

MONGOOSE PUBLISHING PRESENTS



# Sig'n's & Portents 35

## Roleplayer

### A Raven In The Roost

AN ALL NEW INTRODUCTORY SCENARIO FOR RUNEQUEST!

### Priest Of Ishir

NEW CHARACTER CLASS FOR LONE WOLF!

### Drops And Drop Capsules

BACKGROUND DETAIL FOR STARSHIP TROOPERS

Plus... More Steampunk Technologies, Shadizar Adventure Plots,  
Tales From Mongoose Hall and lots, lots more!

S&P Roleplayer 35

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Normally you'd be getting some hugely witty or esoteric editorial riposte from Matt Sharp about now, but I've been tasked with finishing off S&P this month, meaning I've also got to do the editorial.

Frankly, this sucks as I don't do editorials, so instead I have left you with a picture of the Wheel of Pain from Conan because that's how I feel.

It's also conceivable that if this editorial is grotty enough I might not be asked to do another one, which would be nice.

Alex promised that I'd enjoy shipping out to the States to keep him company but this wasn't what I had in mind.

Did I mention the Wheel of Pain already?

**T.C.**



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# Signs & Portents Roleplayer

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Everybody says there are 101 things to do in a big city, and Vincent Darlage went out and did them all in Shadizar. Look in here to find out what he got up to and then annoy your Games Master to put some into your Conan adventures.

#### 52 A Raven In The Roost

To commemorate the release of RuneQuest we have this fantastic adventure from the pen of mongoose staff writer Bryan Steele. It looks like there's trouble in the duck illage of Roost and the players are going to have to sort out out. You're dealing with ducks, so you know RuneQuest is back!

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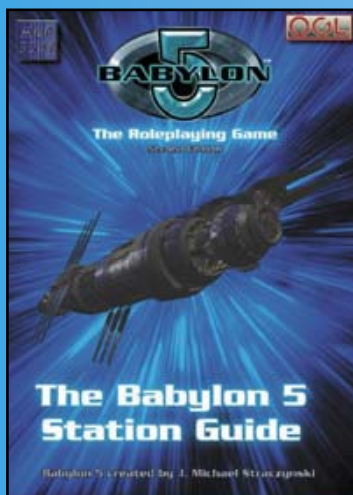


is back!



# EYE ON MONGOOSE

*Coming This Month*



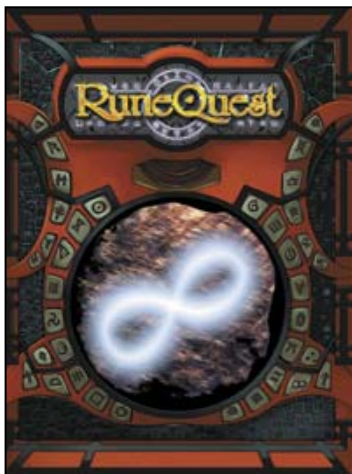
It is a time of danger and of hope, a time of unhealed wounds and new opportunities. It is the dawn of the third age of mankind, a dawn whose light casts shadows of the past as indistinct portents of things to come. It is the year 2258, and the human race, still beaten and bloody 11 years after its second great interstellar war, has built what may be humanity's finest achievement.

This achievement is not a ship, not a weapon, not a tool of death of any kind. It is something far grander. It is the galaxy's last, best hope for peace. It is Babylon 5.

Five miles of metal and polymer, Babylon 5 was born of cutting-edge science and knowledge. Upon this technological stage, however, are played out the oldest of stories – of prejudice and vengeance, of cruelty and charity, of good intentions betrayed by ambition and the price of forgotten history.

This box set contains the ultimate guide to the Babylon 5 diplomatic station. Every location, from stem to stern, has been mapped out and detailed. Every sector has been populated and examined. Three books and multiple poster-sized maps combine to make Babylon 5 a living, breathing place that will form the perfect centrepiece of any campaign. From the command officers of C&C to the worst criminals of DownBelow, Babylon 5 has never been treated to such detail.





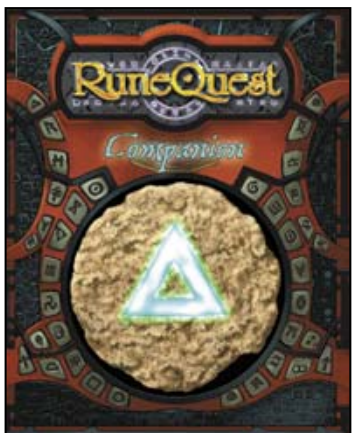
Designed to bring the original RuneQuest up to the 21st Century, this main rulebook contains all you need to explore the many fantasy worlds possible with RuneQuest.

Attention has been applied to keep this main rulebook down to a sensible (and easy on the wallet!) 100 pages, while layout has been refined to make the book easy to read and fast to pick up, allowing players to comprehend sections of the rules with a mere glance - meaning less time flicking through the book and more time playing!

As well as character creation, the RuneQuest main rulebook provides full rules for skills, cults/guilds, combat, adventuring, monsters and Rune Magic, the first magic system introduced for the latest edition of RuneQuest.

Eminently expandable to any fantasy setting, RuneQuest is supported in 2006 by Mongoose Publishing with the Glorantha and Lankhmar worlds, while other publishers are free to introduce their own settings, due to the Open Content licence available for the game.

RuneQuest has come of age. Go adventuring with one of the most powerful and flexible rules systems available.



The RuneQuest Companion expands on some of the rules from the core rulebook and also offers a large number of new rules for use in the game. Within these pages, readers will discover the secrets of the spirit world and how to handle spirit combat in RuneQuest – and they will also meet a few of the more common and more dangerous denizens of the spirit world. New and powerful styles of magic are explored as well, from the faithful priest who gains magical power directly from his god to the learned sorcerer who uses skill and will to wrench magic into existence, to change it and manipulate it.

The RuneQuest Companion also contains an expanded chapter on cultural backgrounds and professions. From the primitive herbalist, to the mariner sailor, to the civilised tumbler, players will find a host of new backgrounds and professions to suit any character idea.



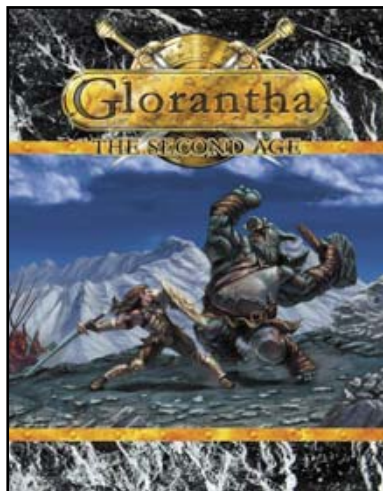
Runes of Chaos is an introductory scenario that gives new and old Players alike a look at the newest breath of life into the RuneQuest world and game rules. From searching ruins and crossing blades with deadly monsters, to hunting down treacherous villains and saving both damsel and scoundrel... RuneQuest will bring a new feel to your table.

In This Adventure the aged daughter of Geramaine and Susanna, Sadradi, has fallen quite ill and knows her life is coming to a close. Her entire life has been dedicated to the protection of her parents' village and the people who call it home. In recent months Wofe has suffered many disappearances of livestock, with a visiting farmer having gone missing just last week. Sadradi fears that a dark evil has nestled in her quaint little town and that when she passes to the next world, it will take over the village and undo her family's work.

Rune of Chaos is the perfect introduction to the new RuneQuest system.



This book contains everything you need to launch an epic Runequest campaign set in its classic setting of Glorantha, a world of mythic adventure.



Glorantha is a world permeated by magic and shaped by myth. Its heroes achieve power by questing for runes, physical manifestations of the eternal abstract forces that shape its destiny. Eventually they graduate to even more powerful magics, learning to gain power by emulating the deeds of the gods, mastering the arcane formulae of the sorcerous arts, allying with spirits, or achieving meditative awareness of life's unknowable secrets. In doing so, they draw on one or more of the mythic Otherworlds surrounding their everyday material world. With the right magic, they can travel to the realms of the gods, become participants in their ancestral myths, and return with wondrous new abilities. Those who fail these daunting tests may be diminished, destroyed, or eternally lost in the mythic realms.

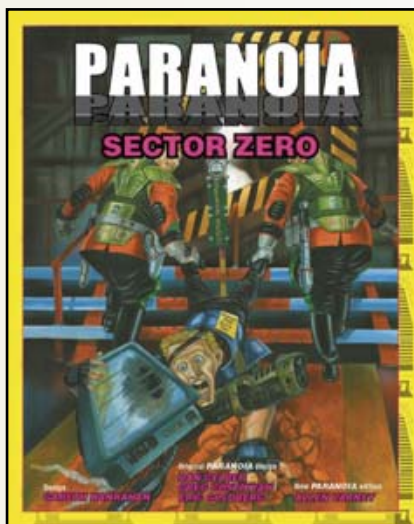
Glorantha is a world of clashing cultures, where good and evil aren't always easy to sort out. Though cursed with more than its share of tyrants, monsters, and villains, no single one of its cultures maintains a monopoly on virtue. Two warring cultures can be, from their own point of view, equally right — or equally ruthless and brutal. Cultures differ on the right way to live, the true events of myth and history, and the very purpose of existence. And that's just the humans: its inhuman races follow their own alien agendas, as laid out at the beginning of time.

The Second Age is a time of unprecedented discovery and exploration. For the first time, trade and travel allows the interaction of far-flung cultures. Both Empires innovate feverishly, unveiling new forms of magic, new devices, new modes of perception.

Against this backdrop of unfettered progress, dark omens gather. Men have pushed the Glorantha's eternal laws of myth and magic to the breaking point. How long will it be before the world strikes back at them, punishing their unprecedented hubris?



Packed with all the information a Games Master needs for easy reference during a session of RuneQuest, this is produced in the style of Mongoose's new 'deluxe' GM Screens. Made from thick card stock, this screen will last many years of play with RuneQuest as your players fight against rival cults and build their own empires.



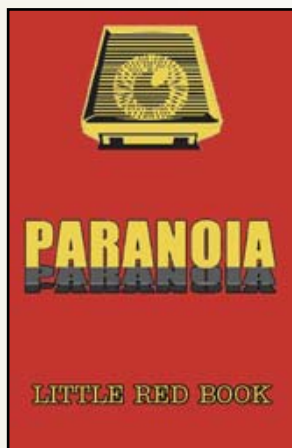
Just as 'Code 7' is Troubleshooter dispatchers' jargon for a mission that promises certain death, so 'Sector Zero' is Alpha Complex slang for punishment duty. Troubleshooters 'sent to Sector Zero' face a dispiriting assignment nobody else wanted. Maybe they must supervise Armed Forces latrine scrubots, or administer experimental R&D medications to insane super-powered mutants. Or maybe those benighted Troubleshooters get in so much trouble they're assigned the missions in this PARANOIA collection, Sector Zero.

The three missions in this collection will entertain your players while making their Troubleshooters wish they'd called in sick.

'Bubblegum Run' sends the PCs on a couple of annoying errands into Junior Creches corrupted by Communist propaganda slipped into chewing-gum wrappers.

In 'The Dinner Party', a BLUE citizen recruits the Troubleshooters for a dire emergency, on which the fate of Alpha Complex itself – uh, doesn't depend at all. In fact, he wants the PCs to prepare an evening party for several high-clearance citizens. Well, what a relief! What could possibly go wrong?

'Lightning Rod' sends the Troubleshooters out onto the immense dome over Alpha Complex to set up an R&D experiment. And then another experiment. And another. Hey, what's all that ominous-looking grey stuff gathering overhead?



[[[ Deleted for Security Reasons ]]]



# Tales from Mongoose Hall

Matthew Sprange

Star Wars IIa

## A Lost Hope

Well, up to this point, we have some very inexperienced (but well meaning) Jedi Padawans trying to control the defences of an entire Bothan world, not entirely assisted in an able fashion by Van Kleif, a representative of the Republic.

A nice easy start to the session this time. Alex decided he would trawl the bars in the spaceport for a ship captain desperate enough to try and run the Separatist blockade of the planet – no small thing with four battleships in orbit. Unfortunately, a failed Gather Information check kept Alex out of the loop while all hell was breaking out in the Council Hall (see last issue). This, he thought, was probably a good thing. He finally managed to locate a captain and, after promising the Jedi Council would pay the Quarren 25,000 credits (how easily the Padawans spend their money) for his trouble, began writing a message. He also promised to escort the freighter off planet with a flight of Jedi Starfighters, giving Alex a good excuse to mix it up with some Vulture Droids (as



*'Yes, it's a fast ship... of course I can fit inside, it's actually much further away than it appears in this picture!'*

well as get an ominous look at a Trade Federation Battleship up close) before returning with 1 hit point left on his fighter! It would be in the shop for a month before returning to battle ready condition...



What happened next was not so good. You see, I had a great little scenario all planned, a nice change of pace with something for everyone. This went downhill for two reasons. First, David (playing General Itchigo) could not turn up for this session, so his character spent the whole scenario in the Council Hall, greasing the wheels of Bothan politics. Second, Doghouse, finally, came out of the Bacta Tank, and demanded to know just what the hell was going on (again, see last issue for the riots, staged votes and torture). Needless to say, when he met up with Alex, Van Kleif was put under house arrest in short order.

Here I hit a problem. I wanted the trial of Van Kleif to go ahead in this session (player trials are always fun) but without David there, it would be mightily difficult. And besides, the Jedi had heard of a group of Bothan resistance fighters trying to escape from one of the southern cities, pursued by a Droid army. Added to this, Richard (Fordy) had just joined the game as a Blood Carver working for the Republic – effectively, Van Kleif's sidekick. By this time, Richard had already slipped past a whole squad of clones to plant a bomb in the interrogation room holding Councillor Borrsk's body (once more, see last issue – it was a good one, trust me...)

In the end, Van Kleif was locked in his office (sidelining Ian, who played him, from the session), while Fordy, Alex and Doghouse all went South in three Gunships to rescue what they thought would be perhaps 30 Bothan resistance fighters.

Homing in on the signal, they arrive at the Bothans' site within a few hours to find... three survivors. Droids are already closing in and the Bothans have taken refuge in a clearing with an ancient ruin. The Gunships sweep in with great efficiency, gunning down Droids as they emerge from the jungle. However, the Jedi soon become irritated when they realise that a) the Bothans are racing to the ruins, not the Gunships and b) the droids are completely ignoring the Jedi, marching to the ruins as well.



*'Aren't you a little tall for a Protocol Droid...?'*



Leaping out of the Gunships, the Jedi are suddenly hit by a Bad Feeling. They scream at the Bothans to get on board and manage to work out that the resistance fighters believe the Droids are not after them at all, but have been searching for the ruins. Doghouse has the presence of mind to use See Force and gets a register, somewhere underground.

Hmm... After a short pause for thought, the Jedi pile the Bothans on a Gunship and send them back to the capital. Meanwhile, they turn a Gunship towards the ruins and blast away to remove the huge stone doors (and there was me thinking they would use the Force or something...) Creeping slowly, they head down the steps into darkness...

And immediately spring a blaster trap that nearly takes off Doghouse's head. Five minutes into the ruins, after they had triggered a pit trap, a flame trap and had been ambushed by mutant dogs, the cry went up.

'This is a dungeon!'

Well, I said it would be a change of pace...

In truth, though, Doghouse had already begun to spot something was a bit 'odd', after he had identified the mutant dogs as Sith Hounds. He added them to the Bad Feeling earlier and suddenly did not like the maths involved. Still, they pushed forward...



*Fordy vs. Ewoks*

Then they were hit by the best trap of them all. And for this, I sincerely regret the whole party was not there. Everyone's vision went skewed and then foggy... and then they were each somewhere else.

Fordy found himself on Endor, outside an Ewok village. Chancellor Palpatine was behind him, urging him to wipe out the enemies of the Republic. Needless to say, being a good servant of the Republic, Fordy spent the next twenty minutes hacking apart Ewoks, burning their village, creeping up on Ewok Shamen and strangling them... He was in his element.

Alex found himself before the Jedi Council, his former Master mocking his attempts to become a Jedi Knight. Mace and





*'Who the hell are you?'*

Yoda found this all very funny and, before long, the Master was approaching Alex with a lightsabre, goading him to prove what a great Jedi he was. Alex, thinking clearly, refused to fight, announcing that he did not believe this vision and that it could not be real. A lightsabre to the head proved him very, very wrong.

Doghouse was on Tatooine – in the middle of the desert. Before he could wonder exactly what was going on, an incoming shot whistled past his head and, trying to find the source of the attack, is greeted by the sight of Aurra Sing approaching, grinning as she unhooks a lightsabre. Needless to say, she got her man...

And then it all ended. The Dark Side visions passed, leaving them all relatively unharmed, but in possession of a Dark Side point each. Well, no one said the path to the Light Side was meant to be easy.

A few more traps and then they are on to Level Two. Narrowly avoiding the effects of a dart trap laden with Sith Poison (they'll never know how close they came), they soon come to the Local Big Bad. Yes, our intrepid heroes were, in fact, messing around within a 4,000 year old Sith Tomb and the evil spirit was still there, aided by more Sith Hounds. They manage to find his sarcophagus, along with a Sith Holocron and a mysterious amulet on display.

Within seconds, the Holocron had been destroyed, which seriously annoyed the spirit – Dark Side powers started raining down on our heroes and, attacked in the rear by Sith Hounds, things started to look very bad as, one by one, they began to succumb to Wounds. What followed was a fraught running battle out of the tomb with Doghouse being carried by Alex as the spirit pursued them. Doghouse did, however, manage to grab the amulet before he blacked out...

So, back home for tea and medals! Well, things never seem to quite work out that way for the guys. Van Kleif, you see, had committed suicide – Ian wrote a note and everything. A gathering crowd outside the spaceport was demanding the release of the dead councillor. With an angry mob on their door step, two dead bodies and an explosion in the spaceport to account for, they had everything to play for...

**Next time: Ian returns with his third character of the campaign (and with David still on his first!), and there is a new bout of politicking with the Bothans. . .**





# Priest of Ishir

## A New Hero for The Lone Wolf Roleplaying Game

**Marco Conti**

**T**he Priests of Ishir are found in all Magnamund. Sustained by an unbreakable faith, they have the holy mission of guarding the peoples of the world from any threats Naar poses, of giving comfort to the wounded souls with the kindness of the Mother, and they attempt to redeem those who have taken the way of crime, without serving Naar in the process.

The Priests of the Moon receive their 'holy calling' at no determined age, but the large part of them begin their path through faith around twenty years.

In every corner of Magnamund there are associations of Priests that care for the poor, the ill and the weak, because it is their way of thinking they must share the blessings of Ishir as much as possible.

Every group of Priests is quite different from the other: each uses its own titles and hierarchy system. It is impossible to find a common doctrine, or a centralised authority able to speak for all Priests of Magnamund. In other words, in each state or kingdom, the clergy of Ishir follows its specific rules, facing specific problems. For instance, the Church of the Lastlands includes

all Priests from Sommerlund and Durenor. This Church does not have a declared hostility towards other Churches, but do not accept some aspects of the Vassa Cult, that worship not only Ishir, but the Majhan too, considered ancestors with the status of demigods and worthy of deep respect and worship. In the Stornlands, the Priests say that Ishir alone gave birth to Aon, and the proof would be the stars, considered fragments of the Moon's light. In the end, regional differences in the cult of Ishir are as numerous as the peoples of Magnamund. But, there is little space for hatred between Priests: they all have a strong and gentle Mother as a paragon, and the common enemy, Naar, is always lurking in the shadows to kill all who do not pay homage to him.

**Adventures:** Priests that embark themselves on long journeys or quests are quite few, but those who travel are driven by the desire to see distant places of holy power. Others decide to spread the Word of the Mother to the unfaithful. Some begin to travel thinking it is in their best interest knowing how the Goddess is worshipped by people different from their own. The youngest undergo personal quests or crusades against Evil (mundane and spawn from Narr, sometimes at the cost of their own lives).

**Characteristics:** Priests of Ishir care for much more than the spiritual life of the community they serve. They offer healing to the wounded and the sick, they nourish the poor. With the donations they receive from the upper classes, they build houses and give work to the unemployed. In the small towns, the local Priests also act as judges and heads of the community. Many Priests are also well-educated scholars, masters of theology, mythology and history. Old Priests act as ambassadors or counsellors for their political leaders. All Priests are well known and loved by the common people, who view them as gentle guides more than an authoritarian institution.

There are not sexual discriminations between the ranks of Priests, and the numbers of men and women sworn to the Goddess is quite the same. Generally speaking, the Priest can marry or have relationships, as Ishir does not forbid these things. But some Priests decide to consecrate all their life to the Mother, keeping themselves away from sentimental or sexual relationships with others.

**Allegiance:** No Priest of Ishir can ever imagine devoting her soul to Naar, and in the unlikely event, she will be hunted for this nefarious act. It is very unlikely that a Priest could follow the Path of Balance, because the very force that sustains a true Priest is her faith in the Gods of Light.



**Religion:** Priests of Ishir consecrate their souls to the Goddess of the Moon, but they still pay high homage to Kai, Lord of the Sun. Though, they see the Father Sun distant from the struggles of everyday life, being too engulfed in the war with Naar: to them, Ishir is the gentle, ever present Mother that protect the common people from harm.

**Background:** Priests of Ishir come from every kingdom or ethnic group of Magnamund, with the exception, obviously, of the lands controlled by Darkness. The Priests keep the special abilities granted by their nation of origin, unless the player chooses that her character received the calling at a very early age.

