

MONGOOSE PUBLISHING PRESENTS



Signs & Portents

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Roleplayer

The Mad Druid

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RuneQuest Variant Weapons

HIGH ADVENTURE OR LETHAL EXTREME...YOU DECIDE!

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Conversion Guide, Tales From Mongoose Hall, Starship
Troopers Fiction and lots, lots more!

S&P Roleplayer 36

September 2006

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Yep, the Wheel of Pain remains for another month. that can only mean one thing. They got me to do it again. Like I don't have enough to do strong-arming people for Alex. But has it got me anywhere? Not a chance. Sometimes I think there is little purpose being the Most Dangerous Man In The Company if nobody actually cares. Now I'm in the States they are all behaving like wise guys.

So, you have articles and I have to do another editorial. Thus you get the Wheel of Pain again, because I want you to share my burden. As for the actual magazine, well RuneQuest is in full swing, and we have a monolithic adventure plus some variant weapon rules from Matthew (he who wrote it, if you didn't know). I am assured that as of next month office newbie Chris Longhurst will be taking over the reins, hovered over no doubt by Ian Barstow, who appears to have nothing better to do. Until that time, you're stuck with me.

T.C.



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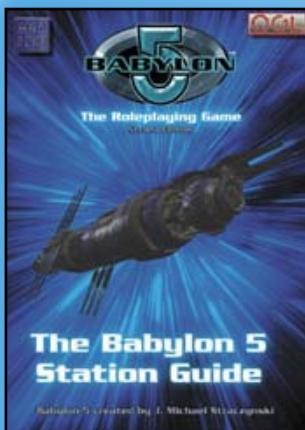
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Coming This Month

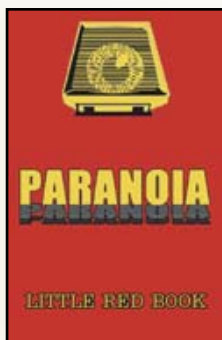


It is a time of danger and of hope, a time of unhealed wounds and new opportunities. It is the dawn of the third age of mankind, a dawn whose light casts shadows of the past as indistinct portents of things to come. It is the year 2258, and the human race, still beaten and bloody 11 years after its second 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 centerpiece 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.



[[[Deleted for Security Reasons]]]



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.



Rune 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 Germaine 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.

Tales from Mongoose Hall

Matthew Sprange

Star Wars IIa

A Lost Hope

Chapter 4

So, let us have a recap. The players (mostly Jedi Padawans) are 2nd and 3rd level characters who, by circumstance, have been given control of the defences of a Bothan world – including an entire Clone Legion. Not all Bothans are afraid of the Separatists, however, and the players have been having problems trying to convince them to fight, a mission not aided by the torture and death of one of the opposition councillors. Still, after the last session in which they rescued Bothan resistance fighters from the southern cities, they hoped to swing a few more votes their way.

Things start smoothly, with the resistance fighters being given food and rest after their ordeal, while a new council session is arranged. Then Ian happens.

Or, more to the point, Ian's new character arrives – a Bothan detective (seems to be a cross between Columbo and Shaft) dispatched to investigate the deaths of Councillor Borrsk and Van Kleif (see last issue and the one before that for the almighty cock-up that led to this). Keen to stamp his authority on the matter, Ian is soon handing out cautions (he used to be a Plod himself) and warning the Jedi not to leave the planet (ha!). This soon has the Jedi making a complaint to the Bothan Senator about being allowed to do their job in running a war but Ian very nicely sidesteps the Senator's interference by suggesting the politician take responsibility for anything bad that happened thereafter.

So, the Jedi were interviewed, one by one, as Ian started to build up his case.

While this was going on, Alex arranged for the resistance fighters to be debriefed while Doghouse spent a little time in the Bacta Tank (again) before studying the amulet he had snatched from the Sith Tomb (yes, I know, but you cannot stop curiosity. . .). After fiddling around with the Force, he decided the amulet was a focus of some sort but was not keen on pushing his luck. He puts the amulet on (under his robes, we noticed – something of a *Precioussss* about that), and decides to fiddle with it again later.

Ian's investigation into the Jedi is largely inconclusive, though he decides that if General Itchigo (David) is allowed to continue leading Republic troops, the war is surely lost. By now, Ian is under pressure from his boss (aren't detectives always?), who orders him to stick near the Jedi and solve the case within 24 hours. On the plus side, Ian does disperse the rioting crowd outside the spaceport with a few well chosen words (which boiled down to *'trust me'* but it seemed to work).

The debriefing of the Bothan resistance fighters is more fruitful. Things have not all been smooth up to now, but here we enter a brand new chapter – and what was certainly the best session to date. . .

Having pumped the Bothan resistance fighters they rescued, the players decided that a trip to the Separatist held city of Thundin'ar would be in order. The intention was not to rescue the Bothan slave workers the resistance fighters had alluded to but simply to gather evidence that atrocities were taking place. The hope here was that

with definite proof that the Separatists were taking advantage of Bothans in other cities, the Jedi would have little trouble with the Bothan Council in the capital. Bringing the Bothans onside would give them an army large enough to throw the Separatists off the planet altogether – or so they believed.

So, a little trip down south was in order. Knowing that Vulture Droids filled the skies away from the capital, Alex decided on a little diversionary tactic. He sent Gunships and Jedi Starfighters in all directions from the capital. At the same time, two Gunships and Starfighters would fly south. He would fly one Starfighter while the rest of the players and a squad of elite clones would be in a Gunship. The other two craft flew tight formation directly above them – the idea being that the former would land in the jungle a short distance from the city, while the others would turn and fly back to the capital. Hopefully, it would appear on the droids' sensors that just two craft flew south, then turned back when Vultures were sent to intercept them.

Funnily enough, the plan worked perfectly. The players found themselves in the jungle, about twenty clicks from Thundin'ar. The first part of the operation was a success.

The trip through the jungle was uneventful in the main. A droid patrol was dealt with by the elite clones (they are 12th level, way better than the Jedi!) before the players could even act. A Nexu was spotted next (the cat from the arena in Episode II). As the clones called for the column to halt, David decided that, as General, he should lead from the front. Drawing his lightsabre and shouting a bloodcurdling cry, he charged forward – and promptly got smacked about. Alex had to step in and save their beloved leader before the Nexu tore his head off. . .

The jungle trek complete, the players found themselves staring down at Thundin'ar. Large factories rose up out of the settlement, belching smoke, as droids patrolled the outskirts. To their right, a makeshift landing pad was in constant operation as a stream of shuttles ferried supplies down from the four Trade Federation battleships in orbit. I made a deal out of the slow and dim-witted binary loadlifters taking newly built Vulture Droids to the shuttles, but none of the players bit. More on that later.

A gully ran from the jungle down to the city, petering about 200 metres from the largest factory. Spying their chance, the players decided not to wait for the cover of night (I know, I know. . .), ordered three of the clones to stand guard to form a rally point, and then proceeded forward. They spotted a droid patrol at the bottom of the gully, and made careful plans. Fordy, playing the Blood Carver operative/assassin/terrorist, used a shadow field to sneak out of the gully and get into a good ambush point. As one, the players and clones rose up out of the gully and dispatched the droids before they could raise an alarm.

Up to now, the players had done uncommonly well. They had made plans and followed them through perfectly. It could not last. It didn't. Here is where things started to go pear-shaped, in a way only my players can get them going.

Their attack on the droids involved a few lightsabres and blaster shots which, inevitably, drew attention from the landing pad. Still, that was some distance away. Making quick plans, they decided to let Fordy sneak ahead into the factories to gather evidence while they created a diversion. Fordy trotted off to the factory.

Unfortunately, they had *not* decided just how to create a diversion and, in the confusion, they started to rush towards the same factory as Fordy, literally following in his footsteps. Fordy's face was an absolute picture as he tried to comprehend just why the Jedi would try to create a diversion in the same place he was heading instead of, you know, on the opposite side of the city.

A battle erupts as droids start pouring out of the factory. Fordy quickly ducks past them and finds a gantry taking him up to a side entrance of the building. Stealthily he creeps up to the top, his Blood Carver senses ready for any surprise attack, his finely honed training ready to deal with any situation. He is confronted at the top of the gantry by a locked door. Fordy looks down at his character sheet then back at me.

'Umm, I can't open locked doors.'

The derision from the other players at this 'great' operative was humiliating, to say the least. Not that they could complain – by now

they had reached the bottom of the gantry too, pursued by a veritable horde of droids. Two clones were dead already. Now, in character, they had no idea where Fordy was but they could see that the gantry just behind them offered a reasonable escape route away from the droids. So that is where they headed.

By this time, Fordy looks set to murder the Jedi as they lead an army of droids towards him. Deciding that the door presented too great a challenge, he climbed up to the roof, and started peering through skylights. We'll come back to him in a moment.

The Jedi and clones were fighting a rearguard action as they climbed up the gantry. Alex, with a withering glance at Fordy, reaches the side door and promptly draws his lightsabre to cut a way through. He is quickly joined by Doghouse.

Down the bottom of the gantry's stairs, things are not going quite so well. Just two clones survive, and they are badly injured. David amazed everyone by charging *forwards*, into the droid army, before he realised everyone else was travelling in the opposite direction. Scrambling past the clones, he instead elects to help Ian, who is having trouble getting his police droid (a badly programmed protocol unit called Norm) up the stairs. Ian is less than happy when a stray blaster shot strikes Norm squarely in the back.

Back to Fordy. Completely ignoring the debacle below (or maybe sure he could create his own), he inched forward along the roof towards a skylight and peered in, camera at the ready to capture evidence of Separatist atrocities. He sees huge conveyor belts with half built droids rushing past, immense metal furnaces, and various machines making assorted droid parts.

As he watches, he sees four droids walk in to the factory. As I describe their blue-tinted armour, cloaks and staffs, the players groan, wondering what is coming up. The droids are followed by two well-dressed Bothans, obviously keen on their new factory fittings. They, in turn, are followed by a tall woman, with dark clothes, a bald head and pale skin – the Big Bad herself, General Syphus!

At this point, the players cannot quite believe that they are just a few yards away from their nemesis. However, as Fordy's mind begins to turn with possibilities, General Syphus stops walking and looks straight up – at him. Debating whether to wave or not, Fordy remains motionless as she gives a slight nod, then turns to leave.

At this point, Alex and Doghouse burst in. The Bothans flee and huge doors open up in the opposite end of the factory, allowing rank upon rank of droids to enter. Quickly gauging the odds, Alex turns to flee, running straight into Doghouse. Picking themselves up, they tear out of the factory, only to run into Ian who, by this time, has finally managed to get Norm to the top of the gantry. Run away, they cry! Ian is not happy.

By now, they are in a very sticky position. The gantry is filled with Jedi, dead clones and an obsolete police droid. At the bottom of the stairs, the area is packed with droids and, to make matters worse, the reinforcements from the landing pad have arrived, bringing a Spider Droid with them. Doghouse springs off the gantry to the ground far below, using the Force to steady his fall, Alex following his lead. Ian tells David to look after Norm then promptly leaps off too, hurting himself in the process. This leaves David alone with Norm at the top of the gantry as droids close in on all sides. His first thought is to throw Norm off the gantry but fails his Strength check miserably. Giving up, he slices a section of the gantry with his lightsabre and then grabs the remaining metal tube to lower himself gently to the ground. This one action was probably the best thing any player did in this debacle.

With Ian shouting at Norm to 'go undercover', they flee. Alex and Doghouse find a new lease of life as they start sending blaster bolts back to the droids with their lightsabres (they had just gained the ability) and they all start heading back up the gully with droids in hot pursuit. The clones left at the rally point turned out to be a seriously good idea as they laid down covering fire and, finally, they all retreated back to the Gunship.

Which leaves Fordy on the roof of the factory. . .

However, Fordy is not worried about getting back, oh no. He knows that, with his shadow field, he has a better chance than all of them of getting back to the Gunship in one piece. But he has bigger fish to fry. You see, Fordy has just worked out that with one critical hit, he can take out General Syphus and thus end the entire campaign. You can probably see where this is going.

Like a cat, he edges across the factory roof, mirroring General Syphus' movements. By the time he gets to the edge of the roof, she is just stepping out of the factory. Making sure her back is well and truly towards him (shooting a woman in the back. . .), he lets off one well-aimed shot.

To his credit, he actually hits but the damage is minimal. She turns round, reaches out with a hand and bathes him in Force Lightning. Feeling he has made his point, Fordy retreats. Using the shadow field, he gets back to the Gunship and they all leave for the capital.

They are all aware that they have failed. Ian uses the term 'catastrophic'. The only footage they managed to obtain was of some wealthy Bothans obviously getting wealthier as they take on new Separatist contacts – not the desired result. Morale is low.

It is certainly not helped when General Syphus sends a communication directly to the Jedi, offering to make peace and compromise – all they have to do is go back to Thundin'ar without weapons. They scoff at this until she reminds them that it was they who came like thieves in the night, destroying her property with a certain wanton abandon. It crosses their minds to start editing the vid to display on Bothan news networks before they remember they are Jedi.

They go about their duties, reporting to high-ranking Bothans, getting discouraged by the negative feelings in the Council and altering clone assignments. The highlight here is that Doghouse starts playing with the amulet he found in the Sith Temple. Feeding more and more Force into it, the device suddenly magnifies his energies before releasing them in a blast that destroys a sizeable part of the wall. I told him that the use of this power felt *really* good. Oh, and help yourself to a Dark Side point. . .

They start discussing plans, trying to figure out just what they could do next. One mentions that if they could destroy a Trade Federation Battleship, it would go a long way to getting the Bothans on side. This idea is immediately shot down, until I ask 'why just destroy one?' That got them thinking, and the little seed planted earlier suddenly bore fruit. Why, they said, we could steal a shuttle and board a ship – we could even take it over!

Oh, yes. I had thought they might try to do that when they were right next to the shuttle pad, but I am sure you are familiar with the strange twists and turns that player logic takes.

Not to matter. Things now go into overdrive. Ian start enlisting the Bothan underworld, tracking down someone with connections to the Trade Federation in the hopes they can supply plans of a battleship and the shuttle departure details. They start talking about capturing a droid and reprogramming it. Plans abound of how many are needed to board one of the ships, how to take it over and what to do with it. Targets for its weapons batteries are assigned (the main droid control antenna on Kothlis, followed by the other battleships). Debates rage about how this could completely cripple every droid on the planet, how General Syphus could be captured or killed, and who would do what and when. They badger me constantly for more information. There is a real do-or-die attitude as they start to attempt something that, to their minds, 4th level characters have no right to try.

Frankly, I am amazed. There, right in front of me, my players are making a *bona fide* plan. They are actually working things out instead of blundering forward. It is beyond all belief.

I have to get busy and start working out deck plans for a Trade Federation Battleship. . .

Next time: The plan is launched. Will our heroes move closer to winning the war, or will everything fall apart the first time someone sees a droid and shouts 'Get Him!'



Steampunk Scoundrels: Mr. I. N. Absentia

By Joshua Cole

'Mr. Absentia will see to you. You, however, will not see him. Not while he stalks you, preys upon your darkest fears and most forbidden desires. Not while he creeps up on you in the dead of night, silent, implacable, merciless. Not while he draws his legendary pistol. Not until the moment he wakes you, and smiles. That, you will see. It will be the last thing you ever see.'

- Vice-Minister Eustace Thackery to a rival, one week before both were murdered in a single night

No one knows when Mr. I. N. Absentia first came into the world, or by what means. Hardly an individual who relishes the public eye, Mr. Absentia built his notoriety over a long series of covert operations. The first such incident commonly attributed to him occurred nearly two decades ago, but he may have been involved in prior events.

To simply label Mr. Absentia an assassin does injustice to his many and varied talents. Although he is more than happy to offer his services in that capacity, he is equally a spy, a courier and, often with just the faintest hint of his presence, a very effective negotiator. He is a collector of curious and unusual devices, a scholar of science and sorcery, and an accomplished musician. He also happens to be a devil.

Mr. Absentia's diabolism should not be taken metaphorically. He is most certainly inhuman, for his motives and methods transcend mortal bounds. His extreme brutality, enjoying fear of his victims, places him firmly in the infernal camp. Yet in a long and varied career, in a business that rewards the backstabber, he has never once violated one of his contracts.

Unfortunately for his employers, they have shown far less vigilance in perusing those contracts than Mr. Absentia has in penning them.

Goals

Mr. Absentia's motives mystify ordinary mortals. He appears to be unwelcome in infernal circles, and never cooperates with other devils. His focus is not the politics of hell but the comparatively simpler ones of the material plane. His apparent *goal*, however, has no connection to politics, mortal or otherwise.

Mr. Absentia is obsessed with machines. He collects them, invents them, enchants them and delights in them. Espionage is his job; artifice, his passion. He will go to great lengths to obtain an interesting device, although he will not sacrifice a mission to indulge himself.

Mr. Absentia sometimes serves as a patron to up-and-coming inventors, particularly those who push the boundaries of scientific ethics. In such cases, the beneficiary rarely meets his financier – at least until he has outlived his usefulness.

Methods

Mr. Absentia acquires his missions outside the usual channels. He uses his mind-reading powers to probe the deepest, darkest ambitions of those in power, then offers his services as the mechanism to achieve those ambitions.

Once he finds a likely candidate, Mr. Absentia takes care to present himself socially, then gradually worms his way into his potential employer's confidence. Once he has the ear of a powerful patron, Mr. Absentia reveals his identity (though not his nature) and offers a bargain.

Most people in a position of authority harbour some secret rivalry or aspiration; Mr. Absentia simply articulates what should remain unspoken. Most of his potential employers find him persuasive, almost mesmerising, and sign his contract.



Mr. Absentia always upholds his end of a contract, which usually involves killing, spying or otherwise indulging in espionage. He is a master at legalese, however, and words the employer's end in such a way that every contract benefits Mr. Absentia. These contracts, unlike the usual devilish bargain, do not always include the employer's soul. Although Mr. Absentia collects more than his fair share of those, he often accepts numerous monetary contracts with a single employer to build up the latter's dependence on him before requesting spiritual payment.

Mr. Absentia absolutely refuses to tolerate any violation of his contract – particularly the anonymity clause that prevents employers from revealing his identity. Anyone who violates a contract with Mr. Absentia lives only long enough to regret it.

While on the hunt, Mr. Absentia moves like a shadow or a wisp of mist. He enjoys playing with his victims, most of whom stand no chance of opposing him in combat, and often drags out the final execution of his contract – the assassination – for hours. He is much more serious about the other aspects of espionage, probably because he enjoys them less.

Adventure Hooks

Player characters might encounter Mr. Absentia in the course of one of his missions, but unless they already boast powers at the uppermost end of the scale, such a conflict would likely spell their deaths. However, even low-level characters could easily become involved in one of Mr. Absentia's webs, perhaps building up to an eventual confrontation with him.

A public figure targeted by Mr. Absentia might hire the PCs as bodyguards. Of course, they are rather unlikely to succeed, or indeed to have any impact whatsoever on the infernal assassin's activities. All the same, their reputations will suffer when their charge is found murdered in a seemingly impossible crime. The PCs' investigation might finger Mr. Absentia, but they will require far more power before they will be able to take him to task for it.

Mr. Absentia's obsession with all things mechanical is another avenue by which PCs might encounter him. A PC (or friendly NPC) genius might attract the devil's attention and perhaps his proffered finances, if he developed some interesting device. Alternately, the PCs might have a run-in with Mr. Absentia while targeting a mad scientist or evil genius whose work he bankrolled and protected.

However the PCs first meet Mr. Absentia, he makes an ideal long-running adversary. Until he considers them a significant threat, he may enjoy stringing them along and seeing how much they can take before they finally crack – something of an experiment of his own, or so he fancies it.

Mr. I. N. Absentia

Medium-sized Outsider [Evil, Lawful]

Hit Dice: 20d8+100 (190 hp)

Initiative: +9

Speed: 50 ft. (10 squares)

Armour Class: 26 (+9 Dex, +3 natural, +4 leather coat), touch 19, flat-footed 17

Base Attack/Grapple: +20/+24

Attack: Doubt +29 ranged (4d6, 18-20, x4) or claw +25 melee (1d8+4)

Full Attack: Doubt +27/+27/+22/+17/+12 ranged (4d6, 18-20, x4) and Falsehood +27/+22/+17 ranged (4d6, 18-20, x4); or 2 claws +25 melee (1d8+5) and bite +20 melee (2d6+2)

Special Attacks: Consuming sunder, machine curse, mind reading, stealth attack, sundering grasp

Special Qualities: DR 15/good, regeneration 5/silver, smoke and steam, SR 28

Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Saves: Fort +17, Ref +21, Will +18

Abilities: Str 21, Dex 28, Con 20, Int 21, Wis 22, Cha 26

Feats: Combat Expertise, Far Shot, *Improved Sunder, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, *Pistol Firearms Proficiency, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, *Two-Weapon Fighting

Skills: Bluff +31, Concentration +28, Craft (Mechanical) +28, Diplomacy +31, Hide +32, Intimidate +31, Knowledge (Occult Sciences) +28, Knowledge (Politics) +28, Knowledge (The Otherworlds) +28, Knowledge (Technology) +28, Listen +29, Move Silently +32, Sense Motive +29, Spot +29

Environment: Any

Organisation: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 18

Treasure: Standard + Doubt and Falsehood

Alignment: Lawful evil

Advancement: by character class

Level Adjustment: –

Mr. Absentia stands well over six feet tall. Gaunt and grey-skinned almost to the point of ill health, he nonetheless possesses unnatural charisma and vitality. He wears a neatly trimmed black beard and moustache, a plain grey suit, overcoat and gloves, and a matching grey bowler over his bald pate.

Outside of combat, he is never seen without these accoutrements, and he tries to avoid shedding them even when imperilled. A pair of bony, bat-like wings folds under his overcoat, his hands end in cruel talons, and a pair of small horns curl from his skull.

Mr. Absentia's voice shifts between soft, soothing lulls and sharp, metallic snaps, a dichotomy he struggles to control.

