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ALEXANDER SCOTT

WAELESTROM

The turbulent role-playing game of thieves,
rogues, magick and mayhem



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MAELSTROM

Joining a band of travellers in the sixteenth century could be risky. Travel is slow, strangers untrustworthy, and these are turbulent times. Who knows what adventures might be had along the way?

This is your chance to find out. Maelstrom is a full role-playing game for you and your friends - it's exciting, absorbing and tremendous fun! YOU choose the characters, YOU decide their missions and YOU play out the adventures.

Everything you need is here: rules, referee's notes, maps, charts and a wealth of authentic detail to start you on the adventure of a lifetime!

Alexander Scott is a young but experienced gamer and referee. He wrote Maelstrom while still at school.

Alexander Scott

MAELSTROM

Illustrated by Anthony Kerins and Jane Walmsley



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INTRODUCTION

Maelstrom is a role-playing game. Role-playing gives people a chance to explore other worlds, or 'milieux', with characters of their own creation. In a role-playing game you can try to do anything you want - fight the Incas, travel to other planets or merely make your fortune; the only limit is your imagination. Whether or not you succeed in your attempt is a different matter: you will certainly need all your cunning and inspiration. If you fail, on the other hand, it does not matter: you can always play again, and you can be satisfied that your character did his (or her) best.

The 'character' is central to the idea of role-playing. A character is an imaginary person of your creation who represents you in the game. The character may be almost anything - a sorcerer, a priest, a mercenary, a noble or anything else that fits into the game. The character has his own personality and abilities, and these need not be the same as your own. You take the role of this character while you are playing, and the character is completely under your control. A character is of little use, however, without a 'milieu', the world in which he exists. In this book, the milieu is the sixteenth century, the age of the Tudors and the exploration of the world, though *Maelstrom* would work equally well in Samurai Japan, Roman Britain or the far-distant future, to name just three alternatives.

When you play *Maelstrom* you will normally play with a number of other people. *Maelstrom* can be played solo (in fact, a solo adventure is given later on in this book), but the game is best appreciated when it is played in a group. If you have any of the Fighting Fantasy Gamebooks, you will already know how solo adventures are played (if you do not, take a peek at the solo adventure on pp. 120-67). You are given a number of choices as to what you can do, and then you turn to the paragraph that

corresponds to your choice. The new paragraph tells you what effects your actions have had and gives you a new . set of choices.

In a role-playing game, the situation is different. Any number of people can play together (in practice this is usually limited to five or six); there must be at least two people, though: a 'player' and a 'referee'. Each player has his or her own character and can act independently from the other players. In a solo adventure, you are the player and the book tells you what is happening. In a role-playing game a special person must do this job, known as the 'referee'. The referee describes to the players what they (or rather their characters — the distinction is often blurred) can see. The players tell the referee what their characters do, and the referee decides the outcome of these actions. The characters do not have a limited set of options; they may try to do anything they want, unlike a solo adventure where the choices must be limited. Also, the characters do not need to keep to a set sequence of events: anything can happen, and there are infinite possible outcomes.

It is often a matter of chance whether a character manages to do something. For instance, a character (let's call him Horatio) is being chased by a tribe of cannibals. Horatio knows that there is a deep chasm near by, with a log across it. He reaches the other side of the chasm, and decides to dislodge the log, to stop the cannibals crossing after him. Looking back, he sees that they are already beginning to cross. Will he succeed? It depends on how fast he works: success is a matter of luck. This is where dice come in. The referee gives Horatio a chance of success (one in six, perhaps) and Horatio's player rolls a die to see whether Horatio succeeds. We will have to leave Horatio in his plight for the moment; we will return to him later.

Dice

You will need two types of die to play *Maelstrom*: a six-sided die and a ten-sided die. Most people have six-sided dice lying

INTRODUCTION

around somewhere, often attached to other games, and if you do not, you can find some in almost any shop that sells games of all sorts. Ten-sided dice are more difficult to get. You will have to find a hobby shop that sells polyhedral dice. If you are unable to find a ten-sided die, or do not want to wait for it before you start play, a pack of cards can be used to simulate one. Remove all the court cards from a normal deck and shuffle the remainder. Each time you want to throw a ten-sided die, deal out a card from the reduced pack. This is your result. To preserve randomness, you should shuffle after every three or four cards. Apart from this, all that you will need for *Maelstrom* is a pencil, some paper and this book.

At many places in the rules you are required to throw a percentage, a number from one to one hundred. This is done by throwing a ten-sided die twice, taking one number for each digit of the result (10 counts as 0). 01 to 09 are regarded as one to nine, and 00 is regarded as one hundred.

Time

There are two sorts of time in *Maelstrom*: 'real time' and 'game time'. 'Real time' refers to the time that you spend doing something in the real world. 'Game time' refers to the time that passes in the imaginary world where the characters exist. In one session, for instance, you might play for several hours of real time. In the session, however, you might get through several months of game time – a character might get wounded, for instance, and spend some time recovering.

If you have not met the concept of these two sorts of time before, it may seem a little confusing. Game time does not pass at a constant rate. For instance, a group of characters visit a tavern and start talking to a merchant. The referee would take the part of the merchant, and game time would be assumed to run alongside real time. Thus, if the referee had decided that, three minutes after the characters entered, a group of rogues would enter, he could time it on his watch. The characters

become involved in a fight with the rogues. Combat takes a relatively long time to determine. Although it can be very exciting, it will take several minutes to cover each round of fighting (a round is a short segment of a fight, about five seconds, in which a character has time to do one thing - this is discussed later). The real time taken playing through a few minutes of game time is very great. If the characters were then wounded, it would take several months of game time for them to recover. This would be jumped; the referee would say, 'OK, you spend three months in bed, recovering from your wounds,' and the three months of game time would be dealt with in several seconds of real time.

Throughout this book, things are referred to as taking time. This is almost always game time. If, for instance, it says that a character spends seven years learning to become a craftsman, then that time is jumped, though it should be recorded as having passed. When it says that a round of combat takes five seconds, this refers to game time.

You are now ready to enter the world of *Maelstrom*. Good luck!



Enter the world of *Maelstrom* – the fabulous new role-playing game!

Imagine a band of travellers on the long road from St Albans to
London – a dangerous journey in troubled times.
Which will YOU be?

- * An alchemist – skilled in the dark arts of magick
- * A rogue – on the run from justice
- * A noble lady – on her way to stir up intrigue at court
- * A spy – disguised as a herbalist, carrying vital messages
to the King
- * Or any one of a host of different characters . . .

YOU choose the characters, YOU decide the missions and YOU
have the adventures in the turbulent world of Europe in
the sixteenth century – either as a player or as the referee.

Complete with Beginners' and Advanced Rules, Referee's
Notes, maps, charts and a solo adventure to get you started,
Maelstrom is a great game for three or more players.

Cover illustration by Chris Collingwood

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