**Other Classes:** The Priests of Ishir can cooperate at their best with Kai Lords, Sommerlund Knights of the Realm, Dessi Magicians and Vakeros Knights. The relationships with the Herbwaldens are of mutual respect, as it is with the Telchos Amazons. It is unlikely that a Buccaneer of Shadaki could forge a strong friendship with a Priest, but it is not impossible. Sages of Lyris often seek the lore

## Priest of Ishir

Level	Base Combat Skill	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Willpower, Prayer of the Face, Moonfire
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Blessing of the Goddess: +1
3	+2	+1	+1	+3	Divine Strength
4	+3	+1	+1	+4	Holy Ward: +1
5	+3	+1	+1	+4	Prayer of the Face
6	+4	+2	+2	+5	Blessing of the Goddess: +2
7	+5	+2	+2	+5	Divine Strength
8	+6/+1	+2	+2	+6	Psychic Resistance: 12, Holy Ward: +2
9	+6/+1	+3	+3	+6	Prayer of the Face
10	+7/+2	+3	+3	+7	Blessing of the Goddess: +3
11	+8/+3	+3	+3	+7	Divine Strength
12	+9/+4	+4	+4	+8	Holy Ward: +3
13	+9/+4	+4	+4	+8	Prayer of the Face
14	+10/+5	+4	+4	+9	Psychic Resistance: 18, Blessing of the Goddess: +4
15	+11/+6/+1	+5	+5	+9	Divine Strength
16	+12/+7/+2	+5	+5	+10	Holy Ward: +4
17	+12/+7/+2	+5	+5	+10	Divine Punishment
18	+13/+8/+3	+6	+6	+11	Protect the Herds
19	+14/+9/+4	+6	+6	+11	Seal of the Goddess
20	+15/+10/+5	+6	+6	+12	Psychic Resistance: 24, Transfiguration

of Priests in exchange of their own, and many Whytch Chyldren have received asylum from several Priests of Ishir. The Dwarves of Bor tend to mock in some ways the Priests with extremely serious demeanour, and the Shianti Sorcerers act

towards Priests in the same manner of the Dessi. No bonds could be done between Priests and Shadakine Whytches, Dark Cultists, Cenerese Druids and Dark Warriors. Curiously, the Brothers of the Crystal Star are often in discomfort



when dealing with Priests, because Left-handed magic cannot undo the effects of the Prayers of Ishir's Priests.

## Game Rule Information

The Priest of Ishir has the following game statistics.

**Abilities:** Charisma and Constitution are the two key Abilities for the Priests, Charisma because is only through strength of personality that infidels can be converted and faithful could be healed, and Constitution because in order to spread the Word of the Mother and to resist to the threats of the servants of Naar one has to have a strong and healthy body. Intelligence and Wisdom are a good second choice, while Strength and Dexterity do not need a score that provides a bonus.

**Endurance Die:** d6.

**Base Speed:** 30 feet.

**Starting Wealth:** 100 Gold Crowns.

## Class Skills

The Priest of Ishir's class skills (and the key abilities for each skill) are:

Concentration (Con), Craft (Alchemy) (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (History) (Int), Knowledge (Nature) (Int), Knowledge (Planes) (Int), Knowledge (Religion) (Int), Ride (Dex), Speak Languages (N/a), Sense Motive (Wis).

**Skill Points at 1st Level:**  $(5 + \text{Int modifier}) \times 4$   
**Skill Points at each Additional Level:**  $5 + \text{Int modifier}$ .



## Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Priest of Ishir.

**Armour and Weapons Proficiency:** Younger and adventuring Priests learn how to use all one handed weapons, all bows with the exception of the crossbows, light and medium armour and shields.

**Blessings of the Goddess (Su):** A true Priest can be recognised by the strength of their faith, which grants them the ability to invoke miracles. Each time the Priest gains this class feature, the character can, through a small invocation to Ishir, grant to a weapon of his choice the bonus to hit and damage listed in the table. Granting the Blessing of the Goddess requires a number of full round actions equal to the bonus granted, and this holy bonus lasts for a number of round equal to  $(\text{Priest's class levels}/2) + 1$ . The Priest can use this class feature a number of times equal to the Priest's Charisma modifier + 1, for a minimum of 2. The bonus listed in the table is not cumulative: each score replaces the prior. A weapon Blessed by Ishir ignores any Damage Reduction, and undead and Darkspawn creatures hit by them suffer an additional 1d6 of holy damage.

**Divine Punishment (Su):** At 17<sup>th</sup> level, the Priest, as a standard action, can burn his enemies with Moonfire. With a standard attack action, the Priest can direct his Moonfire against any single target within 60 feet, with an attack bonus equal to his Base Combat Skill + Charisma modifier. This attack ignores all armour, magical and mundane, and protective spells work at half their potential. The damage is equal to ten times the normal damage for Moonfire. Divine Punishment can be used to affect all Evil targets in a 5 feet radius area within 60 feet of the Priest. In this case, the damage is equal to five times the normal Moonfire. Divine Punishment can be used a number of times per day equal to the Priest's Charisma modifier + 1, with a minimum of 2. Divine Punishment cannot be used more than once in a single round.

**Divine Strength (Su):** Each time that a Priest gains this class feature, his Endurance score is raised permanently by 3 points.

**Holy Ward (Su):** Through his faith's strength, and the aid offered to all who need divine comfort, the Priest knows that he is part of the Chosen of Ishir. This belief is strengthened by the holy protection granted by this class feature. Each time the Priest gains this class feature, the Character can add the number listed in the table to his Armour Class and all of his Saves. The bonus is permanent, but not cumulative: each number replaces the prior. Half of this bonus can be granted to a number of targets equal to the Priest's Cha modifier, for a duration in rounds equal to (half of Priest's class levels + 1), with a minimum of 3. Imposing to others the Holy ward is a full round action that requires physical contact. Each target can be protected by the Holy Ward only one time per day.

**Moonfire (Su):** Invoking Ishir for a standard action, the Priest's body is engulfed in an aura of silver light. Each Evil creature within 5 feet of the Priest takes 1d6 + Priest's Cha modifier holy damage for each round of contact. Moonfire last a number of round equal to (Priest's class levels + Priest's Cha modifier). Moonfire ignores any Damage Reduction. Creatures of Darkness are allowed to an attempt a Will Save with a DC equal to 10+ (half Priest's class levels + Priest's Cha modifier) to avoid the effects of Moonfire. Each creature of Darkness seeing the Moonfire is considered *Frightened* as long as remains in the area of effect of the Moonfire, unless the creature is granted with a resistance to fear of some kind.

**Prayer of the Face (Su):** The Priest of Ishir has the privilege to learn from the elder clerics some invocations of singular potency, related to the Four Faces of the Goddess; this happens at 1<sup>st</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> levels. Each time the Priest gains this

class feature, he learns only the First Tier of the Prayer of his choice. Knowledge of the other Tiers come automatically to the Priest as he advance in this class, in a way similar to that of Kai Lords.

**Protect the Herd (Su):** Once the Priest has gained the 18<sup>th</sup> level, he can extend his full bonus of Holy Ward and half of his Psychic Resistance to a number of targets equal to double his Charisma modifier for a number of rounds equal to his class level + 2. Protect the Herd is a full round action that requires physical contact. Each target can be protected by this class feature only one time per day.

**Psychic Resistance (Ex):** Ishir's favour is something tangible for Her Priests. They become, through their faith, extremely resistant against psychic attacks. Each time the Priest gains this class feature, he obtains the listed Resistance to the psychic attacks. As per Magic Resistance, each use of Psychic Attack, Mind Blast, Psi Surge and similar against the Priest must beat the Psychic Resistance score.

**Seal of the Goddess (Su):** This mighty invocation can be used in two ways:

- With a prayer of 5 full rounds, the Priest can grant to a weapon he touches a +5 holy bonus to hit and damage, for a number of rounds equal to the Priest's class level + 2. This use can be invoked a number of times equal to 1 plus the Priest's Charisma bonus per day.
- Once per month, the Priest can infuse a weapon he touches with a holy aura that give to the weapon +3 bonus to hit and damage permanently. But this invocation has an high toll: it lowers the Priest's Constitution and Willpower scores by 4 points, that can only be regained at a rate of 1 point per year.

**Transfiguration (Su):** This power can be requested only once per month. Its effects are of a terrifying might: the Priest's Moonfire and Divine Punishment have their range and area of effect quadrupled, the Priest gains a +2 bonus on all his Abilities, his Armour Class is increased by 10 and his hit points by 30. The divine refulgence of the Transfiguration last for a number of rounds equal to half the Priest's class levels + his Charisma modifier, and to activate it the Priest must pray for two full rounds.

**Willpower:** The strength of the faith of a Priest assures that his is an unusually resistant mind. In game terms, each Priest has an additional Ability, called Willpower. This Ability can render a Priest more than a helpless victim in a Psychic Combat. At 1<sup>st</sup> level, the Willpower score is equal to that of Charisma. At each level, Willpower score raise by (Priest's Cha modifier + 1), for a minimum of 1. Lost Willpower is refreshed every 24 hours of a number of points equal to the Priest's Charisma score. If the Priest runs out of Willpower, he is not be able to invoke Prayers, until the recover of lost Willpower.

## Ex-Priests of Ishir

Some people, due lack of faith, have decided to stray from the path of the Priest; when such an event takes place, most of the times they become Adepts, and cannot invoke Prayers anymore. But they keep their Holy Ward (that cannot be shared), Divine Strength and half of the Psychic Resistance at the level they have interrupted their careers as Priests. These features still bless the character because the Mother Goddess always watches for Her children, even if they do not believe any longer. Should the Ex-Priest pay allegiance to Naar, the character will loose all positive effects of her former class, except hit points, Base Combat Skill, Willpower and Saves.



In addition, the Goddess will curse the character in some terrible way left to the Games Master.

## The Faces of the Moon and their Prayers

The Priest of Ishir do not use magic, they make miracles. The force behind their powers is not the study of arcane secrets or the strength of an ancient blood that runs in their veins. To invoke the power of the Moon Goddess the only thing needed is an iron will, a strong self discipline, and, of course, a pure faith. These requirements could seem very difficult to achieve, but some people see them more accessible than magic.

The elder Priests teach to the young clerics that Ishir shows to the world Four Faces, two for Her children and allies and two for Her enemies. Those who have the purest of faith can channel the strength of these Holy Faces that affect in different ways the matter and the living.

Because the Prayers are not acts of magic, they cannot be counterspelled. The Prayers are physically and mentally consuming: even if a Priest can invoke the First Tier of any Prayer at will, the Second Tier can be channelled only a number of times equal to the Priest's Constitution bonus + 1, with a minimum of 2. The Third Tier can be invoked only a number of times per day equal to the Priest's Constitution modifier.

The power channelled through the Priest is so great that overcomes any kind of Magic Resistance and Damage Reduction, however the Goddess does not grant Her believers the powers they ask at any time. Such a direct intervention could break the very fabric of Aon, so, each time the Priest try to use a Prayer, there is a failure chance equal to 45% - the number of ranks the Priest

has in Concentration skill. The same chance of failure affects the use of Divine Punishment, Holy Ward on others, Protect the Herd, Seal of the Goddess and Transfiguration. In case of failure, the character loose half the Endurance and Willpower cost of the Prayer, or a daily use of the class feature.

Each time a Prayer allow a Save, its DC is equal to 10 + half the Priest's class levels + the Priest's Charisma modifier.

The damage produced by Prayers of First Tier is equal to 1d4 + half the Priest's class level. The die increase to 1d6 for Second Tier Prayers and reach 1d8 for Third Tier Prayers (this is called the Base Tier Damage I, II and III).

Each Prayer has a cost in Endurance and Willpower equal to its Tier doubled. The Priest cannot go below 0 Endurance invoking a Prayer. If the cost in Endurance of a Prayer would lower the Priest's Endurance points below 0, the Prayer automatically fails, and the Priest falls unconscious and at 0 Endurance points (stable, and not dying).

Unless stated otherwise, chanting a Prayer is a standard action.

Armour does not affect the chanting of Prayers.

## The Face of Hope (Waxing Moon)

The Face of Hope is shown by Ishir to those who want to heal, nourish and nurture nature and living beings. When the Priest learns the First Tier of this Prayer, he gains one bonus rank in the Heal skill.

### First Tier: Nourish the Flora

When the Priest recites this Prayer, he increase the growing rate of every plants within a radius of 30

feet, centred on him, making them stronger. Any potion based on these plants has a doubled effect, and any '1s' can be re-rolled.

### Second Tier: Heal the Beasts

This Prayer allows to:

- Heal the Endurance of an animal or a magical beast not allied with Darkness by Base Tier Damage II (up to III when the last Tier of this Prayer is known)
- Restore one point of a damaged Ability score of an animal or a magical beast not allied with the Darkness
- Allowing an animal or a magical beast not allied with the Darkness to repeat the Save it failed against a poison or a disease with an additional bonus equal to half of the Priest's relevant Save
- Charm an animal or a magical beast not allied with the Darkness for a number of hours equal to the Priest's class levels. For all this time, the Priest can interact with the target as she had Tier IV of Animal Kinship and Tier II of Animal Control. The target will obey to the Priest's commands only after successful Animal Handling Checks (DC 15 guide me, DC 20 guard me, DC 25 attack). Even in case of failure of these Animal handling checks, no target will attack the Priest, for all the duration of the effect. Animals and magical beasts can make Will Saves to resist the effects of this Prayer.

### Third Tier: Purification of the Body

This Prayer allows to:

- Heal the Endurance of any humanoid being not allied with the Darkness and touched by the Priest by Base Tier Damage III

- Restore one point of a damaged Ability score of an humanoid being not allied with the Darkness
- Allow to any humanoid being not allied with the Darkness and touched by the Priest to repeat the Save failed against a poison or a disease with an additional bonus equal to half the relevant Priest's bonus.

## The Face of Glory (Full Moon)

This is the Face that the Goddess shows in battle, and often its powers are the first learned by those who are sworn to fight the Darkness. When the Priest learns the First Tier of this Prayer, he gains a +1 bonus to hit and damage with a weapon of his choice. This permanent bonus does not increase the number of attacks per round that the Priest can try, but it is cumulative with Blessing of the Goddess.

### First Tier: Splendour

This Prayer grants to the Priest or to the a target he touches a AC bonus equal to  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the Priest's class levels with a minimum of 1, for a number of rounds equal to half the Priest's class levels + 1, with a minimum of 2.

### Second Tier: Wrath

This Prayer follows the same rules of the Tier I, but its bonus affect the Base Combat Skill. This bonus does not increase the number of attacks per round that the Priest can try, but it is cumulative with Blessing of the Goddess

### Third Tier: Authority

With this Prayer the Priest can give a single order to a single living being able of hearing and comprehend her. The command cannot be self-destructive or cause damage to the allies of the

victim. The target can resist to this Prayer making a successful a Will Save.

## The Face of Despair (Waning Moon)

This is the first Face the Goddess shows to Her enemies, with the intention of scare them. When the Priest learns the First Tier of this Prayer, he gains 1 bonus rank in the Intimidation Skill.

### First Tier: Fear

If the target of this Prayer fails a Will Save, he is Scared (-2 to hit, saves and skill checks) for a number of rounds equal to half the Priest's class levels +1, with a minimum of 1. The target must be within 30 feet of the Priest. At Tier II, the target is Trembling (lose Dex bonus to AC, cannot perform actions, enemies have +2 to hit him) and must be within 60 feet of the Priest. At Tier III the target is Panicked (-2 to saves, must flee, 50% of loosing hand-held objects) and must be within 90 feet of the Priest.

### Second Tier: Nullify Magic

With this prayer the Priest can create a rounded area of 5 feet radius centred on himself. In that zone, magic is difficult to activate. Each spell that attempts to enter or function in this zone must beat a Magic Resistance Check equal to the Priest's Psychic Resistance (if any, otherwise the Priest cannot invoke this Prayer). The duration of this Prayer is equal to  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Priest's class levels + 1.

### Third Tier: Consume the Life Force

The target of this Prayer must be within 30 feet of the Priest. If the target fails a Will Save, the poor victim will take 1d4+2 negative levels.

## The Face of Death (New Moon)

The last Face of Ishir is the most frightening, and the Goddess shows it to those She wants to destroy. When the Priest learn the First Tier of this Prayer, the damage of her Moonfire is increased by 1d4 points.

### First Tier: Desert's Plague

With this Prayer the Priest inflict Base Tier Damage I to all plants and objects she manage to touch (it is a touch attack that ignores armour bonuses). At Tier II the damage inflicted is Base Tier Damage II, and the Priest can attack targets distant up to 30 feet away from her. At Tier III, the damage is Base Tier Damage III, and the maximum range is 60 feet. The Desert Plague ignore Hardness of materials. Targets can make Fort Save to avoid the Plague.

### Second Tier: Famine

With this Prayer the Priest can damage sentient beings following the same rules for Desert's Plague.

### Third Tier: Divine Verdict

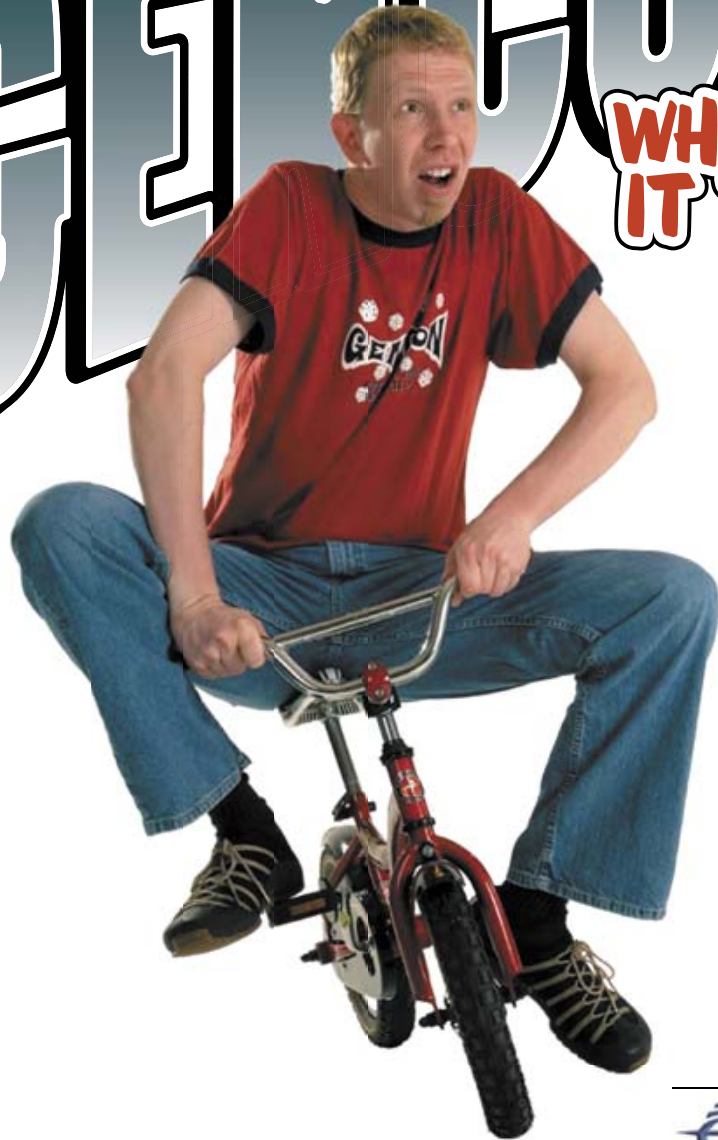
Perhaps the most impressive Prayer, it allows the Priest do inflict *aggravated wounds* each time he damage creatures allied with the Darkness. The duration of this Prayer is equal to half the Priest's class levels + 1. To avoid being immediately killed, targets must pass a Fort Save with a DC equal to the damage dealt by the Priest.





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# DROPS AND DROP CAPSULES

HOW THE CAP TROOPERS EARNED THEIR NAME, FOR THE  
STARSHIP TROOPERS ROLEPLAYING GAME

ROB FARQUHAR

Although presaged by the parachute regiments of the airborne infantry, first deployed in wartime during World War II, the Mobile Infantry is unique from almost every other military unit to ever have existed before in the manner that it deploys its troops: each trooper is usually delivered to his mission area by being dropped individually from an orbiting spacecraft. An Mobile Infantry platoon's rapid journey from base to drop zone and immediate combat readiness upon arrival gives the platoon surprise over its enemy and the ability to press its advantage. The size and speed of the individual drop pods make targeting them mid-flight difficult at best; even a lucky hit is unlikely to eliminate more than a single trooper per platoon. Finally, a precision drop can allow a whole company of Mobile Infantry to bypass almost any form of static ground-based defence, assaulting the enemy directly and often behind its own lines.

Not every deployment will involve a drop; delivery of a platoon to an already secured area is carried out by ship-to-surface transit aboard a shuttle. However, considering the standard MI mission profile, landing boat deployments are the exception to the rule.

## METHODS OF CAPSULE DROP

Not all capsule drops are equal. In fact, there are two main methods of capsule drop, based on the starship the Mobile Infantry platoon is stationed aboard.

## STARSHIP DROPS, OR BED DROPS

The first method is a direct drop from the company's transport starship. This is the traditional method for delivering Cap Troopers to a planetary drop zone. Every Fleet ship has a set of three drop tubes built into its superstructure per Mobile Infantry platoon it carries (one per corvette, between four and eight depending on the class of dreadnought). Essentially giant automatic cannon fed from internal magazines, these drop tubes fire a platoon-worth of drop capsules toward the target planet at rates as fast as one capsule per second. The fired projectiles gain a significant speed advantage, allowing them to move from high orbit to atmosphere in a minimum of time.

Per standard doctrine, the platoon's commanding officer and platoon sergeant are loaded into the magazine of the central tube, which is fired first. Once the platoon's command unit is on its way, the port and starboard tubes commence firing,



launching the platoon's squads. Total loiter time (the time during which the stationary or near-stationary ship is vulnerable to anti-satellite, or ASAT, fire) is rarely more than 30 seconds.

