

THE WORLD OF MARLOWE 2020

Page One of One



Postmodern (un)Reality

Marlowe 2020 is set in a stylized "dark future" setting, similar to novels like *Snow Crash*, *Neuromancer* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*; or movies like "Total Recall," "Minority Report" and "Aeon Flux." Some characteristics of this genre reflected in our game are powerful megacorporations, dangerous urban sprawl, cybernetics (implanted machines that are used to enhance the human body), artificial intelligence, vast social inequality, decadence of the rich, and postmodern blurring of the real with the simulated. Other characteristics of life in the cyberpunk genre you may want to inject into Marlowe 2020 are big hair, style over substance, and street-punk-as-high-fashion.

Megacorporations

A mega-corporation is a highly diversified financial entity that is often a global political, military and economic superpower. Only a dozen or so of these corporations exist, and they are constantly in conflict over resources and market share. Nation-states are obsolete in the age of the megacorp; when private industry handles every aspect of governance from civic development to crime control to military strategy, the government becomes a permanent lame duck.

The two megacorps of any importance in this game are Daikaiju and Ace Eight.

Daikaiju is by far the largest and most profitable megacorporation in Japan, specializing in computers, consumer electronics, software, and artificial intelligence. As far as the public knows, its CEO is Robert Hamada, who formed the corporation during the 2010s. At present, they control the intellectual property rights and technological secret to manufacturing androids. Their brand logo is a three-part oak leaf.

Ace Eight is the American corporation in the game. They are a durable-goods manufacturing, sales and distribution company not unlike a terrifying blend of Proctor and Gamble, General Motors and Wal-Mart. The company's founder was known for his luck and hard-riding attitude on life. Their symbol is a hand of cards (two pair, aces over eights, with a nine spare) in negative.

Cybernetics

"Cyberware" is a kind of technology that people (and androids) get implanted into themselves in order to expand their abilities. Characters in Marlowe 2020 may have item cards for tech that is hidden inside their bodies. Historically to the setting, cybernetics were originally developed to help amputees cope after general medicine made it so that war casualties and street crime victims were more likely to be maimed than killed. After the rejection issue was conquered, it was only a matter of time before people were getting the newest model Daikaiju™ Vox-Com™ implanted cell phones installed in shopping-mall clinics with little more risk than a trip to Piercing Pagoda™.

Drugs

Globalization caused a consolidation of just about every kind of business, from oil to heavy machinery to software... to the drug trade. Natural opiate extraction became outmoded recently when an artificial opioid - not unlike oxycontin - called "Horse" was discovered. Synthesis became so efficient for large drug traffickers that it has become impossible to control. A Horse epidemic is sweeping the globe and there appears to be little authorities can do to stop it.

Another drug on the market today is called Stim. Much like crystal meth, Stim is an addictive stimulant that can be manufactured from over-the-counter cold medicine by any high school brainiac with a chemistry set. It's easier to make and less explosive than crystal meth, which makes it just that much harder to control. Stim has the interesting characteristic of working on androids in the same way as it does with humans, so Japan is addressing the problem of what happens when your artificially intelligent property gets hooked on drugs.

Law

The game takes place in the city of Verona, in Italy, at a party thrown by a local drug dealer that nearly all of you were invited to. Italy in 2020 is infamous for its rapid revolving-door justice system, where a criminal can pay bail and be out *instantly*, without even leaving the site of the crime. In many ways, if you're rich, you're above the law, and Italy makes a lot of money keeping it that way.

RULES SHEET

Page One of Two

VIOLENCE and DEATH

Do not actually grapple with your fellow players. Do not move above a brisk walk, or get unusually physically active. This is a parlor-style game. Even if your character is upset and shooting at someone, remember that you, the player, should be a little calmer. Use common sense.

Shooting

Firearms are represented by a cap gun. You point your gun at the victim and pull the trigger. If no one is in the way and the cap goes off and/or makes a noise, then you hit, unless you are a member of the Daikaiju faction (see below). If someone moves in the way, they are hit instead. The important thing is the gun must make a noise in order for it to "work".

If a member of the Ace Eight faction shoots someone, the victim gets five minutes of "dying" monologue/dialogue, and then passes away. No one can save the victim.

