

Marley & Co., Bailiffs – a company for In Her Majesty's Name

"You kicked the doors in? Have you got no sense son? Them doors'll fetch two shillings and sixpence each with Raggedy Bob, so I'm taking that out of your take son and don't you go complainin' or I'll refer this matter to the Turk."

William Sykes, Sergeant-at-Arms, Marley & Co.

Civil justice in the Victorian period moves at two speeds. The time it takes for civil cases to come to court and then wend their way through the labyrinthine legal process can be measured in years, if not decades. Great houses can be brought to penury, and their scions find themselves debtors in Newgate gaol long before a Judge even sees their papers.

That said, once a ruling is finally made the bailiffs can be at your door even before you have arrived back from the Courts. The bailiffs of this period are not court-appointed officials bound by law and codes of practice. They are private contractors often employed by the creditors and they have no qualms about using all means necessary. This can include breaking in gates and doors, roughing up servants and carting off everything of value including wallpaper, windows and the doors themselves.

Amongst this array of ruffians are those employed by the counting houses of Threadneedle Street. These are in a class of their own as they are usually sent after men who owe tens or hundreds of thousands of guineas. Their appointed task is to find and strip all the assets of the debtor, and they are willing to go to any lengths including extortion, blackmail, kidnap, torture and even murder. They have been known to sell the children and servants of a debtor into slavery on more than one occasion. They know that their backs are covered by the men who finance the government of the day so they feel they can act with impunity.

Jeremiah Marley runs the leading company of such bailiffs. Many of his contracts come directly from the desks of the Principal Accountants of the major banks that line Threadneedle Street. He has attained his position by being the most ruthless man in a truly vicious profession and he generally employs retired soldiers, in particular those who were dishonourably discharged for any crime but cowardice. Marley is no fighter and does not like to get his hands dirty. Thus he has spent time studying mesmerism with Madame Blavatskya of Camden, which allows him to divert anyone who would dare to lift a hand against him.

His second-in command is a tall and rakish Turk called Yezim. This man never talks but directs the men with curt hand signals and his bullwhip. There a rumours that he is a eunuch, has no tongue and was formerly a keeper of the harem of the Ottoman Sultan. If asked, Marley will reply that just one of those things is true but not say which. Yezim is fond of lashing any man that stands in his way and is reputed to have killed several.

Marley's men all wear black top hats and drive wagons led by black horses. Each man wears a black armband and sash in mimicry of an undertaker's cortege. Each wagon and its crew is led by a 'Sergeant-at-arms', a man who has served Marley for many years and who is trusted to relieve the take of no more than 5% of its value. Marley makes a serious example of men who take more than that, so they are usually very 'honest' and open about it. The rest of his men are divided into Breakers and Takers.

The job of the Breakers is to find and gain entrance to the debtor's property. Marley regards these men as his 'Fist'. They specialise in shock and awe, intimidation through the fast and effective use of force. The favoured weapon of the Breakers is the traditional English quarterstaff. It is as good for breaking through doors and windows as it is for cracking heads.

The Takers are those who then value and remove anything or even anyone of value. They have been known to remove all the floorboards in a house and even dig up the recently dead to take and sell their clothes and jewellery. Marley regards these men as his 'grasping hand'. Some are trained in identifying important documents such as deeds, stock certificates and bonds. Others are expert in opening safes, and these are often called 'crackers'. All of them carry crowbars which double up as handy clubs.

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The Police hate the bailiffs with a passion. They view them as little more than 'thieves with writs' and although they cannot shut them down they will try and interfere where they believe criminality is taking place. Most cases they bring though never make it to court. More than one Division Superintendent has been known to tip off the local Vigilance Committee about Bailiff activities and then send in his men to deal with the ensuing riot.

Figure	Pluck	FV	Sv	Speed	Cost	Talents/Powers	Basic equipment
Marley	4+	+0	+1	+0	34	Leadership +2, Erudite Wit, Mesmerism	Lined Coat, Pistol
Yezim	3+	+4	+2	+1	48	Leadership +1, Terrifying	Brigandine, Bullwhip, Pistol
Sergeant	3+	+3	+2	+0	34	Leadership +1, Tough	Brigandine, Quarterstaff, Sawn-off Shotgun
Breaker	4+	+2	+1	+0	23	Tough	Brigandine, Quarterstaff, Sawn-off Shotgun
Taker	5+	+0	+1	+1	14		Lined Coat, Pistol, Club
Cracker	5+	+1	+0	+0	25	Engineer	Lined Coat, Pistol, Club, Bomb

Options

- A Sergeant-at-arms or Breaker can exchange their sawn-off shotgun for a carbine (+15 points).
- Any Breaker or Taker can be *fighting drunk*. Such men reduce their SV by 1 and cannot run. However, they are regarded as having the Numb Talent for the reduced cost of 5 points.
- A crew can take one wagon drawn by six horses (+ 15 points) or a Hercules Steam Lorry (+18 points). One of the company will double up as the driver.
- A Cracker can also take up to three Brick Lane Bottle Grenades (+6 points each).