Ideally, firing should commence once the starship has achieved geostationary orbit above the landing zone. This means minimal scattering of the platoon and less time spent dressing ranks before accomplishment of the mission objectives can commence. Of course, the complexities of space travel and orbital physics make an ideal drop infrequent, if not downright rare. Also, if the ship has a minimal vector, it is unlikely that the captain will extend the ship's loiter time by precious seconds to correct; even with counter-battery or

antimissile defences; a spaceship is still an easy and fragile target.

## M2 DROP CAPSULE

The M2 'Trojan Horse' drop capsule is a sophisticated affair, a combination of simple re-entry vehicle and cannon shell. A single M2 capsule can carry one Mobile Infantry trooper. Two specialised variants exist, one that can carry a single M8 or M9 Marauder and another that enables a neodog handler and his caleb to drop in the same capsule. A third variant designed to contain a single Cybernetic Humanoid



Assault System is currently in the early stages of development.

Prior to launch, an M2 capsule appears in two pieces. The lower piece constitutes one half of the re-entry capsule itself, while the upper half is both the top half of the re-entry capsule and a block of explosive propellant. During drop preparations, a fully suited MI trooper carrying full field kit is securely strapped into the capsule

(chest, hips, arms, legs and head) laying on his back; thus the origin of the term 'bed drop'. The fastenings can be checked by the drop room's operating complement of naval ratings, but are most often checked by the platoon's senior officer (whom the ratings check once the rest of the platoon are sealed into their capsules). Marauder capsules contain the Marauder with its driver's compartment as close to horizontal as possible; this means the Marauder suit's limbs often have to be folded in, in order to fit the pod.

Once done, the two sections of each capsule are fastened together and a conveyor loads the capsules into the magazine. Firing is initiated and controlled by the drop room master at the captain's order.

The capsule is roughly egg-shaped, and consists of four layers. The first is the main re-entry shield, which burns away during re-entry. This allows M2 capsules to be fired directly into the atmosphere on a perpendicular to the surface, instead of the shallow re-entry arc most aerospace craft have taken since humanity's early steps into space during the 20<sup>th</sup>

Century. The second and third layers consist of aero brakes and a set of parachutes, respectively, each further decreasing the capsule's rate of descent.

The inner layer is the capsule itself. This egg-shaped pod contains the trooper in reclined position, distributing the forces of both acceleration from firing and atmospheric

deceleration evenly across his body. The pod also features a basic ground-sensing radar that hooks into the trooper's visor in order to give him a range-to-ground. When the trooper believes the situation is safe enough to do so, he triggers the explosives in the final shell, leaving him in only his power suit or Marauder. The capsule's torso fastenings remain, becoming the harness for a last pair of parachutes that allow the trooper to keep his final descent unpredictable before disengaging the chute harness and landing, usually with assistance from his suit's jump jets.

The fragments of the final shell consist of radar-reflective material that distributes itself in the atmosphere about the trooper, effectively guaranteeing that any radar attempting to track the falling trooper will be unable to gain a precise lock.

## SLINGSHOT DROPS, OR FEET FIRST DROPS

With the introduction of the dreadnought came a new method of dropping capsule troopers. Although dreadnoughts, as mentioned above, are equipped with capsule launch tubes, they also have extensive vehicle bays equipped with a new design of shuttle: the Slingshot drop ship. Each shuttle features a compliment of ten specialised, tubular airlocks, which are entered from the shuttle's main passenger bay and exited through iris hatches in the ventral hull.

Eight of these 'tubes' carry the M4 drop capsule. The remaining two tubes are mounted in the aft bulkhead of the drop bay, and are large enough to house a single Marauder (of either type) each. A large ceramic-composite re-entry plate is affixed to the Marauder's feet and legs. If the squad aboard the shuttle has no Marauders, the Marauder tubes can be adapted to house an M4 drop capsule.



Unlike starship drops, the drop capsules are not propelled from the drop ship by any form of reaction. Once the drop tube's ventral hatch opens, the struts holding the capsule or Marauder in place within the tube disengage; capsule propulsion is provided by the shuttle's artificial gravity and the gravity of the target planet itself (where applicable). If the squad includes Marauders, they are dropped first, unless the shuttle is carrying the platoon's command squad, in which case the lieutenant and platoon sergeant drop first. The rest of the squad usually drop in rank order.

Shuttles can make precision drops from lower orbits as they present a smaller target profile to ASAT weapons. Also, as each squad in a platoon is carried in its own shuttle, squads, platoons or even an entire company can be simultaneously dropped across a broader area (according to the mission profile) where a bed-drop would be limited by having to drop from a single ship.

Although dreadnoughts have multiple launch tubes, they present larger and more tempting targets for ASAT weapon systems and thus dare not loiter unless and until threat from ASAT weapons is reduced to acceptable margins (usually via elimination of enemy assets by MI or TAC Fighters).

### M4 DROP CAPSULE

The M4 capsule is an odd affair, especially when compared with the familiar M2. Instead of an all-enclosing egg or pod, the M4 is a large, squat suit of heavy composite plate which fits over the standard M-4A1 and M-4C8 Power Suits, featuring attitude correction thrusters at the knees and elbows. Unlike the M2, the trooper enters the M4 capsule standing up, and is dropped 'feet first' (as with the M2, an M4 Neodog variant allows a neodog handler and his caleb to drop in



the same capsule). Also, the M4 is a much less complicated affair than the M2; its composite construction means that relatively little of its outer tegument burns away, whilst still ably distributing re-entry heat away from the trooper. Explosive charges where the main armour plates meet blow the capsule away from the trooper at the trooper's command; these discards serve to jam ground radar much as the discarded shells of the M2 capsule. Per the above notes, the M4 features no drop propellant, and as the drop velocity of the M4 when compared to the ballistic entry of the M2 is low, no parachutes are included; the trooper's jump jets provide enough thrust to allow for a clean, fairly comfortable landing.

### SLINGSHOT DROPS AND CORVETTE TRANSPORTS

While the dreadnought and Slingshot were in the planning stages, SICON strategists discussed extending the Slingshot program by replacing part of the standard complement of Viking landers on each corvette with Slingshot drop shuttles.

In theory, this would allow a corvette's platoon more tactical flexibility. The point became moot as the existing Viking complement aboard each corvette became occupied with ferrying the platoons of Light Infantry assigned to most ships after the massive upturn in recruitment post-Buenos Aries, crowding the already-cramped corvettes even further and exacerbating tensions between the 'caps' and the 'lights'.

## USING CAPSULE DROPS IN THE

### GAME

Capsule drops are an important part of the atmosphere of *Starship Troopers*. They help separate the novel from the many military science fiction works before and since. They are also a clear point of demarcation in any MI operation: once a drop commences, it is all go and it will not stop until the squad boards the retrieval boat. Until drop, though, it is all waiting, the slow ticking-away of seconds until D-minus-zero. At that point, the drop process itself becomes dramatic, but the troopers themselves cannot do anything of consequence until they can pop their pods and hit the DZ.

Once they are out in the open, though, some interesting things can happen. A trooper can fire his jump jets too early, using up more fuel, or too late, hitting the ground hard enough to cause injury. Flak in the air might damage the trooper's gear or even eliminate it, leaving the trooper short of ammo or even a weapon once on

the ground. Or a combination of lateral vector, atmospheric conditions or even human error could scatter the trooper out of formation, forcing him to waste precious seconds (and possibly jump fuel) as he rejoins formation. While his Player Character is airborne, the player should make a Perception roll to get the lay of the land and pick out enemy emplacements from the air and a Knowledge (tactics) check to determine the most advantageous landing site based on the trooper's observations and tactical doctrine for the mission. Depending on local weather and / or AA fire, the player can make Acrobatics checks to direct his trooper to the DZ, to avoid flak or to hold course in high crosswinds.

When making Knowledge (tactics) check to identify a landing zone or Acrobatics check to stay on course, a good rule of thumb is that the trooper lands fifty feet off the proper mark per point the trooper's player fails his check by. The difference, added to 10, is then used as the Difficulty Check value for an Athletics roll as the trooper ignites his jump jets to slow his final descent. If this roll is also failed, the trooper takes 1d4+2 hit point damage, ignoring armour damage reduction; however, the trooper can make a Fortitude save versus a DC of (10 + the points the Athletics roll failed by), taking only half damage (round down) if successful.

## THE FIRST DROP

An exception to the above notes is the very first drop the players participate in during the campaign. The Games Master should use the players' first drop to set the experience of dropping up in his players' minds, so that they will remember it for the other drops to follow, and should not simply gloss over the details. That being said, the players will have little to do but listen to their Games Master describe the drop until their capsules open, so a little finesse and brevity are recommended.

The Games Master should either read the first chapter of the novel, watch the first episode of *Roughnecks: The Starship Troopers Chronicles* or download Mongoose Publishing's promotional video for *Starship Troopers: The Miniatures Game* to get a feel for the pace and drama of a capsule drop. Ideally, describing the first drop should take no more than three minutes, plus a little more time if the drop is a starship drop and the Games Master wants to lay up the quiet tension of being sealed in the ship's magazine, waiting for firing to commence.

The Games Master should get loud and animated when the drop starts and the capsules are released or fired into the target planet's atmosphere. Describe the heat, shaking and buffeting the Player Characters experience as their capsules enter atmosphere. If the players are in M2 capsules, spend some time on the jolts and shakes as their capsules' shells burn or peel away. Then, once they release their capsules, describe the broad panorama they have of the terrain below and the landing zone, not to mention the thrill of sitting unsupported on air.

It is fair to assume that the character has gone through several drops during training, but the experience of skydiving is still worthwhile touching on for the players' sake.

## BEFORE THE DROP

*I always get the shakes before a drop. I've had the injections, of course, and hypnotic preparation, and it*

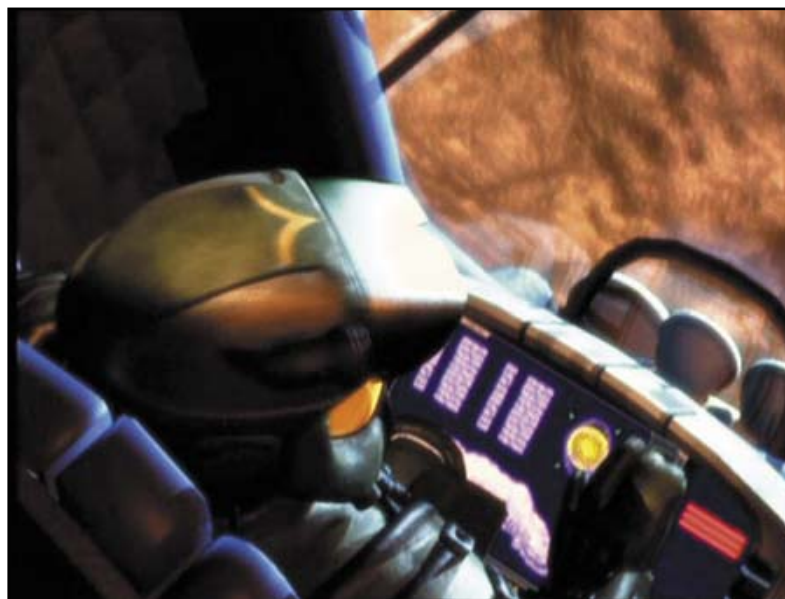
*stands to reason that I can't really be afraid...*

*But the fact is: I'm scared silly, every time.*

*- Johnnie Rico, Starship Troopers*

Immediately prior to drop, the Player Characters are in some sort of holding area, either in squads next to the capsule conveyors in their starship's drop room, or in the seating and equipment area of their Slingshot, forward of its drop bay. This is a tense time, as the characters wait for the appointed moment when they climb into their capsules and are dropped.

This is a good opportunity for inter-Player Character roleplay. Every trooper is on edge to a lesser or greater degree, and although the characters are trained to not let their nerves get out of hand, they are more likely to be interacting with their fellows than otherwise, if only to seek assurance that everyone else is feeling as tense. The players can let each other see their characters' private moments, doing the little things many soldiers do before battle, including the five





minutes during pre-drop countdown always set aside for prayer with the platoon chaplain.

Also, it is a good opportunity for the commanding officer to do one last run over the mission objectives and plan of action. Although we assume the characters have been fully briefed and prepared, it allows the audience (in other words, the players) to find out what is expected of the characters without having to sit through hours of briefings, drill and tactical breakdowns

Again, the novel and the first episode of the series both provide excellent examples, as Sgt. Jelal and Lt. Razak, respectively, let their troopers know what is expected of them (as well as give an insight into their personalities and their unit's history).

If a Games Master wants to start the campaign *in media res* or is writing a *Starship Troopers* convention module and wants a good, quick starting point, he cannot go far wrong with this approach.

## THE POINT OF NO RETURN

*In the past, armies have been known to fold up and quit because they didn't know what they were fighting for... But the M.I. does not have that weakness. Each one of us was a volunteer... now we fought because we were M.I. We were professionals, with esprit de corps... we climbed into our capsules because (the platoon sergeant) told us it was time to do so and we fought... because that is what (Mobile Infantry) do.*

- Johnnie Rico, *Starship Troopers*

The troopers of the Mobile Infantry are the best trained, most thoroughly equipped and toughest soldiers who have ever served in any armed force in the history of Mankind. As individuals, they have come through the most gruelling and intensive training known to man. Once they

have seen combat, they are bonded to their fellow troopers with a strength that few who have not fought shoulder to shoulder will ever understand. They face death for the sake of the United Citizen's Federation, the honour of the Mobile Infantry and the name of their platoon.

Ever since SICON was formed, the vessel that deploy troopers to a combat zone, whether a drop capsule or a landing craft, has served as a clear mark of the point of no return for each and every MI trooper about to commence a mission. Now and again, somewhere, a trooper will refuse to step past that point of no return. This may be a sudden breaking of nerve, or perhaps a decision that the trooper has been brewing over since the last mission, when they almost broke in the face of that onrushing Bug horde.

Let it not be said that such a weakening of will is common, especially not for troopers. The aforementioned bonds of friendship and comradeship are so strong that the thought of letting the rest of the unit face the enemy short-handed is often more than enough to keep a trooper getting into the capsule every mission. Even then, the shaming idea of being held in lesser esteem by his or her friends and squad mates is hard to overcome. A trooper's training has already provided him with the discipline required to advance toward danger. Troopers may receive counselling from a designated psychologist or even the unit's chaplain, should either be available. Finally, there is the fact that the trooper could have resigned from service at any downtime prior and did not.

Nonetheless, all troopers are still human, and every human being has a point where the stresses of combat against a race as terrifyingly inhuman as the Arachnids become simply too much to bear. At that point when a trooper refuses to deploy for a mission, that trooper has, per the mandate of Federal Service, permanently and irrevocably

discharged himself from Federal Service and forfeited forever his chance at earning franchise. SICON levies no further penalties against the former trooper, however, making available rapid transit back to the now-civilian's home planet on the next available courier.

Worthy of note, of course, is the fact that the squadmates and commanding officers of troopers who decide to exercise their option to not complete Federal Service whilst on are required to treat any such action as dereliction of duty or even desertion depending on circumstances, and take appropriate measures.

So how does the *Starship Troopers* Games Master make use of this aspect of Federal Service? The answer is sparingly. Game-world justifications aside, a trooper Non-Player Character in the players' squad or platoon quitting before a drop is a powerful moment on many levels, especially after your group has played through a few missions. There will probably be an unspoken assumption that all Non-Player Character troopers are reliable; shattering this assumption can create a memorable moment of high drama. Repetition, though, though, risks cheapening the event and frustrating players.

Keep in mind the mindset and tastes of the group when considering this step. For example, it is tempting to have a Non-Player Character that the Player Characters have come to rely upon suddenly decide to quit before a drop. This may risk players believing that their Games Master is robbing them of an important tactical element of their squad. *Starship Troopers* is a combat-oriented game after all, and such a move affects the combat potential of each Player Character. If players are keen on roleplaying, though (even at the potential expense of their characters), the sudden resignation of a team mate right before a drop will give their characters more fodder for

interaction, and may allow some spotlight time for a Player Character wrestling with his own doubts. Plant subtle cues in the sessions leading up to the Non-Player Character's big decision. Make the Non-Player Character withdrawn, tense even during off hours, perhaps willing to talk about 'back home' more often. This in and of itself inverts a common device of horror films, where the guy who's short or going to marry his sweetheart on his next leave gets killed; the players may never suspect that the Non-Player Character trooper will Exercise his Option instead.

Dropping out is also an interesting option for players who leave the campaign, although perhaps even more final than death. The science fiction of 'he's not dead until you see the body, and sometimes not even then' won't apply here; the character will still be alive but will never, ever be able to rejoin his comrades as a trooper. If the player is amenable, the Player Character might show up for a guest appearance later (perhaps with a level or two of Civilian) if the Player Characters take leave - or even conduct operations - on the former trooper's home planet.

### SICK CALL

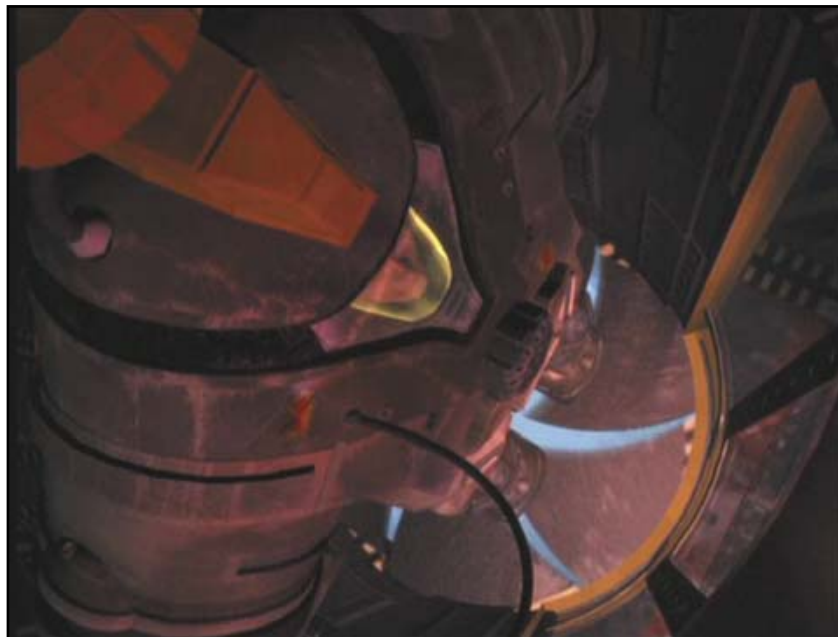
*Jelly went over us again, his face mean, his eyes missing nothing. He stopped by the man in front of me, pressed the button on his belt that gave readings on his physicals. 'Fall out!'*

'But, Sarge, it's just a cold. The Surgeon said-'

*Jelly interrupted. "But Sarge!" he snapped. 'The Surgeon ain't making no drop - and neither are you, with a degree and a half of fever.'*

*- Johnnie Rico, Starship Troopers*

Of course, an option less cruel than eliminating a member of the Player Characters' squad permanently is to have a trooper drop out for a mission with an illness. In fact, this is a perfect way to get around the absence of a player without having to drum up some kind of urgent business that calls the Player Character away (after all, where else can a trooper go while on active



duty?) - the trooper is simply too ill to make the drop. Per the above example, the illness does not necessarily have to be anything major or immediately debilitating - but if there is a chance that a fever will impair a trooper's reflexes, slow the squad or otherwise put a platoon at risk (for example, if a trooper with a head cold sneezes at precisely the wrong moment and covers the inside of his faceplate with mucus), he can always be 'downchecked' for a mission. Better to be a man short than to have a man dead weight.

### CASING THE ZONE AND LIFTING THE DIRT

Whenever the Player Characters are dropping on a 'hot DZ' - i.e. enemy forces are expected at the drop zone - the Games Master should always describe what the players see below them once they are out of their capsules but before they

land. Although the troopers have probably seen orbital photos and topographic scans, this will be the first time they will have actually seen the battlefield with their own eyes. Describing what they see gives the players a heads-up on the live situation on the ground right now. Things that would have been summarised in briefing - local time and weather, the lay of the land and any habitation - should be described in more detail: 'The briefing mentioned possible inclement, and it looks as though Intel's right for once - you've just come out of the bottom of a roiling rain cloud, and a strong wind is buffeting you eastward; you reckon you might be blown maybe two hundred feet east of the drop zone.'

These details give the players the opportunity to take control of the session, letting them plan what they want to do as soon as they touch down, as well as pick out a landing site (see above). The Games Master must not give the players much time to think, though. Their troopers are still midair, and unless they use their chutes and/or jump jets to break their fall, the ground will break it for them quickly enough...



Finally, the Games Master hands the act of touching down on the DZ over to the players. Should they wish, let them make Acrobatics or Athletics checks to come down looking as cool as possible, or let them describe how they touch down and what they do next (draw weapons, seek cover and so on).

## GETTING TO KNOW YOUR FLEET CREW

*In a mixed ship, the last thing a trooper hears before a drop (maybe the last word he ever hears) is a woman's voice, wishing him luck. If you don't think this is important, you've probably resigned from the human race.*

- Johnnie Rico, Starship Troopers

The previous section discussed using the pre-drop moments for inter-Player Character play. It is also worth mentioning that these sequences allow you to set up some Non-Player Characters that the Player Characters will meet whenever they drop, and quite possibly get to know, becoming comrades, friends and sources of shipboard scuttlebutt.

## DROP ROOM CREW

Each drop room aboard a Fleet frigate or dreadnought is crewed by a team of Fleet ratings, usually Ensigns and Mates overseen by the ship's Master. They are responsible for pulling capsules for storage and checking them prior to drop, as well as sealing MI troopers into them. More importantly, the Master operates the drop tube firing controls.

