior tactics and mechanically-computed firing tables.* 914161**Marcus Aurelius** becomes Emperor.*916-923163-*

170Campaigns in Scythia come to nothing, as the Romans underestimate the size and climate of the steppes. The Roman frontier stabilises along the line of the Don river.927-943174-190The province of Germania is extended along the Baltic coast in a series of peaceful colonisations. 930177Marcus Aurelius, in what is later seen to be a fit of madness, names Commodus as his successor. **Commodus** becomes Emperor and purges opposition in the Senate. *The city of Rome has a population of 2 million. 933180Five miles of electric street lights are switched on in Rome by Commodus. The first steam-powered tracked artillery is deployed.937184The first electric telegraph between Rome and Ravenna is completed. Over the next 20 years, the whole Empire is wired into the telegraph system, a rail network is created in parallel to the roads, and the legionary forts repositioned. The Empire can now react almost instantly to any military threat with an information network second to none, and the transport capacity to move troops to wherever they are needed. 941188The Commodus Purges. Commodus uses the telegraph system to organise and carry out his first mass arrests and executions. The army is virtually beheaded as most legionary commanders are executed. The scholars of the Domitian School, forewarned thanks to their control of the telegraph system, go into hiding. The process is repeated virtually every year for the remainder of his reign.945192Commodus is assassinated when a bomb is hurled into his box at the Games. The Empire is plunged into civil war, and the Persian provinces revolt.* **Septimus Severus** *emerges as the new Emperor. He re-establishes the Domitian School at Ravenna.946193The 2nd Battle of the Euphrates is almost a repeat of the first. However, this time primarily German legionaries are used to destroy the Persians. The German garrison of Persia is made permanent, and retired German legionaries are encouraged to settle in Persia. Although it takes another thirty years to completely pacify the former Persian provinces, Rome's eastern frontier is now at the gates of India.951198Legion II Augusta becomes the first military force in the world to be equipped primarily with flint-lock gunpowder weaponry. New tactical experiments continue for several years to find the right balance between firepower and melee ability. This is the point at which the legions cease to have a uniform organisation, and are tailored to fit their tasks.952199The First Great Plague. Approximately 15% of the Roman world is dies in the space of six months from a virulent form of influenza. Septimus Severus is among the casualties, and he is succeeded by* **Vespasian II**. *Plans for the conquest of India are abandoned, as the Empire's economy goes into a decline.953-954200-201The Year of the Six Emperors. Vespasian II is killed in December 200 by his wife, Lollia the Poisoner, and succeeded in turn by* **Marcus I** *(also poisoned) and then by a string of pretenders and usurpers:* **Honorius**, **Marcus II**, **Valerius**, **Vespasian III** *and finally* **Quintus**. *Lollia survives them all, and fortunately the Empire is strong enough to survive the turmoil as well.955202Quintus dies suddenly and without declaring an heir.* **Lollia** *seizes power and becomes the first Empress, almost to the relief of the Senate. The aftermath of the plague and the economic woes of the Empire need a strong hand.957204Revolt of the Praetorians. After their commander, Gaius Metellus, is murdered on Lollia's orders, the Praetorians revolt and take control of Rome. Lollia's forces quickly crushes the revolt because the Praetorians have become a 'court regiment'. Much of the city is burned to the ground in the fighting. The Praetorians are disbanded.959206Lollia 'liquidates' the Senate by the mass poisoning of 260 senior senators and military commanders at a feast in their honour. Lollia is widely assumed to have gone mad. The riots that follow result in her death at the hands of the mob. With no obvious candidates left to be Emperor,* **Marcus Longinus** (**Longinus I**), *one of the richest and most influential survivors in the Senate, manages to buy his colleagues' support. His first act is to restore the Praetorians and increase the* Speculatores, *a group of secret police within the Praetorian ranks.960-962207-209The Longinus Reformation. Longinus puts the Empire back on a sound footing by purging all of Lollia's appointees. As a patrician from one of the 'industrial estate families', he is very interested in trade and commerce. Longinus lays out the foundations of a new series of roads, railways and sea routes to economically integrate the Empire to a far greater degree than has previously been the case. Provinces specialise and internal and external trade is encouraged.984231Longinus dies, having doubled the wealth of the Empire in 25 years. Scientific progress has also continued apace under his benevolent rule. Unusually, he is succeed by his natural son,* **Longinus II**, *the Younger, who continues his father's policies.987234The city of Rome has a population of 6 million.992239Longinus II begins the 'Merchant Conquests', a series of trade and economic manoeuvres that rapidly integrate border lands into the Empire, particularly in Africa.1000247The Millennial Games last for 200 days.*

Ethiopia becomes a province at its own request. Its king is appointed as hereditary governor.1003250Longinus II is killed in a hunting accident. His nominated heir, **Jovian**, *succeeds him for two months before abdicating in favour of* **Carus** *the Egyptian, the first non-Latin Roman to be Emperor. 1008255The first large-scale commercial hydro-electric*