Mr. Absentia's pistols, *Doubt and Falsehood*, are nearly as famous as their owner. Each of these rune-etched amazing machines operates in accordance with strange and esoteric mechanical and magical principles, little understood by mundane inventors. Any observer can readily understand the danger they pose, however.

Combat

Fighting Mr. Absentia openly is almost certain death for most creatures. He can kill a typical opponent with a single unexpected shot from *Doubt or Falsehood*, but prefers to toy with his prey for a time. In close quarters, his strange power over machines renders him almost invincible.

Consuming sunder (Su): If Mr. Absentia successfully sunders a metal or mechanical object, he heals a number of hit points equal to the damage dealt. He gains any excess as temporary hit points. These temporary hit points fade after 24 hours.

Machine curse (Su): Any mechanical device or construct within 30 ft. of Mr. Absentia

operates in accordance with his will, not its original programming or the directives of an intelligent operator. Mr. Absentia can cause a firearm to jam, an automaton to turn on its master, a vehicle to increase or decrease its speed or swerve wildly, or any other effect he chooses.

Alternately, Mr. Absentia can cause a machine to malfunction, in which case it suffers 4d6 points of damage. This damage ignores hardness, damage reduction or other protective measures. A machine or construct with an Intelligence score, such as a cog, may make a Will save (DC 28) to resist either effect. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Mind reading (Su): Mr. Absentia can read the thoughts of almost any intelligent creature, even at great distances. He automatically detects the surface thoughts of any creature within 30 feet. Mr. Absentia can focus his mental attention on any individual to whom he has line of sight. Unlike most mortal telepathy, however, this effect works even against creatures Mr. Absentia cannot see, provided he has a photograph or other close likeness of the target. Mr. Absentia can move and defend himself while using detailed mind reading, but cannot take any standard or full-round action.

While focusing his mind-reading powers, Mr. Absentia can probe even the deepest recesses of his target's psyche, possibly uncovering details the target himself does not recall. After a number of rounds equal to 1d4 + the target's Wis modifier, Mr. Absentia knows any useful or interesting details in his target's mind. The target of Mr. Absentia's mind-reading gets

a Will save (DC 28) to resist the effect. If he succeeds by five or more, he also realises that an attempt was made to read his mind. The save DC is Charisma-based.

Stealth attack (Ex): Whenever Mr. Absentia strikes a flat-footed creature, his attack is automatically considered a critical threat. He must roll to confirm the critical normally.

Sundering grasp (Su): Mr. Absentia's claw attacks bypass object hardness and the damage reduction of Constructs.

Smoke and steam (Su): While in any area of smoke, steam or other gaseous emission from a machine, Mr. Absentia can fly at 90 ft. per round with Good manoeuvrability and gains a +10 circumstance bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks. In addition, he suffers no ill effects from hazardous conditions caused by any sort of mechanical device.

Equipment

Doubt and Falsehood

Although these pistols appear to have been crafted in much the same way as amazing personal weapons, the level of enchantment and diabolism that went in to their construction renders them more akin to minor artefacts.

Doubt and *Falsehood* are twin pistols, large and menacing but almost delicately crafted. Intricate filigree – gold on *Doubt*, silver on its twin – runs down their lengths. Upon closer inspection, this decoration seems to move as

though possessing a life of its own, displaying a scene now abstract, now terrifyingly real, now gone before its reality becomes truly apparent.

The damage dealt by *Doubt* and *Falsehood* serves as the best testament to their fiendish power. Each packs more of a punch than a mortal weapon twice its size. This is by far the least dangerous aspect of *Doubt* and *Falsehood*, however.

Any creature dealt damage by *Doubt* must make a Will save (DC 28) or suffer a –6 penalty to Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma for 1d6+1 rounds. Further attacks do not apply cumulative penalties.

Any creature dealt damage by *Falsehood* must make a Will save (DC 28) or fall into a stupor for 1d6+1 rounds, unable to take action or even defend itself.

The saves for both effects are based on Mr. Absentia's Charisma.

Mr. Absentia's connection to the two weapons is such that he can suppress either or both of these effects at will. While on the hunt, he often does so, allowing his victim full access to his faculties as he is slowly, inexorably whittled down.

In game terms, *Doubt* and *Falsehood* are Small telluric-powered amazing personal weapons, crafted from arcanium, with the special features Accurate x1, Additional Hard Slot x1, Damaging x2, Greater Damage x4, Harmful x1 and Increased Range x1. Their CP cost is 59 each, before enchantment. Although a

skilled human inventor could duplicate these elements (see below), the more esoteric aspects of *Doubt* and *Falsehood*'s construction remain beyond human ability.

Mortal copies of *Doubt* and *Falsehood* require little advanced technology, but weigh far too much for most characters to heft one-handed. Mr. Absentia has no difficulty wielding the originals, thanks to his supernatural strength.

Doubt and Falsehood

Small Amazing Personal Weapons

Construction Points: 64

Hit Points: 26

Hardness: 13

Range: 25 ft.

Damage: 4d6 (19-20, x4)

Hard Slots: 5

Material: Arcanium

Weight: 32 lb.

Power Source: Telluric Power Source

Purchase DC: 23¹

Malfunction Threshold: 1

Construction (Body): Craft (Mechanical) DC 19, Craft (Structural) DC 15

Construction (Other): Telluric Power Source Craft (Structural) DC 10 and Craft (Expression) DC 20

¹ - *Doubt* and *Falsehood* cannot be purchased.



Were-Insects - A New Look At Lycanthropy

By Carl Walmsley

Some of the most lethal and ingenious creatures to stalk the Earth (and that goes for whichever version of 'Earth' you are talking about) are insects and arachnids. Equipped with a host of natural defences and terrifying hunting techniques, the bug kingdom is a ruthless one. Combine this with the shapeshifting abilities of a lycanthrope and a host of new and dangerous adversaries present themselves. Many adventurers will be familiar with the folklore surrounding were-wolves – most will likely encounter one if they stick around long enough. They will be less prepared to deal with a seductive and deadly were-mantis or a blood-sucking were-mosquito!

Were-Mantis

Were-mantises tend to be encountered deep within forests and jungles, living a hermit-like existence. If encountered in human form, they often welcome strangers and invite them to stay for a meal and a rest. This gives the were-mantis a chance to size up any potential prey before deciding whether to attack them.

A female were-mantis is particularly dangerous for any male humanoids that encounter her. Unlike the males, which are rather plain, female were-mantises are extremely alluring creatures. When interacting with males, they are considered to have 16 Charisma. Ideally, a female were-mantis will lure potential prey into mating with

her, before transforming suddenly, beheading the unsuspecting victim and feasting on his corpse. Were-mantises usually construct simple cabins or shelters, where they spend much of their time in human form. It has been known for them to be accepted as slightly quirky outsiders by nearby communities, which have no knowledge of their true nature. A were-mantis acknowledged in this way will be careful not to prey on members of the community, as this would draw unwanted attention. The cabins built by these lycanthropes are located within heavily wooded areas that make it easy for the were-mantis to hunt and, if necessary, to elude enemies. Positioned directly above the shelter will often be overhanging branches that would facilitate any sudden retreat.

Were-mantises will keep the possessions of their victims, often gathering a collection of trinkets and valuable objects that they will stash in the woods close to their shelter. This can make them a useful source of treasure.

There is a rare sub-species of were-mantis that can fly whilst in mantis form. These creatures gain fly 50 ft. (average) as a movement type.

Combat

Were-Mantises are cunning opponents that will seek to make a single lethal attack against an opponent, ending a fight before it really begins. When in human form, they will try to hide their

true nature, lulling their target, until it is time to strike. In Mantis or hybrid form, they use their considerable skills of stealth to stalk their prey and take them by surprise.

Alternate Form: A were-mantis can assume the form of a giant preying mantis (about five feet high and seven feet long) or a mantis-humanoid hybrid.

Curse of Lycanthropy: Any humanoid or giant hit by the were-mantis' bite attack must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or contract lycanthropy.

Decapitate: If a were-mantis scores a critical hit on a flat-footed opponent, it beheads it instantly. Unless the target is somehow able to survive without a head (undead, ooze, and so forth), it is dead!

Improved Grab: When a were-mantis hits with a claw attack, it may attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Leap: If a were-mantis charges a foe, it may leap up to its full movement (40 ft.), ignoring potential obstacles, and make a full attack.

Skills: * Were-Mantises have a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks. Because of its camouflage, the Hide bonus increases to +12 in areas of dense foliage, such as forests.

Were-Mantis

	Human Form Medium Humanoid	Praying Mantis Form Medium Humanoid (Human Shapechanger)	Hybrid Form Medium Humanoid (Human Shapechanger)
Hit Dice:	1d8+2 plus 2d8+4 (20 hp)	1d8+2 plus 2d8+4 (20 hp)	1d8+2 plus 2d8+4 (20 hp)
Initiative:	+3	+9	+8
Speed:	30 ft. (6 squares)	40 ft. (8 squares)	40 ft. (8 squares)
Armour Class:	13 (+3 Dex)	19 (+5 Dex, +4 Natural)	17 (+4 Dex, +3 Natural)
Base Attack/Grapple:	+5/+9	+6/+10	+5/+9
Attack:	Dagger +5 (1d4+1)	Claw +6 (1d8+2)	Claw +5 (1d6+2)
Full Attack:	Dagger +5 (1d4+1)	2 Claws +6 (1d8+2) and bite +3 (d4+1)	Claw +5 (1d6+2)
Space/Reach:	5 ft./5 ft.	5 ft./5 ft.	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	-	Curse of lycanthropy, decapitate, improved grab, leap	Curse of lycanthropy, improved grab
Special Qualities:	Alternate Form, damage reduction 5/silver	Alternate Form, damage reduction 5/silver	Alternate Form, damage reduction 5/silver
Saves:	Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +3	Fort +6, Ref +9, Will +3	Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +3
Abilities	Str 13, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10	Str 15, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10	Str 14, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10
Skills:	Climb +6, Diplomacy +3, Hide +10*, Listen +4, Spot +8, Move Silently +8	Climb +7, Hide +11*, Listen +4, Spot +8, Move Silently +9	Climb +7, Hide +10*, Listen +4, Spot +8, Move Silently +8
Feats:	-	Improved Critical (Claw), Improved Initiative	Improved Critical (Claw), Improved Initiative
Environment:	Jungle and forest	Jungle and forest	Jungle and forest
Organisation:	Solitary	Solitary	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	3	3	3
Treasure:	Double goods and items	Double goods and items	Double goods and items
Alignment:	Neutral evil	Neutral evil	Neutral evil
Advancement:	By character class	By character class	By character class
Level Adjustment:	+3	+3	+3

Were-Spider

Were-spiders are the kind of monsters that scare other monsters. Lurking in the dark, lonely corners of the world, they wait patiently for potential prey to happen by. They will happily eat anything with a pulse, but have a particular fondness for humanoids, especially elves – a race they find singularly delicious.

A were-spider lair is a hideous place, often designed to tempt in unwary prey. Treasure is frequently scattered around the entranceway, creating a trail leading down into the darkness. There are also stories of were-spiders infiltrating human society to plant false treasure maps in an effort to lure victims to their doom. The tunnels within a lair are filled with traps, pits and collapsing walls. Once a were-spider has you within its domain, it will do whatever it can to prevent you from leaving.

A lone were-spider, then, is a dangerous foe – an entire brood is truly deadly. Though most were-spiders are solitary, there are a few colonies that exist well away from civilized regions. Ancient ruins and long-forgotten cities serve as perfect sites for these arachnid settlements. They resemble the lairs of lone were-spiders, but on a much larger scale, and are full of pitfalls, hidden passages and – for those brave enough to look for them – the remains of previous victims. To enter one of these spider-cities is almost certain death, however.

At the heart of each were-spider colony resides a brood-queen (7th-level or higher). She is the matriarch of the group, overseeing the development of her children until such time as she grows weak and they turn on her. At such a time, the broodlings will devour their progenitor, and the strongest among them will claim her

place. The others must submit to the new queen or leave the nest to become solitary creatures or try to start a colony of their own.

Combat

Were-spiders will always carefully choose where they fight. On their own ground, where there may be hidden pits and traps, they will seek to outmanoeuvre an adversary, using knowledge of their surroundings to give them the upper hand. They are patient, sometimes terrifyingly so, but when the time comes to act they will do so without hesitation or regret. Mercy is a very human trait, and not something ever to have burdened the soul of a were-spider.

Alternate Form: A were-spider can assume the form of a giant spider (about 5 feet across) or a spider-humanoid hybrid.

Curse of Lycanthropy: Any humanoid or giant hit by the were-spider's bite attack must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or contract lycanthropy.

Poison: The bite of a were-spider is poisonous. Injury, DC 15, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Dex.

Web: Were-spiders often build trip-wires and snares using their webbing, or suspend themselves above the ground to fall upon unsuspecting prey. A single strand of web is strong enough to support about 500 lb.

Were-spiders may create nets from their web and use them to ensnare victims. These nets have a range increment of 10 feet and may trap medium-sized or smaller creatures. Fighting free of the net requires either a Strength check (DC 16) or an Escape Artist check (DC 13). Trying to spot a hidden web, placed as a trap, requires

a DC 20 Spot check. A character that stumbles (or flies) into a web becomes trapped in the same way as if it had been thrown onto them. Each net has 8 hit points and damage reduction 5.

Were-Butterfly

Unlike their more fearsome were-insect cousins, were-butterflies are creatures of great beauty and compassion. They nest deep within forested regions, leading a reclusive existence, high up in the canopy of the trees. Possessing a natural affinity with the forest and instinctive magical talents, were-butterflies fashion their homes from giant lily-like flowers, which live symbiotically among the trees. These flowers provide not only shelter but also food for the colony. The nectar of these flowers – named *elnaryn* by the elves, meaning 'blossom spring' – forms the basis of a delicious drink that is the staple diet of were-butterflies.

These unusual were-insects prize music, art and literature, fashioning instruments and parchment from the forest's natural resources. Each year, when it is time to mate, thousands of were-butterflies take to the skies above their home, filling the air with a beautiful song. It is said that every note is part of a far greater whole, a melody that stretches back countless years, with each new generation adding to the melody. Wood elves and other forest dwellers will travel many miles to witness the flight of were-butterflies and to hear their song.

Were-butterflies are very knowledgeable regarding events that have occurred within the region where they live. They keep records, inscribed on a parchment that seems not to age even with the passing of many centuries. These libraries are well tended, and are a source of great pride for the colony. With a life span of

Were-Spider

	Human Form Medium Humanoid	Spider Form Medium Humanoid (Human Shapechanger)	Hybrid Form Medium Humanoid (Human Shapechanger)
Hit Dice:	1d8+1 plus 2d8+2 (17 hp)	1d8+1 plus 2d8+2 (17 hp)	1d8+1 plus 2d8+2 (17 hp)
Initiative:	+6	+7	+7
Speed:	30 ft.	40 ft.	30 ft.
Armour Class:	14 (+2 Dex, +2 leather)	16 (+3 Dex, +3 natural)	15 (+3 Dex, +2 natural)
Base Attack/Grapple:	+4/+4	+5/+5	+5/+5
Attack:	Longsword +4 (D8+1)	Bite +5 (d6+2 plus poison)	Bite +5 (d6+2 plus poison)
Full Attack:	Longsword +4 (D8+1)	Bite +7 (d6+2 plus poison)	Bite +6 (d6+2 plus poison)
Space/Reach:	5 ft./5 ft.	5 ft./5 ft.	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	-	Curse of lycanthropy, poison, web	Curse of lycanthropy, poison, web
Special Qualities:	Alternate form, tremorsense 60 ft.	Alternate form, Darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.	Alternate form, Darkvision 60 ft., tremorsense 60 ft.
Saves:	Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +5	Fort +5, Ref +8, Will +5	Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +5
Abilities	Str 12, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 11	Str 14, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 11	Str 14, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 11
Skills:	Climb +7, Craft (trap making) +5, Hide +4, Listen +3, Move Silently +4, Spot +3	Climb +17, Craft (trap making) +5, Hide +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +6, Spot +3	Climb +13, Craft (trap making) +5, Hide +5, Listen +3, Move Silently +6, Spot +3
Feats:	Improved Initiative	Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (bite)	Improved initiative, Weapon Finesse (bite)
Environment:	Forests and underground	Forests and underground	Forests and underground
Organisation:	Solitary or colony (7-50)	Solitary or colony (7-50)	Solitary or colony (7-50)
Challenge Rating:	3	3	3
Treasure:	Double	Double	Double
Alignment:	Chaotic evil (solitary) or Lawful evil (colony)	Same as human form	Same as human form
Advancement:	By character class	By character class	By character class
Level Adjustment:	+3	+3	+3

Were-Butterfly

	Human Form Medium Humanoid	Butterfly Form Medium Humanoid (Human Shapechanger)	Hybrid Form Medium Humanoid (Human Shapechanger)
Hit Dice:	1d8 plus 1d8 (9 hp)	1d8 plus 1d8 (9 hp)	1d8 plus 1d8 (9 hp)
Initiative:	+2	+4	+3
Speed:	30 ft. (6 squares)	30 ft. (6 squares), fly 20 ft. (average)	10 ft. (2 squares), Fly 30 ft. (good)
Armour Class:	12 (+2 Dex)	14 (+4 Dex)	13 (+3 Dex)
Base Attack/Grapple:	+1/+0	+1/+0	+1/+0
Attack:	Dagger +3 (d4-1)	none	Dagger +4 (d4-1)
Full Attack:	Dagger +3 (d4-1)	none	Dagger +4 (d4-1)
Space/Reach	5 ft./5 ft.	5 ft./5 ft.	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	spell-like abilities	Curse of lycanthropy, spell-like abilities	Curse of lycanthropy, spell-like abilities
Special Qualities:	Alternate form, scent,	Alternate form, damage reduction 10/silver, scent	Alternate form, damage reduction 10/silver, scent
Saves:	Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +4	Fort +1, Ref +6, Will +4	Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +4
Abilities	Str 9, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 14	Str 9, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 14	Str 9, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 14
Skills:	Handle Animal +6, Hide +7, Listen +4, Move Silently +8, Search +6, Spot +6, Survival +5	Handle Animal +6, Hide +9, Listen +4, Move Silently +10, Search +6, Spot +6, Survival +5	Handle Animal +6, Hide +8, Listen +4, Move Silently +9, Search +6, Spot +6, Survival +5
Feats:	Weapon Finesse (dagger)	-	Weapon Finesse (dagger)
Environment:	Forests	Forests	Forests
Organisation:	Colony (20-500 plus 50 % non-combatants)	Colony (20-500 plus 50 % non-combatants)	Colony (20-500 plus 50 % non-combatants)
Challenge Rating:	1	1	1
Treasure:	standard	standard	standard
Alignment:	Neutral good or lawful good	Neutral good or lawful good	Neutral good or lawful good
Advancement:	As character class	As character class	As character class
Level Adjustment:	+2	+2	+2

only a dozen years, these people would quickly lose track of their history were it not carefully recorded.

With many natural predators – including other were-insects – were-butterflies rely on stealth and secrecy to maintain their safety. If seriously threatened, they will usually flee, and it is not unheard of for an entire settlement to be abandoned if it is under serious attack. Some of the more resilient members of a were-butterfly colony may build snares and traps around the edge of their village, if only to provide an early warning of a potential attack.

Combat

Were-butterflies will always try to avoid a direct confrontation, fighting only to defend themselves and as a last resort.

Alternate Form: A were-butterfly can assume the form of a giant butterfly (about 7 feet across) or a butterfly-humanoid hybrid.

Curse of Lycanthropy: Were-butterflies do not pass on lycanthropy in the same way as other were-creatures. They may elect to share a draft of their nectar drink, into which has been added a few drops of were-butterfly blood and saliva, if they wish to bestow what they consider to be a gift upon an outsider, and make him one of their own. This is an extremely rare occurrence. If the mixture is imbibed, the drinker may choose to resist the effect (Fort save, DC 15) or willingly allow himself to become infected. If lycanthropy is contracted, the subject falls into a stupor the next time he sleeps, from which nothing short of a *wish* can wake him. His body begins to excrete a brittle white filament that forms a cocoon around his body. Within a few hours, a chrysalis is created. Inside this shell, the subject begins the transformation into

a were-butterfly. This process takes 48 hours. If, during this period, the chrysalis is seriously damaged, the subject must make a DC 20 Fort save. If successful, he awakens and may emerge from the cocoon unharmed and unchanged. If unsuccessful, the subject dies of shock. After the period of metamorphosis has passed, the new were-butterfly may emerge from its cocoon in its new form. It has a full understanding of its new abilities and is freely able to change between its different forms.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will – *entangle* (DC 13), *speak with plants*. Caster Level 3rd. Save DCs are Wisdom-based.

Were-Dung Beetle

Among the most loathsome of life forms, were-dung beetles (or *muck-herders* as they are also known) are shunned by almost all other creatures. In human form, they are found living amidst the filth and squalor of cities, the detritus of busy ports and the sewers of larger towns. There are even tales of them scratching out a living among the tunnels and caves of the world below, harvesting dung from the creatures that dwell in the unending darkness. Dragon dung is especially esteemed by these most hardy of muck-herders, who consider it a prize beyond the riches of any hoard!

In human form, were-dung beetles are often mistaken for beggars, ferreting among the trash for scraps. They are invariably smelly and filth-ridden to the point where real beggars consider them an insult to the trade. They will look to remain on the fringes of humanoid society, happily harvesting the bounty that people and domesticated animals produce in abundance. This is then either fashioned into easily transportable balls or stored in large mounds,

preferably far enough away from a settlement as to not attract attention.

Muck-herders not only derive nutrients from the dung that they gather, but may even choose to live in it, fashioning simple hovels for themselves. Certainly, when it is time to mate and reproduce, were-dung beetles do so exclusively within their stores of dung. The fertilized eggs are buried within and, upon hatching, the larvae have access to a ready supply of food. New-born muck-dwellers mature at a frightening rate and grow to adulthood within two years. A single brood usually consists of about a dozen children.