As platoons usually muster in their drop rooms thirty-five to forty minutes before D-minus-zero, they have a chance to catch a few words with the drop crew before final inspection by the platoon CO. The face of the drop crewman who seals the

trooper into his capsule is the last face that trooper sees prior to unloading, which often fosters a strong bond between troopers and drop crew. Some friction remains, although mainly at the level of friendly joshing.

## SLINGSHOT CREW

The drop capsules from those platoons aboard a dreadnought that drop from Slingshot drop boats are also serviced by a drop crew, but MI troopers rarely interact with these ratings, as the M4 drop capsules are typically loaded into the drop boat's tubes before the MI squad embarks. Marauder drivers are those troopers on a Slingshot drop most likely to interact with a drop crew, though, as their Marauders are handed directly over to the drop crew for loading, and drivers who are attached to their suits tend to oversee loading personally, which often causes friction (and, accordingly, headaches for the drop crew's Master).

Instead, the squad is more likely to interact with the pilots of their Slingshot. Although some crews have little interaction with their MI charges beyond the red and green drop-notification lights in the drop compartment, many maintain regular contact with the squad's leader, providing time-to-drop updates and reporting on any 'rough air' (from turbulence to anti-aircraft fire). Some even bend regulations by opening the cockpit hatchway and allowing troopers to speak directly to them (although the hatch is always closed again should the Slingshot come under fire or have to make sudden course changes).

A squad that drops by Slingshot is almost always picked up by Slingshot, and often by the same crew that dropped them. When

rendezvousing for retrieval, the co-pilot maintains contact with the squad leader (or comms tech, if the squad has one), who guides the Slingshot in on his comm signal. It is at such times the MI units come to appreciate a good Fleet pilot, and any bonds between squad and crew become stronger.

## THE CAPTAIN

Whenever a drop is made, regardless of whether by drop tube, Slingshot or even direct landing, the captain of a starship always farewells its MI complement just before it departs ship (and orders the firing of the drop tubes when applicable). Aboard corvettes, it is also the captain who has direct helm control during braking and docking of inbound retrieval shuttles. As such, MI troopers tend to have strong feelings about their captains.

In rare cases the relationship between an MI unit and a ship's captain can become adversarial. In such cases, SICON policy is to covertly review the case, then juggle ship assignments and get the MI unit or the captain re-assigned before any serious infractions of regulations occur.





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# Of Steam and Other Technologies

## A Treatise on the Conception and Execution of Ludic Environments in the Steampunk Genre, part 2 of 2

By Mr. Alejandro Melchor

In the first part of this article, a number of options were presented for a Games Master to choose and assemble the technological elements of his own steampunk setting. In this second part, the attention shifts to magic and the world of the occult.

Magic breaks the rules of nature as science is beginning to understand them, but scholars and occultists explore the possibility that magic is merely just another set of rules that have not been properly codified except by magicians and priests jealous of their power, who lack the proper mindset for true scientific research. Supernatural phenomena may abound undetected, waiting for the right adventurous soul to set to the task of uncovering their secrets.

### The Five Stages of Occult Presence

Just like the stages of technological adoption can determine what can be done with machines and science in a steampunk setting, the occult can be likewise present in five different stages, each of one defining the relations of that element with the world at large. The stages of occult presence are ranked from 0 to 4.

**Stage 0 – Absent:** An occult element at stage 0 simply does not truly exist. It may still be theorised about or appear in folk

tales around the world, but it is no more than fanciful speculation and ignorant superstition. If another element with a higher stage of presence depends on an absent element, the Games Master should look for an alternative explanation or origin, such as establishing ghosts as psychic entities if there are no undead creatures in his setting, except for ghosts. *Examples:* Tales of ancient ruins from a civilisation that never existed, ghost stories in a world with no afterlife, a setting that has never contemplated the existence of psychic powers simply because they are not real.

**Stage I – Hidden:** The occult element in question does exist, but lies hidden from proper study and interaction. The methods of this concealment can stem from a conscious effort from the element itself or its participants, who wish to remain unnoticed by society at large, or from some external issue that causes the element to remain apart from the everyday world. The element and its participants may be quite powerful, but they fail to exert their full strength by virtue of their voluntary or forced suppression. *Examples:* A hermetic society of magicians practicing their craft from the shadows, the world of faerie forced into the background by the tide of rationality, the pristine ruins of an ancient civilisation that remains undiscovered because no records of it survive.

**Stage II – Obscure:** Common folk are aware of the existence of the occult element, but it

is extremely rare, inaccessible or clouded in rumour and legendry. The occult element is quite real, but people have no clear understanding of it by lack of exposure to the extent that some quarters may still believe it to be fantasy instead of fact. An obscure element can be in possession of certain parties and guarded zealously from the masses, or its rarity is such that, even while documented cases exist with ample evidence of their reality, they do not happen with enough frequency to be available for thorough study. *Examples:* Vampires exist and people know it, but there is a lot of confusion about their actual powers; magic is real but has not been practiced in ages, lost grimoires contain instructions readable only by a few; the Sidhe is real, but there are too many false accounts on how to get there, and seldom do travellers from the other side introduce themselves as such.

**Stage III – Unusual:** While not rare nor particularly obscure, the occult element is still not an everyday sight, but this is more akin to the exclusivity of membership in a gentlemen's club than to the element resisting attempts to study and understand it. An unusual presence means that even while most people have restricted access to the occult element, a few members of the society are more familiar with it by virtue of exposure or research. When an occult element exists at this stage, it can be studied by common science, but there are some difficulties. *Examples:* Psychic and mediums ply their trade in the streets, their

## Presence Modifiers

Occult presence can have a very definite effect. The less present the element, the harder it becomes to learn something about it. This affects the Knowledge (occult) skill, applying a presence modifier to the normal Difficulty Class for all kinds of questions. For example, a basic question about a commonplace occult element is DC 10 ('what kinds of faerie are there?' in a world with heavy contact with the Fair Folk), while a tough question for a hidden element is DC 45 ('what is the secret Name of the Vampire King?' in a world unaware that the undead exist).

### Knowledge (occult sciences) DCs

Stage	DC modifier
0	_*
I	+15
II	+10
III	+5
IV	+0

\* Knowledge does not exist or is considered sheer myth, covered by the culture or history specialisations of the Knowledge skill.

The stage of presence may translate as an actual resistance to supernatural phenomena, imposing a penalty to rolls related to rolls where supernatural forces try to influence the world, such as Psychic Control checks to use psychic powers, ritual checks to use magic, or ask for a saving throw for highly magical creatures intruding on the mundane world. For example, a particular steampunk setting has magic at the obscure stage, psychic powers at the unusual stage and access to otherworlds (the astral psychic plane in this case) at the commonplace stage. In this setting, Michael Faraday based his research on magnetism on the works of Franz Mesmer instead of James Maxwell, and discovered the chemicals in the human brain that interacted with the ether to create psychic phenomena. Magic rituals would suffer a -4 penalty, while Psychic Control checks would suffer a -2; attempts to access the astral psychic plane through the ether would be commonplace and suffer no penalty from the setting's reality. This is an optional rule that a Games Master can include for all the occult elements in his setting, or for just a few of them; in the example above, magic can still be obscure, psychic powers still be unusual and the psychic astral plane still be commonplace, but the stages are only indicators of their frequency, not a palpable limitation.

### Resistance Penalty

Stage	Penalty
0	-16
I	-8
II	-4
III	-2
IV	+0



talents known and partially understood, but which only manifest in special people; golems as luxury items; monsters from ancient myths exist but are on the brink of extinction.

**Stage IV – Commonplace:** ‘Occult’ in name only, the element has a pervasive presence in the world, fully understood and documented, sometimes even part of normal academic pursuits or job training. When an occult

element is commonplace, it becomes an integral part of everyday life, applicable in many situations and whose basic principles are well understood. Supernatural phenomena pertaining the occult element are thought of as natural phenomena, even if they entail very special powers. At this level of presence, occult phenomena can interact with science and technology, and often overlap. *Examples:* The Royal Academy has a branch dedicated to Hermetical Alchemy; ghosts work as spies and sentries for the Queen’s army, there are trade and migration agreements with Faerie.

The following are the main occult elements that appear in the steampunk genre. While this section does not present many hard and fast rules for presenting them, they are useful for creating the atmosphere of a setting and giving a justification to other items in the game, like psychic powers, magic rituals and conduits, supernatural races available for Player Characters, supernatural energy sources, access to fantastic worlds and so on. They often reference to Earth mythology and beliefs, particularly the ones that caught the attention of the Victorian people, but if the setting is set on an alternate world the Games Master can easily change the names and a few relations to make the elements fit with his vision of the world.

## Faerie

The world of the Little People intersects with human tales in many places, and belief in them spikes from time to time, growing so strong as to let them be real once more. There are many kinds of Faerie, their faces changing with the expectations of the world of humans, but in all of their guises and subspecies they are unforgettable, either because they are breathtakingly beautiful

or because they are terrifyingly hideous. The entrances to the realm of the Faerie are as mysterious as the Faerie themselves, located in sylvan glades or circles of stones, and open only during very special dates or by the command of their masters. Humans who find, open and cross the threshold to Faerie never return unchanged, if they return at all.

The faerie element influences the availability of the different subsets of the Faerie character races, and defines the presence and strength of their powers, the existence of the fey creature type in the setting, and probably that of the magical beasts as well. Faerie as an otherworld may be independent from this element, meaning that its existence does not require that its inhabitants visit our world with any frequency.

**Stage 0 – Absent:** No faerie element means exactly that, if there are any stories about the Good Folk, they are only that.

**Stage I – Hidden:** The races of faerie exist and often travel to the world of humans, but they are very reserved and careful, opening entrances to their world in remote, pristine patches of wilderness or only during specific dates, such as Beltane and Samhain. Or both. They use their magic to clothe themselves in illusion, appearing as normal humans to mingle with mortals, or remaining invisible to mortal eyes. The faerie character races are available at this level, but only the more human-like are encouraged. The player should nonetheless concentrate on learning magic or traits to keep the character’s true nature hidden. Only the most daring or curious faeries venture into mortal settlements.

**Stage II – Obscure:** The gates to the realm of Faerie open at the will of its rulers and to

## The Empire of Meridean

The assumed setting in *OGLE Steampunk* is the Empire of Meridean, a world-spanning realm that has grown by the technological efforts of humans, treading over the other races of the world in their advance towards progress. In this setting, the occult elements are in the following stages of presence:

- **Faerie:** Stage III (unusual)
- **Psychic Phenomena:** Stage IV (commonplace)
- **The Afterlife:** Stage III (unusual)
- **Magic, Sorcery and Witchcraft:** Stage III (unusual)
- **Places of Power:** Stage II (obscure)
- **Monsters:** Stage III (unusual)
- **Magical Science:** Stage II (obscure)
- **Otherworlds:** Stage I (hidden)
- **Deities and Demons:** Stage I (hidden)

people who know the proper rituals, sacred places and times. Tales about the faerie circulate amongst people not as fables, but as anecdotes that listeners know in their heart to be true. The faeries, on their part, travel often to the mortal world, but they still feel the need to clothe themselves in glamour to hide their nature. A few careless faeries let their disguises fail and show their true appearance to those around them, thus giving birth to the rumours and tales. People in power would know about Faerie and exchange amenities and information at the back of the common folk.

**Stage III – Unusual:** Faeries are an uncommon sight, but so are denizens from the furthest colonies. The realm of Faerie, while still separated from the mortal world, is more easily accessible. Rumours and tales give relatively accurate instructions on how to meet a faerie or travel into their lands, but not many people see the need to do so. Characters can belong to any of the faerie races and attract as much attention as any other foreigner. Note that faeries displaying openly their natural weapons or dangerous powers will be treated with the same consideration as armed and dangerous foreigners: not very kindly.

**Stage IV – Commonplace:** The presence of faerie is a fact of life and something about which people never give a second thought. Faeries are so entrenched in the fabric of everyday life that they can sell their magical talents as common services and occupy many niches in the social ladder. Human nations have built roads into the realm of Faerie, or their land may have a physical existence, like being on an island or a remote valley; in any case, exchanges of all kinds exist on all levels between the mortals and faeriekind.

## Psychic Phenomena

The hidden powers of the human mind are a mystery that eludes men of science and the cloth alike. Separate from and, at the same time, akin to magic, psychic phenomena gained a small amount of recognition amongst scientific circles as researchers and theorists unveiled new natural phenomena, or at least extrapolated them. Amongst them, psychic powers and related incidents occupy a lot of attention, and their vagueness pose a real danger for the gullible, as charlatans fake abilities, while true savants hide their talents as they know they are not idle entertainments for the jaded and the curious. Magical societies study psychic phenomena with the same vigour as scholarly circles as they manifest in a wide variety of forms, from the unintentional talent of a teenager haunted by poltergeists to the exotic arts of foreign styles of pugilism.

As an occult element in a setting, psychic phenomena include the powers described later in this chapter, the psychic, medium and, perhaps, the mentalist vocations of the occultist Player Character class, psychical research and some aspects of ghostly existence, the astral and ethereal planes of existence, the afterlife and the nexus between science and magic.

**Stage 0 – Absent:** There are no such things as psychics or any related phenomenon. All who claim to have extraordinary mental powers are either charlatans or madmen. If magic is present in the setting, would-be psychics may be magicians with a natural talent.

**Stage I – Hidden:** Psychic phenomena exist, but it is hardly talked about except as myth and tales. Psychics may be either hiding their talents from society in justified fear of being made into guinea pigs or accused of foul

deeds, or their power is so weak that not even themselves know about it and attribute their visions and manipulations as keen intuition and blind luck. The astral realm is hard to access, requiring extreme discipline or the aid of drugs or inspired technology. The occultist class offers the psychically oriented vocations, but its members may take steps to hide their powers, or characters may not use them voluntarily.

**Stage II – Obscure:** Everybody knows the tale about somebody's aunt who could guess what others were thinking, or the anecdote about a visit to a palm-reader or attending a séance. Psychics and their powers are known to exist, but most people view any news about the subject with scepticism, treating anyone claiming to have such talents to be trying to con them. Real psychics are certainly not common, but they have a better grasp on what their increased perceptions mean, thanks to the existing speculations. Some try to exploit their gift, while others prefer to conceal it and trust in the element of surprise. The astral plane appears associated with the luminiferous ether, magnetism and other scientific studies; and the experiments seem to work, although they are still the province of eccentric geniuses. Psychic powers and vocations are freely available, but the character should expect a lot of suspicious looks.

**Stage III – Unusual:** Psychic research is an accepted branch of science, but one that only very few have the patience to explore. Having psychic powers is similar to having a high I.Q., it happens rarely and provides a tool for success, but it is still a common trait of the species. The public trusts that if a person sets up business as a psychic, he will tend to be the real thing, for many scientists and true psychics are quite ready to debunk frauds and



protect the legitimacy of their practice and field of study. Psychic powers and vocations are not only available, but also reliably documented, which enables a psychic to do some research into the various talents that he might develop. Lucid dreaming is another way to access the astral plane, and brave explorers report entire otherworlds lying just beyond the Gate of Deeper Slumber.

**Stage IV – Commonplace:** Being psychic is just like learning a new trade, even if the job skills are difficult to master or are available only to the talented few. Psychic research is not an occult science at this stage, but a normal discipline studied in every prestigious college. Psychics receive respect for their unique talents, séances are a tried and true method for contacting the spirits of the dead (if the setting allows their existence) and there may even be training courses so that people can develop their psychic potential. The astral plane is well understood, with technological devices capable of tapping into it and replacing some of the psychic's traditional duties.

## The Afterlife

There are few aspects of life as fascinating as death, and what comes after... and in-between. The afterlife is a matter of much debate and speculation, and the focus of many religions of the world. Souls need to be laid to rest before they can pass on to whatever fate awaits them, else they can return in various horrid forms to haunt the living. Humanity's fear of death populates its world with monsters that escape the clutches of the Grim Reaper by virtue of some evil magic or extremely unfortunate circumstances. Ghost stories are a favourite pastime amongst all strata of society, but other types of undead exist, animated by unholy energies and preying upon the life they left behind; there are mindless skeletons created by

dark magicians, but there are also guls that eat the dead, revenants that return from the grave to exact revenge, vampires that hunt mortals because of their unholy pacts, mummies who defied death and paid a terrible price and ghosts who cannot move on, obsessed with what they left in life or the circumstances by which they did leave it.

The afterlife plays into a steampunk setting by providing it with a justification for the undead creature type, and some brands of magic and psychic powers that interact with the world of the dead, such as the medium vocation of the occultist class and the Necromancy discipline of magic.

**Stage 0 – Absent:** This is an existentialist world. All that people get is a lifetime and all is gone when it is over. People claiming to hear the dead are merely justifying the little voices in their heads.

**Stage I – Hidden:** Whether a whisper in the night or the unknown shadow in the wall, the dead are aware and can interact with the living, although they are restricted to particular times of the year, like Samhain, or limited to places heavy with death, such as graveyards, haunted castles, ancient tombs or battlefields. Undead are not famous for having any desire beyond tormenting the living, but something may still force them to walk the shadows and tread with caution. Mediums can get in touch with the departed, but only through great effort, and any answer the dead may give is inconclusive at best. Vampire and ghost Player Characters are possible, but they will be severely limited in their options at this stage of occult presence.

**Stage II – Obscure:** Legends speak about them, and few mortals can claim to an encounter with the restless dead. This stage of

presence is adverse to the undead in the sense that, while their existence and, therefore, right to exist is not yet accepted by and large, there is enough information lurking that determined hunters can use against them. More occult books and folk tales detail the strengths and weaknesses of their kind, even if many still treat them as fiction or superstition. Undead characters should take special measures to avoid getting caught by informed hunters. Séances and other magic to contact and work with the energies of death still remain as the province of the few.

**Stage III – Unusual:** It is difficult for people to differentiate between ghost stories that are just tales and the ones they should pay attention to, and the ability to tell the difference may save lives. Mediums are professionals who offer valuable services for resolving disputes and maybe even crimes, although finding one who can summon and channel the correct ghost is hard. For their part, ghosts find the way back to the world of the living much easier, while the magic to create lesser undead is, if not freely available, at least not as hard to find. Vampires may be considered ambassadors from their exotic lands, merely gentlemen with eccentric appetites. Tomb explorers know how to deal with mummies and other revenants. In general, the undead begin losing the shroud of fear and mystique, becoming more akin to natural phenomena, although they will always be a force to be reckoned with.

**Stage IV – Commonplace:** The afterlife is so well documented and open to research that many religions become moot, ushering new ones that can cope with the world's perfect understanding of what happens after death. Ghosts may seek employment as spies, couriers and other professions that require

stealth, and living professionals can set up services to help usher ghosts towards their final rest. Vampires walk the streets day and night, displaying their nature for all too see. Widespread does not mean fully integrated, however; the undead can be branded illegal creatures, hunted by officially-appointed agents, specially trained to deal with such threats. Geniuses may invent machines to speak with the dead or even travel to whatever underworld they go to.

## Magic, Sorcery and Witchcraft

More arcane than psychic phenomena, magic has always been the realm of the fantastic, only linking with science in the darkest times of the past, where the only other alternative to knowledge was religion. Magic receives many denominations, and the different practices and tools it employs can span entire libraries. The common elements of magic throughout its different traditions is that it is a means to change the world, and by that it has often been compared with science. In a steampunk setting, where science is the key to a realm of infinite possibilities, magic often takes a similar, if not the exact same place, coexisting harmoniously as another branch of study, albeit one that grants great personal power to its practitioner.

How present magic is in a setting will determine whether the rules on magic rituals and conduits will see any use in any given game of *OGL Steampunk*, which includes the golem construct subrace, the magician vocation in the occultist class, the different Ritual skills, the Knowledge (occult) and Craft (alchemy) skills as opposed to Knowledge (culture) and Craft (chemical), and the access

and existence to otherworlds; it influences the presence and justification for the magical beast creature type, possibly the afterlife and means of contacting the dead, the power behind magical materials and the places of power, all of which may have a different source in the absence of magic in a setting. Alternatively, the Games Master may give different stages to each discipline of magic, making a world where diviners can chart the fate of nations, but where the dead never rise from their graves at the behest of a necromancer.

**Stage 0 – Absent:** The world is devoid of real magic; all the charms and tricks of witches and magicians are nothing more than obscure herbalism and manipulation, and experts on the occult are mostly anthropologists and alienists. In settings where psychic phenomena are real, some psychics may claim their talents are magical in nature.

**Stage I – Hidden:** The real magicians, true alchemists and veritable witches practice their craft well away the eyes of society, often persecuted for their delving in sciences not meant for mortal minds. Magic may be weak, or it may be strong but concealed, the important part is that anyone enjoying the fruits of magical practices do so away from the attention of others. Magical societies admit new members under the direst of oaths, and solitary practitioners disguise their craft from their neighbours. Magical creatures may prowl the darkest recesses of the wild, but do all in their power to remain unknowable. The secrets of magical materials, places of power and other related matters linger in forgotten ruins and lost texts from an ancient past when magic was more commonplace, or just as occult.

**Stage II – Obscure:** The first signs of real magical presence in a setting are monsters

and magical places, with rumours travelling from town to town, muddling the truth and making it hard to ascertain whether magic really has something to do or other forces get confused by the ignorant. Many stories of haunting are actually misinterpreted examples of magic in action. A witch's curse is quite real and people fear it rightly, and stories about strange smells and sounds from a hermit neighbour's house are less speculation and more actual experience. Occult texts detail rituals gone from mainstream studies, but are not as hard a find. Characters of the magician vocation has no problem, and often no qualms about remaining obscure, for such condition provides them with secrecy and privacy. The Games Master may rule that all Ritual skills are cross-class for everyone, even for occultists, requiring the Learned feat to make them into class skills.