*power is generated in the Alps. The power goes to feed the ever-growing demand for electricity among the wealthy of Rome.*1010257*Lucius of Capua sends a wireless message (the letters "SPQR") from Palantine Hill to the Senate. Later that same year he broadcasts between Ravenna and a ship at sea.*1018265*Carus dies, and his natural daughter,* **Cleopatra Augusta**, *becomes the second Empress.*1023270*The whole of Europe from the Baltic to the Mediterranean and the Atlantic to the Black Sea is completely integrated into the Empire, as are all the North African and Middle Eastern provinces. Cleopatra Augusta changes the* Ius Civile, *the civil law code, so that all provincials are considered Roman citizens, second class.*1024271*Tassianus of Ravenna becomes the first man to fly in a hot air balloon. Unfortunately, he plunges to his death when his balloon catches fire after an hour in the air.*1041288*All Imperial forces are equipped with cartridge-based firearms.*1042289*Ashanti becomes a client kingdom and, armed and trained by Roman advisors, rapidly expands into central and southern Africa.*1042-1048289-95*Electricity replaces steam on all Roman railways. Advances in storage technology mean that many other steam-powered vehicles are also being phased out.*1043290*Cleopatra Augusta is assassinated by a lone gunman. Mayan involvement is suspected, although nothing can be proved. She is succeeded by* **Severus**, *who has the entire Mayan embassy executed in the arena. In return, every Roman in the Mayan Empire is offered up as a sacrifice to the Mayan gods.*1043-1053290-300*The 1st Maya War. Using the Hurons as proxies, Severus fights an inconclusive series of campaigns against the Mayan Empire in the central New World. The war ends in stalemate.*1044291*The last cavalry in the Roman army are phased out as electric vehicles take over all their duties in 291.*1056303*Most of Northern India becomes a series of client states of the Empire, their economies almost entirely under the control of Rome.*

*The first crude electronic computer, the Colossus of Memphis, appears and clearly demonstrates its superiority over its mechanical brethren.*1057-87304-334*Mineral oil is discovered under the sands of Arabia, leading to a revolution in artificial materials. Over the next 30 years plastics become widespread. The coal fields of Britannia, Germania and Northern Gaul enjoy an unexpected boom as the same industrial and chemical technologies increase the demand for coal.*1060307**Constantine I** (the Flyer) *becomes Emperor.*1061308*Constantine conquers Dacia Inferior (the steppes) in a series of lightning campaigns. The Roman Empire now extends from the Atlantic to the Urals, and from the Baltic to central Africa. Its influence is world-wide.*

The Chinese Ambassador is thrown to the lions for his part in a plot against Constantine's life. Diplomatic relations between the two Empires are severed. The Chinese take no further action — the man was guilty, after all.

*The population of the city of Rome reaches 18 million. The New Colosseum is completed on the Vatican Hills, and is capable of seating 200,000 spectators.*1072319*Constantine moves the capital from Rome to his new city of Constantinople. The Senate, however, refuses to leave Rome, so Constantine leaves them there and simply stops consulting them.*

*The first television station, under the strict control of the State, begins broadcasting from Constantinople. The Games are broadcast for the first time, as an object lesson in Roman justice, but incidentally attracting a huge sporting audience.*1073-78320-325*2nd Mayan War. Border disputes in the central New World and in the Pacific lead to open warfare once more. Roman warships manage to sweep all Mayan shipping from the seas, but this is an empty victory as the Maya are a continental, not naval, power. After initial successes on land the Mayans are pushed back and sue for peace. Constantine grants them generous terms and marries his daughter to a Mayan Prince to seal the bargain.*1077-78324-325*The Second Great Plague. Perhaps because travel in the Empire is extremely easy, cholera sweeps across the European Empire. Around 7% of the population dies in the next 18 months. Constantine makes public health a priority, and is credited with stopping the plague.*1078325*The Council of Nicaea defines Christianity in the Empire, and edits the Bible to decide which writings will be included. Christianity has been a growing religion for the last 300 years, but this marks the point where it becomes the 'official' religion of the Empire. The Church Elders agree to the Imperial Cult being part of the Church: the (live) Emperor is 'God's Elect' on Earth and can be asked to intercede with God like any other (dead) saint. In return, Constantine recognises the Bishop of Rome as head of the 'One True' Church. Senior Church figures rationalise this as the logical extension of 'Render Unto Caesar…' It is this agreement which secures Constantine's place in history as the first Christian Emperor, and the Church's place as the new State Religion.*1080327*The first heavier-than-air flying machine is created. The aeroplane is the invention of Domitia Paulina, the great-granddaughter of Tassianus, Rome's pioneer aviator.*1089336*The Hurons becomes a fully fledged province of the Roman Empire, rather than a client. The Romanisation of the Hurons and their sub-tribes begins in earnest. The Mississippi River marks the border of the new Huron province.*

Constantine 'foolishly' risks his life as a passenger aboard the first aeroplane to fly across the sea between southern Britannia and Gaul. Later that same year, he is aboard an aircraft which flies between Capri and Rome, and lands in the market square of the Old Forum.

*First formal contacts with Nippon.*1090337*Constantine dies from a chill caught on one of his aeronautical adventures.* **Vespasian IV** *becomes Emperor and moves the Imperial capital back to Rome. This is his only act of note, as he is killed when a war rocket which he is inspecting explodes in his face. His successor, Marcus Domitius, takes the name* **Vespasian V** *(the Just) in his honour. Vespasian V's reign is a careful one, a period of consolidation rather than expansionism. His careful and comprehensive reviews of all Rome's laws produce the Code of Vespasian, which makes the whole legal system comprehensible to the 'Roman in the street', a major step forward.*1106353*The first flight of the Atlantic. Balbus and Macro of the Praetorian Air Guard fly from Wounded Elk in Huron to Bracara Augusta in Hispania in little over six hours.*

