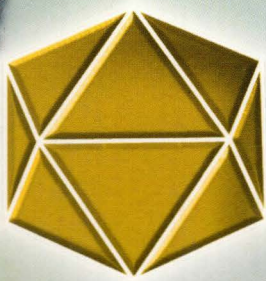


UNITED PLAYTEST PRESENTS

www.gamingfrontiers.com • GAMING FRONTIERS VOLUME 2

gaming

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for all things d20



Volume 2

The articles contained herein require the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook, Third Edition, published by Wizards of the Coast®

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VOLUME 2

for all things d20

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A special thanks goes out to Mr. Gary Gyga for giving us his time.

United Playtest would like to thank the d20 companies and their representatives for their continued support of our product. We couldn't do it without you. Okay, maybe we could, but it would be a heck of a lot harder.

This time around I would first like to thank Adam Williams and all the staff at Osseum Entertainment. Without their efforts I don't believe we could have been as successful as we were. New company, first product, they helped us navigate some of the pitfalls of the publishing business. The d20 publishing community continues to be supportive and friendly despite the fact that the playing field gets more and more crowded with each passing day. Thank you again for the long-distance relations we have developed. I look forward to seeing you all again at this year's Gen Con. Karl and Jeff continue to be positive in spite of my many failings. They are the true backbone of this company. To risk an analogy: they hold the knot while I tie the bow. And last but not least, thanks to my family for surviving through another book's production. I love you Kathy, Emily, Calvin, Madeline and the newest addition in the works.

- Rob

Here's a big helium-filled-gorilla-floating-outside-the-car-dealership thank you to Norma for being the best wife on the planet, gigantic Metal-Gear-Rex-sized props to Rob for keeping the faith, a huge Monte-Christo sized shout out to Bennigans for being so damn fast (Wanna do lunch next week Karl?), humongous Our-Place-sized songs of love and joy go out to the "FIU kids" (you know who you are), and, of course, I gotta throw some love to the people, places and things that make my world go 'round like a CD without a scratch: my family and friends, 80's speed metal bands, Nala, Taco Bell, Diet Coke (no lemon, thanks), and Eden Studios for the HACK card game, which kicks more ass than Jackie Chan.

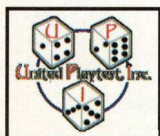
- Jeffrey

I'd like to thank all the d20 companys out there for producing great adventures, sourcebooks, creatures and prestige classes. Without any of you this hobby really wouldn't be what it is today. Rob and Jeff, its great working with you guys on something we all love, keep up the good work. Kathy, thanks again for being so understanding and my best friend.

- Karl

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gaming FRONTIERS

for all things d20

VOLUME 2

EDITORIAL

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William de Sonnac and the Knights Templar

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GEAR

A dearth of gaming gear has caused Jeffrey S. Carter to go searching elsewhere for inspiration. While he was gone, we broke his PS2 controller, and then blamed it on his dog. He's still suspicious

CARTOONS

Tony Moseley

FRAMEWORKS

Patrick Keith

Frameworks is where you'll find an art gallery and Q&A session with up and coming artists in the gaming industry. If you liked Patrick Keith's gorgeous cover for Volume 1, just wait to see the rest of his stuff

MAC'S CORNER

Seeking (a d20 System) Shakespeare

Industry figure Mac Golden joins our happy little family and lays down some good advice for aspiring d20 writers in this first installment

REVIEWS

We take on the good, the bad and the ugly so you don't have to

Editorial

Fiction: To print or not to print...

Dilemma

We received some negative reaction to our inclusion of short fiction in Volume 1 of Gaming Frontiers. This floored me. Completely, 100%, jaw dragging on the ground flabbergasted me. I thought all of our readers would love reading fiction based in d20 settings. Correct me if I'm wrong but isn't it us game-geeks that would bring our own reading material to school? Only to get yelled at by the teacher to "put that book down and pay attention!" to the all too easy, quite boring lesson? We would forego eating so we could get more game time in at lunch in the library. That is until we were thrown out for being too loud while thrashing orcs.