**Stage III – Unusual:** Meeting a magician is like encountering a famous actor; unusual but certainly not unheard of. The heads of magical creatures hang in display from many explorers' clubs, taunting visitors with the evidence of a different world lying outside the empire's edge. Practitioners of magic may gather in publicly known organisations, even if entry remains as exclusive as ever. Folklore may hold the secrets of many small charms to protect against the many little threats the commoners face, and grimoires brimming with magical secrets gather dust in college libraries, traded by scholars and collectors. The different Ritual skills are class skills where appropriate.

**Stage IV – Commonplace:** Magic is simply a different kind of science, studied and codified by scholars around the world, practiced empirically by hedge magicians and with a few effects leaked and appropriated by the common folk. Magic can fuel the



most wonderful machines and inventions, fantastic creatures adorn cities' zoos and magical power plants stand tall where cairns used to be. Supernatural races will be more common, particularly constructs, but the faerie will be more likely to venture out of their otherworldly home into a magic-rich ambience. Magical rituals are freely available in public reference works, although the more dangerous ones are restricted to trusted magicians, particularly members of some occult order or another.

## Places of Power

Mechanical mills use the power of wind and rivers to move; magic is not that different, requiring a source of power, whether it is the much theorised astral plane, ambient magic power or a flow of magical energies across the world very much like the flow of blood through a living creature. From the occult teachings of exotic cultures to the buried past of more familiar magical traditions, places of power dot the surface of the planet, granting good fortune and general benefits to everything built upon them, or permitting the knowledgeable to tap them, like the aforementioned rivers and wells. Places of power divide in two kinds: ley lines, which are like rivers coursing across the landscape, invisible lines that carry the magical lifeblood of the world; and nexuses, the spots where those lines intersect and create springs of untapped magical power. Ley lines often form the foundations of roads to bless travel, and nexuses are likewise sacred ground, ideal for temples and churches, but also for laboratories and occult libraries.

Places of power can be a cosmetic element to a steampunk setting, but can also be excellent ways to marry magic and technology, building railroad tracks upon ley lines so that it is magic that produces the steam that move locomotives, instead of coal. This occult element is not

as vital for a steampunk campaign that incorporates magic, but it provides ample justifications for how magic can work.

**Stage 0 – Absent:** Magic, if it exists, is not constrained by lines and spots; it flows freely. That, or its non-existence, makes the point moot.

**Stage I – Hidden:** Information on ley lines and nexuses is extremely hard to find, and tapping into their power is extremely difficult, even for the most accomplished magicians and supernatural creatures, of which only few are aware of these places of power. Magic may be difficult if magic does not answer from anywhere but from a nexus or ley line, or it simply does not have the potential it could have if the practitioner knew that, by performing his ritual a few feet to the side, he would intensify the effectiveness of his workings.

**Stage II – Obscure:** What knowledge there is of the places of power is hidden away by those who possess it, or buried under symbolism and formulae. Alternatively, the ley lines may be few, and seldom intersect. Most nexuses may already be occupied by ruins of ancient civilisations, their orientation and layout puzzling archaeologists and occultists alike.

**Stage III – Unusual:** For one reason or another, few exploit the places of power in the setting. This may be because they are not that many to begin with, or there are better methods for channelling magical energy. Locals may know that a particular hill bubbles with the power of a nexus, but leave it alone as none of them knows the rituals or possesses the technology to derive any advantage from it.

**Stage IV – Commonplace:** Most people know the layout of the magical map. Ley lines are

marked with signs so as to avoid interference, nexuses are expropriated by those who know how to use them, and regulations exist for the exploitation of these places of power. Where this element is commonplace, magic usually is as well, although an alternate would be to have a rich flow of magic that may only be tapped by arcane technology, because there are no magic rituals to do so.

## Monsters

Mythology is rife with mentions of horrible creatures with overwhelming powers, defeated by brave heroes. From the mighty dragons and sea serpents to the more humble, yet more insidious doppelganger, monsters are creatures of the imagination, dreams and nightmares, following different set of rules from normal animals. The monster population in a steampunk setting is not too great, limited to the most obvious examples. Many of these creatures are actually products of science gone awry more than actual magic, escaping from laboratories to torment the countryside and create their own legends. The truly supernatural monsters are rare, and prefer to keep to themselves, although they make fine trophies and pets when they get caught. Of these creatures, lycanthropes can infiltrate society while retaining their bestial impulses, sometimes even unaware of their own curse.

This occult element is more a combination of elements; the Games Master is the final arbiter on whether a particular monster exists in his setting, although he is free to change his mind and include monsters as new discoveries in taxidermy. The lycanthrope and hybrid Player Character races fall into this category, although their origins are different and the Games Master may ban one, the other, or both.

**Stage 0 – Absent:** There are no monsters under the bed. Not even science can produce giant, mutated animals without them collapsing under their own improbability.

**Stage I – Hidden:** People do not fear monsters because they know that they are only fables, except they are not. Lurking in dark corners of forests, bogs and jungles, monsters stalk their prey, leaving no trace of their passing. Professional hunters scoff at the tales of the monsters' existence, preferring real prey to fictional targets, and the few eccentrics who heed the rumours are laughed at by their peers. Monsters may build communities far inside the wilderness if they are intelligent enough, although the most powerful of them, like the dragons, prefer a solitary existence and may have the power to back up their wishes.

**Stage II – Obscure:** Just like the undead, monsters keep a low profile as lore about them is more available, exposing their weaknesses and informing about their strengths; those with a scrap of intelligence at least. Such creatures pose a more serious danger as they are more numerous and people still do not believe in them fully. The products of failed experiments (or worse, of *successful* ones) are locked away in basements, or set loose to terrorise entire communities or a single person to mimic legends. Dinosaurs and creatures of a forgotten era thrive in lost worlds deep in remote jungles and dragons dream an ageless sleep in the centre of the planet. The monstrous creatures of the Games Master's choice are available, but characters must embark on long expeditions to find them.

**Stage III – Unusual:** Royal zoos have a section dedicated to monsters found on exotic lands, and that is the only chance

most people will have of facing such creatures (although they are bound to escape to provoke chaos and mayhem). People may *have* heard about a dragon spotted in the highlands, or are wise enough to avoid the woods by the naturalist's cottage. Professional monster hunters fill the gaps on their walls with the heads of fantastic creatures and their meat is a culinary delicacy or the source material for fascinating biological research. If a monster should walk the streets of a city in a non-threatening manner, people would certainly stare and give it ample space, but if it behaved, they would not immediately alert the authorities.

**Stage IV – Commonplace:** Nature is a wonderful and chaotic thing, and evolution is a wild and unpredictable force, giving birth to all manners of creatures. There is nothing magic about a unicorn, dinosaurs make excellent beasts of burden and war mounts, and naturalists can explain why dragons breathe fire, or how the etheric resonance of the Moon with atavic cell structures causes lycanthropes to transform. Half-bear bodyguards and canine butlers are prized staff members in a rich household and griffon cavalry protects the frontiers and borders of the empire. Monsters are as common as the Games Master wants them to be, but each of them would have a different impact if its species were common. Intelligent dragons prowling the skies of the empire will have a vastly different effect than hybrids, which are included as a character race.

## Magical Science

Science and magic are not that different, both of them obeying certain laws of cause and effect, even if their fields of influence seem to oppose. As a force, magic is as subject to study as magnetic waves, and scholars

have managed to learn some of magic's rules through the lens of the scientific method. The most amazing development in the acceptance of magic as a natural phenomenon is that its principles and effects can be coupled with those of other sciences and, more importantly, with their derived technologies. Magical science is a common element in steampunk campaigns where magic enters the equation, manifesting in the availability of alternative power sources of occult origin, as well as mystic materials that combine to create a very particular kind of technology.

Magical science as an occult element makes the weird science in a steampunk setting into something weirder still. Steam engines may use bound fire elementals as an unending source of heat, clockworks may use mystical silver so they can run forever, gemstones may capture raw arcane power to move airships, and a very long etcetera of possibilities.

**Stage 0 – Absent:** Magic may exist, and wondrous technology may rock the world, but the two of them just do not mix. In the eyes of scientists, magic is the way of primitive people or superstitious fools, and the same goes around, for occult practitioners, science is a blindfold for the true wonders of the world.

**Stage I – Hidden:** Only the most exclusive circles of scholars know the ways to mix magic and science. Where magical science is at the hidden stage, magic also conceals itself, so that those in the know have exclusive access to the blessings of the combination. The sorcerer scientists build their abodes far from prying eyes so that the masses cannot disturb or be disturbed by their research. The inventors disguise the results of their work as normal pieces of technology, building false engines to conceal the fact that it is magic that fuels them.



**Stage II – Obscure:** In the halls of some universities, the marriage of occult and natural sciences is a topic that comes up often, but never sparks serious discussion. However, the circles that practice magical science are more open about admission, its practitioners more willing to take on apprentices from the most promising and open-minded of their students. They let little snippets of their work filter out to the public, but since nobody else can reproduce their work they receive the label of one-trick ponies, the rest of their work dismissed.

**Stage III – Unusual:** The general public knows that magic and science can mix, but realise that the techniques to do so are much too hard to learn; even the practitioners of either individual field have difficulty fusing the mindsets of both disciplines. Technomagical devices are luxuries or heavily restricted to government use, or that of their inventors; they are not something extremely out of the ordinary, and people will not run away screaming when a noiseless, smokeless gliding wing lands at a plaza.

**Stage IV – Commonplace:** Magic and science are so intertwined that what works for one may easily work for the other, chemists refine metal from the stars and the Philosopher's Stone is anything but myth. Railroads run on ley lines, giant automatons are powered by raw arcane strength, the division between the occult principles and the natural ones is practically undistinguishable and accomplished magicians can receive the title of 'professor.' The Games Master may eliminate Knowledge (occult sciences) and subsume its aspects into the other Knowledge skills.

## Otherworlds

The normal folk in a steampunk setting live in their cities and villages, enjoying the fruits of progress or suffering to promote it, their everyday existences focused on the here and now. Outside the concern of ordinary people, there are different worlds lying outside the normal routes. Even the most exotic of the empire's colonies cannot compare to the extraordinary strangeness of the otherworlds. Whether they are simply pockets of land hidden and high inaccessible or truly different realities, otherworlds beckon with the call of adventure and discovery in an age where exploration of the last corners of the world pushes many to chart all that remains unmapped. Going from mundane (but no less extraordinary) to more exotic, an otherworld can be a lost mesa where time froze and prehistoric or fantastic creatures still roam, the ruins of an ancient civilisation, a land where no one grows old, the centre of the earth, the Moon and other planets, the land behind the mirror, a town that only appears for a day every hundred years, a world with an alternate history but otherwise equal to the original, a world with different laws of nature, the Astral and Ethereal planes or the realm of the Faerie.

The presence of otherworlds broadens the horizon for adventuring, giving characters more options to explore and get into trouble, without disrupting their own society. In an otherworld, the Games Master has the freedom to experiment with different stages of both occult presence and stages of technological adoption without affecting his central setting. Characters can learn new skills and even gain access to magic knowledge or psychic power, not to mention return to civilisation with treasure of both the monetary and scholarly types.

**Stage 0 – Absent:** The world offers enough opportunities for adventure and discovery; there is no need for anything else.

**Stage I – Hidden:** The way to the otherworlds is barred to normal travel; there are no maps pointing to them, no known routes and hardly any record of their existence. Only the most determined explorers or the unluckiest travellers chance upon the entrance to an otherworld, and getting out is twice as hard as getting in. Its inhabitants may be able to travel to the normal world, but they keep their origin secret, if they show themselves to others at all, as is the case of ghosts and faeries.

**Stage II – Obscure:** Ancient texts or the odd legend may speak of an otherworld, but the way to it is as obscure as its existence. Notable researchers can make finding the route that leads to an otherworld into their life's work, and hire adventurers and explorers to help them find it, travel to it and return loaded with its riches. The otherworld's inhabitants may still be a mystery, springing a dire surprise on any visitor or trespasser.

**Stage III – Unusual:** The existence of one or more otherworlds is a known fact, but not many can travel either because it is expensive, very hard, or the natives are not too welcoming and allow few visitors. Imports from an otherworld are available on certain markets, or may even be widespread, granting fortune and glory for the brave few who can travel and bring them back. It is possible to see the natives of an otherworld walking around, being the visitors instead of the visited.

**Stage IV – Commonplace:** Otherworlds are just like faraway lands; it may be difficult or expensive to travel there, but it is nothing out of the ordinary, with established routes and means of transport that employ the technology or magic of both worlds to connect them. Since trade and diplomatic relationships are possible, the natives of the otherworld can be found on the streets as ambassadors, tourists, legal and illegal immigrants, some of them selling the wares of their land of origin, others offering their services as guides to lead expeditions to their home.

## Deities and Demons

The power of faith can have real repercussions in a world, particularly when the deity in question not only does exist, but also takes more than a passing interest in its worshippers. The power of faith can express itself as magic, except that it originates from an intimate connection between a priest and his deity, rather than by study or knowledge. A character may even gain psychic powers and attributes them to the power of his faith, instead of regarding them as natural phenomena. On the other side of the coin, worshippers of dark and evil forces may also derive an amount of power from their unholy pacts with forces from beyond. The interesting part is that neither might be wrong.

Religion is a sticky issue to include in any kind of game, so a Games Master must specify well what the role of a deity is in the scheme of things, especially if it relates to a real world religion. Where the power of divinity expresses itself through magic or psychic powers, it is more adequate to give it to worshippers of strange cults, devoted to forgotten deities from ancient civilisations,

or even to elder things that exist outside of time and space and wait to wreak havoc on mankind if released from their prison. The mechanics need not change, with characters needing levels in the occultist class or skill ranks in the different Ritual skills, it is just a matter of flavour whether they call upon the forces of magic through arcane diagrams, or upon the force of their divine or demonic sponsor using sacred paraphernalia.

**Stage 0 – Absent:** The atheist's paradise, either there are no religions, or the deities involves pay no attention to the comings and goings of mortals. Luckily, neither do the dark forces. If there are cults claiming power derived from faith, they are most likely swindlers or practitioners of either magic or psychic phenomena, should they exist in the setting.

**Stage I – Hidden:** Divine powers manifest only through the work of secret cults or in an unknown order within a religious institution. With methods as furtive as their existence, practitioners of the divine arts push their unique agendas for either good or evil, heeding the tenets of their faith away from the eyes of laymen, granting their secrets to a precious few. Some divine orders are hardly undistinguishable from those who practice straight magic, differing only on the source of their power.

**Stage II – Obscure:** People know that something is going on in the depths of a church's catacombs, or there are plenty of legends involving devil worship that may not be too far off the truth. That no one can prove whether the rumours are true or false is inconsequential, something which the *real* groups may use to their advantage. Claiming membership in a divine order is met with suspicion and may not have the desired intimidating effect the person wished it had,

for the group's existence is not enough well-known to warrant instant recognition. Lone priests in established churches may hold real power in their hands, but they are more the exception than the rule.

**Stage III – Unusual:** The power of divinity manifests only in the most faithful of followers, and it is a mark of great prestige in institutionalised religions. On the other side, evil cults pose a real threat that the government recognises and assigns branches of its judiciary towards seeking them and stamping them out. People recognise the power of faith, and there may even be a few pious worshippers that manifest minor divine gifts (limited psychic powers or a couple of ranks in Ritual), but the true power is still in the hands of the few priests with a strong devotion towards their patron.

**Stage IV – Commonplace:** Being ordained in a religious order is just the first step in a path of power, for every priest trains in channelling the power of his faith, and eventually gains abilities beyond the laymen's ken. Theocracies are more common, as churches have more powerful tools by which to gain political leverage. Evil cults are not only a threat; they are a true danger and may be on the verge of destroying the world if heroes do not stop them in time. Deities may have avatars by which they appear to their worshippers, or may even pay a direct visit and walk in all their divine glory... or in unassuming guise, travelling incognito to verify his church is doing what it wanted it to do.







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# Fear Files

## Cat Demons

**Morgan Davie**

*All right, then, we're agreed. We're going to take this demon down before he can murder any more people. Until then, treat every stray moggy with utmost caution, and—Jerome, could you please stop nuzzling my neck?*

*'Sorry, boss.'*

One line of demons has long used our world as their playground. They emerge from their other-dimensional home to wander as they like across our lands, taking what they want, destroying what displeases them, and completely disregarding any of the consequences of their actions.

They are the Bastic lineage. They are devoted to malice and the pleasure-principle, and have a penchant for interfering in the lives of humans for their own dark amusement. At best, they are a dangerous nuisance. At worst they are the cause of enormous misery and destruction.

### The Bastic Lineage

Humankind's relationship with cats is long and complex. Since ancient times, small cats have been kept as domestic companions and to hunt mice and rats. Big cats are regarded with awe, respect and fear. Throughout the wax and wane of this relationship, the Bastic line of demons has prospered.



In prehistoric times, there was a woman who savoured the taste of catflesh. She trapped and ate small cats, and on the rare occasions a big cat was killed she would feast for days. Three great and wise cats gathered to discuss what should be done, and it was decided that she should be trapped and

devoured. The cats mimicked the voice of the woman's child, and lured her into their clutches. Together they overwhelmed her and ate her. However, before they were done, the men of her tribe stumbled across the three great cats, and in fury they cornered and slew them.

When the battle was done, the men gathered at the woman's side, and were horrified to see something stir in her ruined body. Crawling forth from her bloodied cadaver was the first Bastic demon, slick with gore and burning with rage. It killed the men of the tribe, then stalked into their encampment and murdered the women, the elderly and the children. It spared one member of the tribe only, a small boy, who ever after told the story of the cats and warned others from eating them.

This demon was the first sire of the Bastic lineage. He coupled with other demons and with captive humans, and slowly the Bastic lineage grew in number. However, the children of the first sire were uniformly hateful and selfish. They together ambushed and murdered their father. This was the only time any of them managed to work together. Now, these children and their own progeny walk through the many worlds, serving only their own selfish desires and careless of the welfare of any who cross their path.



## Bastic Demon

### Medium Outsider

**Hit Dice:** 6d8 (33 hp)

**Massive Damage:** 12

**Initiative:** +3

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**Defence:** 15 (+3 Dex, +2 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 12

**Base Attack Bonus/Grapple:** +6/+8

**Attack:** Claw +9 melee (1d4+2)

**Full Attack:** Main Claw +9/+4 melee (1d4+2), Second Claw +7 melee (1d4+1), Bite +7 melee (1d6+1)

**Space/Reach:** 5 ft. x 5 ft. / 5 ft.

**Special Qualities:** Alternate Form, Cat Lord, Darkvision 60', Empathic Link, Heightened Senses

**Weaknesses:** -

**Saves:** Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +5

**Abilities:** Str 15, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 15

**Skills:** Balance +12, Climb +11, Hide +7, Jump +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +12, Search +4, Spot +8

**Feats:** Multiattack, Simple Weapon Proficiency, Weapon Finesse

## Evidence

- **Gather Information (DC 15):** Yeah, now that you mention it, Old Mr Ziegler did look after the odd stray cat that came his way. Sentimental about 'em I guess.
- **Search (DC 20):** There's some kind of fibre on his clothes, and on his sofa, and, er, on the inside of his wall-safe and jewellery boxes. Our guess is a very, very curious pet.

## Research

- **Gather Information (DC 15):** It's definitely cat fur, but not like anything we've dealt with before. This lot spontaneously combusted when we put it under a microscope...

- **Gather Information (DC 30):** There is a line of demons who take the form of cats – they are known in some medieval texts as the Bastic lineage.

**Horror:** Fear 15

*There is something on your bed. It is human-shaped but covered in silky, tawny fur. Its long limbs stretch out to the far corners of the duvet, and its yellow cat's eyes regard you with bemusement. It wears a long leather tunic covered with intricate embroidery. 'You've been gone a long time,' it purrs. 'I ate all the fish in your fish tank. Oh, and I may have killed your wife.'*

Bastic demons, like their spiritual cousins the cats, are driven primarily by the desire for immediate self-gratification. They want pleasure, and they want it now. This can take the form of pursuing sex, food, entertainment, pretty things or general curiosity. They are prone to changing their interests and priorities at a moment's notice. They are inconstant and incapable of loyalty. Bastic demons are an ongoing source of trouble and misery for humankind. They think nothing of using, abusing and outright killing any human if it serves their most casual whim.

## Combat

Generally, Bastic Demons only enter combat if they so overmatch the opposition that they can toy with it. Faced with a serious show of strength, a Bastic demon's typical response is to run away and avoid the combat entirely. If seriously threatened and unable to flee, a Bastic Demon will launch a whirlwind of close-combat attacks against the most threatening opponent, keeping this up until the opponent is dead or gone.

**Alternate Form (Su):** A Bastic Demon can assume the form of a tiny (domestic) cat.

The transformation back and forth can be made at will and takes one full round to complete. Statistics while in cat form are given below.

**Cat Lord (Su):** A Bastic Demon can command any cat to do its bidding. There is no limit to the number of cats it can control, and exercising control requires no effort on the demon's part. Control can only be exercised within a one-mile radius, although cats given specific instructions will continue to follow those instructions beyond this zone, until the instructions are fulfilled. A Bastic Demon can also summon cats from within a one-mile radius at will; in an urban setting, 1d10 cats will arrive each round the summons is maintained. Issuing and maintaining a summons is a free action.