Vespasian is succeeded by the (natural) twin-Emperors **Galba II** *and* **Lucius**, *having been unable to select one of the twins as sole heir.*1111358*Roman technological and trade dominance gives control over Nippon; the warlords are integrated into the Empire as auxiliaries and carefully integrated one-by-one into the new colonial administration of the Nipponese home islands.* 1112359*"Delenda est Carthago" (Carthage must be destroyed) is the signal which launches the Romano-Nipponese invasion of the Hawaiian islands. All the natives are executed, and new colonists introduced. The genocidal 3rd Hawaiian War ends in less than six months; not one Hawaiian remains alive.*1116363*Galba II dies;* **Lucius** *continues as Emperor, but withdraws to the High Palace in the Alpine foothills. Power passes to Macro, the commander of the Praetorian guard, who is eventually adopted by Lucius. Over the next five years, strains begin to show as Romans come to resent Macro's harsh policies.*1123370*Lucius dies, allegedly smothered by* **Macro** *who takes the throne. A 'Mayan' gas attack on Venetia is later revealed to have been a plot by Macro, but he immediately attacks the Mayan Empire, bombing several cities with poison gas. The Bishop of Rome denounces Macro, and the Army of Nova Mundi refuses to leave barracks. Macro is arrested by Sulla (his own Praetorian commander) and handed over the Mayan Empire for his criminal actions. The Maya sacrifice him.*

Sulla (the Saviour) *seizes the throne.*1124371*Sulla gives up the throne in favour of* **Constantine II** *(the Scholar), claiming that Rome needs a clever ruler, not a brutal one. He returns to the Praetorians, but makes no attempt to be a 'power behind the throne', preferring to be an honest soldier. Trade, the arts and culture flourish anew.*

*The Games enter a period of prolonged and steady decline in both quantity and quality thanks to Constantine II's indifference to them.*1139386*The Domitian School is decentralised and put under the control of assorted patrician-controlled industrial estates; the greatest of these estates, however, remains under the control of the Emperor and the Imperial Family. The 'kick start' given to science by the Domitians is now self-sustaining. Huron splits into two provinces. Huron Superior expands westwards and northwards towards the Great Lakes. Imperial ambassadors to the Lakota offer formal military aid and training. The Lakota Nation becomes the most powerful people on the Plains.*1152399*Lucius the Scholar dies.* **Claudius II** *succeeds. Under his influence, Roman medicine, science and technology have advanced steadily. The life expectancy of a Roman is now 80 years. 35 million people live in the city of Rome, which stretches across most of Central Italy.*1197444*Claudius II has his life-support switched off. The Consuls who have ruled in his name select* **Alaric**, *the Army Commander in Dacia, as the most suitable candidate for Emperor. The era of the* **Germanic Emperors** *has begun.*1200447*To mark the 1200th anniversary of Rome, the Roman Navy launches its first space probe into orbit. The slave aboard is poisoned by remote control because no method exists of returning him to Earth.*

*Border disputes with the Chinese are engineered by a small clique of Hunnish officers. Alaric bows to military pressure and declares war on the Chinese.*1201-06448-453*General Attila launches his 'drive to the East' against China. He is finally halted at the Battle of Manchuria by the Chinese and then executed in Rome when he uses chemical weapons without Imperial permission. Rome and China agree the Peace of Beijing (453), which recognises all of Rome's claims to Siberia. The Chinese retreat behind the Great Wall and seal their borders. Tensions persist between the two states, but a 20 mile wide demilitarised zone is established along the border.*1202-21449-468*In a series of launches, the Navy progresses to the point where it can retrieve a man from space. The so-called* Astronauts *become a new elite, rather than a group of condemned slaves.*1203450*Alaric is succeeded by* **Theodoric** *in a military coup.*1206453*The Roman Army reaches its largest size, with 108 Legions and over 1000 assorted auxiliary formations.*

*Roman scientists are amazed when the first Chinese satellite is launched, and warn of a 'race' to establish control of the 'high ground' of space.*1207454*The Mayan Empire puts a*

*spaceman into orbit.*1211458*A joint Romano-Mayan expedition lands on the Moon and the first Roman colony (of six men!) is established.*

The Treaty of Pacal divides the Moon between the Roman and Mayan Empires. The Chinese are not consulted and declare war; the Nipponese home islands are devastated by plague bombs before Roman scientists develop vaccines.

*The Forbidden City in Beijing is bombed for the first time.*1213460*The Moon War peters out, when it becomes clear to the Chinese that they have little chance of winning and quite a lot to lose by fighting Rome and Maya simultaneously.*

Theodoric is killed by the 'Nipponese plague' and **Alaric** *is restored to the throne.*1215-1251462-498*Alaric is deposed for a second time, and the* **Council of Generals** *declares the* **New Republic***. Economic mismanagement weakens the Empire/New Republic, and eventually the legions revolt under the control of their middle-ranking officers.* **Childeric***, a legionary legate, is elected Emperor at the Council of Constantinople.*1254501*Romano-Nipponese cities flourish along the Pacific coast of Nova Mundi and along the coasts of Australasia. The interior of the continent is left to the 'Dreampeople' by Imperial decree.*

Roman scientists explode their first atomic bomb, in a high orbit over the Pacific, where the dangers are minimal. The (partly unexpected) EMP effects cause the Chinese to begin the War of Assassins. Three Emperors, **Childeric***,* **Julius Attila** *and* **Alaric II** *die in less than six months, bringing to an end the Germanic Emperors period.*

Nipponese Ninja and Speculatores *are despatched into China to carry the war back to the enemy.*1255502**Claudius III** *(the Immortal) becomes Emperor. Thanks to advanced medical techniques, Claudius becomes the one of the longest-reigning of all Emperors. The Imperial security services become ever-more powerful, charged with protecting the Emperor's life at all costs.*1274521*The War of Assassins comes to an end, when the Chinese admit what they have been doing.*

The Moon colonies now have a population of 100,000 plus.