Showing my age

Of course this was twenty years ago. Maybe that's the problem. I don't want to sound like a fuddy-duddy but is it possible that kids of today don't read? I find that hard to believe. I must admit that my pong game was in no way as compelling as Playstation 2. But come on. There's always time to read. You make time to read. Are you going to tell me that 300 pages of rules is okay but a ten-page piece of fiction is a waste of your time and money? I've always found a well-written piece of fiction more inspiring than a hundred pages of campaign setting that is rarely much more than a history lesson.

A long time ago...

I was reading Science Fiction and Fantasy novels long before I was introduced to gaming. It was this background that instantly attracted me to roleplaying. I could personally experience these great epics. In fact I could "write" some of my own. Did I want to learn how to play Dungeons and Dragons? For me it was a no-brainer. If the gamers of today need to be shown the light then I'm up to the task. Like my father did for me, I will help them discover the joy of reading. Lord help me, I do sound old.

Personal preference

Lately I have turned to short fiction to satisfy my reading itch. This lateral move in reading preference is largely because of a lack of time. If I get engrossed in a novel everything else falls by the wayside for a week or so until I finish it (I'm not a fast reader). With

Gaming Frontiers to publish, the required phone calls and emails, website updates, three kids to watch over and a pregnant wife to keep happy I can't afford to do that. Besides I have my share of 140 pages of material to edit every volume. Finding something to read isn't the problem. Enjoying the reading is. If it's work, it's not quite the same. I'm watching for errors in grammar, syntax and punctuation. I'm searching for the scene I want the artist to illustrate. So when I have fifteen minutes to spare I get the latest copy of Realms of Fantasy, Black Gate, The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction or Dragon magazine and start with whatever's there when I open it up.

Standing my ground

I refuse to remove fiction from our product entirely. If we continue to get a large number of negative responses even after this editorial the amount of fiction will be scaled back. But it will never be removed entirely. Not as long as this is my sandbox. Am I being stubborn? I don't think so. Our product is a lot of things to a lot of people. The people who like fiction want me to keep it and the people who don't still buy the book and ignore those pages just like they probably have with Dragon Magazine for years now (as sad as that may seem to me).

A call out to our readership

Please tell us what you think. And not only about this fiction topic. We need to know what you like about our product. And what you don't like about it, too. We like criticism. We can take it. We'll listen. It's the only way we can improve our product and still be around twenty years from now, when I'll gripe about virtual reality books not being the same as holding a sturdy piece of pulp in your hands.

See you in three months.

Robert J. Williams
Editor-in-Chief



Editorial

ON THE HORIZON

the CANTING CREW

e x c e r p t

By: GARY GYGAX Illustrated by: BRYAN SWARTZ

Herein You will Discover Details of the Criminal Underclasses, their City and Country Environments, their Secret Speech and Signs, and many Examples of How to use the Thieves' Cant in Conversation.

The Essential Handbook for All in the Fantasy RPG Underclass! Every respectable rogue is going to need a copy of Troll Lord Games' The Canting Crew, written by the father of D&D himself, Gary Gygax. It's on store shelves now, but if you haven't picked it up already, then check out this exclusive excerpt for a taste of the full product. The new prestige class presented here, the Pacer, or City Ranger, is ready to be used in your ongoing campaign!

- Editor

Introduction

The ranks and the jargon of the underclass are the meat and drink of most fantasy role-playing game campaigns. Thus I have undertaken to put together a little handbook for Game Masters and players in such games, something to use to both develop more detailed rogues, thieves, beggars and masterless folk, and to complete the environment of the fantasy campaign in a richer manner with regard to the criminal underclass. It is drawn from the actual cant of the late Renaissance period, augmented with various archaic, vulgar, and obsolete words, and then garnished with imaginary additions to round it out so as to be more complete and useful. Not only should this work facilitate any effort to bring verisimilitude to the criminal underclass in a fantasy game setting, but by learning some of the language of the "Cant" and adding whatever else seems appropriate, all concerned will certainly be

able to enhance the color of and their immersion in the game, play their underclass characters more "realistically," and have more fun while so doing.