**Empathic Link (Su):** Bastic demons can, at will, exercise an empathic link with any cat within a one-mile radius. This allows them to see what



the cat sees, feel what the cat feels, and generally ride along, unnoticed by the cat. The demons have also learned an additional trick – they can force this empathic link on to humans. To open an empathic link with a human, the Bastic demon must succeed in an opposed Charisma check with the target human. This requires a Full Round Action; if the attempt fails, it cannot be attempted again until the next day. If the empathic link is opened, the target can make a Will save (DC 16) to close the link again. If this save is failed, the empathic link becomes established.

While a target is experiencing an empathic link, the Bastic demon can feed experiences and impressions to the target as it sees fit. The target can be made to experience a ‘ride along’ inside a cat on the hunt, or to endure an act of vivisection from the cat’s point of view. This information can be sent in the target’s sleep (as dreams) or while waking (as visions – while a waking target is experiencing these visions, they are treated as if they are dazed).

Additionally, the Bastic demon can impose cat-like tendencies on the target. The target will become dedicated to the pleasure principle – to the pursuit of self-gratification above all else, particularly in the drives for rest, hunger and sex. A successful Will save (DC 15) can curb these tendencies, but the motivation beneath will remain strong and will just resurface elsewhere the next time the character is careless.

Only one empathic link can be sustained at any one time. If a target forces the empathic link closed by succeeding in a Will save, it can never be reopened unless the target is willing. Such a Will save is only possible at the moment the link is established, and at any later stage when the target has reached an absolute crisis point as a result of the empathic link.

**Heightened Senses (Ex):** A Bastic demon’s senses of sight and hearing are exceptional. The demon gains a +4 bonus to Spot and Listen checks.

## Bastic Demon (cat form)

**Tiny Outsider**

**Hit Dice:** 6d8 (33 hp)

**Massive Damage:** 10

**Initiative:** +2

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**Defence:** 14 (+2 Dex, +2 size), touch 12, flat-footed 12

**Base Attack Bonus/Grapple:** +6/-6

**Attack:** Claw +12 melee (1d2-4)

**Full Attack:** Main claw +12/+7 melee (1d2-4), Second claw +10 melee (1d2-4), Bite +10 melee (1d2-4)

**Space/Reach:** 2 ½ ft. x 2 ½ ft. / 0 ft.

**Special Qualities:** Alternate Form, Cat Lord, Darkvision 60’, Empathic Link, Heightened Senses

**Saves:** Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +5

**Abilities:** Str 3, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 15

**Skills:** Balance +11, Climb +11, Hide +6, Jump +7, Listen +8, Move Silently +11, Search +4, Spot +8

**Feats:** Multiattack, Simple Weapon Proficiency, Weapon Finesse

## Terror of the Cats

The Bastic Demon’s main warriors are the vast array of cats it can call forth. Singly, cats are not much of a threat to any character but in groups they can be deadly. Here are some tactics a Bastic demon can use to make characters fear going toe-to-toe with a bunch of cats.

Note that most of these tactics assume some kind of co-operation on the part of the cats – a co-operation that would never happen were it not

for the influence of the Bastic demon’s Cat Lord special quality.

## Death by a Thousand Cuts

Except in exceptional circumstances, a domestic cat is only capable of doing 1 point of damage to a character on a successful attack. Additionally, they have a 0 ft. reach, which means they must enter a target’s fighting space to attack it, drawing an attack of opportunity in the process. This means that a cat, alone, can never be more than a minor annoyance to a character. However, it is quite possible for a group of cats to collectively wear down a target, hit point by hit point, until they are dead.

Cats are Tiny and have a 0 ft. Reach. When a creature with 0 ft. Reach attacks, it must move into the target square, provoking an attack of opportunity; at the conclusion of the attack, it returns to its original position.





A Medium-sized target can be surrounded by up to 12 Tiny creatures, including corner-positions, all of which can make attacks once per round by moving into the target square and then moving back out to their original square. Each attack provokes an attack of opportunity, but few characters will be able to take advantage of all these opportunities.

This positioning will also give cats a Flanking bonus. If a target is fully surrounded by 12 cats, all 12 will have the +2 flanking bonus to attack. This gives each cat a respectable +6 to hit.

If a target is reduced to 0 hit points or less, the cats will immediately attempt a coup de grace. This will mean the target will be making a series of Fortitude saves (DC 11), with failure meaning instant death.

## Hitting Where It Hurts

The OGL Horror rules provide guidelines for called shots. With their flesh-digging claws, it is entirely appropriate that cats take advantage of these. If a Bastic Demon instructs a group of cats to attack a target's eyes, that target could be in serious trouble... Remember, simply apply the size modifier of the called shot target as normal – the small size of the cat is already accounted for in its bonus to attack.

## Taking Away Their Weapons

A particularly effective tactic for a cat is to disarm the target. A group of cats acting together can bite and claw a weapon out of a target's hand and, if it is small enough for them to carry in their mouths, they can even drag it away out of reach. Since the average human cannot cause much more damage with his fists and feet than a cat can manage with its claws, this can significantly shift the odds in an encounter.

## Too Many To Count

If enough cats are gathered together, they can be treated as a Swarm. 300 cats are needed to make a swarm. Statistics for a 10 HD cat swarm are given below.

### Cat Swarm

**Tiny Animal (Swarm)**

**Hit Dice:** 10d8 (45 hp)

**Massive Damage:** 10

**Initiative:** +2 (Dex)

**Speed:** 30 ft.

**Defence:** 14 (+2 Dex, +2 size), touch 12, flat-footed 12

**Base Attack Bonus/Grapple:** +0/-12

**Attack:** Swarm (2d6)

**Full Attack:** Swarm (2d6)

**Space/Reach:** 10 ft. x 10 ft. / 0 ft.

**Special Qualities:** Distraction, Low-light Vision, Swarm Traits

**Saves:** Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1

**Abilities:** Str 3, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 7

**Skills:** Balance +10, Climb +5, Hide +17, Jump +6, Listen +4, Move Silently +9, Spot +4

**Feats:** Weapon Finesse

**Swarm Traits:** Must move into target's square to attack. Half damage from slashing or piercing weapons, +50% damage from area-effect attacks, cannot be tripped, grappled or bull rushed, cannot grapple an opponent. If reduced to 0 hp or lower, the swarm will break up.

**Distraction (Ex):** Any living creature beginning its turn sharing a square with the swarm must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or be nauseated for one round.

## Sample Bastic Demon: Barrisker

*I had the most vivid dream last night... like I was a cat, wandering through the grass near that old abandoned house on Baywood Street... and I dreamed there was someone going into the house! Then I woke up, and that stray cat I've been taking care of was sitting on my bed, staring at me...*

Barrisker is a powerful, malicious but charming demon, who has a habit of stealing anything that catches his attention. He cherishes this object until he becomes bored with it or an alternative catches his eye, at which point he forgets all about it. He is an inveterate liar and everything he says is designed to make him look good, even if it has to be a blatant lie to achieve this end. He will kill anyone who questions him, if the opportunity arises.

He is nearly six-feet tall, a long, lean figure covered in golden fur streaked with darkness. He wears necklaces and shiny wristbands, which transform with him when he assumes cat form.

Barrisker could enter the characters' lives when he steals something valuable from the wrong people. Wounded and pursued, he will seek refuge in cat form with a cat-loving character. Then, posing as a stray, he will recuperate while under their protection. Eventually he will try to establish an empathic link with a character, and reveal his true form. He will promise to release the stricken character only if the group help him find safety from the people hunting him.

Of course, the complication is that he does not have the item in question any more. He sold it to a trader in return for some pretty (but worthless) costume jewellery. This problem means that saving Barrisker from retribution may prove difficult...



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# SCENARIOS OF SHADIZAR

## MORE ADVENTURE IDEAS FOR THE CITY OF SHADIZAR FOR CONAN THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

A sorcerous wife sacrifices an antagonistic husband to a demon in return for a promise of a more congenial husband. The new husband is in the shape and form of the old husband but the Player Characters note the substitution. The sorcerous wife, so happy with the exchange, begins to offer her services to other aggrieved wives.

A husband suspects his wife is about to sacrifice him to a demon and begs the Player Characters to protect him.

A father suspects his wife is going to sacrifice one or more of his children to a demon and begs the Player Characters to intercede.

A lascivious husband sacrifices his fat, grumpy wife to a demon in exchange for the services of a shapely demoness but the gorgeous succubus refuses to remain loyal to the man and is sucking the souls out of as many people as she can, turning his home into a dark bordello he has no desire to be a part of.

The cult of Zath, one of Zamora's many spider cults, has decided to purge Shadizar of its iniquities and has begun a massive vigilante campaign.

A wife of a noble has rejected an adulterous lover and this lover is now persecuting his beloved's husband. The rejected lover may involve the characters in some manner or the wife may hire the characters to stop the estranged lover. The husband may

even involve the characters by hiring them for protection.

A grotesque cultist has managed to ensnare a beautiful wife and cause her to betray her loving husband in favour of the cultist, who loves the woman. Variations can be used wherein the grotesque and odious cultist is a voyeur and wants



## VINCENT DARLAGE

to hurt the woman's husband, so he convinces the young bride to sleep around with others so he can watch – eventually this involves the Player Characters, who may take exception to being watched or it may bring about the means for the cultist to blackmail aristocrats, nobles and Player Characters.

A perverse wife decides to antagonise her husband, despite his obvious good nature, by sleeping with a commoner (or Player Character) and intentionally arranging to get caught.

A Hyperborean Witch King (or Queen) sets up a cult in Shadizar and his bizarre Witchmen begin to run sections of Shadizar as crime bosses (see *The White Hand of Hyperborea* article in *Signs and Portents* issue 9 for details on Witch Kings and Witchmen).

A werewolf is stalking the shadowed streets of Shadizar. Authorities believe the werewolf is one of the Player Characters.

A scholar has smuggled a Stygian sarcophagus into the city so he can worship it in private. Within the sarcophagus is an ancient vampire, who the scholar believes to be a god.

A woman is the mistress of a father and son at the same time, both of whom accept the arrangement. However, the mistress' husband does not and seeks vengeance. The father and son approach the Player Characters for protection or to murder

the husband of their mistress. Alternatively, the husband of the mistress may intend the Player Characters to be the instrument of his wrath.

A woman has become enamoured of a bull. The bull is sacred to the cult of Anu but she wants him and will stop at nothing to own the bull. This enraptured feeling may be natural to her perverted mind or it may be artificially introduced by a sorcerer or demon as an experiment or means of revenge. Other animals, such as swans, horses or snakes may be substituted.

A man has become enamoured of one of the male Player Characters. If rebuffed, he (or his heirs if he is killed for his impertinence) plots revenge. He may try to get the characters enslaved so he can buy the character, he may attempt blackmail to get what he wants, he may turn to occult means to enslave the characters or he may try old fashioned murder.

A Player Character discovers his parents were brother and sister. They want the character to marry his sibling to maintain the purity of their bloodline and use diabolic means to pressure the character. A variation might use a Non-Player Character as the discoverer of his parents' lineage and murders them in self-righteous outrage and pins the crime on the Player Characters.

A nobleman discovers his wife's family has barbaric blood and he throws her to the street. The wife's family, now wealthy, wants the nobleman dead. The wife may appeal to the Player Characters for aid as she may not be able to cope with life on the street or her family is in another city and cannot aid her.

A man discovers his sister is a prostitute in Shadizar. He hires kidnappers (perhaps the characters) to bring her home but she does not want to go.

A man discovers that his mistress, formerly a prostitute, has returned to her former life for unknown reasons. The man may want to discover the reasons, kill her, kill her clients (which may include the Player Characters), sacrifice her in a dark ceremony to grotesque Shemite deities or may go on an enraged rampage through the town, killing everyone in sight.

A horrible communicable disease is devastating Shadizar and the cause is a coven of unclean prostitutes dedicated to slaying as many as possible before the disease kills them. The disease could be caused by an unknown carrier who is spreading it to the prostitutes and wives of Shadizar. The disease could also be the work of a sorcerer or demon.



A man discovers his lover is a sorceress devoted to a horrible demon-cult. The discovery, after he tells the Player Characters about it, costs him his life.

A man discovers his wife is a demon made flesh and his children are horrible monsters that need to be eradicated but he is unable to kill his own children, so he hires or tricks the Player Characters into doing it for him.

A woman out on the town takes a mysterious lover. Later, while talking to the Player Characters, she is arrested and murdered by the royal guard because her mysterious lover was none other than the drunken king of Zamora who now has regretted his indiscretion.

A man discovers his Pelishtim wife is actually an ancient woman served by grey devils. She has been luring people to their deaths to maintain her beauty and feed her black-hearted servants. The man seeks the help of the Player Characters or the Player Characters become involved when the wife attempts to lure them to their doom.

A downtrodden woman discovers that her husband/lover is obsessed with some vice and she uses that obsession to further her own ambitions.

An honourable man discovers his son or daughter is the noted assassin or bounty hunter who hunted down and killed his brother or friend. He contrives to kill himself in some manner that implicates his child but the child believes the Player Characters are the murderers due to circumstantial evidence.

A sorcerer commits or causes to be committed, two arsons in each quarter of the city simultaneously as part of a spell to destroy Shadizar and resurrect an ancient Atlantean-era city that once existed on the site before



the arrival of the Zhemri. The characters must somehow stop the completion of that spell.

A person discovers a sibling is a sorcerer of vile repute and decides to kill the sibling. The attempt fails and the sibling seeks retribution, which also fails and the cycle begins anew. The Player Characters get caught in the middle or is hired by one side or the other.

A nobleman discovers his wife was once a prostitute and her former pimp or a former client is blackmailing her, threatening to expose her past. The nobleman may hire the characters to kill the blackmailer or to dispose of the wife, depending on his feelings toward her.

A raised corpse somehow regains his memory, perhaps through the untimely consumption of salt and escapes the sorcerer who raised him. He beseeches the Player Characters to help him rest in peace and visit vengeance upon the vile sorcerer who resurrected his body for dark purposes.



A rebel plots against the king of Zamora, not knowing he is a bastard son of the king. He is secretly being watched by the king's men, who is aware of the son's treachery but are hoping to use that treachery to further their own ambitions. The Player Characters become involved on one side or the other.

Women with no blood in their bodies are being found each night in Shadizar. No, it is not a vampire but a sorcerer bleeding the women dry in dark rituals for some nefarious purpose (see the Bleed Dry feat in *Scrolls of Skelos*).

A hauntingly beautiful Nordheimer woman is dancing at a tavern and each night she leads a dozen men to her quarters and none of them are ever seen again. She is casting *Dance of Atali* as she dances and leading the men to her demon lover (see *Scrolls of Skelos* for the spell description).

A Player Character (probably a noble would work best) is contacted by his family and given the duty of travelling to Shadizar to punish a traitorous relative. Characters with a familial allegiance or the noble social ability of family ties are the most likely to be motivated by this plot hook. The family member to be punished may or may not be guilty.

A family's devotion and happiness is disturbed by the parents-in-law to such a degree that the spouse kills them, then must hide the deed from the other spouse. The Player Characters could be hired to find the in-laws, hired to kill the in-laws, hired to protect the in-laws or framed for the murder of the in-laws. One or more of the Player Characters could even *be* the in-laws...

A marriage is prevented by inequality of rank, so the lower ranked lover arranges to have the higher ranked family dishonoured in secret.

A man gets even with his bothersome in-laws by causing them to be kidnapped and sold into slavery, leaving him in peace.

An enemy of the Player Characters finally lets down his guard and is tracked down. Unfortunately, the opportune moment is the villain's wedding. When the characters disrupt the wedding to slay their foe, the foe's family seeks revenge.

A girl's marriage is forbidden on account of her arranged betrothal to a higher-ranking member of society by her parents. She beseeches the characters to help her marry her chosen lover, not the one her family has arranged for her.

A girl's marriage to her lover is forbidden because her parents intend to sacrifice her to their demonic overlord in a diabolic wedding ceremony that will make her a queen of Hell. She begs the characters to intercede on her behalf.

A girl's marriage to her lover is forbidden because her lover is her brother. They have fled to Shadizar to get married and the characters have been hired to bring them back.

A girl cannot marry her beloved because she incorrectly believes her beloved is already secretly married. Nothing will convince her of the falsity of her belief and she has hired the characters to assassinate the imaginary wife of her beloved. The characters may incorrectly kill a female friend of the beloved, causing any number of further complications.

A street gang is causing trouble for a local business owner (perhaps one of the characters' favourite businesses, such as a tavern or brothel). The owner implores the king for assistance but is jailed. The owner's daughter appeals to the Player Characters to aid them.

The king of Zamora has outlawed one of the more esoteric religions (one shared by a member of the Player Character party works best) in Shadizar, feeling its popularity is beginning to rival his own. All the ordained priests are jailed. The congregation of this religion learns one of the characters can perform the ritual, which they believe must be done yearly or a calamity will occur and begs the character to perform the forbidden act for them. Alternatively, the congregation might hire the characters to free their leaders.

The King's Own (or a rival temple) have confiscated the Holy Remains of a local religion's patron saint/founder. The religion wants the corpse back.

A character seeks to hire the characters to avenge a slain, seduced or dishonoured ancestor, friend, sibling, mistress, wife or child. Alternatively, the character does the avenging and the Player Characters have to hunt him down.

A Non-Player Character (or a group of them) is jailed for a crime he did not commit. He escapes from the king's maximum-security jail to the Shadizar underground. Seeking revenge, they begin to harass the king of Zamora and disrupt local government.

A business owner is ruined because of a false accusation about his goods and/or services. He seeks vengeance.

A powerful man in Shadizar (perhaps even the king) decides to get rid of one of his advisors, a scholar of repute. He has the man drowned, hanged, buried alive and other gruesome deaths, yet each time the scholar arrives for work the next morning as if nothing had happened. The Player Characters are hired to kill the advisor once and for all.

The characters become engaged in the professional pursuit of criminals. They may find out they are bringing in dissidents the king suspects of treason, not actual criminals.

The characters happen upon a scene where the king's soldiers are arresting a group of dissidents. The Player Characters are assaulted and arrested as well. If the arrest succeeds, the characters are jailed and must escape. If the arrest fails, they become wanted men for resisting arrest and, if any guards are killed, murder.

The king of Zamora has a man condemned to death. The man's daughter vows revenge and begins to study the black arts. She starts marrying noblemen under assumed identities and avenging her father's death on her husbands, one after another, by sacrificing them to a demon, who is promising eventual marriage to one of Zamora's princes.

Zamora suffers a humiliating defeat against the Turanians. Turan occupies Shadizar and the Player Characters are put in a position where they can lead a revolt and restore Shadizar to Zamora's king.

The king of Zamora is overthrown and Shadizar, like the rest of Zamora, is thrown into chaos and mob rule during the resulting power struggle and civil wars. Turan takes advantage of the situation and begins attacking fringe cities, as well as Shadizar itself.

An earthquake levels part of Shadizar, including some of the defensive walls. Opportunistic Hyborians or Turanians take this chance to attack and capture Shadizar. Characters may be part of the invading force or the defending armies. Characters may be part of a recapturing force of Zamorians or a rival band of Hyborian mercenaries intent on taking Shadizar from its conquerors.

A group of Picts, brought here from Pictland as a curiosity on the command of the king, escapes and the king of Zamora is killed or believed to be killed. The Picts stage a coup and one of the Picts usurps the throne. The king of Zamora (or one of his heirs) is discovered by the Player Characters and he appeals to them for help in restoring him to the throne.



The Player Characters find a noblewoman in a wretched state, despoiled and ruined in an alley. Her bodyguards attacked her and left her for dead. She promises great wealth if the characters avenge her. She lets the city believe she is dead so the characters can find out who the mastermind was.

The characters are hired by one of the king's advisors to do a job for the king of Zamora. They must retrieve some relic or capture a holy site. After the quest is done, it turns out the advisor



wants the item or place so he can use its power to betray the king. When the coup fails, the advisor deftly saves himself by implicating the Player Characters.

The Player Characters uncover a conspiracy against the king of Zamora accidentally. They must choose to either join or be hunted down by the paranoid conspiracy, who are afraid the Player Characters will obstruct them in some manner.

A demon carries off someone or something desired by the characters but leaves a few clues behind.

A noblewoman of Shadizar decides to marry but only wants the most brave and adventurous of husbands so she designs a quest for a fabulous object of myth and legend. The characters either have their own motivation to join the quest or are beseeched to enter the quest on behalf of another.

A prince, princess or other aristocrat is kidnapped and a reward posted, as well as a hefty bounty for the capture of the kidnapper. Unfortunately, the victim is either in love with or has fallen in love with her captor and does not want to return to her sheltered, pampered life. If the characters allow the 'victim' to remain with her lover, an advisor to the aristocratic parents manages to implicate the characters as part of the crime and the aristocrat's personal guard arrests them. They are to be tortured for information about the whereabouts of the victim if the arrest is successful. As a variation, the players may discover (after the arrest or attempted arrest) that the victim is half-demonic and must be kept sheltered and innocent or an abomination will be born that will destroy the world/that particular family/Shadizar. Another variation could prove that the victim's protectors are not interested so much in the victim but in something the victim took with her. Yet another variation could show the victim is destined to be a sacrifice in a vile ceremony and if that ceremony

is not undertaken, a horrible demon lord will awaken and devastate the world, bringing about an Age of Darkness.

A riddle is given to the king of Zamora that needs to be solved on pain of death; the characters are in a position to solve the riddle. The woman who gave the cursed riddle to the king is a vindictive scholar who is covered by the drunken king. She, on the other hand, hates her drunkard father, the king and is using this riddle to stall his unholy appetite for her.

The malicious rivalry of two noble siblings catches the Player Characters in the middle as they try to get their father/mother/uncle/aunt to recognise each as the preferred heir and reject the other as unfit.

A 'voice in the night' is inducing the slaying of trusted lovers and paramours. The voice may be a

vindictive scholar or a demon. One of the lovers of a Player Character tries to slay the character. As a variation, the voice in the night convinces the character to do the unjust slaying if a Will save is failed.