*The first orbital High Palace is built for the Emperor.*1406653*The Lakota Nation controls the New World to the northern Pacific coast, having absorbed every tribe of natives in its path. The northern half of the continent is evenly divided between the now-three Huron provinces and the Lakota Nation.*1425672*With borders now largely fixed on Earth, Roman attention turns to the other planets of the Solar System. The Treaty of Pacal is extended to cover worlds beyond the Moon and the Chinese are allocated shares of the Asteroid belt, Mercury and Venus.*

The first Roman and Mayan colonies are established on Mars.

*Asteroid mining begins in earnest.*1451698*The first permanent scientific bases are established on the moons of Jupiter.*1456703*Claudius III finally dies for the seventh and final time. His robot doctors are prevented from healing him by* **Bear-Walking-Tall***, the head of the* Speculatores, *who becomes the first Huron Emperor, and beginning the* **Provincial Emperors** *era, and the true start of the Pax Romana.*1484731*The first clone is grown to term in an artificial womb. The Church immediately condemns the practice. The Emperor orders that cloning experiments continue in the hope of breeding a race of super-loyal guardsmen.*

*Hydrogen 'scoops' running into Jupiter's atmosphere make Europa the most important possession in the outer solar system as a refuelling base.*1487734*Ashanti is absorbed as a province of Rome. However, it is still governed by its king, simply renamed as king-governor, and the position remains hereditary. All of Africa is now officially Roman, which merely formalises what has been the case for over 300 years.*1500747*To mark the 1500th anniversary of Rome a new colonisation effort is launched on the Moon, and the lunar population is raised to 20 million.*

Roman life expectancy is now over 175 years for members of the patrician class, thanks to medical advances.

Bear-Walking-Tall retires and is succeeded by **Thunder-Of-His-Engines** *as Emperor. The Code of Demetrius renews the Games in Rome as part of the celebrations. The Church's objections are side-stepped by making a gladiatorial sentence last for 5 years only, regardless of the number of fights, so that being sent to the Games isn't necessarily a death sentence. The Church also rationalises gladiatorial combats by maintaining that God is always on the side of the virtuous.*1558805*Cloning technology allows the creation of cheap slave labour, with a deliberately limited life-span. Most equestrian and many plebeian families now own at least one clone. Clones are banned from any participation in the Church and, initially, from the Games.*1609856*Scandinavia is officially absorbed into the Empire as a province. It has actually been a Roman possession in all but name for most of the previous century.*1654901**N'Komo I** *becomes Emperor of Rome on the death of Thunder-Of-His-Engines, the first Ashanti to reach the Imperial Throne.*1676923*The Ionian Disaster. All 250,000 provincials on Io are killed when their domes fail after a huge meteor strikes Jupiter's moon, causing severe geological stresses.*1707954*N'Komo I retires to a monastery on the asteroid Callisto. He dies shortly thereafter, having failed to*

listen to the safety instructors.

Pope Running Fox *succeeds to the Imperial Throne, becoming the first man to hold both Papal and Imperial authority simultaneously.*

Laws promulgated by Running Fox increase taxation on human slaves to the point where it is uneconomic to own them. Unintentionally, he makes private slavery a real status symbol for both owner and owned. Public slavery is unaffected by the new laws, however.17531000Running Fox attempts to switch the Empire over to the Christian calendar to mark the Christian millennium. Although resisted by many, the new dating system is enforced for all government business; die-hard traditionalists are executed for heresy.

The first clone warriors appear in the arena.17571004Running Fox reintroduces crucifixion as an Imperial punishment. His unique status mean that no-one dare argue with this decision on theological grounds, even though to many it smacks of heresy.1782-18111029-58The Years of Heresy. Running Fox declares treason to be the equivalent of heresy and vice versa, and uses the Church and the Praetorians as 'hunting dogs of loyalty'. Over 150 million people die in the subsequent purges of the Empire.

The Games are further re-invigorated when Running Fox declares in a papal bull that it is no sin to kill a man in the arena, because all such killings are in self-defence and almost certainly for the good of the Empire, and hence sanctioned by the Church, God's representatives on Earth.18051052For the first time the population in all off-world colonies just exceeds that of the conurbation of Rome at 351 million; urban Rome's population has been substantially reduced by Running Fox's purges.

Later in the year Running Fox dies of 'natural causes' (lack of air when he is pushed out of an airlock while inspecting an Imperial space transport). **N'Komo II** *succeeds him and moves the Imperial Household into Earth orbit. The conurbation of Rome now stretches from the Alps to the tip of Italy, and is now the ceremonial and administrative capital of the Empire only; the executive arm is where the Emperor chooses to live.1807-19311054-1178The Religious Rebellion. Despite N'Komo's best efforts, war breaks out on Mars between Roman loyalists and separatists (backed by the Maya). The two sides relatively trivial religious differences are the root cause of the trouble, but fighting rapidly gets out of hand.*

The separatists want independence from the Church and Rome (but especially the established Church), but trouble spreads to other worlds in the form of terrorism aimed at religious bodies. The Mars separatists are rapidly crushed, but religious terrorism continues sporadically for the next century. The rebels rapidly become less tolerant of religious differences than the Church they are opposing. 'Heretics', 'witches' and nuns are widely targeted by the rebels, categories which seem to include any woman they dislike.