Were-dung beetles are not naturally aggressive, but tend to evoke such a negative response from other creatures that they are often forced to defend themselves. In their scarab-like beetle form, this is something that they are more than capable of doing, protected as they are by a tough shell. A bite from a were-dung beetle is doubly dangerous – it causes not only a savage wound but carries the risk of infection. Ironically, the work of muck-herders, gathering the waste of animals and humanoids, has many benefits and serves to keep an area free of faeces. Unfortunately for the were-dung beetles, few creatures see it this way.

Muck-herder stores are often a rich source of treasure, shoved to one side by the beetles, who have little interest in anything but their precious dung. If one can only put up with the smell, there are riches indeed to be found!

Combat

Given a choice, were-dung beetles will often try to flee from a fight. However, if cornered or if their dung store is threatened, they fight savagely and without mercy.

Were-Dung Beetle

	Human Form Medium Humanoid	Beetle Form Medium Humanoid (Human Shapechanger)	Hybrid Form Medium Humanoid (Human Shapechanger)
Hit Dice:	1d8+2 plus 2d8+6 (22 hp)	1d8+2 plus 2d8+6 (22 hp)	1d8+2 plus 2d8+6 (22 hp)
Initiative:	+0	+0	+0
Speed:	30 ft. (6 squares)	30 ft. (6 squares)	30 ft. (6 squares)
Armour Class:	10	17 (+7 natural)	15 (+5 natural)
Base Attack/Grapple:	+4/+5	+4/+7	+4/+6
Attack:	Rusty dagger +4 (d4+1)	Bite +6 (d10 +3)	Bite +5 (d8 +2)
Full Attack:	Rusty dagger +4 (d4+1)	Bite +6 (d10 +3)	Bite +5 (d8 +2)
Space/Reach	5 ft./5 ft.	5 ft./5 ft.	5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks:	Disease	Curse of lycanthropy, disease	Curse of lycanthropy, disease
Special Qualities:	Alternate form, reek	Alternate form, damage reduction 10/silver, reek	Alternate form, damage reduction 10/silver, reek
Saves:	Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +2	Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +2	Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +2
Abilities	Str 12, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 7	Str 16, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 7	Str 14, Dex 10, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 7
Skills:	Climb +4, Hide +5, Listen +4, Move Silently +5, Search +6, Survival +4	Climb +6, Hide +5, Listen +4, Move Silently +5, Search +6, Survival +4	Climb +5, Hide +5, Listen +4, Move Silently +5, Search +6, Survival +4
Feats:	-	-	-
Environment:	Any, except areas of extreme cold	Same as human form	Same as human form
Organisation:	Solitary or troupe (2 plus 2-12 non-combatants)	Same as human form	Same as human form
Challenge Rating:	2	2	2
Treasure:	Double	Double	Double
Alignment:	Usually neutral	Usually neutral	Usually neutral
Advancement:	By character class	By character class	By character class
Level Adjustment:	+3	+3	+3

All attacks made by a were-dung beetle may cause *dung fever*, not just a bite attack.

Alternate Form: A were-dung beetle can assume the form of a giant bug (about 5 feet long) or a beetle-humanoid hybrid.

Curse of Lycanthropy: Any humanoid or giant hit by the were-dung beetle's bite attack must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or contract lycanthropy.

Disease (Ex): dung fever; bite; fortitude DC 13, incubation period 1d6 hours, damage 1d3 Str, 1d3 Dex, 1d3 Cha.

Reek: All living creatures (except other were-dung beetles) within 20 feet of a were-dung beetle must succeed on a DC 14 Fort save or be sickened for 10 rounds. Creatures that successfully save cannot be affected by the same were-dung beetle's smell for 24 hours.

Were-Mosquito

Equally at home in sweltering cities and steamy swamps, were-mosquitoes are sadistic parasites that prey upon other animals. Their vampire-like nature has made them figures of fear in regions where they are commonplace. There are even legends that describe whole cities laid low by the diseases these creatures spread, the survivors turning upon one another as the lycanthropic curse fills them with a hunger for blood.

In their humanoid form, were-mosquitoes tend to develop a stooped frame and often have lank, greasy hair that covers a pale, twitching face. Their fingers tend to tremble, constantly moving and convulsing. It has been known for them to seek employment in places of healing, such as sanatoria and temples. This provides a

were-mosquito with ready access to a source of food, and they have no need to fear contracting any of the diseases carried by their charges. That they in fact hasten the spread of contagion, usually making things far worse for those in their care, is not something that escapes them, but in which they take a cruel pleasure. Female were-mosquitoes are especially dangerous when pregnant. At such times, the amount of blood that they must drink increases greatly, due to the hunger of the developing young.

In mosquito form, these creatures are skilful predators. Despite the constant hum that accompanies their movements, they possess considerable stealth skills and will usually look to feed upon sleeping or helpless victims. If forced to fight, were-mosquitoes use their agility in the air to dart in and out, looking to wound enemies by stabbing with their razor-sharp proboscis.

Were-mosquitoes are usually solitary, coupling only to mate, which they do during the hot, still summer months. Immature were-mosquitoes begin life as eggs, hatching into larvae after a few days. In areas where it is especially hot, this process is accelerated. These larvae, which must live in still water, feed on other insects, growing at a prodigious rate. After a month or so, they will have grown to about a foot in length. It is around this time that they gain the ability to change between mosquito and humanoid form. They continue to develop rapidly until they reach a stage where, in humanoid form, they resemble teenagers, at which point the aging process slows down to mirror that of their humanoid form.

On occasion, were-mosquitoes have been mistaken for vampires. Besides the blood-sucking nature of both species, were-mosquitoes have an aversion to garlic. More than one vampire-hunter

has confronted what he expects to be an undead adversary, only to have it transform into a giant mosquito and attack him.

Combat

Were-mosquitoes are cowardly creatures that prefer to feed upon unsuspecting prey. They will rarely kill their food, as this attracts too much attention. Instead, they drain enough blood to sate their hunger, but not enough to threaten the victim's life.

Alternate Form: A were-mosquito can assume the form of a giant mosquito (about 6 feet long) or a mosquito-humanoid hybrid.

Aversion to Garlic: A were-mosquito must succeed at a DC 14 Will save to come within 10 feet of fresh garlic.

Blood Drain: A were-mosquito can drain blood from a victim with its proboscis by making a successful Grapple check. If it pins its foe, it may drain blood, dealing 1d3 points of Constitution damage each round that the hold is maintained. In addition, a victim whose blood is drained risks contracting a disease (see below).

Curse of Lycanthropy: Any humanoid or giant hit by the were-mosquito's bite attack must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude save or contract lycanthropy.

Disease: Were-mosquitoes carry a range of diseases but the most common is the *burning plague*; bite; Fortitude DC 11; incubation period 1d3 days, damage 1d3 Str and 1d3 Con.

Immune to Disease: Were-mosquitoes are immune to non-supernatural diseases. Against supernatural diseases, they receive a +6 bonus to all Fortitude saves.

Wounding Bite: When a were-mosquito inflicts damage with its bite attack, it releases anti-coagulant saliva into the wound. This causes

a persistent injury. An injured creature loses 1 additional hit point each round from each wound inflicted. A wound will stop bleeding

naturally after 5 rounds or as soon as a healing spell is used. Alternatively, a DC 15 Heal check will staunch the bleeding.



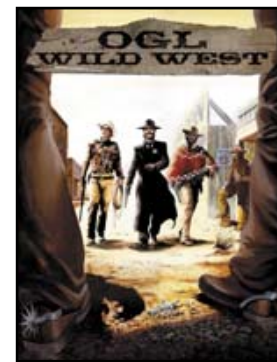
Were-Mosquito

	Human Form Medium Humanoid	Mosquito Form Large Humanoid (Human Shapechanger)	Hybrid Form Large Humanoid (Human Shapechanger)
Hit Dice:	1d8+1 plus 2d8+4 (19 hp)	1d8+1 plus 2d8+4 (19 hp)	1d8+1 plus 2d8+4 (19hp)
Initiative:	+5	+7	+6
Speed:	30 ft.	20 ft. (4 squares), fly 40 ft. (good)	30 ft. (6 squares), fly 30 ft. (good)
Armour Class:	11 (+1 Dex)	15 (+3 Dex, +2 natural)	14 (+2 dex, +2 natural)
Base Attack/Grapple:	+2/+2	+2/+3	+2/+3
Attack:	Stiletto +2 (d4)	Bite +5 (d8+1)	Bite +4 (d6+1)
Full Attack:	Stiletto +2 (d4)	Bite +5 (d8+1)	Bite +4 (d6+1)
Space/Reach	5 ft./ 5ft.	5 ft./ 5ft.	5 ft./ 5ft.
Special Attacks:	-	Blood drain, curse of lycanthropy, disease, wounding bite	Blood drain, curse of lycanthropy, disease, wounding bite
Special Qualities:	Alternate form, immune to disease	Alternate form, damage reduction 10/silver, immune to disease, scent	Alternate form, damage reduction 10/silver, immune to disease, scent
Saves:	Fort +4, Ref +4, Will +2	Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2	Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +2
Abilities	Str 11, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 9	Str 13, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 9	Str 12, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 9
Skills:	Climb +6, Hide +6, Listen +4, Move silently +5, Spot +3	Climb +7, Hide +8, Listen +4, Move silently +7, Spot +3	Climb +7, Hide +7, Listen +4, Move silently +6, Spot +3
Feats:	Improved Initiative	Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (bite)	Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (bite)
Environment:	Any warm or temperate region	Same as human form	Same as human form
Organisation:	Solitary	Solitary	Solitary
Challenge Rating:	2	2	2
Treasure:	Standard	Standard	Standard
Alignment:	Usually chaotic evil	Usually chaotic evil	Usually chaotic evil
Advancement:	By character class	By character class	By character class
Level Adjustment:	+3	+3	

Monty's Offer of the Month

OGL heaven

This month Monty wants to encourage you guys to try out the regular excellent articles S&P has for our OGL line of games. So, if you want to try your hand at some gunslinging, steampunking or scarefying (that's horror to you and me) you can pick up any of your OGL books for just \$30/£20 each, post free!



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BABYLON 5 ROLEPLAYING GAME 2ND EDITION CONVERSION GUIDE, PART 1

BY BRYAN STEELE

When we undertook the alteration of the massively popular *Babylon 5 Roleplaying Game* into a second edition, we knew that there might be a few growing pains but before we knew it we had a much more streamlined system that took so much of what we loved about the first edition and polished it into the gem that we now have in our libraries. We even included a fast and hard conversion guide in the back of the new book to bring people into the new system seamlessly. That was the plan, anyway.

Our loyal fan base, mostly through e-mails and posts on our very popular Babylon 5 Forum, raised their electronic voices and asked Matthew for a more complete conversion guide. Matthew asked Ian to get the wheels in motion. I guess I am that wheel.

Rather than taking away from our constant and sometimes heavy release schedule to put together a massive conversion guide all at once, Ian asked me to do a series of short articles that look a bit closer at the conversion process from one edition to the next.

Converting to the ‘New’ Races

While the Player Character races in the front of *B52E* (*Babylon 5 Second Edition* for the

anagram-challenged) are not exactly ‘new’, many of their finer points were altered a bit from their first edition varieties to better suit the new system and their overall use in the Babylon 5 universe.

This section will compare the new versions of each Player Character race to that in the first edition, hopefully helping our fans and readers understand how to quickly alter their first edition characters’ racial information.

Abbai

Well, considering the Abbai received three small paragraphs in the first edition, the fact that they are included in the Player Character race section of *B52E* has to say something about their increased importance. The Abbai are a huge source of diplomatic and technological plotlines based out of the League of Non-Aligned Worlds, so they needed a little closer look this time around.

Major Changes

The ability score adjustments were *radically* altered from a +2 Dexterity/-2 Constitution into a -2 Strength/+2 Wisdom. The original setup made for extremely effective ranged combat characters, which should be far rarer overall – especially for an aquatic-based race of defensive peaceniks.

The Abbai’s swimming speed was increased to 40 feet; faster than their walking speed – which makes sense for an *amphibious* race! This also increased their bonus to their Athletics skill tests from +5 to +8 when swimming.

We eliminated the penalty for being in hot climates. This seemed awkward and odd, especially if they have any tropical planets in the Matriarchate.

Abbai in *B52E* are no longer utterly immune to drowning. Instead, they can ‘hold their breath’ effectively using hidden gills in oxygenated water for several hours. This was to make them seem more evolved, and far less merman-like.

New Additions

Making sure that the readers were well aware that the Abbai are intellectuals and deep-thinkers, we added the fact that several Knowledge skills are always considered class skills. This helps even Abbai Soldiers seem more educated and intelligent than say, a Drazi equivalent.

Adding a penalty to all Abbai initiatives keeps them defensively minded, rather than ‘fast on the draw’. As does their new inherent bonus to Defence Value.

Also adding to their status as intellectuals and diplomats, giving them an additional Fluency feat makes them fit with multi-race player groups rather easily. If they can manage to become the group's linguist, the character will fit right in!

Brakiri

Although the Brakiri did receive an actual Player Character race entry in First Edition, they did get a slight polishing for *B52E* – but not much. It was the addition of the Trader class and the language Fluency system that altered the Brakiri more than anything else.

Major Changes

The amount of time that a Brakiri need not take Fortitude saves in *extremely hot* conditions



went from every hour to every twenty minutes, reflecting that even a desert people can suffer exhaustion. Also, Brakiri can now last a much longer time without water – representing a natural resistance to dehydration.

The favoured class of the Brakiri is no longer the shady Agent, changed to the much more applicable Trader.

New Additions

The Brakiri now get an additional language Fluency, allowing them to be the social 'wheeler-dealers' that they are regularly painted as.

Centauri

The Centauri have always been a favourite character race in Babylon 5, with great characters like Londo and Vir to give shape to the personalities that so many of us roleplayers have wanted to emulate. *B52E* did not take any of that flavour away when it slightly re-defined these hedonistic fan-heads.

Major Changes

Centauri characters have a different list of which 'socialite' skills to consider Class skills due to the alteration of the skill system itself. These skills will still form the background of most political or power-brokering characters.

Due to their interesting lean on dishonesty and 'selective conversation', they no longer gain a bonus to Diplomacy. Instead, they receive the same bonus to Intrigue – which could be quite useful in otherwise diplomatic situations nonetheless.

The bonus to Fortitude saves that were once solely used for poisons and toxins is now a blanket +1. This makes it far easier to remember, and reflects the Centauri's hedonistic lifestyle.

New Additions

Centauri now also have Diplomat as a Favoured Class, showing how their internal politics can be found nearly anywhere in the Centaurum.

Drazi

Everyone loves the Drazi. Fans, readers, players and yes...even us. However, that being said, in *B52E* the Drazi got a slight overhaul from their 'over the top awesomeness' in first edition. They were too well-rounded and powerful in the first rendition, and now we feel they are a little more balanced out by their new adjustments.

Major Changes

Although we kept the +2 Strength, we altered the -2 Wisdom to a -2 Intelligence for *B52E*. A loss in Wisdom originally made them simply easier to sneak past (modifier to Spot and Listen) and get probed by Telepaths (Will save). It did not nearly reflect enough of the Drazi single-mindedness that we know and love from the show.

The Improved Unarmed Combat feat no longer exists in *B52E*, so we gave them the Brawler feat instead. Ever been punched by a Drazi? If you have...you know why we did this.

New Additions

Not happy with simply leaving the Drazi hot-headedness in the hands of our roleplayers, we added the 'Short Fuse' racial drawback. This gives the Games Master a great tool for prodding his Drazi players into using some of those martial add-ons the race is known for!

Humans

Well, let's see...uhm...we really did not change Humans at all. There really was no need to. The bonus Feat and Skill Points is a great way to keep Humans in line with all of the benefits of the aliens. When combined with some of the interesting Feats that come out of the *Earth Alliance Fact Book*. Humans can be a very entertaining race and are still unparalleled in their versatility.

Minbari

Ahh...the old boneheads rise up again to fill the pages of Babylon 5 with their castes and



powerful wisdom. Sure, they can't lie...and some of them *hate* the primary race in many of our books and stories, but they make for great Player Characters and are a mainstay of the Babylon 5 universe. Especially when they learn they have been duped by the Vorlons for so long...what do they do then?

Major Changes

No longer assumed to be harder to kill, they no longer receive Great Fortitude for free. Instead, they are simply difficult to dissuade from their chosen tasks, reflecting in a +2 bonus to Concentration.

Religious caste Minbari still gain the bonus to all Knowledge checks, but now *must* choose Diplomat, Ranger or Telepath as their starting class (no more Religious-trained Soldiers).

Warrior caste Minbari no longer gain the blanket +1 Attack bonus with a weapon, instead they gain the Weapon Focus feat (a much better deal in the long run). Also, they have to choose Agent, Officer or Soldier as their starting class.

Worker caste Minbari received the biggest change. No longer receiving the bonus to Craft and Profession skills, they now can attempt any Technical check untrained and receive their +2 bonus to Computer Use, Operations and Technical instead. This shows that an advanced race such as the Minbari rarely work

with their hands in large construction anymore, relying on technology to do the work as their extension. Also, they must choose Scientist or Worker as their starting class.

With their new enforced class setup, their favoured classes have changed depending on the caste they are. Their new favoured classes give an option for each caste, rather than simply assuming.

New Additions

As there were no real rules regarding the inability of a Minbari to lie (without proper reasoning), we added a huge bonus to any Bluff skill checks made by Minbari. Of course, if the Minbari is ever discovered to be dishonest and caught in a lie, they can never use the bonus again, as their credibility is officially shot.

Narn

One of the most tragic races in Babylon 5, the Narns are also one of the most popular. With their inability to ever become Telepaths, their treatment at the hands of the Centauri, and the powerful images brought to us by the late Andreas Katsulas as G'Kar; there are never a shortage of players ready to step into a Narn's boots.

Major Changes

The +1 Damage when fighting Centauri was changed to a +1 Attack bonus due to the nature of the bonus. Just knowing how someone else fights and *really* wanting to hurt them will not make energy-based projectile weapons any better.

Although the effect is the same, we changed the wording of the +2 Narn hit points to a free Toughness feat instead. This allows the character to them build off that Feat in the case of prerequisites and the like.

Another more or less semantic change, the Narn have access to all close combat weapons and also grenades – a benefit from years of living under leaders that were essentially guerrilla fighters.

New Additions

Actually, the only real addition to the Narn was an additional favoured class of Officer in addition to Soldier. There has been a structured Narn army and navy for a long time, after all.

Pak'ma'ra

Slipping their way into the forefront of the Player Character race section of *B52E*, the butt of some of the series' best jokes is now one of the offered character races. Destined to see a little more love in a future supplement based solely on them and their fascinating Civility, the Pak'ma'ra are the little filthy brother that most roleplayers never wanted – but are so glad to have when it comes time to hide that body...

Major Changes

Once penalised in their Charisma by a massive -4 and benefiting from a minor Constitution of +2, the 'new and improved' carrion eaters now have an impressive +4 to Constitution. The drawback is a lack of Dexterity and Charisma (-2), as it is hard to be fast with a huge breeding hump and nobody likes the guy who has morgue-breath.

Since both Hide and Pick Pockets became new skills entirely, the Pak'ma'ra no longer get a bonus to them. Instead they gain the same +2 to their counterparts (Stealth and Subterfuge), which are also always class skills.

While they are amazingly resilient and gain the Great Fortitude feat, and are completely immune to most diseases and poisons, and some toxic environments, they are no longer immune to radiation – which felt a bit wrong. Eating corpses makes your immune system tough, sure...but rad proof? We thought not.

Still unable to communicate in anything but the Pak'ma'ra tongue, the wording is different now so they can at least learn to *understand* other languages. This is useful if their translator is broken, stolen or otherwise unavailable.

New Additions

Besides actually receiving a truly disgusting feat all for themselves, the Pak'ma'ra also gained a remarkable ability to search and discover. This is reflected in a bonus to Intrigue (Gather Information) and Investigate (Search) skill tests.

Also, there is a reminder of the penalty to their Athletics skill tests for jumping due to their similarly reduced Movement score.

Other Races

In many of our other sourcebooks and past Signs & Portents articles for first edition we included many other Babylon 5 races like the Gaim, Hyach, Vree and Llort. These races are not being ignored in *B52E* and they will be

addressed in appropriate second edition source books.

Many of the changes that would need to take place are simple enough. If a race gains a bonus to Spot or Listen, add it to Notice instead. If they gain a Feat that no longer exists, give them the new equivalent. Most of these minor changes will never affect your games *too* much, and we have faith in our fans to do the right thing and not make their second edition versions fair in comparison to the changes that we made to ours.



RuneQuest Variant Weapon Tables

Introducing Lethal Extreme or High Fantasy to RuneQuest

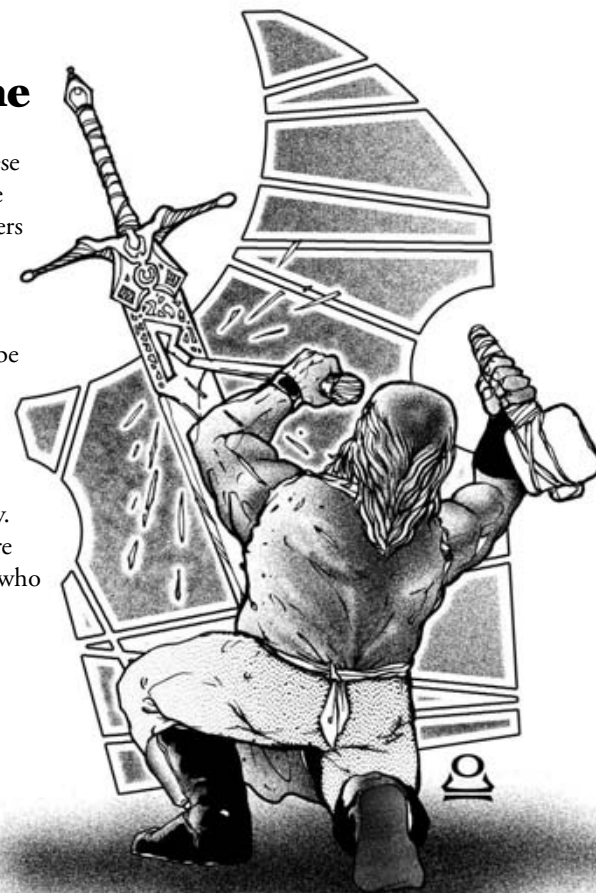
by Matthew Sprange

When designing the new RuneQuest, we had to balance a great many options. Nowhere was this more apparent than within combat which, in many ways, defines a roleplaying game. RuneQuest has always had the reputation of being a deadly game, forcing players to only engage in battle when the odds are most definitely on their side and being inventive in their tactics. The balance we opted for in the main rulebook was one where some hideous damage was possible for good fighters but combat would tend to last for several rounds as opponents chipped away at one another before delivering a killing (or, at least, disabling) blow.

