Galactic Methuselah

Imagine, if you will, beings so powerful that they are near god-like in stature. Beings that can cross the universe as easily as you or I cross the street. Beings that enter parallel dimensions, or alternate time streams, as easily as you or I enter the next room. Beings capable even of piercing the veil between reality and fiction. Such beings are Galactic Methuselah, beyond formidable, the very essence of enigmatic, whose motives are as inscrutable to us as our motives are to insects.

Now, imagine working for such a being. That's where you come in, a servant of a Galactic Methuselah. As powerful as the Methuselah are, they are also very busy. And some chores are just not worthy of a Methuselah's time. So they send their servants out to conduct what are, to them, mundane tasks though to us they are often very nearly suicide missions.

Of course, being Methuselah, ordinary servants won't do. No, Galactic Methuselah must have the very best servants possible, genetically enhanced and armed with big guns.

Creating a Servant

Pick Stats: There are three primary stats: Strength (STR), Dexterity (DEX) and Mind (MND). Each player assigns scores of 18, 16 and 14 to one of the three attributes, as desired. (For example, STR 18, DEX 16, MND 14, or STR 14, DEX 18, MND 16, etc.).

Stat modifier is (STAT-10)/2, round down.

Skills: Per standard M20, there are four skills: Physical, Subterfuge, Knowledge and Communication. Select one skill to be your character's Tag skill (put a small T next to the skill on your character sheet).

All skills start with +1. The Tag skill receives an additional +3. Tag skills increase +1 for each experience level gained; non-Tag skills increase +1 every even numbered level (i.e. levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, etc.).

Mutations: Servants may be any kind of mutant: humanoid, animal, plant, even mutant dinosaurs or mutant aliens. All servants start at medium size.

Select up to 10 points worth of mutations for your character. Each mutation point you spend increases your character's Experience Base by 1, thus increasing the number of experience points the character needs to advance each level.

Galactic Methuselahs are expert manipulators of DNA, so characters have no genetic defects.

Players may select the same mutation multiple times, paying the cost for each 'stack' of the mutation. All bonuses and effects stack each time the mutation is taken. Mutations that have a multiplicative bonus increase the multiplier by one step (i.e. x2, then x3, then x4, etc.).

Activated mutations have an (A) next to their name. The activation cost to use the mutation is equal to its total point cost in hit points. These hit points may not be healed normally and can only be regained after complete rest. Activating a mutation usually takes an action.

Amazing Fortitude (1) = +5 to Fortitude Saves (Phys +STR)
Amazing Reflexes (1) = +5 to Reflex Saves (Phys +DEX)
Amazing Will (1) = +5 to Will Saves (Mind + level)
Blindsense (1) = Can pinpoint targets within 30'
Chameleon Skin (1) = +10 Subterfuge when not wearing clothes
Climbing Hooks (1) = 10' climbing speed
Enhanced Strength (1) = +1 to Strength stat
Enhanced Dexterity (1) = +1 to Dexterity stat
Enhanced Mind (1) = +1 to Mind stat
Keen Ears (1) = +10 Listen (Subterfuge + Mind)
Keen Eyes (1) = +10 Spot (Subterfuge + Mind)
Keen Nose (1) = Can track by scent
Padded Feet (1) = +10 Subterfuge when sneaking w/o shoes