Imperial scientists develop the electric rail gun, a replacement for large conventional guns.18581105Roman scientists prove that psychic powers exist, and that they seem to be partially sex-linked to the female sex. Centuries of records are re-examined to determine how many witches actually exhibited psychic powers.1860-761107-1123Political troubles lead to a prolonged economic downturn; N'Komo uses food supplies as a weapon against disloyal provinces. Civil unrest increases, but the army stays mostly loyal.

Continued experiments prove that psychics are always women; no male 'witches' exist at all.1876-881123-35The European Troubles. N'Komo's policies of trying to keep the rebels within the Church send the wrong messages to the general populace. Rioting spreads across northern Europe, initially it is religious in nature and aimed at foreigners and the disloyal. The riots are fanned by the League of Patricians, a shadowy organisation which claims to be truly patriotic to Rome and the Church. The Governors of Britannia and Germania are executed when it becomes clear that they are aiding the rioters, not putting them down.19101157N'Komo II is assassinated by his own guards who have been suborned by religious fundamentalists. His death is used as the excuse for a further series of religious purges.

The Roman Inquisition is established and proceeds to slaughter over 3 million people in its first year of operation.

Consul Gaius Calpurnius Vespasian Kanus seizes power, and adopts the title of **Vespasian VI** *in an attempt to claim historical legitimacy. This marks the end of the* **Provincial Emperors Era***.19321179Emperor Vespasian and Pope Urban establish the Holy Order of Vestal Sisters of The Perpetual Truth to shelter and control all female psychics in the Empire. This is presented to the People as the Great Witch Cleansing, and the terrorism of the last century dies away. The psychic Sisters help to hunt down the last of the terrorists.*

From now on, all women of equestrian rank or better are routinely screened for psychic ability. Random samplings of plebeian women are also tested. The incidence of positive, useful psychic ability found remains at about 3 individuals per million people tested. All are women, and no single genetic factor seems to be involved.19561203The 500th

anniversary of the 'Pax Romana' is marked by the largest Games ever held; in three months of contests 21,000 pairs of gladiators are matched. The Religious Rebellion is conveniently ignored.

Vespasian is killed by the Vestal Sisters after he tries to rape one of their number. The Papacy helps keep the affair secret, and the Pope's nominee, **Constance** (known as 'the Witch' and one of the Vestal Sisters) becomes Empress.19621209Constance takes her own life, unable to cope with the constant mental bombardment that exercising Imperial power entails. Her successor is her nephew, **Justinian** and he is only 11 when he comes to the throne. He has, like all men, not a single shred of psychic ability.

Power passes to the Emperor-Designate, Maxentius.1963-22311210-1478The Great Convention. At Maxentius' urgings, Rome, Maya and China agree to outlaw war between themselves. Tensions do persist, but for nearly 500 years no actual combat occurs between the Great Powers of Humanity.19711218Justinian has Maxentius executed on trumped-up charges of heresy and treason, establishing himself as an Emperor in the old-fashioned mould.

The Games are again revitalised under Justinian, as he seeks further historical legitimacy.19981245The Jump is discovered. Psychic researchers accidentally discover that, under very controlled conditions, a 'window' can be opened between two points in space. Experiments press ahead to control this phenomena.20001247The Bi-Millennial Games attract the largest video audience in the history of mankind. Some 95% of the whole Roman population are virtually glued to their screens for the month-long holiday ceremonies. Large segments of the Mayan and Chinese population also watch.20011248The first jumpship, the Empress Constance, disappears into a window beyond the orbit of Pluto. It is never heard from again, although psychics all over the system claim to have 'heard' the crew's death screams.20061253The first successful jump to another star system takes place. The Imperator Attila makes a successful entry into a window and emerges less than 200 million miles away from Alpha Centauri. Rome claims the star system as a possession; over the next six months conventional (non-jump) space ships are ferried through the window and a garrison is established.

Because all jumpships require psychic crews, and the Church has a virtual monopoly on psychics in the Vestal Sisters, the Church gains a functional monopoly over interstellar flight. From this point on, all Emperors do their best to make sure that they have adequate 'influence' over the Church's affairs. The Roman Navy, however, retains its role in intra-system vehicles and in combat spacecraft. Psychics find it intensely painful to cause the deaths of others directly, making jump-capable battleships impractical.20091256Justinian visits Alpha Centauri aboard a jumpship and declares the entire system to be a Roman province.20101257The first Mayan and Chinese jumpships are launched, and successfully visit Alpha Centauri. The Romans warn both nations away from 'their' new star/province.2018-331265-80All the nearer star systems are visited by Roman jump ships.

The colonisation of Alpha Centauri continues apace.2060-761307-23The T'ang Rebellions. China and its possessions disintegrate into a mass of warring statelets. Both Rome and Maya remain uninvolved and the Great Convention holds. Eventually, a centralised Chinese government does arise, but the power base has shifted from China to the Asteroids. The Chinese retreat further behind the 'Bamboo Curtain' and become very isolationist.2098-21091345-56The Justinian Reforms. Justinian moves the centre of power away from the Senate and the military, concentrating it in the Imperial Household. His appointees and assistants take plenipotentiary powers to run the Empire.

The Baltic and North Seas are entirely dead as a result of pollution.21051352The first successful gene-splicing is carried out to create a completely new form of life. The first lifeforms generated are nearly all harmless 'pets' for members of the Imperial family. Within a year, however, designs of genetically-tailored killers for use in the Games are approved and production begins.21071354The first artificial Beastman appears in the arena, and is a huge success with the crowd. Genetic engineering's future is secured by this success. The Church remains to be convinced that such creatures have souls and can therefore understand the sacrifice inherent in the Games.21201367The first two jump gates are built, one in the Home system and one at Alpha Centauri. The Gates create a permanent window between the two systems, allowing ordinary (non-Jump) ships to pass through, although they have to be staffed by psychics to keep the link open.