A Player Character is deemed mad and an attempt is made to arrest and hold the character by the local authorities. The character needs to avoid arrest and clear his name. Perhaps there is a madman on the loose or perhaps a jealous rival has set them up.

Madness is running rampant throughout the city, causing the slaying of beloved kinsmen, leaving many distraught kinsmen and quickly filling the jails as these mad people turn themselves in. When the king is nearly assassinated because of this contagious insanity, he offers a reward for a cure or culprit.

A man discovers his parents were powerful sorcerers who went insane. Afraid that insanity is hereditary, the man slowly drives himself insane. His insanity creates complications for the Player Characters when he buries alive another character, perhaps one sought after by the Player Characters.

An oracle in Shadizar declares a certain girl in the city must be sacrificed to one of the loathsome gods of the Zamorians and further declares one of the Player Characters must perform the sacrifice or the god will arise and devastate the city in its search for the girl and the character. Unfortunately for the Player Character, the girl to be sacrificed turns out to be his sister or daughter, one he has not seen since she was a baby.

A political rival to the Player Characters has made the courts unbearably hot and unstable for the players and the only solution is the slaying of the rival. Unknown to the characters the rival is a daughter/son or sister/brother to one of the



characters, long unseen or totally unknown – until just before the killing is about to start.

A chaste religious order in Shadizar is hunting one of its priests, who has broken his religious vow of chastity for a passion or vice that will ultimately prove fatal if the characters do not intervene.

A nobleman threw away his future as a general on his passion for a low-ranked coppersmith's daughter. Disgraced but having won his bride, he lives now in abject poverty. In order to buy himself back into society, he has conceived of a plan to steal the gorgeous heirlooms of his cousin. However, he refuses to debase himself by performing the actual theft himself, so he hires the Player Characters. Unfortunately, the copper-smith father-in-law catches wind of the plot and does not want his daughter taken into society, where he will not be welcome, so he warns the victim of the Player Characters' intended theft, keeping the name of his son-in-law out of it.

If the players had known a particularly honourable Non-Player Character from former games/campaigns, they could meet up with him again in Shadizar, although now his honour and/or fortune are both in ruins because of his erotic vices, which found free (and cheap) expression in Shadizar. He is now in dire straits and the players need to pull him out of the situation.

A scholar or dabbler Player Character is discovered as a sorcerer and the king's men attempt to arrest him. Should he be captured he will be tortured until he 'confesses' and implicates all of the other Player Characters.

A scholar must sacrifice his daughter to a powerful demon in fulfilment of an agreement made years ago, before the daughter was even born. The scholar begs for the Player Characters to intercede.

A rising cult in Shadizar is demanding its members sacrifice non-member friends and family to prove their faith to the cult leader. One of the Player Characters' friends or a family member of one of the Player Characters has decided to target the Player Character(s) for this mass sacrifice.

The Player Characters are in Shadizar's jail and the only other man in the cell with them is a lowly Brythunian thief. This thief, however, has been in the prison many times and has loosened a stone in the wall. He leads the characters on a daring escape, possibly necessitating a hasty exit from Shadizar entirely on some adventure initiated by the thief.

A scholar decides to kill the king of Zamora. She builds a unique pleasure house catering to the upper classes. Finding out the vices and obsessions of the upper court, she begins blackmailing them all. She arranges a mass orgy and uses her clout to force the entire court to be in the pleasure house at once, allowing her and her mercenaries to kill them all, including the king of Zamora. One of the pleasure house slaves, however, is loyal to the king and, through some circumstance, also knows at least one of the Player Characters and confides in him the plot.

A man is cursed; he is not allowed to fall in love and express that love in any fashion. This has been his plague since he was a child. Every time he falls in love, a demon begins to plague the object of his love, causing his beloved's fortunes to fail, her honour to become compromised or even her life taken from her in savage brutality. The man pleads with the Player Characters to end his curse or, if one of the Player Characters is female, falls in love with that character. The plot also works if the cursed victim is a virginal female and she falls in love with one of the male Player Characters and

the demon begins his horrible work to bring about the downfall of the Player Character. The victim may not know there is a demon at work. The curse could have been brought on by the victim or by the victim's ancestors.

An immortal character (a sorcerer, mummy or vampire) has become jealous of a Player Character's success and has decided to eradicate the Player Character. Perhaps the character seduced a person desired by the immortal, perhaps the character stole something desired by the immortal or won a contest or game the immortal feels should have gone to it.





A local noble lady has become politically popular and is rivalling the king of Zamora in her influence among the upper echelons of ranking nobility, as well as being popular among the merchant and lower classes. The king of Zamora, who does not permit of rival politicians, decides to have her eliminated but openly doing so would incite a rebellion. He decides to dupe people into killing her for him, using a smear campaign against her. A sorcerer convinces the king to allow him to use his magic to make her look guilty of witchcraft in the eyes of the populace. Perhaps the Player Characters are in the employ of the lady and must defend her honour and expose the king. Perhaps the Player Characters are duped into killing the lady and thrown into prison by the king for public execution so he can look the hero, even though he orchestrated the murder behind the scenes. Perhaps the king's sorcerer kills someone important to the Player Characters and evidence points to the lady in question, leading the players to confront her and either kill her or discover the truth and expose the king.

A sorceress has ensnared the king with her magic and is using him to further her own dark desires, allowing her to arrest people she does not like so she can sacrifice them to her own black gods and demon lords. She is effectively ruling the kingdom and intends to ruin it, perhaps to hand over to the Turanians, the Brythunians or to her demon god.

The priests of two opposing religions stir up a religious war in the middle of Shadizar, destroying buildings and disrupting what little order there is.

The Player Characters are hired as assassins to take out both religious leaders.

A woman has fallen in love with one of the Player Characters but so has a sorceress. The sorceress intends to use magic to win the rivalry for the character's love. The other woman pleads with the other Player Characters to help.

Out in the countryside, an exiled scholar from one of the temples of Shadizar is binding demons to scarecrows. He then proceeds to craft amazing



scarecrows and mannequins for sale in Shadizar, shipping them to the crowded bazaars. Once in the bazaars, the demon-scarecrows begin slaughtering the masses, among whom are the Player Characters.

A Player Character inadvertently says or does something offensive to a follower of one of Shadizar's many gods. That Player Character is marked for punishment for contempt of that god by the followers.

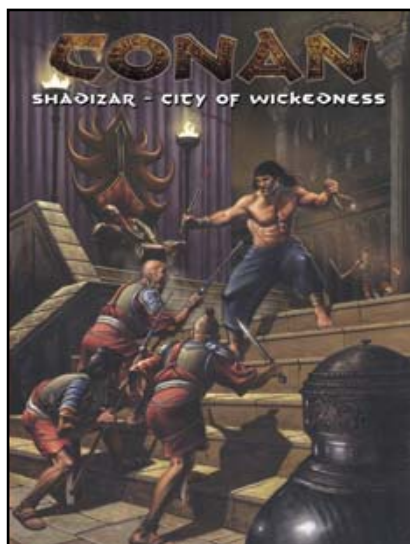
A nobleman in Shadizar is being told baseless rumours of his wife sleeping with one of the Player Characters. The enraged nobleman punishes his wife unfairly and plots malicious revenge against the Player Character(s) while the author of the rumours watches, delighted. His goal is to make a fool of the nobleman so he can have the wife for himself or he has reason to want vengeance against the Player Character(s).

A friend of the Player Characters believes the Player Characters are guilty of crime but he does not want them to suffer, so he draws false suspicions on himself to save the Player Characters, believing he has the clout to get out of any serious punishment. However, the crime is far worse than he originally believed and now he is being tortured for a 'confession' and will be condemned to die. He also learns the Player Characters did not do the crime in the first place, so his sacrifice is completely in vain. He manages to get word to his friends and begs them for assistance.

A woman joins a new cult in Shadizar against her lover's wishes. An acquaintance convinces him his girl is now possessed by a demon and he hires the Player Characters to destroy the cult and free her from the supposed possession. The cult is actually a good one, based on positive thinking and mutual support and they do not appreciate being destroyed.

# Monty's Offer of the Month

## GATEWAY TO SHADIZAR



This month Monty thought Vincent Darlage's adventure hooks for Shadizar in Conan The Roleplaying Game were so good that many of you would rush to start, only to remember you hadn't bought the box set yet. Kindly mongoose that he is, Monty has directed that we provide you with encouragement, so walk with us through the Gates of Shadizar with this great offer! for just \$30/£20, post free!

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# A Raven in the Roost



An Introductory Scenario For RuneQuest  
by Bryan Steele

## Introduction

Just a few hours' ride from the nearest human settlement, lies a small village of just a handful of hallowed tree buildings called Roost. It is the home to a few mingled families of Ducks, who live off the gathering of nuts and fruit plants from the floor of their scattered woods. Having settled Roost over a generation ago after being ridiculed and ostracised by the humans, the Duck families enjoy their little town of five houses and an inn/tavern. It is a generally peaceful place where travellers stop to trade or rest, but never stay long – the human city is far more exciting than a bunch of Ducks eking out their existence as farmers and gatherers.

Roost sits next to a large pond, which the Ducks swim for leisure and fish for food within. It is also a source for several aquatic plants that they grow there, including their number one traded item – garlic lilies. The pungent flower grows near the shore in clumps, spreading like a weed unchecked, and can be used in many medicines. It is said to have other properties such as bestowing longevity and protecting against spirits, but most dismiss these claims as wives' tales. Although it smells strikingly like the bulb

of the same name, garlic lilies are not related to garlic at all – even though the Ducks have used them as a table spice for decades.

The village of Roost is the setting for our little adventure, where a handful of intrepid adventurers either headed to or from the human city will have the chance to enjoy Duck hospitality – and possibly become local heroes.

### In This Adventure...

...the Ducks of Roost are a friendly and inviting bunch of fine feathered fellows that will be more than happy to open their tavern's doors and bring in the Player Characters for a good and stout lunch or dinner. With promises of the best stew for miles and the coldest ale this side of the river (which river, who knows!), the Player Characters will soon be patrons at Roost's finest...*and only*...tavern/inn. It is a great place, and where most of the village comes to barter, trade and socialise. It will not be long before the 'newcomers' are treated with open arms by the many Ducks of Roost.

From the very beginning of their relationship with the village, the Player Characters will be introduced to Poush Maller – the 'mayor'

of Roost. Poush will be able to give them a good and solid explanation of why the village exists and the importance of the garlic lily trade to them. In fact, should any of the Player Characters try the famous garlic lily almato; they will discover the plant actually does have some healing properties!

During their relations with the Ducks of Roost, they will soon meet a strange black-feathered stranger named Nightfeather. He claims to be to be a weary shaman, and is currently being chased by horrible beasts of the southern forests. Nightfeather will tell a grisly tale of these animal creatures raiding the village he was from weeks ago, trying to earn the village and the party's trust and protection.

It will not take long for night to come, and with it comes the Broo. Broo are terrifying minions of Chaos, and they are seemingly after Nightfeather, who demands to be locked in the storeroom of the tavern for his safety. Should the Broo not find him, they should move along in the search with only a little trouble – easily enough to be dissuaded by the Player Characters.

As events unfold, and the Player Characters are swept into combat with the Broo – Nightfeather will unveil his treacherous schemes...and the

Ducks of Roost will never see his betrayal coming! The safety and further safety of Roost will be in the hands of the Player Characters.

Will they be able to stop Nightfeather *and* the Broo? Or will they be forced to choose which is the greater of two evils...

...and will they be able to tell which one that really is?

## Preparing to Play

*A Raven in the Roost* is an introductory scenario that gives new and old players alike a scene that can be planted in any chronicle using the *RuneQuest* new game rules. Using the new rules and an easy-to-fit setting, *A Raven in the Roost* can be placed in nearly any Runequest game, but assumes that the Games Master is centred in the Glorantha game setting. For other settings the Games Master may need to tweak a few things here and there, but the overall idea behind the adventure should be the same. For more on the Glorantha game setting, watch the Mongoose Publishing product announcements!

A copy of *RuneQuest – Core Rulebook*, a notepad, pencils and a full set of dice (at least one of each of the following; d20, d12, d10, d8, d6 and d4) will be needed to play *A Raven in the Roost*. Players and Games Masters may also find copies of the *RuneQuest Companion* or *Glorantha* as good reference points for the minor facets of the adventure. This is by no means necessary, as every encounter in the scenario has statistics listed for those involved; but some Games Masters may wish to have extra information at their fingertips. It may also be helpful to have a few of Mongoose Publishing's Runequest miniatures or counters and some form of map handy for when battles to break out, but are also not essential.



Games Masters should read and become familiar with the entire scenario before attempting to immerse their players in it. This should allow the Games Master to fit each encounter

together with the last seamlessly, or to evolve his methods to mesh the encounters with the sometimes random actions of his Player Characters. Should the Player Characters get far too distracted, a crafty Games Master should be able to use subtle hints or alter the written encounters to get them back involved with the written scenario. Alternatively, Games Masters may want to expand on the events and settings in *A Raven in the Roost*, creating a much larger campaign tool from this short scenario.

This scenario is designed for three to five starting Player Characters, though it can be easily adjusted or adapted to accommodate groups of higher experience, abilities or attendance. Should Games Masters have fewer players they can easily use their own judgment to lighten the severity of some encounters while strengthening those for a larger group. The scenario was written a certain way, but Games Masters should have the final say in how it is delivered to their Player Characters to suit the feel of their own chronicles.

## A Stranger Arrives

This adventure assumes the Player Characters have not yet been through the area containing the village of Roost, possibly passing by to get to the nearby human city. This village can be placed anywhere in the Games Master's world, so long as it is along a major road and built upon the shores of a pond. Should the Games Master plan ahead to be using this scenario, and has any of his Player Characters actually be *from* the area – or possibly a Duck cousin of



## The Village of Roost

The nearest human city is actually a full six or seven hours' ride away from Roost, and rarely sends anyone this way due to the increased bandit attacks along the road between them. Combined with the real reason why the Ducks formed the village, there is little communication between the two communities except for brief and terse trading meetings.

Nearing two generations prior, a family of Duck snake-oil salesmen was run out of the city for being charlatans and frauds – one of which actually getting quite roughed up. That Duck, Perrance Maller, pitched a camp at the first fishable pond he discovered, if only just to recuperate from the beating he took at his former clients. Upon finding the area pleasant and the pond full of life, his camp quickly turned into a cabin. His cabin turned into a roadside tavern, and eventually friends of his family came to settle nearby. Calling this place his family's new 'Roost'...the name stuck. The area's first all-Duck settlement had become a reality.

The village consists of six hallow tree-trunk cottage buildings on the east side of a worn cart-road, nestled against Lily Pond. The road runs all the way into the southern forests, which are teeming with Elves and predatory creatures, and all the way through the human city to the north. The pond is only a few hundred feet across, but due to the nature of the prolific garlic lilies there is much plantlife and fish to be foraged or caught there.

There are the following buildings for characters to possibly visit:

◆ **Roost Tavern** – the centrally located three-story building that serves as an inn as well as a tavern/pub. It is actually owned by the Maller family, who have 'owned' the village since it began, and who live upstairs.

◆ **Woodan's Cottage** – the shore-side cottage of Perciful Woodan and his six children, who live their lives fishing garlic lilies from the pond and selling them as dried herbs.

◆ **Whindal's Farm** – the roadside cottage surrounded by several short rows of vegetable plants and tall cornstalks. Redd and Gingere Whindal live out their old days farming there small plot, waiting for their missing grandson to come back from his life of adventure.

◆ **Curranthe Home** – an elegantly decorated roadside home owned by the artistic and eccentric Ikke Curranthe and his family, who rarely leave the confines of their home unless it is to trade for goods with travellers.

◆ **Dyve Cottage** – the shore-side cottage of Rowe and Frederic Dyve, two brothers who pride themselves on their spear-fishing techniques.

◆ **Greenplume Home** – the building nearest to the tavern, the Greenplumes are cousins to the Mallers and moved here just after the tavern was built. Upwhind and Francene Greenplume live within the modest home at the moment, and are expecting children at any time.

The village has no true militia or guard, merely the martial attitudes of the male Ducks living in Roost at any given moment. Other than a few odd shields and swords that are stored in the back room at the tavern, Roost does not have a true armoury or stockpile at all. In fact, they rarely care for martial trades at all – priding themselves on being able to avoid hostilities whenever possible.

Roost is a friendly and laid-back place that is a good stopping point for many travellers, especially those looking to trade and barter for the types of things that such a slowed pace of life can create.

one of the families here – Roost could be the actual destination of the party for one reason or another.

For the convenience of the Games Master that wants to use Roost in their game beyond just as a setting for this scenario, we have included some additional information about the village. As always, if this does not fit well with a Games Master's current RuneQuest campaign he should change it as he sees fit in order to make it more in line with his own chronicle.

## Nightfeather's Tale

The Player Characters, who are travelling on a well-worn cart path will eventually ride or walk through the midst of Roost, where they will be beckoned into the tavern by the welcoming smells and sounds that a weary traveller rarely turns away. The village is slow this time of day, as most of its inhabitants are either working or inside the tavern taking a hard-earned break from their daily lives.

As a note, the Games Master should usher or urge the players using a combination of smells, sounds and maybe even tastes to draw them into the tavern. If they do not, it is possible that Nightfeather could try to talk to them on the road – but this will likely talk a bit of adjusting to the following segments. It is simply easier if the Player Characters do, in fact, go inside.

When the Player Characters decide to enter the tavern, read the following aloud to the players:

**The smell of something wonderful cooking in the massive stew cauldron behind the long, brass-edged bar grabs your senses the second the light wooden doors open before you. A light harmony is ringing out from some wooden wind chimes near an open window,**

**and a touch of laughter welcomes you. There are a handful of other patrons in the tavern, all of them members of the short-bodied Duck race. As you look around at several empty tables, a brown-feathered Duck walks up to you.**

**'Welcome! Welcome to Roost Tavern! Our finest...' he begins, but is quickly interrupted from a table of two young examples of his species.**

**'And only!' they cry out in unison, followed by laughter.**

**'True, true,' the first Duck continues with a smile curling the flesh at the base of his bill, 'My name is Poush Maller. Mayor, innkeep, and chef. You can take this table over here.' He gives a gentle bow, then walks you over to the round oaken table – which is much shorter than you are used to, forcing you to sit upon the floor.**

**'I recommend the Garlic Lily Almato...it's perfect this time of year.'**

Should the Player Characters choose to eat a hearty meal, they will find the food to be quite good. Poush knows how to cook vegetarian cuisine extremely well, and is always eager to hear about new recipes should a Player Character actually have one. Also, if any Player Character tries the almato, they will recover 1 HP to each of their hit locations over the course of an hour-long digestion period. This is obviously due to some kind of supernatural effect, and the imbiber will know it is working from the first spoonful or two.

Also in the tavern are Rowe and Frederic Dyve (the younger Ducks who shouted above), Perciful Woodan with two of his youngest

Ducklings, and Francene Greenplume. The atmosphere in the tavern is that of mirth and good cheer, with stories and laughter abound. Should the Player Characters get involved or entertain the patrons, they can learn the following information (perhaps requiring Influence or Persuasion skill rolls):

- ◆ The village of Roost relies heavily on the trading of fish and Garlic Lily plants.

- ◆ Garlic Lily plants are very hearty and prolific, but seem to only grow in Roost Pond.

- ◆ Roost does not have the best of relations with the nearby human city, and they rarely even trade except when necessary.

- ◆ The one Duck that served as a town guard died of a strange fever almost two months ago, and warrior training to make another is going slowly...but Frederic is doing well for a Duck his age.

The evening will go on with stories, songs and food (costing maybe a silver or two for the whole night) with Ducks coming and going. They will gladly barter and trade goods for goods if they can, but they do not have much more than farming goods, foods and anything related to life on a pond's shore. It will make for a great and peaceful event, until just after sundown – when a stranger to the area will burst in unannounced.

When you feel it is a good time to begin the meat of the scenario, read the following aloud to them:

**The doors suddenly swing open with a crack of wood meeting the edge of the bar, a fierce evening breeze carrying in a handful of**



leaves along the floor. Standing there, chest heaving, is a jet black-feathered Duck with a remarkably dark brown bill. He wears cloth robes that look as though they have seen better days, and one of his eyes is covered by an eyepatch.

**Poush stands up, and takes his first step toward the stranger with a ‘Welcome, what can I...’ – when the dark Duck raises his hand and waves him off.**

**‘There is no time,’ the stranger says hurriedly, ‘my name is Nightfeather. I am a shaman of the ancient ways of our people from far, far away. You must hide me...or else you are all in grave danger.’ He looks out the doorway, then scrambles backwards, closing it quickly.**

If any of the Player Characters distrust the newcomer and specifically ask if they think he is lying to them, they can make a Perception skill test opposed by Nightfeather’s Influence of 35%. Should they succeed, they will know he is hiding something. A failure means that they believe his story even further.

Once Nightfeather is inside, read the following aloud:

**‘I have travelled many leagues with a pack of hunting man-beasts on my tail feathers, and they will stop at nothing to try and kill me!’ he takes on a slightly panicked look and peeks outside of a window briefly.**

**‘They sacked my village on the other side of the Southern Forests a week or two ago, and I have been running ever since. They sent a small pack of their hunters after me, as I am the last survivor of my village. I was trying to find a larger city or town to protect me before**

**nightfall, but this is as far as I could get. Can you help me?’**

Poush has a soft spot for Ducks in trouble, giving his family’s background, and wants to help Nightfeather. Even if the Player Characters try to dissuade him, Poush will smile and wave them off (they are, after all only a few hours’ less strangers themselves!) and serve the man a bowl of almato.