Tail (1) = +5 on Balance, Jump and Swim tests
Tremorsense (1) = Sense targets through ground vibrations up to 30'
Aquatic (2) = Gills and webbed fingers/toes
Empathy (A) (2) = Sense strong emotions; +2 Communication
Leech Damage (A) (2) = Touch attack; absorb 1d6 hp from target
Light Natural Armor (2) = Scales, fur; +1 AC
Low Light Vision (2) = Can see in all but total darkness up to 100'
Mutant Rage (A) (2) = +4 STR, -2 AC for duration of combat
Psychic Heal (A) (2) = On touch heals 1d6 damage to target
Stench (A) (2) = All adjacent creatures suffer -2 on all rolls
Talented (2) = Pick another Tag skill
Tougher (2) = +2 hit points per level
Darkvision (3) = See in total darkness up to 60'
Forcefield (A) (3) = Absorbs 10 hp of damage
Natural Weapon (3) = Claws, horns, bite, etc; 1d8 +STR damage
Prescience (3) = +1 on initiative rolls, never surprised in combat
Regeneration (3) = Heal 1 hit point per round
Uncanny Dodge (3) = x2 DEX bonus to AC
Extra Limb (4) = May make 1 extra one-hand attack or hold shield
Heavy Natural Armor (4) = Carapace, exoskeleton; +3 AC, -1 DEX
Light Warp (A) (4) = +10 Subterfuge when sneaking
Shapechanger (A) (4) = Same mass as character up to 10/min level
Tank (4) = x2 starting hit points
Bigger (5) = +2 STR; use 2-hand as medium and medium as light weapons
Double Healing (5) = Double all healing effects
Energy Blast (A) (5) = 1d12 damage up to 60' range
Haste (A) (5) = Duration of combat may take 2 actions/round
Levitate Self (A) (5) = Levitate self + 100 lbs per Mind bonus
Wings (A) (5) = Fly for 10 minutes/level
Leech Strength (A) (6) = Touch attack, leech 1d4 STR and add to yours
Light Slip (A) (7) = Invisible 1 round/level or until attacks or hit
Teleport (A) (7) = Up to 30' distance
Immunity to Acid (8) = No damage from acid effects
Immunity to Cold (8) = No damage from cold effects
Immunity to Electricity (8) = No damage from electric effects
Immunity to Fire (8) = No damage from fire effects
Immunity to Poison (8) = No effect from poisons
Immunity to Psychic (8) = Psychic abilities and powers have no effect
Immunity to Radiation (8) = No effect from radiation

Equipment: Servants begin with 2,000 gold pieces with which to purchase initial equipment.

Characters can carry total items equal to their Strength stat. Several smaller items can be grouped together as one item (i.e. 10 magazines, 6 grenades, 100 gold, 250 rounds, 10 potions,5 rockets/missiles etc.). Up to six items can be readily available for easy access; everything else goes into the backpack. Particularly heavy or bulky gear counts as two or even three items.

Armor
Light Body Armor = AC +4; Cost: 250 gp
Medium Body Armor = AC +6; Cost: 500 gp
Heavy Body Armor = AC +8; Cost: 1,000 gp
Ballistic Shield = AC +1; Cost: 100 gp
Combat Helmet = AC +1; Cost: 100 gp

Assume armor is modified to fit the mutant's body.

Armor Accessories (1 for Body Armor)
Trauma Plate = AC +3; Cost: 300 gp
Enviroseal = Immune to gas attacks; Cost: 1,000 gp
TAC Computer = +1 initiative and attack rolls; Cost: 1,000 gp
Thermal Insulation = +4 on saves vs. fire; Cost: 500 gp
Cyro Insulation = +4 on saves vs. cold; Cost: 500 gp

Guns
Light Pistols (.22, 9mm, 10mm, .45 ACP, etc.) = 250 gp
Heavy Pistols (.44 Magnum, .50 AE) = 400 gp
Machine-pistols/SMGs = 500 gp
Bolt Action Rifles/Pump Shotguns = 350 gp
Assault Rifles/Combat Shotguns = 800 gp
Sniper Rifle = 1,000 gp
Machinegun = 1,500 gp

Single Shot Grenade Launcher = 900 gp
Multi-shot Grenade Launcher = 1,500 gp
7.62 mm Minigun = 3,000 gp
Rocket/Missile Launcher (6d6 dmg, 20' AoE) = 2,500 gp
Flamer (3d6 dmg, 20' CoE, 10 shots) = 1,500 gp

Players may pick any type of weapon they want. For example, a HK MP-5 SMG or an M-4 Carbine. Just note the caliber ammunition it uses and the number of rounds the magazine holds. Microlite20 Modern has a handy list of firearms you can reference. If a player wants a particularly rare or exotic gun (i.e. Barrett .50 Cal sniper rifle), increase the base cost by 50% to 100%.

Note, machine-pistols and sub-machineguns use pistol ammo; machineguns/miniguns use rifle ammo.