A Roman colony is established in the Galban system, some 12 light years from Earth. The convention arises of naming stellar provinces after Emperors and Imperial triumphs.

Jumpship navigators and other important psychic crewmen are reorganised into a new paramilitary-religious order: the Aurelian Sisterhood (named in honour of Aurelius the Navigator). All other psychics remain in the Vestal Sisters.21381385The Claudian and Vitellian systems are colonised by Rome.

A third jump gate is constructed in the Galban system.

China and the Mayan Empire continue their own star colonisation programmes.

Legio XL Galba is the first unit to be assigned to permanent space-borne duties. Its space legionnaires are trained and equipped for deep-space and orbital assaults. Both the Mayan and Chinese governments lodge formal objections and begin training their own space marines.

*The Church decides that gene-spliced creatures do have souls, as long as they include human genetic material in their underlying design and demonstrate some understanding of the Church's teachings. Most gene-spliced creatures fail one or other of these tests, and so are judged soul-less flesh machines.21681415Justinian succumbs to extreme old age. He is to prove the longest-reigning of all Emperors to date, and the one who outlives most heirs (12 in all). His final heir, **Helen**, has a fatal heart attack when told that she has become Empress, but is revived to take the throne. She vows not to use longevity treatments to extend her reign.2168-21991415-1446Over this entire period the Empire goes into a slow economic and cultural decline. The economy shrinks by some 30%+ overall, and the burden of taxation beggars many equestrian and patrician families. The assumption among scholars is that the colonisation of other star systems is attracting the best and brightest, and taking capital from the home system. The colonisation procedure, however, is not slowed.21851432The Jovian system is colonised, at sixty light years it is the furthest outpost of the Empire by far.*

The Claudian system achieves provincial status.

*The Centauri Rebellion proves to be a short-lived bid for Imperial power by the provincial governor, Septimus Drachens. His status as Emperor of Centauri lasts for 27 hours before a force of loyal legionaries storms his palace and kills him. Septimus is not helped when every psychic in the Centauri system turns against him, thanks to his barbaric torture of a psychic crew who refuse to transfer him to Earth.21991446Helen dies and, as she has left strict instructions that she must not be revived, she is succeeded by her adopted son, **Claudius IV**. Claudius proves to be a brutal man, more interested in the arena than anything else. Real power resides in a cabal within the Praetorian Guard.*

*22111458Claudius IV is assassinated by his Prefect of Praetorians, Lucius Demitius, who puts his own son on the throne as **Marcus III**, preferring to remain in the shadows himself.*

*Financial stringency leads Lucius Demitius and his cabal to raise taxes and cuts expenditure. Support for the out-system colonies is cut back, although their tax burden is increased.2214-311461-78The Second Centauri Rebellion lasts nearly 17 years. Imperial taxation demands force the provincial governor, Henricus Salus, to declare himself to be 'Emperor of the New Worlds', and the Claudian and Jovian systems join the rebellion.22311478The Bombardment of Luna. In a sneak attack Henricus Salus' forces manage to force a window through into the home system. In the subsequent system-wide battles, most of the Roman and provincial space fleets are destroyed. The Luna colonies are bombarded by the provincials and Marcus III commits suicide rather than be captured. Lucius Demitius is taken prisoner and thrown to a gene-spliced 'demon' in the arena. **Henricus I** takes the throne of Rome as his own.*

Encouraged by the seeming weakness of Rome, the Mayan Empire and China attack Roman possessions all across the home system, and the War of Attrition begins.2231-531478-1500The War of Attrition. The initial attacks of Mayan and Chinese forces are stunning. On Earth the fighting reaches the outskirts of Rome. In space, however, the Mayan fleet is destroyed and the Chinese forced to retreat through windows into their out-system colonies. The war heads for stalemate, with no side willing to use large-scale orbital bombardment or any nuclear weapons for fear of retaliation. Clone troops are deployed in huge numbers, but without breaking the stalemate.

The war comes to an end when all sides are completely exhausted. All sides agree to withdraw to their original territories. The war is fought almost entirely in the home system — control here grants control of every other human system.

*(Heavy) Plasma weaponry and personal lasers are first issued to Roman troops during the War of Attrition.22521499Henricus is assassinated by a Mayan suicide squad. In the middle of the war power passes to the Imperial General Staff, who rapidly become a **Council of Regency**. Imperial heirs are selected throughout this period, but all are found 'unsuitable' as they approach their coming of age.2254-23561501-1603The Regency Reconstruction. After a century of decline, strife and warfare the Council of Regency sets itself the task of restoring the Empire to its former grandeur. Migration to the colonies is officially encouraged, the military are scaled back and research given funding priority. As part of their policy of using public works to create prosperity, the Saharan desert is recreated as a true desert, the Germania forests are replanted and the Northern Seas are restocked.*

The City of Rome itself is completely rebuilt over a period of 25 years, following as closely as is practical, the street plans of the classical city.23001547To mark the 2300th

anniversary of the city of Rome, six colonisation fleets are despatched simultaneously to the Lollian, Domitian, Aurelian, Commodian, Severan and Cleopatran systems. This rapid expansion becomes known as the 'First Wave'. This 'great leap outwards' is officially sanctioned by the Regents as a way of stimulating the Roman economy.