If anyone else shoots someone, even repeatedly, the victim gets the same monologue/dialogue, but a doctor (or cybertechnician for an android) can save the wounded person if the victim gets to a doctor/cybertech in that 5 minutes of time.

Members of the Daikaiju faction are especially bad at shooting. The only hit if they fire successfully (the cap goes off) at least four times in the general direction of the victim, within the space of a single minute. And even then, the victim may survive, as above.

Anyone, including a Daikaiju, can shoot one's self with a single shot. Suicide is easy!

Poisoning

Anyone who has poison will have a sheet of stickers. To poison someone, you must successfully place the sticker on them without the victim noticing and removing the sticker. If the sticker is on the victim for thirty seconds, the victim has been successfully poisoned.

A drink can also be poisoned by putting a sticker on the cup or can it comes in. Anyone who drinks from such a container is poisoned.

If a member of the Daikaiju faction poisons someone, the target turns purple and dies after five minutes of monologue/dialogue, even when trying to poison oneself. No one can save the character. Especially if it's suicide. Daikaiju characters will get a distinctive color of sticker so one knows that one of them did the poisoning, though one might not know this in-character. Only Daikaiju characters can use Daikaiju stickers.

If anyone else poisons a character, the target can survive if the victim can get to a doctor or cybertechnician (if the victim is an android) within 5 minutes.

Members of the Law Enforcement faction are incapable of poisoning someone. The only characters they can poison are themselves. And that's only by accident.

Dying

When dying or wounded (i.e. dying but could be saved by a doctor or cybertech), one can only talk, twitch, or walk with a stagger. One can only engage in violence or poisoning while dying or wounded if one was killed or wounded by poison.

Grappling

Grappling (i.e. grabbing someone to immobilize them) is represented by placing one's hand on the shoulder of the person one is trying to immobilize. Gently!

If a member of the Law Enforcement faction grapples someone, the victim is automatically held, immobile and unable to engage in violence or poisoning.

If anyone else tries grappling, the grappler must play a game of rock-paper-scissors against the would-be victim. If the assailant loses the game of rock-paper-scissors (as opposed to winning or tying), the victim gets away instantly, i.e. the grapple never happens. Otherwise, the victim is held immobile and unable to engage in violence or poisoning.

Once held, a character can hold on to someone for 10 minutes before the victim gets a chance to escape. Trying to escape is a game of rock-paper-scissors. If the victim wins, the grappled character gets out. Otherwise, the victim must wait until let go or another 10 minutes have passed. The character doing the grappling can choose to let go at any time, or must let go if killed.

Members of the Ace Eight faction are particularly bad at grappling. One can escape the grapple of an Ace Eight character by winning OR tying at rock-paper-scissors, either during the initial game of rock-paper-scissors or later, after one has been grappled.

RULES SHEET

Page Two of Two

DRUGS

Narcotics are represented by two different colors, flavors or types of candy. The people running the game will explain which are which. To take a drug, eat the candy. And remember, kids, real narcotics are bad, okay?

Stim

Stim, the basic future-tech stimulant, takes effect instantly and lasts 1 hour. This drug works on androids and humans equally well. The benefits of Stim are that if you're killed while on Stim, you stay alive for an additional 5 minutes. If you're wounded (i.e. you could live if you went to the doctor/cybertech) while on Stim, you get 5 extra minutes to get to a doctor/cybertech. The disadvantage is that when it wears off, you get the shakes and shoot as badly as a Daikaiju for the next hour. If you take more Stim after it wears off, you still have the shakes, but you get the benefits for the hour, though you're going to have more shakes when you're done. Two or more doses of stim during the same hour count as if you poisoned yourself. Also, when on Stim, you should also act more paranoid and jumpy, but energized and enthusiastic as well.