However, we wanted to de-provincialise RuneQuest, in a sense, allowing many different styles of play to be possible through the medium of Open Content. In a nutshell, people would be able to take the core rules, adjust what they wished, and then publish (whether in a book, a PDF or on a web site) their ideas on how games could be played. Here, we give an example of how this is possible by altering nothing more than the Weapon tables to significantly change the way in which RuneQuest is played.

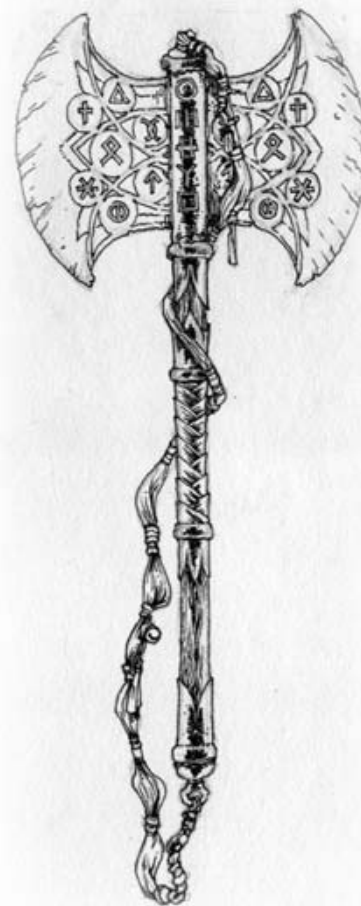
Lethal Extreme

Make no mistake, if you use the weapons suggested by these tables, then you will have one blood-filled game! Your players will have to be very skilful or lucky if they are to keep their characters through a long campaign, but you will be rewarded with a system where any good blow is painful and where limbs and heads alike fly through the air with astonishing regularity. If you score a critical hit, there are very, very few opponents who will survive.



Close Combat Weapons

Weapon	Skill	Damage Dice	STR/DEX	ENC	AP/HP	Cost
Ball & chain	1H Flail	1D8	9/11	2	4/8	250 SP
Bastard sword	1H Sword	2D8	13/9	2	4/12	250 SP
	2H Sword	2D10	9/9			
Battleaxe	1H Axe	2D6	11/9	1	3/8	100 SP
	2H Axe	2D8	9/9			
Bill	Polearm ²	1D10	7/9	2	2/8	50 SP
Buckler	Shield	1D6	—/5	1	5/8	50 SP
Club	1H Hammer	1D8	7/	1	2/4	5 SP
Dagger	Dagger ⁴	1D6	—/—	—	4/6	30 SP
Glaive	Polearm ²	1D12	7/9	3	2/10	100 SP
Great axe	2H Axe	2D10	13/9	2	3/10	125 SP
Great hammer	2H Hammer	3D6	11/9	3	3/10	250 SP
Great sword	2H Sword	3D8	13/11	4	4/12	300 SP
Halberd	2H Axe	1D12	13/7	4	3/10	250 SP
	Polearm ²	1D10	9/9			
	Spear ^{1,2}	1D10	7/7			
Hatchet	1H Axe ⁴	1D8	—/9	1	3/6	25 SP
Heavy mace	1H Hammer	2D6	11/7	3	3/10	200 SP
	2H Hammer	3D6	9/7			
Improvised	Unarmed	1D4	—/—	—	—/—	—
Kite shield	Shield ³	1D6	13/—	3	10/18	300 SP
Knife	Dagger	1D4	—/—	—	4/4	10 SP
Lance	Spear ^{1,2}	2D10	9/9	3	2/10	150 SP
Light mace	1H Hammer	2D6	7/7	1	3/6	100 SP
Longspear	Spear ^{1,2}	2D6	5/5	2	2/10	30 SP
Military flail	2H Flail	2D8	13/11	3	3/10	250 SP
Military pick	1H Hammer	1D12	11/5	3	3/10	180 SP
Natural weaponry	—	As noted	—/—	—	—	—
Quarterstaff	Staff	2D6	7/7	2	3/8	20 SP
Rapier	Rapier ¹	1D10	7/13	1	3/8	100 SP
Scimitar	1H Sword	2D8	7/11	2	4/10	200 SP
Shortspear	Spear ^{1,2,4}	2D6	5/5	2	2/5	20 SP
Shortsword	1H Sword ¹	2D6	5/7	1	3/8	100 SP
Target shield	Shield ³	1D6	9/—	2	8/12	150 SP
Unarmed	Unarmed	1D4	—/—	—	—/—	—
War maul	2H Hammer	4D6	13/7	3	3/12	150 SP
War hammer	1H Hammer	2D8	11/9	2	3/8	150 SP
War sword	1H Sword	2D8	9/7	2	4/10	175 SP



¹ This weapon will impale an opponent upon a critical hit.

² This weapon may be set against a charge.

³ This weapon may parry ranged weapons.

⁴ This weapon suffers no penalty when thrown.

Ranged Weapons

Weapon	Skill	Damage	Range	Load	STR/DEX	ENC	AP/HP	Cost
Atlatl ¹	Spear or Throwing	+1D4	+10m	2	5/11	1	2/4	20 SP
Blowgun	Blowgun	1D3	15m	1	—/9	—	1/4	30 SP
Dagger ²	Dagger or Throwing	1D6	10m	—	—/9	—	4/6	30 SP
Dart ¹	Throwing	1D4	20m	—	—/9	—	1/1	10 SP
Hatchet ²	1H Axe or Throwing	2D6	10m	—	7/11	1	3/6	25 SP
Heavy crossbow ¹	Crossbow	4D6	150m	3	7/9	2	2/8	350 SP
Javelin ¹	Spear or Throwing	2D6	40m	—	5/9	1	1/8	20 SP
Light crossbow ¹	Crossbow	3D6	100m	2	5/9	1	2/5	150 SP
Long bow ¹	Bow	4D8	175m	1	13/11	1	2/7	200 SP
Nomad bow ¹	Bow	3D8	120m	1	11/11	1	2/5	150 SP
Rock/improvised	Throwing	1D6	10m	—	5/9	1	3/5	—
Short bow ¹	Bow	2D8	60m	1	9/11	1	2/4	75 SP
Shortspear ^{1,2}	Spear or Throwing	2D6	25m	—	5/9	2	2/5	20 SP
Sling	Sling	1D6	50m	1	—/11	—	1/2	5 SP
Staff sling	Sling	2D6	60m	2	—/11	2	2/6	20 SP
Throwing star	Throwing	1D6	15m	—	—/13	—	4/1	15 SP

¹ This weapon will impale an opponent upon a critical hit.

² This weapon suffers no penalty when used in close combat.

High Fantasy

These tables take things in totally the opposite direction, allowing players to get away with great heroics in the name of drama. Most hits will result in minor scratches, meaning combats will stretch over several rounds as opponents go too and fro. The side with the best access to armour, magic and Strength will have the advantage, as it will regularly penetrate defences and have the potential to deliver the disabling blows we RuneQuest fans know and love.



Close Combat Weapons

Weapon	Skill	Damage Dice	STR/DEX	ENC	AP/HP	Cost
Ball & chain	1H Flail	1D6	9/11	2	4/8	250 SP
Bastard sword	1H Sword	1D8	13/9	2	4/12	250 SP
	2H Sword	1D8+1	9/9			
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Kite shield	Shield ³	1D6	13/—	3	10/18	300 SP
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Target shield	Shield ³	1D4	9/—	2	8/12	150 SP
Unarmed	Unarmed	1D3	—/—	—	—/—	—
War maul	2H Hammer	D10	13/7	3	3/12	150 SP
War hammer	1H Hammer	1D8	11/9	2	3/8	150 SP
War sword	1H Sword	1D8	9/7	2	4/10	175 SP



¹ This weapon will impale an opponent upon a critical hit.

² This weapon may be set against a charge.

³ This weapon may parry ranged weapons.

⁴ This weapon suffers no penalty when thrown.

Weapon	Skill	Damage	Range	Load	STR/DEX	ENC	AP/HP	Cost
Atlatl ¹	Spear or Throwing	+2	+10m	2	5/11	1	2/4	20 SP
Blowgun	Blowgun	1D2	15m	1	—/9	—	1/4	30 SP
Dagger ²	Dagger or Throwing	1D4	10m	—	—/9	—	4/6	30 SP
Dart ¹	Throwing	1D3	20m	—	—/9	—	1/1	10 SP
Hatchet ²	1H Axe or Throwing	1D6	10m	—	7/11	1	3/6	25 SP
Heavy crossbow ¹	Crossbow	1D10	150m	3	7/9	2	2/8	350 SP
Javelin ¹	Spear or Throwing	1D6	40m	—	5/9	1	1/8	20 SP
Light crossbow ¹	Crossbow	1D8	100m	2	5/9	1	2/5	150 SP
Long bow ¹	Bow	1D10	175m	1	13/11	1	2/7	200 SP
Nomad bow ¹	Bow	1D8	120m	1	11/11	1	2/5	150 SP
Rock/improvised	Throwing	1D3	10m	—	5/9	1	3/5	—
Short bow ¹	Bow	1D6	60m	1	9/11	1	2/4	75 SP
Shortspear ^{1,2}	Spear or Throwing	1D6	25m	—	5/9	2	2/5	20 SP
Sling	Sling	1D4	50m	1	—/11	—	1/2	5 SP
Staff sling	Sling	1D6	60m	2	—/11	2	2/6	20 SP
Throwing star	Throwing	1D3	15m	—	—/13	—	4/1	15 SP

¹ This weapon will impale an opponent upon a critical hit.

² This weapon suffers no penalty when used in close combat.



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Codename: Armoured Fury

A Starship Troopers Story by Richard Ford

Part 1

The small briefing room was dominated by the smell of cigar smoke and the creak of the burnished leather chairs. Lieutenant Thrower reclined in the comfort of the chesterfield recliner and drew in a long swallow of the half-smoked Havana in his fist. His men surrounded him, almost all of them were silently waiting for their CO to arrive. Beef had screwed up a page of his notepad and thrown it at Fredo's head. The short, dark trooper's retaliation was the only real noise to disturb the tranquillity of the room.

Thrower's Tigers had just returned from their fourth Hunt & Destroy mission in as many weeks and the Lieutenant was pleased to see their usual boisterous nature was still hard to suppress. As it was, most of the men were willing to sit and enjoy the respite in the comfort of the briefing room.

A stern look from Sergeant Kains was all it took for Beef and Fredo to stop their bickering. Thrower found it hard to suppress a smile; both of pride and amusement. These men were hand-picked, the best the MI had to offer, and they belonged to him. There was nothing they couldn't handle, they had proved that time and again.

The smoke that permeated the air was suddenly wafted into a flurry of grey mass as a side door was brusquely opened. Colonel Matiz strode in, computer pad under one arm, and took his position at the head of the room.

Ortega took his feet off the chair in front of him in an almost invisible display of respect at the entrance of his commanding officer.

'Men, you've done well once again,' said Matiz, his stern visage scanning the room like a roving gun turret. 'Usually you'd have earned yourself some R&R, a cosy week away in a hot climate with hotter women. Unfortunately that's not a luxury I can afford to give you yet.'

Thrower and his men remained silent, no moans of despondency or petulant huffs of disappointment. Matiz seemed pleased at their acceptance.

'OK, let's get down to business,' said Matiz. Instantly there was a ruffling of notepads and shifting in seats as Thrower's Tigers adjusted themselves to receive their orders. The Colonel pressed a button on the lectern before him and the wall at the front of the briefing room flickered to life. It displayed a revolving planet that Thrower didn't recognise.

'Xenon IV,' said Matiz. A small planet well away from Arachnid space. Mostly jungle terrain with small polar extremities and little dangerous indigenous life. It's also home to one of our most secret scientific research facilities.' With that the revolving planet stopped moving and the view zoomed into one of the planet's large landmasses until a bird's eye view of a nondescript stone structure was evident.

'The project the facility was designed for is known as Armoured Fury. All you need to know is that they're developing new ballistic weaponry that will revolutionise our war effort against the Arachnids.' Matiz paused as though expecting to be interrupted with questions but there were none forthcoming. 'Four hours ago we received a distress beacon from the facility. All attempts at communication have been met with white noise and we can only assume the worse. Consequently we need a team to infiltrate the facility and secure the research data ASAP. That's where you come in. You'll be heading in full Cougar armour. Your orders are to retrieve all data from the facility and rescue any scientists present, then rendezvous for extraction. I need to stress that the retrieval of scientific data is your first priority, if it conflicts with the safety of the facility's staff then unfortunately they're classed as expendable. Once all data is retrieved you are authorised to blow the facility to

avoid any data being compromised. That is all.' Matiz cast his steely gaze over the room once more but was only met with silence as Thrower and his troopers took in all they had heard.

'Well, does anyone have any questions?'

Beef slowly raised one thickly muscled arm. Matiz closed his eyes and nodded, realising he this was not going to be a sensible query, but he would be unable to stop the big man.

'Er, can we get some more of these cigars, Sir?'

This time Thrower couldn't help but smile as his men sniggered like schoolboys.

Despite the insulated cabin the roaring of the Slingshot's engines still drowned out any other sound as the ship came in to land. Thrower and his team were to be inserted several clicks from the target facility. They had no idea what to expect in the hot zone, so insertion away from the target and movement across country was the only option. It would be a short mission if the arachnids had a plasma bug waiting for them in the drop zone!

The team was already suited and booted, their Cougar armour filling the slingshot's cabin and leaving no room for auxiliary crew. Thrower's five man team – Sergeant Kains and four Troopers – had done this a hundred times, there was no need for chit-chat. Everyone prepared for a mission in their own way. Within the confines of their suits the men would be performing their own rituals; Kains checking and rechecking his readouts, Fredo grinding his teeth and humming the latest teen-metal tune that happened to be in his head, Beef would be sleeping but his jaw would be in constant motion destroying his three day old gum and Hernandez praying to the lord almighty for deliverance. Ortega was a mystery, he made neither sound nor movement before any mission, his pre-mission ritual as measured and robotic as the way he executed his job. As for Thrower, he was too busy running through contingencies, routines and formations to worry about prepping himself; his men and their performance were more important.

The pit of Thrower's stomach lurched as the Slingshot engaged its reverse thrusters, slowing its descent as it neared the ground. With a shudder the dropship landed, the cabin barely ceasing its vibration before the bay doors opened.

Without a word Thrower led his unit out into the verdant environment. All he could hear were the screaming engines,

whining in anticipation of take-off as though they expected trouble to leap from the surrounding foliage at any moment.

They were in a wide jungle clearing, completely surrounded by dense flora. Thrower paused at its edge as his men in their tiger-striped armour rushed into the undergrowth and immediately disappeared. When the last trooper ran past him he raised an arm to the waiting Slingshot pilot who gave him the thumbs-up before engaging the ship's thrusters. Thrower watched the Slingshot begin its ascent for several seconds before turning and following his men. The five troopers were waiting like sentinels in the jungle, despite their bulk they were barely visible against the verdant background.

'Comms check – by the numbers,' Thrower ordered.

'Kains check,' replied the Sergeant. Each of the troopers followed suit, confirming that their in helmet comms systems were operational. When they had finished Thrower continued.

'We RV with the Bullfrog fifteen clicks north-north-east from the dropzone. We have thirty minutes gentlemen, let's get moving. Ortega take point.'

No further instructions were needed. Ortega led the way at a blistering pace. The rest of the men fell in behind in staggered formation at twenty metre intervals. Their Cougar armour powered them through the undergrowth and to anyone observing it would have seemed like a herd of charging rhino were moving at an impossible speed.

Twenty-seven minutes later they burst from the thick jungle foliage onto a short jetty. The wood and steel construction groaned beneath their weight as the troopers walked towards the waiting Bullfrog.

The Bullfrog pilot stood and saluted as Captain Thrower approached. He gave a cursory salute in reply, then motioned towards the boat. His silence had the desired effect and Thrower smiled as the trooper, only wearing standard Power Armour, hustled to the front of the vessel and gunned the motor. Thrower was well aware of how intimidating he and his men appeared to other grunts. It was an edge he played on as often as possible.

It was a tight squeeze to fit all six troopers, plus the pilot, in the dinghy but they managed it. Thrower only hoped they didn't run into any trouble whilst on the water as it would be difficult to defend themselves.

As the boat proceeded, following the flow of the river, the troopers maintained their comms silence. Everyone was scanning the bank, the river ahead and their wake, waiting for any signs of trouble. Thrower stood right behind the pilot, watching his nervous behaviour. More than once he glanced over his shoulder skittishly, as though he were about to speak but thought better of it. The trooper obviously had no idea what their mission was or why they were here but he had worked out it must be something big for Cougar troopers to be required.

Thrower did his best to ignore the pilot as they proceeded. The last thing he needed was them coming under attack while he was distracted by a nervous grunt.

After what seemed like hours the Bullfrog finally landed at its destination. They were four clicks from the facility and from his holomap Thrower could see it was open ground. The troopers disembarked and the Bullfrog pulled away, its pilot not even looking back as he put as much distance between himself and the Cougar troops.

With agility that belied their size, the Cougar troopers quickly moved up a sharp rise and onto open savannah. The ground was flat for as far as the eye could see and in the distance Thrower spied their target. The facility stood cold and stark against the lush greenery, the drab, reinforced plascrete block that made up the facility couldn't have looked more out of place.

'Assume combat formation,' said Thrower, moving forward to front and centre. 'We don't need to take any chances. Kains, do we have any life signs in the facility yet?'

'Nothing so far Captain, but we're probably out of sensor range.'

'Alright let's move out.'

Thrower's men spread out beside him, moving at a steady rate towards their target. They hadn't moved two clicks before Thrower's helmet comm crackled into life. It was Kains.

'We got FB Captain. Standard bug readings about three hundred metres your zero.'

'How many?' snapped Thrower, hearing the sound of five rotary cannons firing up, their barrels beginning to spin in expectation of the enemy.

'Hard to say Captain, they move off the scope but there's only a single tunnel.'

'Beef, do you read them?'

'Loud and clear,' Beef replied.

'Invite them to the party, Trooper.'

Beef needed no further encouragement. Stepping forward he zeroed his Hellseed Y-Rack on their front arc and let rip. The rhythmic pumping of the Hellseed was like a sweet symphony that rose to a sudden crescendo as the grenades hit home. The ground in front of them erupted in a huge semicircle as the plain, unspoilt for thousands of years, was suddenly blasted apart.

'Tigers! Two o'clock!' called Fredo, his voice rising slightly above normal pitch. With that his sixgun began to hum as it spewed two hundred rounds per second at the approaching bugs.

The tiger bugs were fast and mean, a breed apart from the usual arachnid foot soldiers. Thrower knew they couldn't allow the creatures to get close. Even encased within the Cougar suits they would still be vulnerable at close quarters.

'Engage,' ordered Thrower. 'Fan out and spread them wide.'

With that the six troopers began to steadily retreat from the advancing horde, the arc of their formation widening as they moved.

Two tiger bugs managed to breach the hail of fire and run towards the line but as their targets spread out they became confused, unsure of which Cougar suit to leap on. A moment's hesitation was all the troopers needed and the bugs exploded in a shower of brightly coloured carapace and slimy green innards.

As the bugs threw themselves on the perpetual rain of shells Thrower began to worry. He knew the bugs weren't stupid, that such a sacrifice was never given needlessly.

Shutting off his sixgun he stepped back from the fray and consulted his scanners. The six red icons signifying his unit glowed brightly on the black display. A horde of green lights were converging on them but winking out two or three per second as the troopers blasted them into nothing. Thrower adjusted the view, monitoring deeper beneath the earth around them. His suspicions were justified. Twenty metres west of their position the bugs were tunnelling towards them.

‘Sergeant Kains, maintain suppressing fire,’ said Thrower, struggling to raise his voice above the din of the sixguns. ‘Fredo on me!’

Fredo broke away from the rest of the group and bounded towards his Lieutenant. Just as he reached Thrower’s side the ground burst open ten feet away, striped carapace and deadly jaws spewing forth from the breach in the soil. Neither trooper hesitated, meeting the ambush with sixgun fire and grenades projected from their Y-racks.

Within seconds the sound of explosive bursts was over. Thrower checked his scanners once more, relieved to see that every green light had been extinguished. His men had also made short work of the main contingent of tigers and were checking for any survivors. A wounded bug could be just as deadly as a healthy specimen if they were not dealt with in a clinical fashion.

Once more the savannah was silent with nothing to disturb the plain but a gentle wind that rocked the grass.

‘Move out – by the numbers,’ ordered Thrower, bounding past the sodden pieces of carapace and gore, strewn across the field of battle. His men followed without a word, not even pausing to congratulate themselves on a job well done. There would be plenty of time for that later. For now they had a job to do and from the number of bugs they had just faced, Thrower held little hope for the scientists in the facility that was now only seconds away.

When they reached the complex itself, all was quiet. There was a single bay door leading into the huge plascrete complex and Thrower signalled to Fredo to override the access panel. Within seconds the door was rising with a metallic hum.

Thrower and his men stood ready as the door revealed nothing but blackness within. Their guns were poised, ready to frag anything that might leap out and attack them. When nothing came, Thrower nodded to Hernandez. The trooper flicked on his helmet lamp and shone it inside quickly surveying the interior before moving forward. Thrower followed on Hernandez’ shoulder, raising his hand in a signal telling the rest of the men to fan out behind and follow them in.

Once inside the bay, the darkness seemed to consume them in a blanket of oppression. Everyone was on edge, wondering what could be lurking in the shadows. The bay itself was empty but for the occasional upturned barrel. Thrower at least expected to see some sort of carnage; torn limbs or half consumed bodies, but there was nothing.