The Church establishes the 'Roving Inquisition' to maintain the faith in the outlying systems.

Mayan and Chinese colonisations efforts continue in competition with Roman ones. Marine life is again found in the Baltic.23521599The Council of Regency dissolves (at gunpoint), and **Julius Aurelius**, the Prefect of Egypt (still a scientific centre), declares himself Emperor.

The provincial governors, although unhappy with the initial change, are won over by the changes — and increases — in power that Julius promises them. The legions briefly refuse orders, but are won over by the promise of better pay and conditions.2353-781600-1625The Julian Reforms. Julius Aurelius reorganises the way that the Empire is run. He introduces a two-tier system of provinces: Senatorial and Imperial, depending on exactly who appoints the Governor. Senatorial provinces are limited to no more than planetary size in extent. Imperial provinces are limited to a single star system, thus giving the Emperor effective control of all space through his appointees. Senatorial appointees cannot gain direct access to space flight. All home system provinces (on- and off-world) are organised as suburbs of the city of Rome. Within a province a governor is given an almost free hand, providing central taxes are paid on time and the population is maintained in a 'recognisably Roman' way of life.

To keep his governors honest, Julius Aurelius also reorganises the Imperial Freedmen *as a group of roving financial and tax agents, tasked with keeping an eye on* all *the governors.*

In parallel with this organisation, Julius Aurelius also establishes the Correctores *as a secret police to watch over all the other secret police organisations.*

The new system works well, forcing governors to co-operate with each other and central authority, if only for fear of who may be watching.24001647The Second Wave jumps off to colonise a further 14 star systems. All six systems of the First Wave are granted full provincial status, even though most of them have effectively been provinces for ten years or more. There are now 24 systems in the Roman Empire, not counting the home system which is shared. By comparison, the Maya control only ten and the Chinese, nine.

The first constructed (as opposed to vat-grown) AI system demonstrates original thought. The Church condemns all such machines as inherent soulless and amoral.24061653Julius Aurelius is assassinated by his third wife, **Helen II**, who takes the throne as Julius' rightful heir. Her reign lasts for 10 days before she is overthrown in a palace coup, which places **Julius Aurelius (II)**, the old Emperor's clone, on the throne. Aurelius II is presented to the general populace as the old emperor who has been rejuvenated. Rumours of his true origins circulate.24141661The Palace War. Julius Aurelius (II) is assassinated in his turn by the Roman Inquisitors of the Church. The orders come directly from the new Pope, Urban III, who learns the truth on reaching the papal throne. In the confusion which follows, Urban puts forward his own candidate for the throne, **Vespasian VII** (the Pretender), while the Imperial Household produces **Helen III**, the natural daughter of the original (human) Julius Aurelius. An all-out war rages for three weeks in the streets of Rome and the corridors of the Imperial Palace between the Inquisitors Militant (Vespasian) and the Praetorian Guard (Helen). With the threat of excommunication or execution hanging over them if they back the wrong side, the military, the provincial governors and the Senate stay on the sidelines, despite threats from both sides as to what will happen to those who show no true commitment.

The Inquisitors are defeated after three weeks of low intensity warfare and assassination, fought mostly in the Imperial Palaces across the solar system. Vespasian and Urban are executed; the Church's right to keep its own soldiery is removed; Helen becomes sole ruler of the Roman universe. In a final act of vengeance, Helen installs her own sister, Julia Augusta, as the new Pope. Pope Julia immediately uses the Vestal Sisters as psychic 'heretic hunters' to purge the ranks of the Inquisitors and the upper echelons of the Church. From now on, the Papal Throne alternates between an elected (male) Cardinal and a female, psychic from the ranks of the Holy Order of the Vestal Sisters of The Perpetual Truth.

The Imperial Confessors are established as a sub-order of the Vestal Sisters, charged with seeking out heresy among the upper echelons of the State.24761723First contact with intelligent aliens occurs, some 112 light years from Earth in the Euphrates system. The k'Tai are a hive species, but communications are established thanks to the psychic Sister-Captain Boudicea, Matron of the Holy Order of the Aurelian Sisterhood and commander of the jumpship Running Fox, and Sister-Confessor Julia Magna of the Vestal Sisters. The k'Tai queen-caste have some difficulty in grasping humanity's individuality, but can appreciate

the high degree of organisation inherent in the Empire. Peaceful trade is quickly established, as the k'Tai are experts in organic chemistry.

Intense political manoeuvring between the Mayan and Chinese begins as a result of contact. Both powers maintain that Rome is not the sole flowering of humanity.2477-891724-36The k'Tai are offered client membership of the Empire.

The Great War. Maya and China attempt to close all access to the k'Tai system in the belief that they must do so to prevent Rome getting a stranglehold on whatever alien technologies are on offer. They also realise that this may be the last chance that they ever have of limiting Roman power. Desperation forces them to increasingly violent and risky strategies.

The fighting spreads across human space, and the Maya sterilise Claudian III of all human life, which actually means of all Romans. Over the next 12 years nine planets are rendered uninhabitable by Mayan bombardments. The Roman fleet refuses to respond in kind. The Mayan Fleet is eventually tracked down by the psychic Vestal Sisters and then destroyed by the Roman Provincial Auxiliary Fleet.

Roman troops fare well against the Chinese. Three Chinese worlds fall to planetary assault auxiliaries, although heavy casualties make it impractical to continue the direct conquest strategy.