Horse

Horse, the basic future-tech depressant, takes effect instantly and lasts 1 hour. This drug does not work on androids. The benefits of Horse are that if you get poisoned while on Horse, you have an additional 5 minutes to get to a doctor, even if poisoned by a Daikaiju (i.e. if a Daikaiju poisons you while you're on Horse, you actually have 5 minutes to get to a doctor). The drawbacks are that while on Horse, you can't hit anything with a gun (well, you can still shoot yourself, if you want), can't grapple, and can't run. Also, males cannot, um, perform... while on Horse. Furthermore, if you take two or more doses of Horse during the course of an hour, it's the same as if you poisoned yourself. You should act really relaxed and oblivious while on Horse.

Additional Notes

If you take both drugs at the same time, you don't get any of the advantages of either drug, but you still suffer the disadvantages.

Drugs are addictive. This doesn't really matter in a 4 hour game, but it might be a concern for your character. Maybe. Also, some characters start the game as addicts. If one is an addict, one gets very edgy if one goes for an hour or more without one's drug of choice.

You can slip a drug in someone's drink. Just literally put the candy in their drink. If the victim drinks it, give them thirty seconds, and then tell one of the people running the game, who will tell the player his character has been dosed.

MONEY

Money is in kiloeuro. A single kiloeuro represents 1000 euro. For this group, 1000 euro is small change. There will be slips of paper or poker chips to represent kiloeuro.

The Daikaiju, Ace Eight, and Law Enforcement factions have a budget. Each member of those factions can go to the people running the game to draw on this account and get cash. You'll have to say why you're getting the cash, and other members of the faction can find out why you took out cash and how much. And once the money is gone, it's gone. Each character has a limit as to how many kiloeuro (total) they can withdraw.

All other characters (Italians who aren't Law Enforcement) will start with cash. That's all the money one has, for now.

STUFF

Firearms are represented by cap guns or noise-making plastic guns of some other sort. Poison is represented by stickers. Narcotics are represented by candy. Everything else is represented by item cards.

Item cards are printed cards. They say on them what a given item is, and what the item does. The rules on the item card trump these rules. Item cards can be traded freely, even stolen off one's corpse, unless marked as CYBER. Items marked as CYBER are cyberwear, installed in the body of the owner, and can only be moved around by a doctor or cybertechnician (for androids).

CHARACTER SHEETS

Your character packet should list who you are, what your personality is, character background (including position), and faction. In addition, it will list who you know (and what you think of them) as well as what stuff you have, including cyberwear and money. Everyone you know is not guaranteed to be in the game; the people running the game can tell you who is present and who is not. The sheet will also list the handouts that should be in your packet besides your character sheet. If your character's faction has a budget, your expense account limit will be listed, **but you'll start with no actual money**; you'll have to go to the people running the game to get actual cash.

Not everyone listed on your sheet may be at the game. The people running the game can tell you who is present and who isn't. If someone isn't around, that person is assumed to be elsewhere, but may come into the game later if someone dies.

MEDICAL RULES SHEET SUPPLEMENT

Page One of One



INTRO

Congratulations. If you're seeing this sheet, it means you're a doctor or cybertechnician. Throughout this document, we'll use the term "patient". For the doctor, your patients are humans. For the cybertechnician, your patients are androids. The doctor cannot use these rules with androids, and the cybertechnician cannot use these rules on humans.

When using these rules, you cannot work on more than one patient at a time.

HEALING

If a patient is poisoned or shot, and wasn't poisoned by a Daikaiju member or shot by an Ace Eight character, you can heal the patient if he or she gets to you in time. Healing takes you five uninterrupted minutes spent with the patient, doing nothing more than talking (for both of you), and then the character is fine. Isn't futuristic medicine wonderful?

DETOX

If a patient is on a drug and wants to be cleared of its effects, you can clear the drug from the patient's system. This takes ten minutes, uninterrupted, during which you and the patient can only talk. If the patient was on Stim, the patient still gets the shakes, but for only half an hour after detox. (If the dose has already worn off, then it's too late for detox.) If the patient was on Horse, the disadvantages of Horse still last for ten minutes after the detox, with none of the advantages, but after that the patient is fine. If the patient was on both drugs, the detox takes an additional ten minutes (for a total of twenty minutes), but there's no ill effects after that.

You can also do a drug test on someone. This requires a bodily fluid (this includes oil for androids) and five minutes of your time, and the people running the game will tell you what the character was on, if anything.