‘Sensors are showing life signs,’ breathed Hernandez. His voice was a whisper, even though no one outside the comm range of his Cougar suit would have been able to hear him.

Thrower glanced at his own sensor readout. Up ahead a single blip told him something was approaching. Before any of them could move, or even think about finding cover, a door opened at the far end of the bay.

Thrower heard a cheerful whistling as a figure entered in a white lab coat. He held a clipboard in one hand a nonchalantly flicked a light switch with other as he breezed in. The strip lights on the bay ceiling flickered and hummed into life as they bathed the bay in coruscating light. Despite the sudden illumination it took several seconds before the man noticed the six heavily armoured troopers standing, guns at the ready, in the bay. As his eyes came to rest on Thrower, the clipboard slipped from his fingers. ‘Er... can I help you?’ he said, a weak smile spreading across his surprised face.

To be continued...

Choosing Skills Based on Character Background

by Joe Wetzel

Not all characters in a fantasy game have always trained to be 'adventurers.' In fact, most grew up performing other tasks or learned some things from their parents' careers before they embarked on an 'adventure.'

For these reasons it makes sense that a character should have some of his initial skills based on his other activities growing up whether these were based on apprenticing in a trade, helping the character's parents or something else from the character's early years.

Below are suggested skill packages based on a character's background. They can also be a useful way to determine what skills a particular Non-Player Character may have. These packages have suggested discount skill point costs for a player choosing the package if the Games Master permits.

Each of the packages below lists the number of points for various skills the character gains for choosing that package. The number of ranks in each skill that the character has will depend on the number of points and his 1st level class.

If a Games Master does not allow the skill point discount, the player can buy any or all of them using skill points normally. In this case the list below simply serves as skill suggestions based on the desired character concept.

The player is free to use additional skill points to round out the character any way he sees fit. A character may only have one of these background skill packages.

Apothecarist, Barber, Dentist or Physician

Although in present times these professions seem only distantly related, in medieval times one person might provide all of these services subject to the science at the time. Through these professions a character would learn some healing techniques, including the effects of some plants.



Healers of all types were highly regarded.

Physicians were more knowledgeable and skilled than apothecaries, barbers and dentists but their services were limited to members of the upper classes. As a result many commoners died, despite the services of others. Many practices, such as bleeding, lancing and surgery, were deemed against church teaching. Therefore those performing and receiving those practices risked retribution from the church.

Apothecarists were typically monks and priests and more often served the common people. They would ask for donations to their sects, although those in private practice would charge a fee. Their remedies would be based on the natural uses of plants, herbs and roots.

Regardless of the specific profession, the cures would often do more harm than good. Two examples are:

- 'Evil spirits' in the head could be cured by trepanning, which is drilling a hole in the patient's head.
- Toothaches could be cured by burning a candle near the affected tooth to drive the worms gnawing at the tooth out into a cup held near the patient's head.

Apothecarist, Barber, Dentist or Physician, Journeyman: 5 skill points. Heal: 4, Knowledge (Nature): 2.

Armourer, Blacksmith or Weaponsmith

Each of these professions offers similar skill packages. As the names imply armourers made and repaired armour, weaponsmiths made and repaired weapons and blacksmiths made and repaired other objects such as metal cooking utensils and horseshoes.

In medieval times armourers and weaponsmiths were also general blacksmiths. When times of war approached they would focus almost exclusively on their specialities as these became more financially lucrative. In fact, a quality suit of armour would cost the equivalent of a modern professional's annual salary.



Armour in particular was difficult to create because it had to be uniquely crafted to fit. Because of this added challenge armourers typically set the standard for quality blacksmithing.

Smiths of all types used anvils, forges, bellows, hammers, tongs, hacksaws, chisels, pokers, files, rakes and of course wrought iron and steel to achieve their results.

The skill points devoted to craft can be spent among the three craft skills as the player wishes. Depending on how many skill points the player wishes to use and what is a better fit for the character's background, the player can choose between two packages.

- Armourer, Blacksmith or Weaponsmith: 5 skill points. Appraise: 2, Craft (any combination of Armoursmithing, Blacksmithing or Weaponsmithing): 4, Disable Device: 2.
- Armourer, Blacksmith or Weaponsmith, Journeyman: 9 skill points. Appraise: 2, Craft (any combination of Armoursmithing, Blacksmithing, or Weaponsmithing): 8, Disable Device: 2.

Banker, Jeweller or Moneylender

Although jewellers and moneylenders were usually seen as separate occupations, in medieval times they had many skills in common. On the other hand banking was in its very formative stages at the time and did not really start until the renaissance. However, it may be appropriate to include it in your campaign setting.

Jewellers would assess the values of various gems, jewels and coins as well as set stones in sword hilts, rings, brooches or anywhere someone would want it displayed.

They were generally respected despite many of them taking advantage of the general public by switching an expensive stone with a similar but much cheaper stone when asked to set or cut it. The average person would not be able to distinguish the expensive stone from the cheap stone. The jeweller could then make a large profit by selling the expensive stone at its true value.

Moneylenders used their own funds to loan out to others. This amount plus a mark-up would be repaid later. If the loan could not be repaid the moneylender was entitled to seize land, livestock and other holdings that equalled the amount owed. Moneylenders would also use their funds as a silent partner in businesses or other ventures. They typically lived lavishly.

In a fantasy setting these professionals need some ability to judge the value of goods, they must be able to discover forged documents (this knowledge could also be used to create forgeries), they may need to know some background of the people in the local area and they have some skill at deciphering scripts.

Banker, Jeweller or Moneylender: 7 skill points. Appraise: 2, Decipher Script: 2, Forgery: 2, Knowledge (Local): 2, Profession (Banker): 2.

Bartender, Innkeeper, Waiter or Waitress

As you may expect, characters with this background have a few interpersonal skills as well as some local knowledge.

Owning an inn or alehouse could be very profitable under the right circumstances. People in these roles would spend most of their time cleaning, maintaining the property, calculating bookings and ordering supplies. Inns usually had an alehouse that was sometimes leased out to another owner as a separate enterprise.

Employees such as bartenders, waiters and waitresses would have more interaction with the clientele. Inns and alehouses also typically employed a small staff of security because the atmosphere was often rowdy and bawdy.

Bartender, Innkeeper, Waiter or Waitress: 7 skill points. Diplomacy: 2, Gather Information: 2, Knowledge (Local): 4, Sense Motive: 2.

Carpenter or Mason

Carpenters and masons in medieval times had a great deal of practical construction knowledge. They also needed to be fairly adroit around the construction site.

A master mason was in charge of the construction site and would have other master masons, apprentices, carpenters and other labourers. Masons in general were highly skilled craftsmen who served the roles of architect, builder, craftsman, designer and engineer.

Masons understood proportion and basic geometry, but generally had no formal education. They worked with a simple set of tools, such as a compass, setsquare and a staff or rope marked in segments to construct their buildings.

Stones were carved on the ground before they were used to construct the building. Scaffolding was used to reach the higher parts of the building with cranes and pulleys used to lift the materials.

Most construction was done during the spring and summer months. This allowed the mortar to set and the laid stones to settle during the winter months. In addition, during the winter months masons would do some carving of the stones to get a head start on the spring construction.

While master masons were often a prosperous part of the middle class and apprentices could hope to move into the middle class, the life of a mason was often a nomadic one. The mason had to be prepared to move to where there was work available. Once a building was completed he usually had to relocate to his next opportunity.

When a new master mason arrived at a construction site he would be taken to the Mason's Lodge to be tested by other recognised master masons. An apprentice who was deemed ready to be tested by his particular master mason was also tested by a group of master masons at the lodge. When an apprentice became a master, he was given a unique 'Master's Mark' which he would use to sign his works in the future.

In addition to constructing buildings carpenters produced the vast majority of items used in daily life during the middle ages. Wagons, tables, tools and utensils were all typically created by carpenters.

Nobles would often keep carpenters on retainer because there was always something in a castle or keep to furnish.

Carpenter or Mason: 7 skill points. Balance: 2, Climb: 2, Knowledge (Architecture and Engineering): 2, Profession (Carpenter or Mason): 4.

Cook

A cook's job was thankless and difficult with average wages at best. Because trade was limited, the variety of food was also limited. Spices and extracts were very expensive and salt was used to preserve meats and fish.

A Lord's cook would have to prepare feasts for hundreds or even thousands of people, particularly for holidays or important political events. Furthermore, there were many instances where a cook was imprisoned for serving a meal his lord disliked.

Through this profession a character would know a great deal about plants and animals that could be useful to him.

Cook: 5 skill points. Knowledge (Nature): 4, Profession (Cook): 4

Farmer

In the middle ages, farmers were usually commoners or serfs. Serfs were not slaves but they were not free men and women either. They were forced to work the land, giving the vast majority of their crop to the local lord or priest. They also needed the local lord's permission to do some things, such as marry, depending on the lord and local law.

Whether the farmer was a commoner or a serf, the local lord would grant a portion of land to the farmer to plant the crops, care for them and harvest them. Typically, each strip of land's use would be rotated among three or four crops, and then left fallow for a year. Varying the crops grown and leaving the land unplanted for a year would ensure the nutrients in the soil would not be used up and had time to be replenished.

Farmers who owned their own land could become rather well off.

Farmer: 5 skill points. Handle Animal: 2, Knowledge (Nature): 4, Survival: 2.

Hunter

A character's background as a hunter can provide a large number of useful skills. Hunting grants the character some knowledge of plants and animals. A hunter also needs to Move Silently and Survive in the wilderness, which are also often useful to adventurers.



Climb, Listen, Spot and Swim are other skills a character may learn as a hunter that will benefit him.

While many in the Middle Ages had some knowledge of hunting, this knowledge was developed by some to be an expertise. Wild boar, bear and wolves were hunted by experts, while commoners would hunt more tame animals such as deer and rabbits. In a fantasy setting there are many more options for a hunter's prey.

It was also a popular but dangerous sport. Lords would hire expert hunters to lead their hunting ventures because of a hunter's expertise. On the other hand, someone caught hunting on a lord's land without permission was often subject to heavy penalties.

Hunters used bows, crossbows, dogs and traps while hunting.

There are two potential hunter packages depending on how many skill points the player wishes to use and which is a better background fit.

- Hunter: 5 skill points. Handle Animal: 2, Knowledge (Nature): 4, Move Silently: 2, Survival: 2.
- Hunter, Journeyman: 13 skill points. Climb: 2, Handle Animal: 2, Knowledge (Nature): 4, Listen: 2, Move Silently: 2, Spot: 2, Survival: 2, Swim: 2.

Merchant or Peddler

A career as a merchant offers a character a few skills. As a merchant, the character must judge the value of items well. He must also negotiate well. Knowledge of local laws and customs is also necessary.

There was a great deal of competition between merchants of fine and useful goods that led to bitter rivalries. However, they could grow rather wealthy and retire to esteemed positions.

Common peddlers, who dealt in plain goods and knick-knacks, on the other hand would roam from town to town. They would seldom be rich due to the high taxes they were forced to pay.

Merchant or Peddler: 7 skill points. Appraise: 4, Diplomacy: 4, Knowledge (Local): 2.

Miner

Miners, even in those days, dug for precious and useful metals and stones. A miner's skills could be of great value to an adventurer exploring underground.

They earned more money than most other workers because their profession was among the most dangerous. Not only did they have to be careful of collapsing mines, deadly gases and cave-ins but they usually spent several days underground at a time. Miners were not overly skilled but they were very hardy.

Miners could also dig tunnels under a castle wall as part of a siege.

There are two potential miner packages, depending on how many skill points the player wishes to use and which is a better background fit.

- Miner: 4 skill points. Appraise: 2, Knowledge (Architecture and Engineering): 2, Knowledge (Dungeon): 2.
- Miner, Journeyman: 8 skill points. Appraise: 2, Climb: 2, Knowledge (Architecture and Engineering): 4, Knowledge (Dungeon): 4.

Noble

A noble was 'free in his person and in his possessions.' A noble's primary obligations were to serve his lord during times of war and to run



his estate. Often he would hire a steward to help run his estate. This background can be chosen by anyone directly related to a noble or who would otherwise grow up in a castle.

It was a privileged but busy life. As mentioned above a man would be busy running the estate by supervising work being performed, reviewing the training of boys for combat, collecting taxes and similar activities. A woman would plan meals, weave and teach the girls the arts of being a lady.

If the character is or was a noble, he may have acquired any of a large number of skills. Naturally a noble knows a great deal about other nobles and their backgrounds. He also knows something of local laws and happenings. He has probably been exposed to a good deal of diplomacy.

In addition, if the noble has been involved in some intrigue, he may have practised Bluff, Forgery, Gather Information and Sense Motive.

It is not unusual for nobles to have some skill acting, playing an instrument or singing.

- Noble, Lesser: 5 skill points. Diplomacy: 2, Knowledge (Nobility): 4, Knowledge (Local): 2.
- Noble: 13 skill points. Bluff: 2, Diplomacy: 2, Forgery: 2, Gather Information: 2, Knowledge (Nobility): 4, Knowledge (Local): 2, Perform: 2, Sense Motive: 2.

Scholar

Librarians, scribes, low level officials and those mentored by a sage are just a few of the backgrounds that are scholarly.

A scholar's primary skills are Knowledge skills. In these background templates the player is free to distribute a number of skill points among all of the knowledge skills. Note the first level skill point limit still applies to any individual knowledge skill. Most scholars also gain some practice in Decipher Scripts.

Scholars copied volumes of works and researched laws and other matters for those who could afford their services. They often had some noble or religious background because the education needed to gain their positions was not affordable by a common labourer.

While their wages were average, they were well respected and afforded every privilege.

Some scholars learn related skills through their readings such as Appraise, Spellcraft and Survival.

There are two potential scholar packages, depending on how many skill points the player wishes to use and which is a better background fit.

- Scholar, Lesser: 6 skill points. Decipher Script: 2, Knowledge (distributed among any knowledge categories): 6.
- Scholar: 10 skill points. Appraise: 2, Decipher Script: 2, Knowledge (distributed among any knowledge categories): 6, Spellcraft: 2, Survival: 2.



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The Mad Druid

A setting-independent, investigative scenario for RuneQuest set in a rural community in the wilds.

By Tim Bancroft

This can be adapted to fit almost any campaign. Located in a remote village the Player Characters are faced with a simple missing person problem, which turns out to be more complicated than they first realise. If playing with four characters it will help if they are seasoned, though six basic characters will find the scenario an interesting challenge. More skilled characters can be readily catered for by increasing the numbers of opponents or by boosting the abilities of the key protagonists. The scenario can – and has – been played by newcomers to RuneQuest or even roleplaying.

As a generic adventure it assumes a relatively magic poor environment. Few of the locals will have much in the way of magic, whether spells or magic items. The heroes, though, being made of sterner stuff than the natives can be generated as required to match the feel of the campaign.

The magic assumed is the Rune Magic system outlined in the core rulebook with a little more advanced nature magic specific to the Guardians (perhaps druids) outlined below. This nature magic can be replaced by similar skills and abilities from any other magic system. Spirit Magic or Sorcery is not used, though Spirit Magic may be a boost to the Guardians (see below).

Background

This background is provided mainly for Games Master use, though could be shown to characters who come from the local area who succeed at a relevant Lore (regional) roll or when characters find it in their enquiries. It is built from a mixture of history and fable and can be readily adapted to different campaign backgrounds.

The Village of Connsford

In the midst of a forest in the wilds is a village, nestled in a peaceful valley far from the centre of the nearest civilisation. Once called Falconsford, its only notable feature is that it sits on a major road linking two powerful centres of commerce. This road meanders through the forest and crosses the local stream at an ancient ford, the village itself straddling the ford, the road and the stream. The villagers here make a reasonably prosperous living, not only from the surprisingly bountiful soil but also from trading their goods, particularly dyed cloth, with travellers. Though known to a few regular traders, the village is otherwise appreciated only by those who live there.

History

Though little now remains, it was said that in years long past the village had been at the centre of a small kingdom, the Kingdom of the Forest. Little more than a barony when compared with nearby civilisations, it was ruled by benevolent lords, visited by bards and frequented by wise and holy druids from the surrounding forest. Its people spread through the forest living in harmony with nature and the richness around them, clearing only what was needed, building exquisite farmsteads from local materials, and startling all with their own beauty, peace and wisdom. The small kingdom lasted for hundreds of years but, as so often happens after the initial bloom of youth, the kingdom began to decay as the descendants of the wise lords turned to wealth, fame and power and began to regard their people and land with arrogance and selfishness.

The wise men retreated to the woods and the bards began to sing of fair lords turning dark. The lords turned to taxation and oppression and war to further their realm and in doing so turned against their people.

In many fables dark times would have begun for the village, but not for Falconsford. Other villages suffered, but as the self-seeking lords began to clear the woods, pressing the locals into service as slave-warriors, they found nothing but an empty village at Falconsford. They turned to the outlying farms only to find them deserted as well. In puzzlement and with frustration they searched the forests, only to find none but the hermits, the wild men-o-the-woods, who introduced themselves as Guardians and warned the warriors away. The gang-masters tried to press the wild men into service but the stories tell they were attacked by every kind of animal, large and small, meek and ferocious. The press-gangs retreated from Falconsford and the surrounding forest.

The lords were infuriated at this defiance and sent more soldiers into the forest to burn and destroy all the villagers' lands. They would force the villagers into submission. When they came to the first outlying farm they were faced by four of the wild men-o-the-woods, the Guardians, each barefoot and dressed in tattered robes, one in grey-brown rags, one in blue, one in green and one in faded yellow. 'Go back to your homes,' commanded the Guardians. Greatly outnumbering the four wild men, the soldiers jeered and waved their weapons but to their surprise the wild men stood still and faced them, their faces grave and sad. 'Leave or die,' they said. 'Leave us all to our peace.' The soldiers, laughing, attacked and were almost upon the wild men when howls sprang up from around them. To their surprise they were surrounded by packs of wolves, by bears, by forest-cats, eagles and predators of every kind. At first fearful, they shrank back but the wolves just sat and howled, so the soldiers turned back to attack the wild men. But they were gone and where they had stood were merely four birds on the breeze, winging their way silently over the forest, an owl, a crow and two falcons.



Then the creatures fell silent and a snarl arose, one that turned the blood to ice. Giant wolves wound their way through the ranks of the creatures around them. These wolves were monstrous animals without the fear of normal wolves, their eyes glowing with malevolence and muzzles that ran red with gore. These creatures, said the survivors, had the cunning of

wolves, the eyes of falcons and the brutality that can only come from nature.

Nothing more is said of the soldiers save one, who escaped to tell the tale to his lord. His baron laughed at him and had him punished for his lies. But when they were told of four wild men at the gates, each barefoot and dressed in tattered robes, they began to fear and called their guards to protect them, refusing entry to the tattered Guardians. The wild men issued a simple demand: that the lords leave the land and its people. Then they left, melting into the impenetrable depths of the forest as if the trees were merely mist.

Of course the lords ignored the warning but from then on, whenever their brutal soldiers left the sanctuary of their ornate manors, they always came back wounded or hurt with tales of mishaps or accidents caused by trees or animals bursting from cover. Always nearby, they said, was a falcon, an owl or a crow on

the breeze. At night the howling of wolves grew louder until few within the manors could sleep. The fey lords became angry. The patrols they despatched came back empty-handed, when they came back at all, and reported being attacked by ferocious Fell-wolves and the malevolence of the forest. One by one the warriors began to leave, talking of a curse. Seeing their power wane, the lords panicked. 'The wolves,' they said, 'must

die.’ One night they gathered the few warriors that remained, waited till the howling began and led their forces from the manors into the forests to destroy these animal foes.

Only a single warrior survived, say the lays, one who fled when his masters assaulted the men o’ the wood. Though his reports are the garbled ravings of a man in terror, the lords found the Guardians, surrounded by simple wolves and animals of the forest. The Guardians demanded they leave their forest; the lords demanded the wild men leave their lands. The Guardians gave the lords one last chance. Given such impertinence the lords attacked, leading their warriors to slaughter the wild life and the crazed men o’ the wood. To the horror of the gathered lords, the Guardians shook their totems and uttered a loud cry: from the forests around the warriors and lords came hordes of the vicious Fell-wolves. The warriors and the lords were slain; the Fell-wolves faded into the forests; the crazed Guardians faded back into the forest from whence they had come.

All that was left was the village and a forest, and the gradually collapsing ruins of the fortified manors in which the lords once lived. The villagers and farmers returned to their homes and their simple existence, living in peace with the land, the forest and the people around. Aware of their debt to the Guardians, the villages cautiously offered them reward, but were asked for no more than welcome, hospitality, offerings to be left regularly at sacred groves and to provide apprentices when asked. The Guardians also restated their simple rules over the sanctity of the forest and departed.

The fight between the lords and Guardians faded into fable. Sometimes a wild man, a hermit, would be seen in the forest, perhaps half-mad or delirious from poison. More often a Guardian might visit the village to request hospitality, to heal those in great need, or occasionally to request a volunteer as an apprentice. But as the years slid past their visits became increasingly rare. None, however, would dare forget their daily offerings on the woodland shrines.

The Village Today

The village is now called Connsford and sits at the centre of a successful farming community, independent but remote. The fields are fertile and the surrounding forest is rich in animal and wild life, whether deer, boar, bear, wolf, game-birds, berries, tubers, vegetables or herbs. The villagers are quietly comfortable and are strangely attractive: though insular they are welcoming to visitors, willingly helping travellers on the road and entertaining them at the village inn, the Barred Falcon. At peace with all nearby, and welcoming

the regular trade as it passes through, the villagers and farmers live their own life with their own gods and traditions.

The Barred Falcon is a focus of the community, frequently visited by locals as well as travelling traders and their caravans. It is large with plenty of stabling and common and private rooms for guests. Prices are decent and the food is of good quality. The drinks, whether the local cider, beer or wine, are all surprisingly good and at reasonable prices, but imported wines are around three times more expensive than would be expected.