Despite previous agreements, the war does spread to earth, and fierce fighting occurs in China and in the Northern Mayan possessions. The Roman Home Fleet manages to isolate the home system from out-system Mayan and Chinese possessions, making victory certain for the Empire.24891736The last in-system possessions of the Mayan and Chinese Empire fall to Roman assault. The Solar System is now wholly Roman.

Deprived of their ancestral burial sites (vital religious sites in themselves), the Mayans sue for peace. All Mayan territory in the home system becomes Roman, but the Mayans are allowed to remove their ancestral dead to their new home system.

The Chinese fight on, carrying out terrorist and pirate attacks throughout Roman space, although officially they also sue for peace. Attacks are blamed on renegade elements within the Chinese military.2489-26531736-1900The Pirates Era. Chinese attacks continue throughout this period with variable intensity. Individual raiders are hunted down whenever possible, but the process is a slow one, even when the Imperial Confessors are assigned to the task.25001747To mark the 2500th anniversary of the founding of Rome, a year-long festival of holidays takes place. The Games form a central part of the festivities. The old Mayan possessions on Earth are returned to the Mayan Empire as a demilitarised 'embassy province.' This generous act mitigates much Mayan bad feeling against Rome. The 'Old Mayan Empire' on Earth becomes a place of pilgrimage for all Maya.25011748The 'Third Wave' leaves Roman space to colonise another 10 star systems. War damage means that the departing fleet is both late and less grand than the previous expansion fleet. Helen III departs with the fleet, becoming Empress-at-Large, leaving the 'Home Empire' in the hands of her adopted heir, **Henricus II**. The division causes few problems, and gives the new colonies in the Third Wave immediate access to Imperial power.25531800Helen III dies, and all power passes to Henricus, unifying the Empire's political structure once more.25581805All colonies of the First and Second Waves are granted full provincial status.

While on an Imperial Progress through the provinces, Henricus is killed in a raid by unidentified (but nonetheless Chinese) pirates. His successor, **Claudius V**, takes control immediately, having been groomed for the role for 20 years. Claudius launches a series of mostly ineffective campaigns against the Chinese pirates.25761823A breakthrough discovery in nanotechnology proves that the concept works. However, the experimental base on Vindex, a moon of Galba VII, is destroyed when it proves impossible to control the rebuilding instinct of the nano-

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The following is a complete list of all the Emperors and other rulers of the Roman Empire. Fictional Roman Emperors are *italicised*.

Imperial Calendar	Christian Calendar	Emperor
726-767	27BC - 14AD	Augustus
767-790	14-37	Tiberius
790-794	37-41	Caligula
794-807	41-54	Claudius I
807-821	54-68	Nero
821	69	Galba
821	69	Otho
821	69	Vitellus
821-832	69-79	Vespasian
832-834	79-81	Titus
834-849	81-96	Domitian
849-851	96-98	Nerva
851-870	98-117	Trajan
870-891	117-138	Hadrian
891-914	138-161	Antoninus Pius
914-930	161-177	Marcus Aurelius
930-945	177-192	Commodus
945-952	192-199	Septimus Severus
952-953	199-200	Vespasian II
953	200	Marcus I
953	200	Honorius
953	200	Marcus II
953	200	Valerius
953	200	Vespasian III
953-955	200-202	Quintus
955-959	202-206	Lollia (the Poisoner)
959-984	206-231	(Marcus) Longinus I
984-1003	231-250	Longinus II
1003	250	Jovian
1003-1018	250-265	Carus the Egyptian
1018-1043	265-290	Cleopatra Augusta
1043-1060	290-307	Severus
1060-1090	307-337	Constantine I
1090	337	Vespasian IV
1090-1106	337-353	Vespasian V (the Just)
1106-1116	353-363	Galba II & Lucius (twin Emperors)
1116-1123	363-370	Lucius
1123	370	Macro
1123-1124	370-371	Sulla (the Saviour)
1124-1152	371-399	Constantine II
1152-1197	399-444	Claudius II
1197-1203	444-450	Alaric
1203-1213	450-460	Theoderic (usurper)
1213-1215	460-462	Alaric (restored)
1215-1251	462-498	The Council of Generals
1251-1254	498-501	Childeric
1254	501	Julius Attila
1254	501	Alaric II
1255-1456	502-703	Claudius III (the Immortal)
1456-1500	703-747	Bear-Walking-Tall
1500-1654	747-901	Thunder-of-his-Engines
1654-1707	901-954	N'Komo I
1707-1805	954-1052	Running Fox
1805-1910	1052-1157	N'Komo II
1910-1956	1157-1203	Vespasian VI
1956-1962	1203-1209	Constance
1962-2168	1209-1415	Justinian
2168-2199	1415-1446	Helen
2199-2211	1446-1458	Claudius IV
2211-2231	1458-1478	Marcus III
2231-2252	1478-1499	Henricus I
2252-2352	1499-1599	The Council of Regency
2532-2406	1599-1653	Julius Aurelius
2406	1653	Helen II
2406-2414	1653-1661	Julius Aurelius II (the Clone Emperor)
2414	1661	Vespasian VII (the Pretender)
2414-2501	1661-1748	Helen III
2501-2553	1748-1800	Helen III & Henricus II (co-rulers)
2553-2558	1800-1805	Henricus II
2558-2628	1805-1875	Claudius V
2628-2654	1875-1901	Claudius VI
2654-2737	1901-1984	Urban I
2737-present	1984-present	Vespasian VIII

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Spartacus, dir. Stanley Kubrick, 1960
Demetrius and the Gladiators, dir. Delmer Daves, 1954

Theatre of Pain documentation created by

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