FEIGNING DEATH

In five uninterrupted minutes with your portable lab (go out of game for five minutes), you can whip up a single dose of a drug, represented by a third type, flavor, or color of candy, which allows a patient taking it to seem to be dead. Once taken, the patient acts as if poisoned by a Daikaiju faction member, and remains "dead" for ten minutes after "dying" before returning to life.

CYBERSURGERY

You can move item cards that are marked as CYBER from one patient to another. The donor (i.e. the person who currently has the card) must be willing or dead. To indicate one is willing, a patient must speak the following ritual phrase: "Forsooth, I am willing to go under the knife for cyber-surgery."

This also requires your portable lab. Yourself, the donor, and the patient who is receiving the cyberwear (who must also be willing, using the phrase above), must go out of game for fifteen minutes while the surgery goes on. You can then move any CYBER items from one patient to another. You don't have to do what you were asked to do by the people once you go off with them.

While under the knife, you can "accidentally" kill either patient, as if the patient was shot by a member of the Ace Eight faction. And to be doubly clear, cyberwear designed for androids don't work in humans and cyberwear designed for humans don't work for androids.

DAIKAIJU BRIEFING

Page One of One



INTRO

Congratulations. If you're seeing this sheet, that means your character works for the Daikaiju corporation. Konnichi wa!

CORPORATE PROFILE

The Daikaiju corporation arose out of the so-called "Ninja Wars" of the 2010s, during which Japanese corporations warred on each other in secret, often joining with Yakuza gangsters in order to do so. Formed out of the ashes of seven large corporations and the Yakuza group known as "Eishin Kai" by the founder and CEO of Daikaiju, Robert Hamada, Daikaiju is now by far the largest and most profitable megacorporation in Japan, specializing in computers, consumer electronics, software, and artificial intelligence. Robert Hamada took the three-part oak-leaf symbol of the Daikaiju Corporation from the family crest of a distant relative.

Almost since its formation, Daikaiju has been engaged in a clandestine corporate war with the American "Ace Eight" corporation over the European consumer electronics market. The Daikaiju corporation considers itself to be supporters of the "peaceful legacy of the Japanese people after the Second World War", which means that Daikaiju prefers to avoid overt violence, instead engaging in espionage and poisonings, tho of course it would be rude to admit to this fact. Unfortunately, the rude and uncouth Americans have often dragged Daikaiju employees into open warfare, where they excel.

Honor, politeness, and hypocrisy are the watchwords of all Daikaiju employees. One does not refer to the poisonings that are regularly used to acquire promotions; a poisoned man is merely "sick" or "indisposed." Overt violence and displays of emotion are to be avoided at all cost. One must never admit to individual ambition, always claiming to serve the needs of the organization rather than one's self. One must be unfailingly polite at all times, no matter what the cost.

The best example of Daikaiju etiquette can be seen in the recent change in CEOs. After a long, protracted illness (believed by most to be an actual illness, rather than a poisoning), Robert Hamada passed away. Almost immediately, his best friend, the corporate raider Ryu Komatsu, married Risa, Robert's widow, gaining all of her shares in the corporation and becoming the new CEO. This was considered to be somewhat uncouth, to marry so soon after Robert Hamada's death, but no one would say so, because that would be rude. Similarly, it would be rude to allude to the fact that this crushed the ambitions of Robert's eldest child, Pat Hamada, to take the CEO position that Robert had been training Pat for, though everyone knows this to be the case.

And, of course, the corporation is still mourning Hamada's loss. Few outside Japan even know that the former CEO is dead.

With the change in CEOs, Komatsu has decided to listen to the pleas of the Security Chief of Verona, and try to negotiate a peace between the Daikaiju corporation and the Americans of Ace Eight. This is how a group of Daikaiju executives and employees have found themselves at a party thrown by a local Italian drug dealer together with many people loyal to the Ace Eight corporation. And naturally, all Daikaiju personnel would be too polite to talk about all the Daikaiju employees that the Americans murdered in cold blood.

ANDROIDS

The Daikaiju corporation owns the patent on, and exclusively manufactures, the only truly artificially intelligent human-like androids on the market. Tho considered to be property or "assets", many androids do important work for the corporation, as well as being one of the Daikaiju corporation's biggest-selling items.