Characters

If generating new Player Characters they can be from a variety of backgrounds. It is expected that Player Characters would be beginning, seasoned or veteran and be generated with above-average attributes.

If any players wish to generate local characters, it is recommended that locals add 2 to their CHA and take 2 from STR, INT or DEX. Most of the locals are related, if distantly, but a slow influx of outsiders helps prevent the perils of inbreeding. For such locals, a barbarian or peasant non-warrior background is recommended, with skills biased either towards farming, hunting and tracking or towards the bardic skills of lore, entertainment and medicine. Indeed, a bard with knowledge of the local lays would be a useful character. Local characters should not be armed with complex armour or weapons: chain and scale shirts and hauberks are rarely available, ringmail is occasionally made to order but all leather armour is readily available. Any of the more complex, refined or specialised equipment such as crossbows, bills, glaives, halberds, rapiers, scimitars and great swords are three times their normal price. Most characters will have nothing more than straightforward daggers, spears, javelins, one-handed swords, axes, bows and longbows, target shields or bucklers and perhaps simple maces. Peasant equipment for improvised weapons is readily available!

Non-Player Characters are assumed to increase in skills at a slower rate than Player Characters.

Games Master Background

The ‘men o’ the wood’, the ‘wild men’ and the Guardians are all the same people. Though there have always been four, there are now only two active and two lethargic Guardians. One of the active Guardians, that to the north-east, has gone half-mad and when sighted is always described as being unkempt, naked, semi-naked or dressed in tattered brown. He rarely has a staff, always carries a feathered totem and frequently carries an ancient,



battered sword. Nearby is often a boar or a battered crow. He is referred to in this adventure as the Mad Druid.

The other active Guardian is always dressed in blue and always carries his staff. He is a little tidier than the north-east guardian and is frequently accompanied by an owl. He is referred to as the Blue Guardian.

The two lethargic Guardians are old and now rarely leave their secluded caves. They should have passed on their knowledge a long time ago but after a succession of apprentices died neither could bring themselves to train any more. Little do the older Guardians know that their

apprentices had been enticed to their deaths by the Mad Druid.

In addition to his nature magic, the Mad Druid has harnessed a darker skill from the depths of necromancy. No other character should be in command of such skills.

Sample Peaceful NPC

Few of the Non-Player Characters need full statistics. A simple base character is presented below which can be used for any character with the adjustment of the few skills given for minor characters and for each major character's profile.

Most Non-Player Characters will be wearing clothes and carrying a utility knife. Some may be armed with farming implements. Only if prepared for war will they be carrying shield or sword or wearing armour.

Connsford Villager/Peasant

Characteristics: STR 11, CON 13, DEX 10, SIZ 12, INT 12, POW 12, CHA 13
CA: 2 **DM:** +0. **SR:** +11 **Move:** 4m **MP:** 12
Age: Var.

Skills: Athletics 30%, Boating 23%, Craft (various – *main role*¹) 42-72%, Craft (various – *minor role*²) 25-42%, Dodge 33%, First Aid 25%, Influence 28%, Lore - Animal 22-52%, Lore - Plant 22-52%, Lore - World 22%, Riding 28-38%, Sing 33%, Throw 23%, Perception 29-39 (54% for woodsmen), Stealth 54% for woodsmen, Survival 50% for woodsmen, Tracking 54% for woodsmen

Atk: * Dagger 37% 1d4+2 damage AP 4/6 (1H Battleaxe) 41% 1d6+1 damage AP 3/8 or (War Sword) 41% 1d8 damage AP 4/10 (Shortspear) 47% 1d8 damage AP 2/5 Shortbow (ranged) 35% 1d8 damage 60m range AP 2/4

(Shield) 45% (or 35% 1d6 damage) AP 8/12

Armour: Typically none unless expecting trouble, in which case experienced hands will have a mix of heavy leather and leather (8% skill penalty)

¹ For interest, GMs may switch a character's primary weapon skills between 1H weapon, spear or bow. Rarely will a local carry a weapon other than a knife, though if a hunter or going on a trek to the remote farms he may carry a bow. Experienced hands will have the better weapons skills as well as professional skills. The very senior, such as the Headman and family heads, will have chain shirts, a heavy leather skirt and helmets which will give them 5 AP on their head, chest, abdomen and arms, and 2 AP on each leg (27% skill penalty).

² *main role* and *minor role* relates to the main purpose of the NPC. All Non-Player Characters will have two main roles in such a small community. For example, the inn-keeper has Craft (brewer) at 72%, being renowned for his cider and beer, but also has Craft (farmer) at 42% as he grows his own apples. One of the farm-workers in the fields is likely to have Craft (farmer) at only 42% and possibly Craft (fletcher) at 32%.



Connsford Villager Hit

Locations

D20	Hit location	AP/HP
1-3	R Leg	0(1)/5
4-6	L Leg	0(1)/5
7-9	Abdomen	0(2)/6
10-12	Chest	0(2)/7
13-15	R Arm	0/4
16-18	L Arm	0/4
19-20	Head	0(2)/5

Connsford Experienced Woodsman

Characteristics: STR 11, CON 13, DEX 14, SIZ 12, INT 12, POW 10, CHA 13

CA: 2 **DM:** +0. **SR:** +11 **Move:** 4m **MP:** 12

Age: Var.

Skills: Athletics 38%, Boating 23%, Craft (snares and traps) 52, Dodge 33%, First Aid 25%, Influence 28%, Lore - Animal 42%, Lore - Plant 52%, Lore - World 22%, Perception 54%, Persistence 42%, Resilience 48%, Riding 28%, Sing 33%, Throw 23%, Stealth 54%, Survival 50%, Tracking 54%

Atk: * Dagger 47% 1d4+2 damage AP 4/6

(1H Battleaxe) 47% 1d6+1 damage AP 3/8

Longbow (ranged) 52% 2d8 damage 175m range AP 2/7

(Buckler) 45% (or 35% 1d6 damage) AP 8/12

Armour: Typically none unless expecting trouble, in which case a mix of heavy leather and leather (8% skill penalty)

* Rarely will a woodsman carry his battleaxe or buckler.

Experienced Woodsman Hit**Locations**

D20	Hit location	AP/HP
1-3	R Leg	0(1)/5
4-6	L Leg	0(1)/5
7-9	Abdomen	0(2)/6
10-12	Chest	0(2)/7
13-15	R Arm	0/4
16-18	L Arm	0/4
19-20	Head	0(2)/5

Key Non-Player Characters

The village headman, Yronix, and Craconix, the captured farmer, can use the statistics for an experienced Connsford local but as both are the head of their household weapon skills are

15% above those specified and Craconix will not be encountered in his chainmail hauberk and war gear. Influence skills for both are 54%, Craft (farmer) and Lore (animal) 72% each, and Lore (world) and Lore (plant) both at 42%. If encountered in his armour Yronix will have a chain shirt, a 'Celtic' helm and tailor made plate greaves, giving 6 points of armour to his head, 5 to his arms, chest and abdomen and to each leg (27% skill penalty).

If needed, the village Healer, Uleris, has First Aid at 74%, Healing at 82% and Craft (apothecary) and Lore - Plant Lore at 65% each. She will be able to treat the Player Characters easily and for moderate costs. She also has Heal 3. Of course, if the PCs have served Yronix, they will be healed for free.

Statistics for the Blue Guardian and the Mad Druid are given below.

Blood at the Barred Falcon

The scenario starts at the inn: in such a small village in such a remote location it is very unlikely the Player Characters will have met anywhere else! Evening is falling. The Player Characters, the heroes, are staying in the Barred Falcon, along with other foreigners and city-types travelling along the high road. There are locals here, too, socialising but regarding outsiders with a fair degree of tolerance: after all, the outsiders and travellers bring both news and money.

You are travellers, explorers, restless for new horizons or exciting experiences. Your travels have brought you to the remote village of Connsford, a small but prosperous trading post on the road across the wilds. There is a single inn, the Barred Falcon, which has extensive

stabling and rooms, and which also doubles as the village tavern. Weary after a day's ride you are resting, eating and drinking before taking your leave to bed in the common room – or private room if you paid the higher rate.

Rumours at the Barred Falcon

The Player Characters may try and find out rumours from the visitors and residents at the Barred Falcon, or may be aware of one or two of these rumours by being locals. The rumours below may also be of use elsewhere in the adventure. The locals in the inn are easy to engage in talk simply through buying them a round of drinks: for each round bought they will impart a snippet of information in the order shown. Successful Influence skill checks could gain an extra snippet of information per round of drinks or food donated.

- A major discussion is that some of the farmers, Deotrix and Craconix in particular, are expanding their lands into the surrounding forest, much to the concern of many.
- Expanding farms has to done carefully so as not to disturb a Guardian. Ideally, a Guardian – a man-o-the-wood – should be approached to ensure that no burial grounds or sacred trees are disturbed.
- Deotrix apparently strongly disagrees. He's already expanded and had no problems.
- Spoken by one of the farm-workers: *'I don't think much of Craconix's two new men. I know he was short of workers, but taking on those two city folk, well... I don't know.'*
- Guardians? The wild men, the men-o-the-woods. Old hermits who look after the forest. Useful healers, if you can find them. Wear different, well-worn clothes, if any at all.

- From farmworkers: *'Mind you, no one's seen a Guardian for ages, bar old Formix and Theophilus. We still keep putting out the offerings, though, and keep the woodland shrines nice and neat.'*
- Animals have been acting strangely lately: wolves are for some reason more active, having been seen by many, and even owls are being seen in daylight.
- One of Pannix's shepherd boys has warned he frequently has to fight wolves off with slingshots but few believed him too seriously as it can be boring looking after sheep. Unfortunately, a lamb was killed by a pack but most think that since wolves are never so bold, it was wild dogs. A hunt is needed, obviously.
- Spoken by an older man: *'Mind you, remember them Fell-wolves from the old tales. I remember being right scared of them as a lad... (chuckle) ... of course, never seen one in my life.'*
- Finally, snippets of the myths and legends, the 'old tales' as described in the background.

Trader and Shepherd

As the heroes sit in the inn gathering what information they will, read the following.

A traveller enters with a servant, both dressed in the garb of more civilised lands. They look harassed and worn, and there is blood on the clothing of both of them. The innkeeper is suspicious and immediately barks out 'I want no trouble in 'ere. What's that blood from?'

The servant calls out for them both. 'We've rescued someone on the high road. Help us. He's outside.' His voice is strained and you now realise both are exhausted.

If the heroes do nothing, two of the villagers near the door run outside with him. Outside is a horse and cart loaded with trade goods, on top of which is laid a figure covered in blood and badly injured. The locals instantly recognise him as one of Craconix's shepherd boys and unload him. Amidst plenty of fuss from the innkeeper they bring him into the inn and lay him on a table. The boy is unconscious from a head wound (-2 hp) and has been mauled in the leg and arm. The innkeeper will send a serving lad for Uleris, the village healer, and the village headman, Yronix.

If questioned, the traveller will confess to being a simple trader with his servant. The trader's tale is simple:

'We were going to stay here, in Connsford, on our way through, but we saw this shepherd on the side of the road. He was gouged and bleeding and we tried to give him a bit of help but neither of us is great healers. Whilst we were focussed on the boy, a massive, old, scarred boar stepped out from the scrub and pawed at some roots, a battered crow on its shoulder. I was scared, I can tell you, as those things are vicious.

Anyway, we stood up and reached for our swords and it just started away. When we pulled them out and I reached for my crossbow it ran away across the scrub towards the forest.

Alain, my servant, swears that when it reached the shelter of the trees it turned into a man, an old, lime-washed man marked with blue battle-paint. I didn't see it though, but then I was looking at the boy.

The shepherd boy will be muttering from time to time. The heroes could try and heal him before Uleris and Yronix come, which will earn them

some respect from the villagers. Once healed back to consciousness he will come too for a few moments, grab the nearest person and gabble insanely:

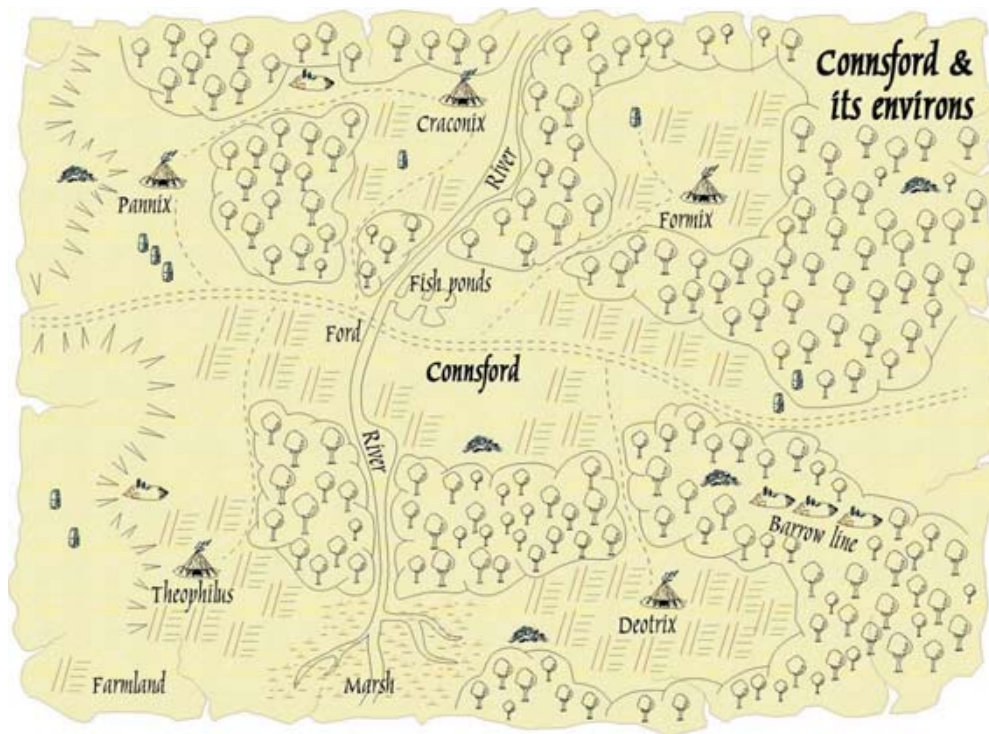
'The hermit is mad! There's been theft from a tomb... a Mad Druid.... Craconix... get Craconix. He's in danger... the wild man's gone mad. Killing anyone who goes near... in the woods.'

He collapses unconscious again and you see the locals in the inn look at each other in bewilderment.

'A wild man, strange? Of course,' you hear. 'But mad? Never.'

Uleris asks two of the stable-lads to take the boy back to her house. Yronix calls to the various farm-workers from Pannix, Theophilus, Deotrix and Formix's farms to take a message back to their masters, a request with which they immediately comply and pair up before leaving. With almost no-one able-bodied left in the tavern he also asks for volunteers to take a message to Craconix informing him of the injured boy. Of course, Yronix will look meaningfully at the Player Characters: they look tough and competent and have been getting along well with the locals. Hopefully the heroes will volunteer. If not, he will look disappointed and ask the innkeeper to find couple of men from the houses nearby to arm them and take the message.

Craconix's farm is to the north of the village (see map). Other farms are marked for interest, as are the ruins and a number of shrine-like sites and barrows. Scale is adaptable by the Games Master though a distance of five kilometres from the village to Craconix's farm works well, a walk of around an hour or so cross-country on the path.



A Curious Journey

If the heroes do not take the message from Yronix to Craconix's Farm, then the wolves encountered on the journey, the owl, and the attack on the farm by the Fell-wolves will be stories told in the morning from those returning from Craconix's Farm.

The journey from Connsford to the farm is about five kilometres and will take place in gradually deepening darkness. By the time the travellers reach the farm it will be dark. The Non-Player Characters may wish to play up any fears by mentioning the distant howl of wolves at the start of the journey and by emphasising heavy sounds in the undergrowth as the Player Characters travel. If checked for tracks, the path has some details of traffic to and from the farm,

a few domestic animals and even a few wild animals crossing it. Again, if asked the wind is blowing into the heroes faces (from the north or top of the map).

About halfway along the track as the group comes to a bend, they spy an owl on one side on a branch, apparently hooting at them. If they threaten it in any way it will fly off silently into the woods but will otherwise fly from tree to tree alongside the path. As they round the bend, perhaps cautiously if they have heeded its warning, they will hear plaintive bleating and see a slaughtered lamb in the road, wolves tearing at it's body, and as they watch a ewe beside it is brought down by another pair. The wolves are pre-occupied and occasionally snarl to each other but on the whole are co-operating over the food. There is no sign of a shepherd.

Horses may need to be controlled if frightened of the wolves. The wolves will be surprised at seeing the characters and will instantly become very wary, snarling and circling protectively around the kill. Apart from being a little more confident, they will behave as normal wolves: if the heroes do anything to frighten them, such as charge, scream, or shoot a wolf, the pack will immediately disperse and hang about in the edge of the forest until the heroes pass and they can get to the kill. Likewise, if the heroes attack quietly the wolves will initially defend themselves, but rapidly break off.

A Night at the Farm

At nightfall the adventurers should end up at Craconix's Farm. When they arrive they will find the gates already shut and a herdsman on watch. The farm defences, a low stone wall around part of the farm enclosure and a bank and stockade in others, have recently undergone some hasty maintenance. The messengers will be challenged and, once recognised, warned about 'wolves abroad' before the herdsman fetches Aron and Craconix's wife, Elia.

Aron is an old retainer of Craconix and is currently in charge of the farm. He and Elia look concerned and will need a little persuading (perhaps an Influence check), unless he recognises a local with the messengers, but will eventually let them into the stockade. Read or paraphrase the following:

Both Aron and Elia are devastated at the news of the shepherd boy's injuries. However, in response to your news they announce worse in return: Craconix and the two new workers have disappeared. All three disappeared in daylight, the two new workers whilst clearing the new land and Craconix whilst

going to fetch the pig-boy and the pigs. Four have now gone from the farm.

Questioning reveals there is little more to tell. The pigs roam the forest during the summer and are brought in occasionally. The new lands are to the east, on either side of the path to Pannix's farm, whilst the pigs were roaming in the woods to the north. The two new workers only disappeared the previous afternoon and often stayed out overnight so nothing much was thought about their disappearance. It was only with Craconix's disappearance that morning that his wife became worried. Aron has searched and found nothing. If questioned privately about Aron, Elia will trust him completely.

The farm's current complement is Aron and his wife and son, Elia and her teenage daughter and two younger sons, two herdsman and their wives and children, one of whom is the pig-boy, and an older teenage farm worker. The farm has a few working dogs. All the occupants bar the herdsman keeping watch are in the main hut as the players arrive.

After the Player Characters have finished questioning the farm's occupants, read the following:

You are welcomed, well fed and offered sleeping pallets for the night in the main hut of the farm. It seems everyone from the farm is here, listening to your tale and quietly sharing a few scraps of bread and mead with you.

During your meal wolf-hoofs sound from some way off on the wood. Elia shivers and Aron comforts her. 'Those are getting more frequent of late,' he says, 'but there were no tracks around where Craconix disappeared.' He looks thoughtful for a moment. 'As you are here, do you mind sharing a watch with us tonight? It would make our life easier.'

You naturally agree and he nods in approval. Your acceptance seems to help break the silence. 'I didn't hear nothin' either,' pipes up the pig-boy. 'The master never come near me. And I 'eard no wolves. It weren't me 'oo made him lost.'

His mother smiles briefly and comforts him. 'I know, piglet,' she says. To you she explains 'He is worried that it's his fault somehow. But he's done nothing.'

'No,' says Elia. 'He's done nothing. We've brought the piglets and lambs in, just to make sure.'

You finish your meal, the watch rota is worked out, and the farm workers disperse to their huts. You are offered pallets and blankets and settle down to a comfortable night in front of a warm fire.

The Night

Three Fell-wolves will attack the farm that night (or four or five if the Player Characters are more experienced). Determine which Player Character is on watch and allow a Perception roll against the wolves' Stealth (in the dark) to prevent any surprise.

If the wolves surprise the guard they will jump into the farmyard and kill a lamb and piglets before attacking the huts. This will wake everyone but one will slaver around the door to the characters' hut. Read or paraphrase the following:

The squeals of the piglets and terrified bleating of lambs brings you awake. For a moment you wonder what has happened then hot, foul breath steams through the heavy leather drapes across the door. You smell wolf and hear a low growl, the sound of a feral menace like no wolf you have heard before.

If the guard is not surprised, read the following:

As you look out over the tamed fields you are startled to see a shadow flit from a bush to an outlying wall. You scan the fields and realise that the shadow is not alone. It seems to be in the shape of a wolf, but much larger, and it is accompanied by three others of a similar size. They notice you spying on them and immediately charge towards you.

These are Fell-wolves, much larger and more sinister than normal and are the wolves from the old tales. Their main target is the roundhouses – the piglets and lambs are merely a temporary distraction. Once they know the Fell-wolves have arrived the farm-dogs will bark but are too scared to actually come close and attack except to finish off a Fell-wolf. Aron and the two herdsman will help drive off the wolves but will always be a few rounds behind the Player Characters in their reactions and responses – none are competent fighters.

The Fell-wolves will attack as soon as they can. It is likely that most of the Player Characters will not be wearing their armour. If they slept in armour then check to see whether or not they are suffering from fatigue. If surprised, no one can grab any armour other than their weapons; if not surprised, they have a chance of slipping on a hauberk or helm and grabbing weapons before the Fell-wolves attack the person on guard. Given stout opposition, substantial numbers of firebrands, and one or more of their number seriously wounded or dead the Fell-wolves will run. A Fell-wolf with a Serious Wound will always attempt to disengage and run away. Whether the pack runs should be checked for at the end of every bound in which something significant happened, such as flaming logs being picked up and brandished or if a wolf is injured or killed. This could easily be roleplayed but if a specific figure is required the chance of this is equal to:

$10 \times (\text{number of people with firebrands} + \text{number of Wolves seriously injured}) +$

$20 \times (\text{number of Fell-Wolves dead})$

ARON: See standard villager but with skills War Sword 50%, Shield 50%, but no armour.

HERDSMEN: As standard villagers armed with spears and no armour.