Damage by Caliber*

Pistol Ammo
.22/.32 Caliber = 2d4; cost 1 gp per 2 rounds
9mm/10mm/.38/.45/.357 = 2d6; cost 1 gp per round
.44 Mag/.50 Action Express = 2d8; cost 2 gp per round

Shotgun Shells
12 Gauge = 2d8; 2 gp per round
10 Gauge = 2d10; 3 gp per round

Rifle Ammo
5.56mm/.223 = 2d8; 2 gp per round
7.62mm/.30 = 2d10; 3 gp per round
.50 Caliber Rifle = 2d12; 4 gp per round

Heavy Ammo
Rocket/Missile = 250 gp each
Flamer Fuel = 10 gp per shot

*Taken from Modern d20 SRD

Gun Accessories
Laser Sight = +1 attack roll; 500 gp
Gunlight = Flashlight on gun barrel; 50 gp
Suppressor = Suppresses sound and muzzle flash; pistols, SMGs, assault rifles and certain sniper rifles only; 500 gp
Electronic Sight = Negates range penalty for single aimed shots; incorporates low-light vision and laser range finder; 500 gp
Inter-dimensional Munitions Portal (IMP) = Provides unlimited ammo for one specific type of weapon (i.e. M-16 or AK-47) = Ammo Cost x 1000; x1.5 for burst fire weapon (i.e. 3,000 gp for an M-16; 4,500 gp for an AK-47)

Melee Weapons
Light Melee Weapons = 1d6 dmg; 100 gp
Medium Melee Weapons = 1d8 dmg; 150 gp
Two-hand Melee Weapons = 1d10 dmg; double STR damage bonus; 250 gp
Hanzo Sword = 2d6 dmg; +1 on attack rolls; may be used as a medium or a two-handed sword; 1,000 gp

Grenades (Thrown and Launcher)
Fragmentation = 4d6 dmg; 20' AoE; 100 gp each
Smoke = Poor visibility in 30' AoE; 25 gp each
Flash Bang = Physical + STR save vs. 16 or stunned for 1 combat round; 75 gp
White Phosphorous = 2d8 dmg per round; 30' AoE; 200 gp each
Multiple Projectile = 4d6; grenade launchers only; turns GL into a big shotgun with 60' CoE; 100 gp each

Other Gear
Climbing Kit = 250 gp
10' Telescoping Steel Pole = 100 gp
Camping Kit = 50 gp
Stimpack = Immediately heals 1d10+10 damage = 250 gp
Basic Toolkit = 100 gp
Low-light Goggles = 400 gp
Flashlight = 25 gp

Assume servants start with backpacks, ammo pouches, equipment harnesses, uniforms, combat boots, etc.

The Link: Every servant shares a link with their Methuselah, providing the following benefits:

Comprehension: Servants can read, write and speak any common language, no matter what world or setting they are in. Particularly obscure or arcane languages, such as the long dead language of horrific alien gods from the depths of space, may be undecipherable at the GM's discretion.

Reflection: The link reflects to others what they would reasonably expect to see. For example, a medieval peasant will see an armored knight instead of a mutant freak wearing modern body armor and sporting a minigun.

Sustenance: While the link is active, servants do not require food or drink to survive. They can eat and drink for pleasure, if they like.

Recuperation: The link allows servants to heal even grievous wounds very rapidly. All hit points are recuperated after only an hour of rest.

Communication: Through the link, the Methuselah can keep tabs on its servants. They can also communicate directly to their servants, if desired, but very rarely do so. Finally, the link allows servants to communicate with one another, no matter the distance.

Experience and Advancement

Experience Base: Each character has an Experience Base equal to 10 plus the number of mutation points spent during character creation (to a max of 20 starting).

Experience Points (XP): Experience Points are earned by defeating foes, overcoming traps and obstacles, good role-playing and frivolously wasting your hard earned treasure.

Foes are worth 1 XP per hit die, +1 XP for each doubling of the foe. Especially powerful foes may provide additional XP. Traps, obstacles and role-playing grant an additional 1 to 5 XP. Finally, every 100 gold pieces spent with no material benefit to the character provides 1 XP. This includes carousing, training costs or donations.