The reason the androids seem so human isn't a secret, though it isn't advertised, either. Every android contains a tiny piece of lab-grown human brain tissue, adding that extra human touch that all entirely software-based attempts at artificial intelligence have always lacked. Androids can eat and digest human food, though they need much, much less than a human, although they do need to recharge their batteries periodically. Many androids have other organic parts as well.

There have been rumors that some of the androids are plotting a rebellion. It would be rude, of course, to refer to these rumors. If an executive were to deign to an answer anyone asking about such things, he would say that the Asimov compensators in every android ensure their loyalty, and remind the rude questioner that no android has ever engaged in violence that it was not ordered to engage in, explicitly or implicitly, by its owner.

Speaking of the Asimov compensators, despite the name, the only thing that those devices do is ensure that an android follows orders given to it by its owner. Some factory models can't engage in violence, but that's an optional feature. All the androids in Verona at the moment are owned by the Daikaiju corporation as a whole, rather than by any individual, and aren't factory models.

ACE EIGHT BRIEFING

Page One of One



INTRO

Congratulations. If you're seeing this sheet, that means your character works for the Ace Eight corporation. Rock and roll!

CORPORATE PROFILE

Ace Eight's symbol is a poker hand showing two aces and two eights (all black cards) with the nine of diamonds as the last card, in an inverted image. Legend has it that the eight different smaller corporations that initially formed the megacorporation Ace Eight were won by the company founder, Frederick Kennedy, in a poker game with that exact hand.

This luck characterized Kennedy's life. He showed a knack for capitalizing on current trends, and in many cases had been saved from disaster and/or corporate takeover by amazing luck, usually bad luck on the part of those who would oppose him. (One especially notable incident involved a would-be assassin literally tripping over his own bootlaces and impaling himself on his poisoned blade.) It was also rumored that this bad luck haunted his companions; while he got richer and richer, his inner circle seemed to change on a nearly weekly basis due to constant disasters and personal tragedies.

Kennedy was very generous with his money, often giving extravagant gifts to his low-level employees or people he bumped into on the street. On the other hand, he became oddly cold and calculating whenever he got involved in a game of chance, and never showed any mercy when gambling is involved, including when on Wall Street.

Though Kennedy died of liver disease, leaving the CEO position to his son, Joseph Kennedy, his hard-drinking, fast-living, shoot-from-the-hip mentality characterizes the Ace Eight corporate culture. As the biggest American megacorporation, Ace Eight has gladly maintained the American military reputation, being quite willing to use force to further its corporate interests. Ironically, Ace Eight does not manufacture any arms, maintaining a contract with various, smaller independent corporations to maintain those needs. In particular, the Colt corporation manufactures the Colt Shortsword pistol exclusively for Ace Eight use.

Ace Eight is the major manufacturer of consumer goods worldwide, from furniture to cleaning supplies to office products to durable goods like cars. For years, now, it has been warring with the Japanese electronics megacorporation, Daikaiju, over the European consumer electronics market. The Daikaiju refuse to fight openly, preferring to fight with espionage and poison, much to the annoyance of every red-blooded Ace Eight employee.

THE ANDROID PATENT

So, how did you end up at a party hosted by an Italian drug dealer with a group of treacherous Daikaiju employees? Why did CEO Kennedy agree to let the Security Chief of Verona help negotiate peace between the two corporations?

The short answer is money. The Daikaiju own the patent on the only truly artificially intelligent human-like androids on the market. (Hell, several of the lower-ranking Daikaiju at the party are androids, property rather than people.) If Ace Eight can purchase the android patent, that could mean much more money for both corporations, which is enough to at least create a pause in the fighting.

LAW ENFORCEMENT BRIEFING

Page One of One



Arrest and Bail

While your goals may all be different, all law enforcement characters have one special ability: They can all arrest other characters. When making an arrest, you have to have a charge to file against the character, and you have to tell them what it is, even if it's totally bogus. Say something like "You're under arrest for possession of cheese with intent to distribute," then ask them "Are you going to come quietly?" If they are, then just walk them over to the GM table to handle their InstaRest™ Fast-Track Arraignment.