Shooting at night amongst the huts and with many people milling around will be difficult: refer to the *RuneQuest* rulebook for details.

Fell-wolves

These are massive wolves with a malevolent snarl and attitude. They rarely make an appearance, knowing man to be their most lethal foe, but come when summoned by the Mad Druid or another who has mastered the nature magics. Like normal wolves they will co-operate against lesser numbers of foes, with larger wolves attempting to knockback their opponents for their fellows to finish off.

Characteristics: STR 17, CON 15, DEX 13, SIZ 13, INT 5, POW 15, CHA 8.

CA: 3 **DM:** +1D2. **SR:** +9 **Move:** 5m **MP:** –

Traits: Night Sight, Scent¹, Fellsnarl

Skills: Athletics 80%, Dodge 55%, (Influence 65%), Perception 60%, Persistence 32%, Resilience 40%, Stealth 55%, Survival 40%, Tracking 60%

Atk: Fellsnarl

Bite 65% 1d8+1D2 damage

Claw 35% 1d6+1D2 damage

Special Atk: Fellsnarl. Once per turn a Fell-wolf can snarl to instil fear into its opponent using its Influence skill (the only use to which it may be practicably put), with an extra 10% per additional wolf concentrating on each foe. This

is opposed by a Persistence roll, with a bonus. Failure means the character becomes demoralised (see the Demoralise Rune Spell) until he pulls himself together with a Persistence roll (treat as an action)



Armour: Hide (AP 2, no skill penalty)

¹ Scent allows tracking by scent in conditions perceived by the Fell-wolf as partial darkness with no penalty.

Fell-wolf Hit Locations

D20	Hit location	AP/HP
1-2	R Hind Leg	2/6
3-4	L Hind Leg	2/6
5-7	Hindquarters	2/7
8-10	Forequarters	2/7
11-13	R Front Leg	2/6
14-16	L Front Leg	2/6
17-20	Head	2/6

Fell-wolf Pack Leader

Even larger and more malevolent than his fellows, the pack leader will typically be the first to attack and the last to retreat.

Characteristics: STR 18, CON 17, DEX 15, SIZ 15, INT 5, POW 15, CHA 8.

CA: 3 **DM:** +1d4 **SR:** +10 **Move:** 5m **MP:** –

Traits: Night Sight, Scent, Fellsnarl

Skills: Athletics 90%, Dodge 65%, (Influence 75%), Perception 70%, Persistence 42%, Resilience 50%, Stealth 65%, Survival 50%, Tracking 70%

Atk: Fellsnarl

Bite 70% 1d8+1D4 damage

Claw 40% 1d6+1D4 damage

Special Atk: Fellsnarl (see Fell Wolves above)

Armour: Hide (AP 2, no skill penalty)

Fell-wolf Hit Locations

D20	Hit location	AP/HP
1-2	R Hind Leg	2/7
3-4	L Hind Leg	2/7
5-7	Hindquarters	2/8
8-10	Forequarters	2/8
11-13	R Front Leg	2/7
14-16	L Front Leg	2/7
17-20	Head	2/7

The Shrine

The morning after the attack, or longer if the Player Characters need some recovery (if necessary send for Uleris from the village), have Aron raise some questions: Why are wolves coming into the settlement? Why did they raid the farmyard as wolves do not risk this, especially when well-fed? More significantly, why these particular wolves and where did they come from? And, finally, where is Craconix?

Aron will ask the Player Characters to search for Craconix. The farm is now four workers down, he has to carry the news to the village (and fetch the healer if required), and everyone now has to double-up for safety. He will allow the pig-boy to accompany the Player Characters to show where the pigs were being kept on condition they promise to protect him.

If the Player Characters do not take the pig-boy they are unlikely to find Craconix unless they head directly west into the woods from the standing stone in the middle of Craconix's fields.

The pig-boy will have a package with him. If questioned, he will open it and show the characters: it is merely a few rolls of bread and some cheese. *'It's an offering,' says the pig-boy. 'For the wild men. Master Craconix wasn't up for it, much. Said they'd long gone and were useless. But me mam says to keep giving it 'em for as long as it keeps going. So I does. Never meat, o' course, but they likes cheese.'* He pauses for a moment then smiles and shrugs. *'Mind you, so do I.'*

If questioned about it pig-boy will reveal that it has long been a tradition for each farm to leave a little food every day or so for the local wild man. Craconix has ignored the tradition. Furthermore, if questioned he will continue with the following: *'An' me mam don't agree with Master Craconix clearin' the new fields. He 'asn't spoke to the wild men about it, an' 'e's goin' right up to the deadbarrow, too.'* The pig boy shakes his head. *'I don't know much about it, but I thinks me mam may be right.'* The pig-boy will lead them to the shrine.

The shrine is at the end of a fairly well used path that leads to a small, cleared grove of holly, in

the middle of which is a roughly squared-off stone. The pig-boy will leave his offering on the stone. The only tracks into and out of the grove will be from the path, but a critical Track success may uncover a separate, very faint track leading through the holly with the faint impression of a single human foot. No more tracks can be found.

If the Player Characters search around, they will spot an owl in the trees (it is still daylight but allow the players to work this out) which will fly further into the wood. If they look in the direction of the owl they will have a fleeting glimpse of an old man in ragged robes with a blue-grey cloak. The old man will disappear behind some bushes.

When they investigate they will not be able to find the old man and will fail on their Track rolls, possibly finding a naked footprint on a critical, but will also find that the undergrowth where they saw him is impenetrable. However, they will find the body of Craconix. After a few moments the Player Characters will see he is not actually dead but semi-conscious, thrashing and twitching from time to time. He will be muttering irregularly, the most coherent parts being: *'The wolves! Not the wolves! He's gone mad, mad... no, stop the trees... dead men are dead, not alive...'* and he will scream, before fading back into delirium once more.

A First Aid check can be made to determine what is wrong with him (at a +20% bonus) and will show that he is suffering from a poison or infection and needs treatment (see the *Mad Druid's Potions Table*, roll 01-06 for details).

Note: Craconix has been given a drug, been shown the Mad Druid's creations (see below)

and been told the druid's plans for revenge in an effort to scare him into stopping the expansion of his farm and get him to pay the 'correct respect'. The drug he was given was not quite what the Mad Druid expected due to poor labelling.

The Player Characters should, of course, take him back to the farm and either heal him themselves or send for Uleris. She will treat him and point out that only rest can cure him before returning to the village. Aron and Elia will thank the Player Characters profusely and ask them to stay a few more nights, just in case, even offering Aron's old great axe in payment (it is worn and has only 8hp but is otherwise serviceable).

The pig-boy will watch everything, and inform the Player Characters that Aron has listened to his mother and is now putting out an offering every day.

The Last Resort

The intervening nights are fairly quiet. Wolf howls will be heard, both normal wolves and Fell-wolves, but the sound is far off. Nonetheless, the whole farm will be very discomforted by the constant threat.

A few mornings later (adapt for recovery), after a particularly noisy night, a messenger comes to the farm and asks the Player Characters to follow him to the village: the head man wishes to see them. He will say no more, other than it is important and potentially to the Player Characters' advantage to do so. When they arrive at Connsford the village is strangely subdued, with few people in the streets. Here they are met by a well-dressed scribe accompanied by two armed woodsmen. The man is Gamax, Yronix's advisor and the village scholar and scribe, and after introducing himself he explains a new development.

'We need your help. Things have got out of hand. The other farms have been attacked over the past few nights, ending in an attack here, in Connsford, very early this morning. We were attacked by a strange assortment of animals – a bear, wolves and a stampede of boars. During the fight one of the villagers was killed, a servant at the inn, and several were injured. But worst of all, Yronix has disappeared, though none saw him come out of his long house during the attack.

The attack, it seems, was led by a Guardian dressed in rags, no doubt the one Craconix described as going mad and no doubt the same one who injured the shepherd boy. We glimpsed him off in the fields, his totem shaking in the air.

I am now headman, though I am far better as an advisor. I have become aware of your blend of skills and ambitions and I think you might be able to do a better job, as independents, in tracking down the Mad Druid or whoever is behind these raids and stop them.

Will you do this task for us?'

He has little to offer other than horses, goats and sheep but will offer a single weapon or suit of armour of up to 200sp value for each of those who help him, the weapon to be made in the forge at Connsford (see above for prices and equipment). He asks the Player Characters to investigate before doing anything, and report back to him what they find. He suggests they talk to Deotrix first, then Pannix, to find out just what happened at those two farms. He will give them a map he has made of the area, showing most of the major features. He will point out the long-barrows and suggest the Player Characters avoid them as some say they are haunted, whilst others, he says, *'Just don't agree with messing with the dead.'*

The Investigation

The Player Characters have little to go on so will need to ask questions in the village and at the outlying farms. Eventually they should deduce that the grey-brown Guardian (the Mad Druid) is based north-west of the village. If, as a result of that deduction, they concentrate their search there give a +20% bonus to all Tracking and Perception rolls in the area between Craconix's farm and Pannix's farm.

From a play perspective the direction of the scenario now becomes player led. The Player Characters can choose where they wish to go and who they wish to question, so the sections below give the answers and visual clues they will find in each major location. The time-line is not too important, though attacks will occur every second night or so at the farms of Pannix, Deotrix or Craconix in a similar fashion to the first night's encounter. The news of the attacks will always reach Connsford the next morning, and the outlying farms the following evening.

In Connsford

The characters can ask questions in and around Connsford. From Gamax, the scribe, and his bodyguards, and from others within Connsford, such as Uleris and her helper, Yronix's dye-workers, the fishmonger, butcher, blacksmith/goldsmith, cobbler/leatherworker and innkeeper, the following information is readily available *if the right questions are asked*:

- The attacks have been at the farms of Craconix, Deotrix and Pannix, and at Connsford.
- All the attacks consisted of a number of ordinary creatures, such as a wolf pack, boars, a forest bear, a panther and birds of prey, and also a small number of feral wolves, those dubbed Fell-wolves.

- No one has disappeared as far as anyone knows apart from Craconix and now Yronix. The two workers who disappeared turned up at the blacksmith's, suspiciously trying to sell some ornamental goblets but were told to be on their way.
- The blacksmith will mention that the goblets were of ancient design and he suspects they may have come from an old grave or barrow, or even that they were stolen from one of the buried family treasure troves. He did not accept anything the two townspeople said about *'just finding them'*.
- Anyone knows that the families often bury some of their treasure and income in time of plenty in secret burial places for safekeeping, calling on it in times of need.
- Formix hires more woodsmen than the others and has some orchards.
- Theophilus is a newcomer but observes the ancient customs religiously.
- Pannix mainly farms sheep. He's worried about the incursions and is making some more secure sheepfolds.
- Deotrix is the most aggressive in his expansion recently, expanding his farm up to the old ruins and towards the river.
- Craconix was merely following Deotrix in his expansion and had only just started.
- Gamax will categorically state that *'There is no reason at all that Yronix was taken, he just runs a small-holding and trades in cloth, whether wool from the hills or occasionally imported cotton which he dyes and sells on. He has recently developed a fantastic new purple dye from a mixture of plants in the forest that he hasn't yet released.'*
- Gamax and the blacksmith know the ancient sites are NOT particularly holy to true Guardians, as a Lore (regional) or Lore (theology) check will also reveal. True followers of the ancient nature religions

would prefer small groves, perhaps those like the 'offering groves' around the farms.

On Paths/Road

Only one encounter will occur along the paths or road, in the south of the map as it meanders through or alongside the forest, and when the Player Characters are coming back from a farm. If they keep a lookout they will spot a large owl, similar to the one they have already seen. It will be sitting on an old tree stump, watching them. As it is daylight this looks a bit odd. If it sees them looking at it, it will fly away. If the Player Characters follow the owl, they will catch a glimpse of an old man in blue robes looking for vegetables or herbs in the undergrowth. As the owl arrives he will turn, see the Player Characters, nod and walk back into the undergrowth. They can keep following but should make Perception or Tracking rolls regularly (the Blue Guardian's Stealth is 130%) and are likely to lose him in the woods or, if need be, when he casts enough spells to hide his tracks.

Craconix's farm

At Craconix's farm, the Player Characters will be welcomed again and have their questions readily answered by Aron, Elia or the pig-boy, as Craconix is still ill.

In addition to the information already gained from Craconix's people, the following could also be discovered.

- If questioned about a banner (which is unlikely to happen until the Player Characters have visited other farms), Aron will mention they had one and the pig-boy will say it was brown and had a boar, and that Pannix had one that was also brown but had a crow.

- No one has seen a Blue-clad wild man, but a brown one is fairly frequently seen, both by the sacred grove and along the track to Pannix's sheep farm.
- The teenagers on the farm will be more approachable than those in the village. None of the youth of the village, they reveal, are particularly keen about volunteering to become a wild man, or an acolyte of the wild men. *'That's just old tales,'* they say.

Pannix's Place

Pannix is a progressive, though not as much as Craconix and Deotrix. His wool is in great demand due to Yronix's stepping up of cloth production, and he is expanding. He is obviously busy, but will try and help out the Player Characters whilst obviously wanting to get back to work.

- *'Yes, we were attacked. And strange it was, too. It was two nights before the village, a night or two after Craconix was attacked. No one was seriously hurt but I lost several sheep and a couple of shepherds have bites and scratches. Trouble is, I now have to double up on shepherding and I've got to build a stronger sheep-fold.'*
- *'Yes, I am expanding, but not into the forest. We're doing very well. I'm using new pasture up on the hills and building a few sheep-folds here and there.'*
- He will confirm a worn crow is often seen in the fields, either by him or his staff, but then lonely crows aren't particularly rare... *'But what is rare is owls being seen in daylight – a bad omen certainly – and we've seen one around regularly. And only recently.'*
- If pressed on expanding into the forest, he will admit: *'Ok, I'm cutting down a few more trees than normal to make new fences, and certainly to make my new sheep-fold, but that's*

it. I've generally cut down the trees and bushes around the old sanctuary.'

- *'Wild men? My shepherds and I have seen a wild man dressed in grey or dirty brown in the ruins, and on the path to Craconix's Farm. Several times. Or perhaps several different ones.'* If asked, no one will have seen a wild man dressed in any other clothing.
- Also, if asked specifically, he used to have an old brown banner at his gate with the sign of a crow, just like Craconix's boar. *'I pulled it down years ago as it served no real purpose.'*

Deotrix's Farm

A woodsman can be seen at the gate to Deotrix's farm, fully armed. He will be congenial and send for Deotrix immediately. A simple green banner hangs from a pole, though it is worn and faded. If lifted, the shape of the falcon at its centre can barely be seen. If anyone in the farm is asked, it's just the old colour of his lands. If mentioned to Deotrix, he raises his eyebrows and mentions he must get around to pulling it down.

Deotrix will be cordial and polite. If the Player Characters mention they are working for Gamax he will be very helpful, the following responses to their questions readily forthcoming.

- *'We were attacked the night before the village, by giant, feral wolves with a snarl like the roar of a lion. Several of my people were badly hurt and Uleris has done what she can. One, though, had a poison slipped into his wine – said Uleris, anyway – and was unconscious, delirious even, for days. Whoever is responsible for this needs to be brought to justice. Or killed.'*
- *'Yes, I'm expanding the farm. Probably winter feed, mainly, but also crops. My father, may the gods ease his soul, would never go close to the ruins, but it's good land there and easy access to the river.'*

- His father paid great respect to the wild men and the older traditions. Deotrix cannot see the point of them so does not adhere to them.
- *'No, I don't give any offerings to the wild men. It's just another old superstition. I don't even know where the sanctuary is, though some of my people might.'* One of his old shepherds will show the Player Characters, but it is disused and heavily overgrown.
- If asked if he had seen any of the animals before: *'Of course I see animals. All the time... I'm around in the woods constantly. [pauses] Mind you, it's odd that a rangy boar keeps trotting down the path in daylight.'*
- If asked why he's around in the woods so much, or directly if he's been near the ruins: *'I've been the ruins – had to, to see what the soil's like. Had a poke around is all.'*
- Owls have been seen in daylight, too: *'My wife says that's a bad omen, but I think it's just superstition.'*
- He has seen a wild man, if pressed, dressed in dirty brown in the far fields and another in grey-blue closer to the farm. *'Could be the same one, mind you, as both carried staffs and looked weather-worn... Uh... no, one seemed to be wearing a sword or something at his waist. The brown one, I think.'*
- If asked about the banner, Theophilus will state it has always been the banner of the farm and he replaces it when it becomes faded. Other farms also had their own banners reflecting the nearest Guardian.
- Theophilus is still regarded as an outsider though he settled here some 20 years ago.
- *'Of course I give offerings to the wild men. Doesn't hurt to follow ancient customs. Sometimes the offering doesn't get taken for a few days, though, and it piles up. But it goes eventually.'*
- *'Expand? No. I've heard of the ban on expansion and have always been fascinated by the old tales.'* Theophilus shrugs. *'I'm comfortable here with my family and it doesn't hurt to follow the ancient customs, for whatever reason they were made.'*
- Theophilus will give a complete rendition of the old tales with little prompting, bringing out a harp to do so.
- He and his family respect the old barrows, leaving them alone. Sometimes they visit the ruins, just to see what they are like.
- *'Seen a wild man? Of course. I went out of my way to track them down and talk to them. I used to see one dressed in a faded yellow, quite regularly, and he'd give me tips on good plants and good herbs, as well as heal my animals. I haven't seen him for a long time, though. I see one clad in blue from time to time in the woods near my sanctuary, but the others – a brown one and a green one – I've never seen nearby, just in the forests around the other farms.'*

Theophilus' Place

Theophilus' farm has a guard, one of his field-workers armed with a crossbow who stands beneath a well-made yellow banner at his gate with a falcon in its centre as a badge. The guard will be polite and friendly, and admit the Player Characters to talk to Theophilus, pointing out his partly stone-built hut to them. Most of the other huts are wood with wattle and daub. Theophilus is obviously a foreigner and will be pleased to see Gamax's investigators. *'It's like the old times coming alive again,'* he says. *'Just like the old tales.'*

a dim view of anyone not observing protocol and asking to see him. The Player Characters will be stopped at the gates by a watchman (a woodsman) who will send for Formix. Formix meets them at the gates and sends the rest of the farm-workers and family away. As the characters enter have them make a Perception check to see a faded blue banner on a broken pole tucked away to one side of the stone walls which surround the farm. If they somehow persuade Formix to allow them to check it they will see that it has a faded owl as a badge in the centre.

His answers to any questions should contain the following:

- *'Why should I expand? I'm happy in the woods with the orchards and my woodsmen do me well.'*
- *'No, neither my farm nor I have been attacked by any creatures.'*
- *'Serves them right, them that expand without talking to the wild men. Everyone knows you have to talk to the wild men first before you take more land.'*
- He has never been to any ruins, long-barrows or old religious sites and neither, to the best of his knowledge, has any of his farm or family.
- *'Have I seen a wild man? A blue-grey one from time to time crosses my fields fairly often, but leaves no trace of his passage, and the woodsmen say they see one dressed in rags up by the ruins very occasionally. My father saw a green one once but that were years ago.'*
- If asked about seeing owls in daylight he looks uncomfortable and will then ask the Player Characters to leave. An Influence check will persuade him to tell the Player Characters why and a Perception check will spot he is hiding something in the first place. *'Yes, I have seen an owl in daylight. But it's a bad omen. Most often it's flying*

Formix's Farm

The encounter with Formix will appear a little more sinister than the others, though it merely reflects the character of Formix rather than any wish to hide anything sinister. Formix will not like them poking around his farm and will take

alongside the blue wild man. But I've also seen a ragged crow atop a rangy boar and that's not natural. So I've increased the offerings a bit. I don't like what's been going on at all, but it serves them that don't obey the old laws right.' He insists the Player Characters leave.

Standing Stones

These are all roughly hewn standing stones, overgrown with lichen and frequently creepers. If clear, vague hieroglyphics can be seen on them, the shapes drawn from animals and flowers. No one will be able to understand what the hieroglyphs mean, if they ever meant anything at all.

Ruins/Long-barrows

These are ruins of once splendid manors and outhouses and the long-barrows are what they say: ancient long-barrows. They are mostly deserted but some are inhabited by wild animals or sheep (if on Pannix's lands). No long-barrow is actually on or beside a path and all are 50m or more away from the nearest path.

At each ruin there is a 9% chance of an encounter with a forest bear or a small pack of wolves or, if the Player Characters are stealthy, a night leopard (see below). All will back off and run away if given half a chance (but the encounter will no doubt scare the Player Characters). The ruins are also a chance to insert a hostile encounter (see *The Forest* below) if the Games Master judges such an encounter would be useful.

All the long-barrows have a trio of standing stones on top, arranged in no particular order. These standing stones are otherwise identical the single standing stones elsewhere. One long-barrow, that just *off* the path from Pannix, has been recently broken into (see plan).

If the long-barrows are visited, it is only at the fourth, and not at his home barrow, that the Mad Druid will be present, either searching for something or praying and performing an ancient ritual. If the Player Characters explore his home barrow and discover the secret doors, treat it as the final encounter (see *The Mad Druid's Long-barrow* below). If disturbed outside and not surprised he will summon either a forest bear or from three to five wolves (see *The Forest* below), all of which will come from the surrounding forest. He will always try to disappear into the woods and return to his main home (use his Stealth and his *clear path* spell). The Mad Druid will always try to hide and move carefully, unseen, and will always try to cover and camouflage his tracks so he cannot be traced. If chased, he will summon a pack of three to five Fell-wolves to delay his pursuers.

The Mad Druid's current home is the long-barrow between Craconix's and Pannix's farms, details of which are given below.

The Forest

Within the forest, the Player Characters may disturb the lair of one of the following. The chance is 10% per kilometre spent travelling in the woods, or as the Non-Player Characters sees fit. Some will be in lairs, as specified in the individual beast descriptions.

There is a chance if a careful search is made that the Player Characters may come across a Plant Rune (on a preserved beech leaf) or a Beast Rune (on a fossilised piece of bone) in the lair of a Forest Bear or Night Leopard they encounter. The Runes will only be present in 12% of the lairs found and requires not only a Perception roll with a penalty of -20%

but that the Player Characters specifically search for items in the lair.