Advancement: The number of XP required to advance a level is equal to the character's Experience Base times their current experience level. For example, a character with an experience base of 20 would need 20 XP to advance to level 2, 40 XP to advance to level 3, 60 XP to advance to level 4, etc. When a character advances a level, reset their XP to zero, though any excess XP carries over.

Each level of advancement provides the following:

1d6 + STR mod hit points

+1 to attack rolls

Increase skills (+1 each level for Tag skill; +1 every even numbered level for non-Tag skills).

Every fifth level (5, 10, 15, 20) the character receives five additional mutation points. These points may be spent or saved as desired. Any spent mutation points increase the character's experience base.

Combat

In addition to standard M20 combat, the following applies:

Burst Fire: Some weapons are capable of burst fire. Burst fire incurs a -4 to-hit penalty and uses 10 rounds of ammunition.

If directed against one target, the burst inflicts double damage. Alternatively, a burst can be direct at a 10x10' area. Make one attack roll against all targets in the area; any that are hit take normal damage for the weapon used.

Miniguns: Miniguns require a Strength of at least 16 to wield by hand. Miniguns always fire in bursts of 100 rounds, with -4 on the attack roll. Select a 10'x10' area, then make one attack roll and compare the result to the AC of each character in that area, as well as to each character in a cone between the attacker and the target area. Any that are hit take double damage; 'misses' still take normal damage.

Jams: If using a gun, on an attack roll of 1 the weapon jams. An action is required to clear the weapon. Revolvers cannot jam.

Area/Cone Effect Weapons: AoE weapons (grenades, rockets, cone effect weapons like flamethrowers, etc.) attack everyone within the area of effect. Make a single attack roll against everyone in the AoE. Any targets hit take normal damage; missed targets still take ½ damage.

Light Weapons: Characters may wield a one-handed weapon in each hand with a -2 attack roll penalty. Pistols, machine-pistols and sub-machineguns count as light weapons for dual wield purposes.

Reloading: Reloading most weapons requires one action. Heavy weapons require two actions to reload. Single shot grenade launchers only require one action to reload.

Hazards

In addition to the standard M20 hazards, servants may occasionally run into radiation. Radiation inflicts damage based on its intensity:

Cold = 1d6 damage every hour
Warm = 1d6 damage every 10 minutes (turn)
Hot = 1d6 damage every minute (round)

Spell Casting (Optional)

The GM has the option of allowing servants to learn magic spells, if they acquire scrolls, spell books or find a willing instructor. They may learn either Divine or Arcane spells (yeah, doesn't necessarily make sense for Divine spells, but think of their Methuselah as a god-like being). The chance to learn a spell is d20 + Knowledge + MND modifier vs. DC of 20 + spell level. Servants may only attempt to learn a specific spell once each experience level. Hit point cost for casting the spell is per standard M20 rules. Servants are not subject to spell level restrictions, though neither do they get the reduced spell cost bonus.

Adventures and the Methuselah

Galactic Methuselah is a tool that provides a thin excuse for you to run a bunch of mutant freaks with guns through any d20 adventure. Each adventure should have a hook, which is the Galactic Methuselah's task for his servants. The mission should require the servants to recover some object from somewhere in the adventure, preferably towards or at the end. It can be anything, such as a book, a scrap of paper, some worthless object, the lunch menu from the Death Star's cafeteria…whatever. The hook only exists to provide an excuse for heavily armed mutant freaks to storm through classic D&D modules, or any other d20 adventure.

The Methuselah is not a crutch. He does not provide hints or clues, nor does the Methuselah swoop in at the last moment and save the party from certain death. The Methuselah made the servants, and if they die he can easily make more.

Furthermore, the Methuselah doesn't care about mundane or even magical treasure. Whatever his servants manage to loot is theirs to keep. The Methuselah only cares about whatever object it was he sent the party after in the first place.

There is more than one Methuselah in the galaxy, and they are known for being royal jerks. So, if you want to spice up a classic D&D adventure, which your players may already know by heart, just throw in a few twists. For example, Orcs armed with AK-47s, or switch the traps around a bit, or something similar. Just blame it on some other Methuselah who got wind of what was going on and decided to throw a few wrenches into the works, so to speak.