The InstaRest™ Fast-Track Arraignment

First, you, the law enforcement character, should tell the InstaRest™ system (aka the GM) what evidence you have against your suspect. If the GM deems that it's enough for at least a slim chance at conviction, the GM – I mean, the InstaRest™ Fast-Track Arraignment System – will decide bail for the character.

The GM will also decide whether to confiscate any of the character's possessions (i.e. take items out of play) or to return them to the character.

Bail Table

Crime	Bail Range
Misdemeanor or drug charge (drug possession, brandishing a weapon, disorderly conduct)	1-10 kiloeuro
Minor felony (assault and battery, embezzlement, espionage, racketeering)	10-200 kiloeuro
Serious felony (arson, assaulting an officer, rape, attempted murder, manslaughter, kidnapping)	200-500 kiloeuro
Murder	500-2000 kiloeuro

Trial and Conviction

This being a one-shot LARP, there will be no trial for the characters that you arrest. It is assumed that they will get a trial eventually. The ones that are members of megacorporations will probably get off with a slap on the wrist if they're convicted at all. The rest, well, it hardly matters. Italian judges are notoriously corrupt, anyway. But at least you did your job!

Police Brutality and Internal Affairs

Internal what? You can go ahead and be as brutal you need to be in executing your duties. The only ones who can call you on your brutality are other law enforcement characters, who can arrest you for stuff like unlawful assault or excessive and unnecessary force, if they really want to. Also, be careful; if the other PCs get annoyed at you and kill or kidnap you, there may be no consequences for them...

Backup

You don't get to call for backup. Sorry. Budget crisis. Staffing crunch.

MONEY AND STORAGE BRIEFING

For Those Running the Game

NOT FOR PLAYERS

Each corporation (Daikaiju and Ace Eight), plus the Italian Law Enforcement group, has money in a group account, which they can draw from. Each character has a limited amount they can draw from the total. Each group pool is smaller than the sum of the limits for each character, so it is first come, first served. The non-affiliated Italians just have cash.

You should have something to represent cash. Poker chips, or even post-it notes with denominations written on them as needed, will do. There's also a file to print out and cut up to use as money, if you like.

Below is how much money each group has:

Daikaiju	5,000 kiloeuro
Ace Eight	10,000 kiloeuro
Italian Law Enforcement	100 kiloeuro

Make a sheet for each group out of regular, lined paper. Draw three columns on it: Name, Amount and Purpose. When a player character comes to withdraw money from the corporate/government account, he or she has to write the character's name on the appropriate piece of paper, plus the amount they're withdrawing, plus the reason. The reason can be anything, but other characters in that faction can look at it and ask questions, like any corporate audit.

Remember each character has a total limit on how much he or she can withdraw. And once the money's gone, the money's gone.

The people running the game also serve as the storage locker for Boo-Boo's drugs. Since the party is at his/her house, (s)he can get his/her drugs from you without fear of the law. Once (s)he has them on his/her person, that's another issue entirely.

If Boo-Boo is not cast, then (s)he is a background NPC, and in order to get drugs, characters must come to you and buy them, as they would come to you for money. When Boo-Boo is an NPC, a dose of a drug costs 1 kiloeuro per hour of the game that's gone past, while supplies (candy) last.

Bail Table

If a law enforcement character brings in an arrest, you, the InstaRest™ Fast-Track Arraignment System, will decide whether to drop the charges or to set a bail for them. You may also decide to take items out of game by confiscating them from the arrested PC. Use this table to set bail (it's based on the money characters will have access to in the game):

Crime	Bail Range
Misdemeanor or drug charge (drug possession, brandishing a weapon, disorderly conduct)	1-10 kiloeuro
Minor felony (assault and battery, embezzlement, espionage, racketeering)	10-200 kiloeuro
Serious felony (arson, burglary, rape, attempted murder, manslaughter)	200-500 kiloeuro
Murder	500-2000 kiloeuro

If the character does not have the cash or expense account to handle their bail, allow them "one phone call" to call another character over and beg for more money to bail them out. If they can't come up with the cash, they're out of the game as surely as if they had been shot dead.