Fell-wolves

Use the statistics already given for Fell-wolves. 1d3+2 Fell-wolves will be encountered at a time.

Wolf Pack

These are ordinary wolves except for the fact they are bothering the settlement rather than keeping away from humans. If encountered without the Mad Druid they will act as normal wolves and will tend to be very cautious, protecting the pack and their young if threatened. 1d4+3 wolves will be encountered at a time and they will run if one of their number is killed or if several suffer Major or Serious Injuries.



Characteristics: STR 10, CON 13, DEX 13, SIZ 10, INT 5, POW 10, CHA 5

CA: 3 **DM:** -1D2. **SR:** +8 **Move:** 5m **MP:** –

Traits: Night Sight

Skills: Athletics 80%, Dodge 55%, Perception 60%, Resilience 40%, Stealth 55%, Survival 40%, Tracking 60%

Atk: Bite 60% 1d8-1D2 damage

Claw 30% 1d6-1D2 damage

Armour: Hide (AP 2, no skill penalty)

Wolf Hit Locations

D20	Hit location	AP/HP
1-2	R Hind Leg	2/5
3-4	L Hind Leg	2/5
5-7	Hindquarters	2/6
8-10	Forequarters	2/6
11-13	R Front Leg	2/5
14-16	L Front Leg	2/5
17-20	Head	2/5

Forest Bear

The Forest Bear is slightly smaller than its cousin, the brown bear, but can be ferocious when disturbed. If those who disturb it stand off it will posture for a while, then slowly back away. Only if commanded by the Mad Druid will it attack indiscriminately. There is a 5% chance that it will be disturbed in its lair with a pair of cubs, which it will not back away from and will defend to death if need be.

Characteristics: STR 20, CON 13, DEX 10, SIZ 20, INT 5, POW 10, CHA 5

CA: 2 **DM:** +1D6 **SR:** +7 **Move:** 6m **MP:** –

Skills: Athletics 60%, Perception 50%, Resilience 45%, Stealth 15%, Survival 60%, Tracking 25%

Atk: Bite 60% 1d8+1D6 damage

Claw 50% 1d6+1D6 damage

Armour: Tough Hide (AP 3, no skill penalty)

Forest Bear Hit Locations

D20	Hit location	AP/HP
1-2	R Hind Leg	3/7
3-4	L Hind Leg	3/7
5-7	Hindquarters	3/8
8-10	Forequarters	3/8
11-13	R Front Leg	3/7
14-16	L Front Leg	3/7
17-20	Head	2/7

Night Leopard

A night leopard, or forest cat, is a local large cat with grey-black fur that hunts at dawn and nightfall. It is rare and solitary and generally tends to avoid man, but will defend its young if cornered in a lair (10% chance) until it suffers a Serious or Major Wound, at which point it will flee. It typically lays in wait and pounces, running after a few rounds if it has not downed its prey. If surprised it will fight once and flee.



Characteristics: STR 17, CON 13, DEX 19, SIZ 15, INT 5, POW 10, CHA 5

CA: 4 **DM:** +1D4 **SR:** +12 **Move:** 8m **MP:** –

Skills: Athletics 70%, Dodge 50%, Perception 60%, Resilience 45%, Stealth 75%, Survival 60%, Tracking 20%

Atk: Bite 30% 1d8 +1D4 damage

2 Claws 45% 1d8+2D4 damage or 1 claw 55% 1d6+1d4

Armour: Hide (AP 2, no skill penalty)

Night Leopard Hit Locations

D20	Hit location	AP/HP
1-2	R Hind Leg	2/6
3-4	L Hind Leg	2/6
5-7	Hindquarters	2/7
8-10	Forequarters	2/7
11-13	R Front Leg	2/6
14-16	L Front Leg	2/6
17-20	Head	2/6

Return to the Village

If the Player Characters do not pick up that the Mad Druid's home is probably in the north of the map in between Craconix and Pannix's farm, or if they need help, have the following encounter when they return to the settlement.

As you talk to Gamax he stops and looks behind you. You turn, wary, and see a weather-beaten man with a shaggy beard and dressed in blue robes. He is calmly walking down the street towards you. He is barefoot and an owl sits on his shoulder, the same owl you have seen before.

The villagers all fall silent and watch from their doors. Behind you Gamax whispers. 'A Guardian. The Blue Guardian.'

The Guardian halts in front of you. He clears his throat, as if unaccustomed to speaking. 'I hear you are looking for the Mad Druid, the cause of the ill fortune befalling this village.'

Hopefully the Player Characters will acknowledge this.

The Guardian nods. 'He is a good man. Or was once and can be again. I fear he has been twisted by exploring the nether world overmuch, using drugs and herbal preparation far more than he should. He should not be killed.'

Gamax steps forward. 'That's fine for you to say, but he is killing us. And he's taken Yronix. You can't expect us to stand by and let him destroy our farms, surely?'

The Guardian leans on his staff and nods. 'But he believes you broke the old laws by destroying the forest and the sacred groves. What of the laws you have broken?'

Gamax thinks for a while. 'But we must expand and cannot do so if you will not guide us.'

'So you will harvest using our advice?' asks the Guardian.

Gamax frowns. 'Of course,' he says. 'And whilst I cannot speak for the farms, I'm sure they would agree to working with you. Theophilus and Formix would persuade them if they came with us, if nothing else.'

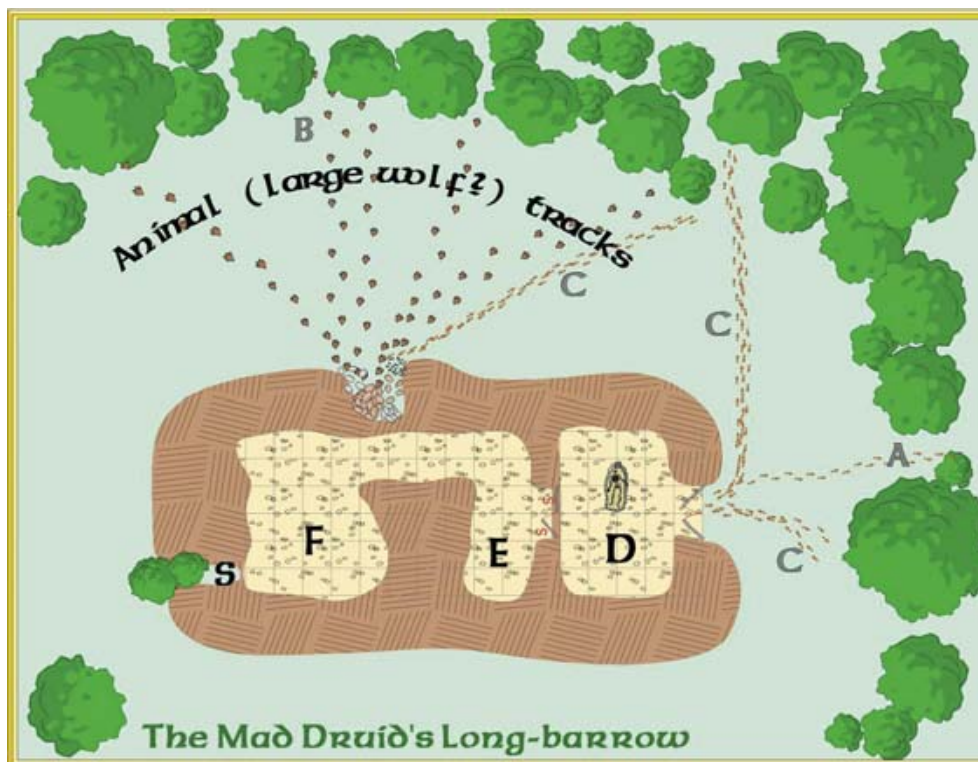
The Guardian smiles. 'Then we can work together.' He turns to you once more. 'But first

you must help me capture the Brown Guardian, he who is called the Mad Druid. You must hand him over to me for his mind to be healed.' He glances to Gamax and reassures the scribe. 'I will make sure he will not trouble you again.' He turns back to you. 'If we help each other stop the Brown Guardian from causing any more harm, you must agree not to hurt him unless there is no other option. And you must not kill him. He is, after all, a Guardian.'

If the Player Characters accept he will accompany them on their search, suggesting they stay to the north, and will use his Tracking skill if asked (Tracking 105%). They should eventually end up and the Mad Druid's Long-barrow.

The Mad Druid's Long-barrow

The chase should eventually end up at the Mad Druid's latest home, an old long-barrow with three separate chambers (see plan). The locals tend to avoid the barrows and not enter them, respecting or fearing those who were buried there. However, around this barrow are signs of work at the end of the tracks marked 'C', which are those of normal, shod feet.



Descriptions of the plan of the Mad Druid's Long-barrow

'S' is a secret entrance into the barrow that is hidden by the Mad Druid (using a mix of Stealth and Survival at 92%). It is his normal entrance and is only 75cm wide and high at most. Both ends are sealed by wicker gates, that on the outside having the camouflage embedded within it.

'A' shows some tracks moving away from the barrow, but if chased onto the barrow they do not come from inside but over the top. They are of unshod feet and are barely noticeable, but no attempt has been made to hide them. A Tracking roll is required to find them against a Stealth of 85% (the Mad Druid, but carrying a heavy body). The Tracks will lead to where Yronix has been laid in a pit in the forest and covered by branches (Perception roll required to spot this 'living grave'). Yronix is drugged and unconscious, unable to call for help. If his location is not revealed, he will come round in three days with his CON reduced to a half and will try and find his way home.

'B' is animal tracks, apparently leading to the half dug out area to the side of the longbarrow. They are reminiscent of large wolves. A Tracking roll is required to find them and they lead into the woods. If the Player Characters follow them assiduously they will eventually come across three to five Fell-wolves.

'C' are shod feet, leading to and from the direction of Craconix's farm (at the top of the map) and to the direction of Pannix's farm at the bottom of the map. No attempt has been made to hide these and a simple Perception roll will enable them to be spotted.

Within the barrow (D, E and F on the plan) the heroes will need some form of light in order to see anything at all. The entrance to D is an old stone doorway, the doors now forced open.

'D', the first chamber, has the signs of being disturbed: from the old entrance can be seen the handle of a tool, possibly a pickaxe, shovel or perhaps a simple spear. Shovels and picks are inside, those from Craconix's farm. The rough wall is daubed with crude, painted scenes



in which the colours blue, green and red are predominant. In the centre is a grave surrounded by stones: the grave has been disturbed and a skeletal hand and skull can now be seen. No valuables have been left behind.

The wall masks a hidden, sealed door that must be specifically looked for. Opening this will be tricky as there will appear to be no way of anchoring any ropes, so a crowbar or similar is required.

'E' is the second, middle, chamber contains 3-4 re-animated skeletons (depending on party size and competency) of ancient warriors animated by the Mad Druid. They will only animate in the presence of light in the passages in which they stand, light such as torches or candles the Player Characters are likely to carry and which the Mad Druid will not carry. If the Player Characters do disturb these guardians, the Mad Druid will find it highly amusing and, from time to time, there will be the sounds of cackles and maniacal laughter from the next room.

Skeleton Sergeant

Characteristics: STR 13, CON 4, DEX 10, SIZ 12, INT 0, POW 0, CHA 0

CA: 2 **DM:** +1D2. **SR:** +5 **Move:** 3m **MP:** –

Traits: Dark Sight, Night Sight

Skills: n/a

Atk: Corroded Bastard sword 42% (65%)
1d8+1d2 AP 2/8

Ancient Large Shield 37% (60%) AP 8/8

Armour: Skeletal (AP 5, No skill penalty),
battered helmet (–4%), ringmail shirt* (–12%),
ancient, rusting greaves (–6%)

* The ringmail shirt is in reasonable condition and would fit another humanoid of SIZ 11-13.

Skeleton Sergeant Hit Locations

D20	Hit location	AP/HP
1-3	R Leg	8/4
4-6	L Leg	8/4
7-9	Abdomen	8/5
10-12	Chest	8/6
13-15	R Arm	8/3
16-18	L Arm	8/3
19-20	Head	9/4

Skeleton Warriors

Characteristics: STR 11, CON 3, DEX 9, SIZ 11, INT 0, POW 0, CHA 0

CA: 2 **DM:** +0 **SR:** +4 **Move:** 3m **MP:** –

Traits: Dark Sight, Night Sight

Skills: n/a

Atk: Corroded Short sword 36% (50%) 1d6 AP 2/6

Ancient Large Shield 31% (45%) AP 8/8

Armour: Skeletal (AP 5, No skill penalty), battered helmet (–4%), ringmail shirt* (–12%)

*The ringmail shirt is in reasonable condition and would fit another humanoid of SIZ 10-12.

Skeleton Warrior Hit Locations

D20	Hit location	AP/HP
1-3	R Leg	8/3
4-6	L Leg	8/3
7-9	Abdomen	8/4
10-12	Chest	8/5
13-15	R Arm	8/2
16-18	L Arm	8/2
19-20	Head	9/3

‘F’, the end chamber is the current home of the Mad Druid, with skull-candles and assorted pelts and waste food, as well as some human remains

tucked neatly to one side with decayed death-gifts and corroded weapons. At one time it was the burial chamber of a lord and contained his Rune of Undead, which the Mad Druid now commands. As soon as he sees a Player Character the Mad Druid will screech and dance from one leg to another, shaking his feather-and-bone totem in one hand, apparently summoning spirits...

His screeches will be vaguely understandable: he will remonstrate with his attackers about the farmers destroying the sacred groves and expanding their lands where they should not. This tirade will become repetitious if listened to for long enough.

The Mad Druid

Scrawny and skinny, undernourished and with a manic look in his eye, this fallen Guardian will scream curses at those who confront him. Dressed in brown rags and with a battered scabbard on a belt around his waist, he also has a wolf's paw, a number of pebbles, a piece of bark and a piece of bone on a necklace around his neck. If checked closely, some of these are his Runes, one of

which is Undead (discovered in the chamber in which he now resides).

If cornered in his long-barrow, the Mad Druid will try to use his ancient sword to beat off a few attacks and in his other he will wave his feather-and-bone totem, interrupting his tirade with some spells and curses. If he is outnumbered by more than three to one he will try to escape through his secret tunnel at the back of this chamber. He will only surrender if he has either a Serious Wound OR he has a Major



Wound and is opposed by a Guardian and one or more healthy heroes, or is trapped. Even when he surrenders he will try and look for an opportunity to escape unless he is tied hand and foot. Once captured, the Mad Druid will not divulge the location of Yronix until healed.

Note: If the party is particularly tough, upgrade the Mad Druid with shamanistic abilities from the *RuneQuest Companion*.

Characteristics: STR 16 (real 10)¹, CON 16, DEX 12, SIZ 10, INT 16, POW 17 (14), CHA 14

CA: 2 **DM:** 0 (+1D2). **SR:** +14 **Move:** 4m **MP:** 17 **Age:** Indeterminate

Traits: Beast Speech² 86%; Carrion birds, wolves, bears, boar, forest cat; forest ally³; heals & recovers in half normal time

Spells: Animate (Skeleton) (3)⁴, Bestial Enhancement 2, Clear Path 1, Heal 3, Summon Beasts (1-3)⁵

Skills: Athletics 38%, Craft – snares and traps 42%, Craft – apothecary 83%, Dodge 63%, First Aid 78%, Influence 38%, Lore – Animal 82%, Lore – Plant 89%, Lore – Regional 56%, Lore – Guardian Theology 65%, Lore – World 22%, Perception 61%, Persistence 42%, Resilience 61%, Runecasting – Beast 65%, Runecasting – Fertility – 62%, Runecasting – Plant 43%, Stealth 95%, Survival 90%, Tracking 78%

Atk: Battered War Sword 47% (53%)¹ 1D8(+1D2)¹ damage AP 4/5
Ceremonial Dagger 58%(64%)¹ 1D4+2(+1d2)¹ damage AP 4/6

Armour: None

Special equipment: Feather-and-bone totem. This is the focus for his Summon Beasts ability

¹ If cornered in his lair, underground, the Mad Druid will drink his strength-enhancing potion

to augment his STR. Figures in brackets indicate his ability with enhanced STR.

² **Beast Speech** gives the Guardians the ability to talk to the animals in their care and effectively communicate with them. If the animals are under the effects of a Summoning, they will readily be able to be commanded to attack the Mad Druid's opponents.

³ **Forest Ally** is an integral part of the Guardian theology. The Mad Druid has two allies who accompany him, a ragged crow and a mangy-looking boar, both of which are less than fully co-operative but who will keep watch for him and have a 50% chance of obeying other commands. Other Guardians have a single ally, typically a bird of prey, who is loyal and totally co-operative.

⁴ If the Player Characters come through the front of the long-barrow, he will have cast his *Animate (Skeleton)* on the four skeletons in the corridor: this will last for 10 rounds and costs 3 MP. If encountered outside he is far more likely to use his *Summon Beasts* spell.

⁵ **Summon Beasts.** If in the wild (and not underground), the Mad Druid can summon an animal of size 12-22 such as a bear, forest leopard or Fell-wolf, or a group of 1d4+1 smaller animals. These will perform a simple task commanded by the Summoner providing he can communicate with them. The cost of this is 1MP per beast summoned and the beasts must be in or around the surrounding area. Once the task is complete, the effect wears off. As with Runecasting, without the totem he cannot use this ability. The spell is cast using his Lore (guardian theology) skill.

Mad Druid Hit Locations

D20	Hit location	AP/HP
1-3	R Leg	0/6
4-6	L Leg	0/6
7-9	Abdomen	0/7
10-12	Chest	0/8
13-15	R Arm	0/5
16-18	L Arm	0/5
19-20	Head	0/6

Within the chamber there is a chest with all the Mad Druid's possessions, which include a large number of healing potions in stoppered jugs, three leaf-wrapped poultices and dried plants, berries and roots in skins, as well as 4-6 sealed clay pots containing anaesthetic, narcotic or mind-bending potions this fallen Guardian has been using to 'form a bridge to the forest' (the words he will use if questioned) and to drug anyone he captures. The healing potions can be discerned as such by a successful Craft (medicine) roll or similar but even a successful roll against the other potions can only reveal that they are sleeping potions or anaesthetics of some kind or antidotes to the same. Other goods within the chest are a Guardian's bone-and-feathers shaker, other totems and interesting shaped sticks and odd-shaped stones, all of which are only of use to another Guardian and will be immediately claimed by another Guardian if one is with the characters.

The characters should be given any healing they need for disease and injuries plus two extra *per character*. The plants, berries and roots will contain enough materials to brew five extra healing potions. The poultices, though wrapped, will only last an extra four weeks.

If the players should examine any of the medicinal potions, narcotics or mind-bending potions they will find they are indistinguishable. Determine the effects of each jar randomly by rolling d100 and checking the following table:

In the other chambers are an old military standard (for example, in a Romano-Celtic world an Eagle from a lost legion) worth around 300 silver to the proper authorities and a variety of treasure, the exact composition decided by the

clay bowls, goblets, axes, tools and eating implements which are worth five times the normal cost of such items but are useful only as grave goods. A Guardian with the characters will try and discourage characters from taking these grave goods, insisting they are left with the skeletons and desiccated corpses in the barrow.

Mad Druid's Potions Table

D100 roll	Result
01-05	Slow Poison Hallucinogen, potency 65. The drinker experiences an initial euphoria followed by nightmares and delirium. Furthermore, hit points in the abdomen will be lost at a rate of 1 per hour until First Aid is given (refer to the damage rules for details).
06-11	Paralysing agent, potency 65. The drinker becomes paralysed and unconscious for 1d3+1 days. On waking CON will be temporarily reduced to half, regaining by 1 point each day a Resilience roll is made.
12-18	Hallucinogen, potency 55. The drinker experiences an initial euphoria followed by nightmares, even if not unconscious, and a feeling of a 'flu-like sickness. Temporarily reduce STR, CON and INT by 1d4+2 (roll for each) and DEX by 1d4, making a single, non-opposed Resilience test each day after consciousness is regained to recover up to four points of each (one point per success, player choosing which ability point is regained). Points of INT, CON or STR not regained in this fashion are lost permanently.
19-30	Hallucinogen, potency 60. Temporarily reduce INT by 1d4+2, STR and CON by 1d4 and DEX by 1d3. All can be recovered through Resilience tests as above.
31-43	As 19-30 but STR and CON loss is only 1d3, INT loss is 1d4 and DEX loss is 1d2.
44-57	As 31-43 but STR, CON and INT losses are 1d3 and no loss of DEX occurs.
58-65	Strength potion, potency 65. This temporarily boosts the drinker's STR by 1d4+2 points. The effect lasts for several hours, at the end of which the character increases in a level of fatigue and must roll again or else suffer an INT and STR loss of 1d3 points.
66-85	Sleeping Potion, potency 65. No nightmares or euphoria is experienced, only a temporary sickness and sleep. No INT or DEX loss and temporary STR and CON loss is only 1d3.
86-100	Antidote to the Sleeping Potion and Paralysing agent.

These drugs will only last two days if opened and only two weeks if sealed, after which they will become a mild poison, potency 42, giving a -2 CON reduction for 1d3+2 days.

Games Master and the needs of the campaign. Each corpse/skeleton should have a silver or gold goblets worth around 40 silver or gold each, copper coins placed over their eyes, swords, spears or weapons as above, and a variety of specially made, miniature grave goods including

Finale

After defeating the Mad Druid and rescuing Craconix, the heroes will be fêted in both the village and Craconix's farm.

Craconix will also reward them by donating 2 sheep or goats or 1 ram, pig or horse to each hero from his stock. The horse will have to be trained to riding but is already used to being a pack animal. One of the animals will have a concealed Animal Rune on one of its hoofs.

He will also extend the welcome of his home whenever the heroes require it. They will become free guests at the farm whenever they need sanctuary providing they stay within the bounds of reason, which is effectively the duration of an illness or injury or two weeks if uninjured.

They will be able to keep the weapons (if they wish) and armour from the skeletal soldiers in the tomb. If damaged, the armour will be repaired for free but the weapons are too badly aged to be restored.

What the heroes do with their goats is up to them.



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