Once he is given the food and calmed down a bit, read the following aloud:

**‘How can we help you?’ Poush asks, leaning over the table Nightfeather is sitting at.**

**‘Well, a few days ago I was as good as dead. It was close to high-moon, and the hunters were almost on me. I dove into a large patch of painful yet aromatic thorn poppies, and I knew it would not be long. But, as the beasts drew near to me, I could hear them...no...see them sniffing at the air for me. The scent of the poppies covered my own, and they kept on moving.’**

**‘Amazing,’ Poush gasps.**

**‘When I reached your village, I smelled those whitish flowers on the pond almost immediately. They are quite pungent. I wondered if I could use that scent to hide myself for the night, so the hunters will not stop here at all.’**

**A throaty and bleating howl echoes out through the night.**

**‘Oh no,’ Nightfeather stands up quickly, knocking his chair backwards; ‘they’re here!’**

## Howls in the Darkness

A small group of Broo have taken up a fanned out and searching position just beyond the southern edge of the village. This is the opportunity for the Player Characters to flex their heroic muscles and possibly ‘save the day’ – or so they think!

Just after the Broo cast off their first few howls, which might beg some Lore skill checks from the Player Characters to see if they recognise the beasts, Nightfeather will plead with Poush. When this occurs, read the following aloud:

**‘You must hide me! Quick! I was going to suggest that I stay in the flowers on the pond...but they are already here, it won’t work! They’ll see!’ Nightfeather says to the mayor of Roost in hushed tones.**

**‘What about the drying room?’ Poush replies, ‘It is filled with this season’s harvest and absolutely reeks of them. They are surely**



stronger than some poppies!’ He quickly stands and swings open the door leading to the aforementioned room, the stench of drying garlic lilies wafting out to make your eyes water.

‘Thank you! Thank you!’ Nightfeather moves to leap inside just as another set of howls splits the night, but is cornered off by an older-looking Duck with mottled plumage.

‘Here, take my boys with you,’ Perciful Woodan says, ‘if that room will hide them from those beasts, I want them safe.’

‘Very well,’ Nightfeather says, letting the young Ducks in first before shaking Poush’s hand. ‘Now, snuff the lanterns, and pray to whatever gods you wish that those monsters move on.’

‘We will protect you,’ Poush says as he closes the door, turning to you with a worried look, ‘will we not?’

The four Broo that are actually in league with Nightfeather are waiting until the lights inside the tavern dim (the signal Nightfeather had pre-arranged). If this happens, the Broo will begin to attack the outermost cottages and homes – completely ignoring the tavern utterly. This might make the Player Characters wonder why these ‘hunting beasts’ are simply attacking homes and occasionally breaking windows, but are not actually ransacking or taking anything. In fact, with a slightly more difficult Perception skill test (-10%) they can tell that the Broo are not really looking for anything at all.

The statistics for these particular Broo are as follows:



### (3) Broo Raider

STR (13), CON (12), SIZ (13), INT (12), POW (10), DEX (12), CHA (7); *Combat Actions:* 2, *Movement:* 30m; Atk: Head Butt +23, 60%, 1D6+1 damage, Short Spear +28, 50%, 1D6+1 damage

*Skills (15%):* Athletics 60%, Perception 35%, Sleight 30%, Track 30%

*Armour:* Horns.

*Head Butt:* Broo cannot parry with their head butt when using it in combat. Deals an extra 1D6 damage when used with a Charge action.

### (1) Broo Raid Leader

STR (13), CON (13), SIZ (14), INT (13), POW (10), DEX (12), CHA (8); *Combat Actions:* 2, *Movement:* 30m; Atk: Head Butt +23, 60%, 1D6+1 damage, Short Spear +28, 55%, 1D6+1 damage

*Skills (18%):* Athletics 65%, Perception 30%, Sleight 30%, Track 40%

*Armour:* Horns.

*Head Butt:* Broo cannot parry with their head butt when using it in combat. Deals an extra 1D6 damage when used with a Charge action.

### Broo Raider (Leader)

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	-/5 (6)
4-6	Left Leg	-/5 (6)
7-9	Abdomen	-/6 (7)
10-12	Chest	-/7 (8)
13-15	Right Arm	-/4 (5)
16-18	Left Arm	-/4 (5)
19-20	Head	3/5 (6)

The Broo were told to attack anything that they can away from the tavern, and that anything they killed would be theirs to take for food or *other* reasons. It is this sort of savagery that might just bring the Player Characters out from the tavern (with the Ducks in tow, of course – but only as observers). Having one of the Broo kill one of the Ducks the Player Characters have already met or one of the other Woodan Ducklings will likely bring them out to do ‘hero work’.

If this occurs, and the Player Characters come out of the tavern to combat the Broo, they will happily engage them. They will not wilfully draw near to the tavern, but will not just stand there and get hit by ranged attacks. Most likely they will hide or seek cover while trying to reposition for melee attack. If the Player



Characters come out to do battle, read the following aloud:

**As your eyes adjust to the high moon above, you can see a quartet of horrible beast-men turning their slavering muzzles filled with rotten and broken teeth the colour of burnt wood toward you. The fur that covers their misshapen and animal-legged bodies is matted with filth and blood, some of which is likely weeks old. In their hands they carry jagged spears of tarnished bronze, and their eyes flash with what could be *hunger*.**

**‘Die manling ones!’ one of the creatures shouts before pushing forward on his ebony hooves.**

Should the Player Characters never decide to go out and deal with the Broo, read the following aloud before moving on to *Nightfeather’s Betrayal* in the next section of the scenario:

**The howls and shouts of the rampaging beasts outside are hideous and bone-chilling, but you remain in the darkened tavern in relative safety. Between the cries outside, you think you hear a child’s whimper – but not from outside, it came from *the drying room*!**

**Perciful, a dutiful father, hears this sound as well and imagery of horrible things smashes into his mind, bringing tears to his eyes instantly. He leaps to his feet and pulls on the drying room door, but it will not budge. Something is holding it closed inside.**

**‘Tys! Pock!’ the worried and weeping Duck shouts at the door, ‘Daddy’s coming!’ He spins, looking directly at you...**

**‘Help me get this door down!’**



The door will offer a 10% bonus to any STR rolls to smash it open, but it also could be chopped down and has 2 AP and 25 HP. If they get the door open, they will find that the shutters to the room have been opened from the inside – and that two huge sacks of garlic lilies are gone, and so is Nightfeather and the ducklings!

If they go outside, probably following a near-maddened Perciful, they will then *have* to fight the Broo before moving on to the next section.

Should the Player Characters defeat the Broo and take a moment to search them, they will find all of the following if they choose to look for them:

- ◆ Each Broo has a badly worn short spear and a small pouch with 1D6 silver in it.
- ◆ The Broo Raid Leader also has two dried Garlic Lily flowers in his pouch, which are easily several weeks old. He also has a small bundle of black Duck feathers wrapped in a silken ribbon.

Eventually, either when the Player Characters take a look around or follow Perciful in search of his missing children, you can move along to the following encounter.

As a note, for all of the normal Roost inhabitants, use the common Duck statistics found in the *RuneQuest Core Rulebook*, cutting them in half for the Ducklings. Due to storyline reasons, any combats that involve Poush Maller or Perciful Woodan can only result in their injury (not death), as they are needed later in this scenario.

## A Village in Peril

**The Broo in league** with Nightfeather, who has now escaped the drying room with two huge sacks of dried garlic lilies and two young Ducklings, have been defeated and the Player Characters are now in a small village that has been immersed in utter chaos. But the dangers are not passed...not by a long shot.

## Nightfeather's Betrayal

After the Player Characters defeat the Broo and begin to look around to assess the damage to Roost, two scenes can unfold.

One; should the Player Characters have run out to engage the Broo immediately, they will be unaware of Nightfeather's escape just yet. Read the following to them aloud:

**The last of the beast-men falls to the ground with a satisfying *thud*, and you feel the adrenaline seeping out from your limbs in a tingling rush of sensation. Just when you are about to turn and celebrate your victory to each other, you hear a muffled cry from inside the tavern.**

**Running quickly to the tavern doors, you are greeted by a weeping Perciful Woodan and a worried Poush.**

**'Nightfeather,' Poush grunts angrily, 'he was taken, and so were Perciful's boys!'**

**'Please...help me find them...' Perciful says through quivering voice.**

Were the Player Characters present for Perciful's discovery inside the tavern, then they already know about the drying room and instead had to contend with the Broo before they could continue the search. In that case, read the following instead:

**The last of the beast-men that you can see crumples to the ground under the brutal weight of your final blow, and you immediately look to Perciful – who is frantically searching around in the darkness for his missing children.**

**You run over to him and his eyes are red from the oily tears that are beading off his feathers and running onto his bill.**

**'Please...help me find them...'**

During the combat and the minutes afterwards Nightfeather was trying to get the two huge sacks of garlic lilies – the real reason for this whole charade – and the two struggling Ducklings toward the darkness at the edge of the village to be picked up by the waiting Broo (payment for their help).

Due to how the dastardly dark Duck has to deal with being Overloaded and fighting the two bound Ducklings, he suffers a -20% penalty to his Stealth skill for the purposes of the Player Characters searching for him.

The Player Characters should be given three Perception skill tests opposed by Nightfeather's Stealth to see if they can spot him. Should any of these players specifically mention using their powers of smell to find him via the massive amount of dried garlic lilies he is carrying, they get a +25% bonus to their Perception for the purposes of these tests.

Roost is small, and Nightfeather is not in the best positions for being sneaky, so it is quite likely that the Player Characters will find him in short order. If this is the case, read the following aloud:

**In the gloom of the night you are shocked to see Nightfeather not only safe, but hunched over by the weight of two huge burlap sacks saddled over his shoulders. Under each arm, wriggling to be free, are the two Woodan Ducklings – at which Perciful shouts out to them.**

**'Boys! Thank the gods!' then the realisation sets in and his brow furrows, 'You bastard! What are you doing with my sons?'**

**'And our harvest!' Poush adds in, his voice growing squeakier in his growing displeasure.**

**Seeing you all drawing nearer to him, Nightfeather wraps the bailing twine he had tethered the two Ducklings together with around a fencepost, like you would a steed or dog, he then drops the bags of lilies.**

**'Damn you!' he points at you, 'Damn you for being here at all! This should have been simple! I get the lilies; they get the rest...easy as that!' Nightfeather shoves a hand in the sack and produces a fistful of garlic lily flowers, which he crushes into a pulp in his hand. 'These plants are the key to power... real power...and you waste them in stews and poultices!'**

**He drops the crushed flower paste into his bill and gaggles it back instantly. Instantly he laughs, and rips off his eye patch – revealing an empty socket that has a small stone in place of his eye. A symbol, a small insignia on the stone begins to glow. Softly at first, but then brighter and brighter, until it illuminates the whole area a dazzling green.**

**'You fools,' he cackles at you, 'your have brought this upon yourselves!'**

**The first of the dazzling bolts of green fire erupts from the stone and melts the sand at your feet to a small patch of shining glass.**

**'Chaos cannot be denied!'**

Nightfeather will now attack the Player Characters with a handful of his ranged magical



attacks that come from his special mystical item. He will retreat at the first option if he is injured or believes himself to be extremely outmatched. Nightfeather's statistics (and a brief history) are below.

If forced to retreat hastily, he will leave the lilies behind. If he can take a tactical withdrawal due to the Player Characters backing away or seeking cover, he will launch a few more magical attacks before grabbing up the sacks and disappearing into the night – just as the rest of the Broo arrive to try and snatch the Ducklings.

For the purposes of this combat, eating a handful of garlic lilies takes two Combat Actions and a successful CON test, but results in 1D3 HP regenerated to all hit locations and an additional 1D6 Magic Points given to the eater (which must be used in the following round or are lost).

## Nightfeather, Chaos Shaman

Raised like his own bastard son to a dark wizard far away from these lands, Nightfeather grew up to worship the Chaos gods and to hate his own people – for they had become the symbol of weakness and foolishness that plagued him as a Duckling. Obsessed with power, Nightfeather cut out his own right eye and placed a small Eldritch Rune in its place. This gives him mad visions while sleeping, but also allowing him to funnel powerful energies through it as Eldritch Bolts.

STR (10), CON (13), SIZ (8), INT (15), POW (19), DEX (13), CHA (17); *Combat Actions*: 2, *Movement*: 30m; Atk: Dagger +24, 36%, 1D4+1 damage

*Magic Points*: 19

*Traits*: Excellent Swimmer

*Skills (35%)*: Athletics 45%, Dodge 44%, First Aid 32%, Influence 51%, Lore – Chaos 65%, Mechanisms 34%, Perception 45%,



*Runecasting*: Eldritch Bolt 64%, Sleight 44%, Stealth 35%

*Armour*: Magically Protected Robe

*Eldritch Bolts*: These are fiery green bolts of magic that cost 1D6 Magic Points, and inflict 1D4+1 points of heat damage, ignoring a number of AP equal to the Magic Points spent on the bolt.

## Nightfeather

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	1/5
4-6	Left Leg	1/5
7-9	Abdomen	1/6
10-12	Chest	1/7
13-15	Right Arm	-/4
16-18	Left Arm	-/4
19-20	Head	-/5

Should Nightfeather be allowed to escape (or if he manages to retreat), read the following aloud as he disappears:

As the black-feathered villain disappears into the darkness, his voice can be heard to echo out back at you...

‘This is not the last you have heard of me, you curs! I will be back!’ He laughs maniacally, which slowly is drowned out by the approaching grunting of beastlike creatures drawing nearer. ‘For now, however, I did promise them your village...and the Broo are quite fond of *children*...’

‘*Black Duck says children ours!*’ one of the larger, antlered beast-men chortles as he and his two brethren emerge into the moonlight, where you are sad to be able to see them... If the Player Characters did in fact manage to kill Nightfeather, read the following aloud:

As the black-feathered villains slumps to the ground, the glow in his stone eye flickering with the last beats of his evil heart, he lets out a muffled laugh...rolling over onto his back to cough blood out from his cracked bill as he speaks.

‘This is not over, not for you,’ his eyes roll toward the darkness beyond the edge of the village, ‘I did promise them your village...and the Broo are quite fond of *children*...’ he coughs again before the light in his eye fades completely and his death rattle growls out.

Then there is another growl, and another. You look to see where it is coming from, and part of you wishes you had not.

‘*Dead black Duck said children ours!*’ a larger, antlered beast-men chortles as he and his two brethren emerge into the moonlight, where you are sad to be able to see them...

Just as the Champion Broo arrive, continue on to the *Save the Ducklings!* encounter.

## Save the Ducklings!

After Nightfeather is dealt with in one form or another, his Broo associates will arrive just in time to force the Player Characters to be the heroes they were born to be! By the hungry look and savage attitude of these new Broo champions, it is quite obvious that the two leashed and gagged Ducklings are the initial target of the trio.

After the players have had a moment to adjust themselves after the battle with Nightfeather, read the following aloud:

**The three massive beast-men snort and bleat at one another in their twisted language, and they split up – with two headed your way and one splitting off toward the two tethered Ducklings just a few dozen metres away. Black hunger burns in his eyes and his sword waves like a butcher standing over a suckling pig.**

**‘Gods! Save my boys!’ Perciful cries out, his legs frozen in fear as the hulking beasts of sinew and predatory flesh begin to build up speed...**

This is where the players will need to make a choice. The Broo have effectively split into two groups – the combat headed there way, and the lone Broo headed to chop down the Ducklings.

It will take the combatant Broo two rounds to get to where the Player Characters are, and it will take the Duckling-minded Broo three rounds to reach the post in which they are tied to. This means that either the Player Characters will need to split up their efforts and deal with both groups simultaneously, or

hopefully manage to deal with one group with time to spare to save the Ducklings.

Also, it will only take the Player Characters two rounds to reach the Ducklings’ post. An opposed Athletics skill test with the Broo accompanied with a standard CON check (or receive a level of Fatigue) can cut this time down to one round.

It will require a hastily performed DEX check at a -5% penalty to untie the knots on the post, or a single effective edged-weapon attack on an 1 AP/2 HP piece of leather cord, to release the Ducklings – making their saviour the target of the charging Broo.

Combat will likely ensue in one way or another, unless the Player Characters flee – in which the Broo will simply wreak havoc for a few more minutes before growing bored with the small village and leaving. The statistics for the Champion Broo as follows:

### Champion Broo

Wielding crude axes and swords in combat, the larger and more vicious Broo champions paint themselves in the blood and waste of their foes in disgusting rituals to serve their Chaos gods. They protect themselves as best they can with their oddly shaped bodies by wrapping some areas of their bodies with thick leather straps buckled with rivets or studs.

STR (15), CON (16), SIZ (16), INT (10), POW (12), DEX (11), CHA (7); *Combat Actions:* 2, *Movement:* 30m; Atk: Head Butt +23, 65%, 1D6+3 damage, Axe or Crude Sword +28, 55%, 1D6+3 damage

*Skills (20%):* Athletics 65%, Perception 35%, Sleight 35%, Track 40%

*Armour:* Horns, Leather Strapping

*Head Butt:* Broo cannot parry with their head butt when using it in combat. Deals an extra 1D6 damage when used with a Charge action.

### Champion Broo

D20	Hit Location	AP/HP
1-3	Right Leg	1/7
4-6	Left Leg	1/7
7-9	Abdomen	-/8
10-12	Chest	1/9
13-15	Right Arm	1/6
16-18	Left Arm	1/6
19-20	Head	3/7

Unlike the blind devotion of the common Broo, Champions are not unwilling to retreat if injured badly – especially knowing now that they are not going to get the same payment they were promised by Nightfeather. They will not go without a fight, but they are not necessarily *always* vowed to finish it.

Once the Broo are dealt with in one way or another, there are two endings possible to this encounter: the Duckling(s) survive...or they do not.

Regardless to how it is ended, this encounter marks the last of the adventure portion of this scenario.

## Conclusion

After the Champion Broo are defeated, run off or what not; the village of Roost is likely still shaken up from their first full-on attack in twenty years. They have dealt with predatory animals and the occasional bandit, but never a half-dozen deadly Broo and a Chaos-worshipping example of their own species before! It will leave the inhabitants stunned and locked away in their homes at least until



morning, at which point they will begin to repair what damages were done to homes, fences and the like.

Immediately after the battle, though...there is the fallout from the fight that must be taken into consideration.

Should the Broo have been defeated and both the Ducklings escaped with their lives, read the following:

**‘Oh! Thank you, thank you!’ Perciful proclaims as the two Ducklings charge into his awaiting arms. He scoops them up and looks at you with the look that only a father can give to the saviours of his children, ‘Never will you go hungry in a table of my setting.’ His thanks said, he whisks the two boys away toward their home – where he hopes his older boys have been defending diligently.**

**‘You really came through for us,’ Poush said, extending his hand to you, ‘that does not happen often enough for my people. If it were not for your help, all of Roost would likely be on a spit over those beasts’ cooking fires by morning. I wish we could repay you in a way fitting such a deed,’ he sighs, ‘but all we have is our thanks and a few pouches of dried lilies. I know it is not enough compared to what you have done, but you should feel welcome in Roost whenever you pass this way again.’**

**He places his hand on your shoulder.**

**‘Roost is not much, but it is all we have – and we gladly share it with you.’**

Should the Broo have managed to kill either/ both the Ducklings, read the following aloud instead:

**‘No, no no, no!’ Perciful cries out as he collapses over the bloody remains of his offspring, the strength drained from his limbs from horror and pain. He nuzzles his bill deep in gore-speckled feathers and sobs loudly. You know his pain must be greater than you can truly imagine, and you wish you could have been faster...or stronger...or...**

**‘His youngest,’ Poush interrupts your thoughts, ‘it is a hard thing to lose a child.’ He shakes his head. ‘But it could have been worse, you know. If it were not for your help, all of Roost would likely be on a spit over those beasts’ cooking fires by morning.’ Extending his hand, his face quivers slightly as the sobbing continues behind him.**

**‘I wish we could repay you in a way fitting such a deed,’ he sighs, ‘but all we have is our thanks and a few pouches of dried lilies. I know it is not enough compared to what you have done, but you should feel welcome in Roost whenever you pass this way again.’**

**He places his hand on your shoulder.**

**‘We have suffered, but we will persevere. Roost is not much, but it is all we have – and we gladly share it with you.’**

Poush will quickly arrange for each Player Character to receive a waxed pouch with 1D6 doses of crushed Garlic Lily flowers (see above for details) by morning, and will never forget what they had done for Roost. Should they ever come this way again, the village will be extremely happy to see them and will treat them as honoured guests.

Other than a good night’s sleep (on the house, of course), Roost will hold little more than good roleplaying and hearty meals for the Player

Characters until they choose to move along to their own adventures. What the future holds for them can only be decided by Fate and the Gods...

What happens to any of the village’s inhabitants or the scenario’s other roles is up to the Games Master. Perciful could take up a martial role in order to protect his Ducklings better in the future. The Dyve brothers might want to take on an adventurer’s life, having seen the Player Characters in action. Nightfeather (if he was not killed) will likely want revenge on the Player Characters, and can become a constant threat when they are least expecting it...or perhaps the Dark Wizard he serves has now become interested in those who thwarted his minion’s scheme? What of the rest of the Broo tribe? Do *they* seek revenge for their fallen brethren, and even them against whom? Ultimately it is up to the Games Master to decide these things, and we encourage them to go wherever they need to make the best story and gaming experience for their chronicle...

Overall, the *A Raven in the Roost* adventure scenario was designed to be an introduction for new or basic characters or players to the system and world, but can be a good source of several new story arcs. Now that the village area is mapped and known by the Player Characters, it is simply up to the Games Master to evolve it for his own chronicle.

We look at this as just another chapter in the stories of your heroes. Where will *RuneQuest* take them next?

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