While the basis of the "Canting Crew" society is late medieval English culture, much of the material is grounded in the later Renaissance, and this model is one that serves the role-playing game buff well, I believe. Most fantasy game campaigns are centered around vaguely Anglo-Saxon communities because of the influence of the media treating the subject in film, television and literature. The material herein is thus meant to embellish that base. I have taken historical material and adapted it to the medium at hand, the RPG. In so doing, I have attempted to keep the whole as generic as possible so that the work can be used in any campaign regardless of the rules system.

This work assumes there is criminal organization, indeed a vast "conspiracy" if you will. The structure is one I have imagined for the devious fantasy game milieu in play. It is complex and convoluted, and detailed so as to be both believable and suitable in game use, yet not so rigid as to prevent addition or deletion as is desired. In this structure the "Brotherhood", the assassins, are the foremost of the Canting Crew. They are virtually above all others in many respects because of their deadly nature and potential state approval. Next come the thieves, with an internal hierarchy that is the most detailed, and likewise potent because of official sanctions. Then come the vagabonds (jongleurs, gypsies, strolling players, mountebanks and tinkers), which also have a detailed social structure. Finally, there are the many ranks of the beggars who are likewise stratified by their skill in the "craft", and who also might be broadly sanctioned by a state through taxation...and bribery. These four criminal groups each have their own associations, sometimes referred to societies, fellowships, guilds, etc. For the sake of ease, I use "Brotherhood" as the mantling organization's name, but that choice is to be understood as mutable.

Each association is basically national in character, headquartered in the largest city, with "branches" in other cities and

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towns throughout the state. Within Brotherhoods are various Mobbs (groups of Gangs), Gangs, Cliques (groups of one or more Knots, with or without other individual persons) and Knots (sub-gangs), but the details of these in the infrastructure of the associations are left to any using the concept, for such details are certainly world and state dependent. The head or heads of the association, in turn, have connections to neighboring and even more distant societies of like sort. The cant is what links them all – the Brotherhoods, Mobbs, the Gangs. In short, the cant links criminals to criminals.

Prestige Class

Pacer (City Ranger)

This class has great knowledge of the city they operate in. If someone is looking for something or someone in particular, these people can help find them. They have tracking ability, have learned the routes and modes of travel in the city and know who to contact for information. These individuals are usually well armed and armored with the ability to use both to their advantage. Many serve as bounty hunters, and are often used by the local officials.

All classes but the barbarian are able to enter in to the ranks of the Pacer. Those that choose to work in the service of the local officials are known by the green cloak and silver colored cloak pin they wear.

REQUIREMENTS

To become a Pacer, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Knowledge (Geography & Local): 2 Ranks each
Tracking
Urban Lore: 4 ranks
Base Attack Bonus: +6
Class: Any but Barbarian

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Pacer.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The Pacer is proficient with all Simple and Martial Weapons. They may wear light and medium armor, and use all shields (excluding the tower shield).

Note: The Pacer must select 2 weapons to be his/her Chosen Weapons upon beginning this prestige class. The Pacer can fight with the ambidexterity feat (which they receive for free at 1st level) and two weapon fighting feat only with these two specific weapons. This may be done in both light and medium armor.

CLASS SKILLS

Skill Points at each level: 4 + Int modifier

Class Skills: Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Heal (Wis), Hide (Dex), Intuit Direction (Wis), Jump (Str), Knowledge (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), Tumble (Dex) and Use Rope (Dex).

Urban Lore (Wis): Use this skill to learn about the village, town or city you are in.

This would include knowing the areas for lodging, eating and purchasing goods. You are able to establish contacts and learn of the darker or criminal areas in the area as well. For a village, this will take 2-3 days. For a town, this will take at least one week. For a city, 10 days to 2 weeks.

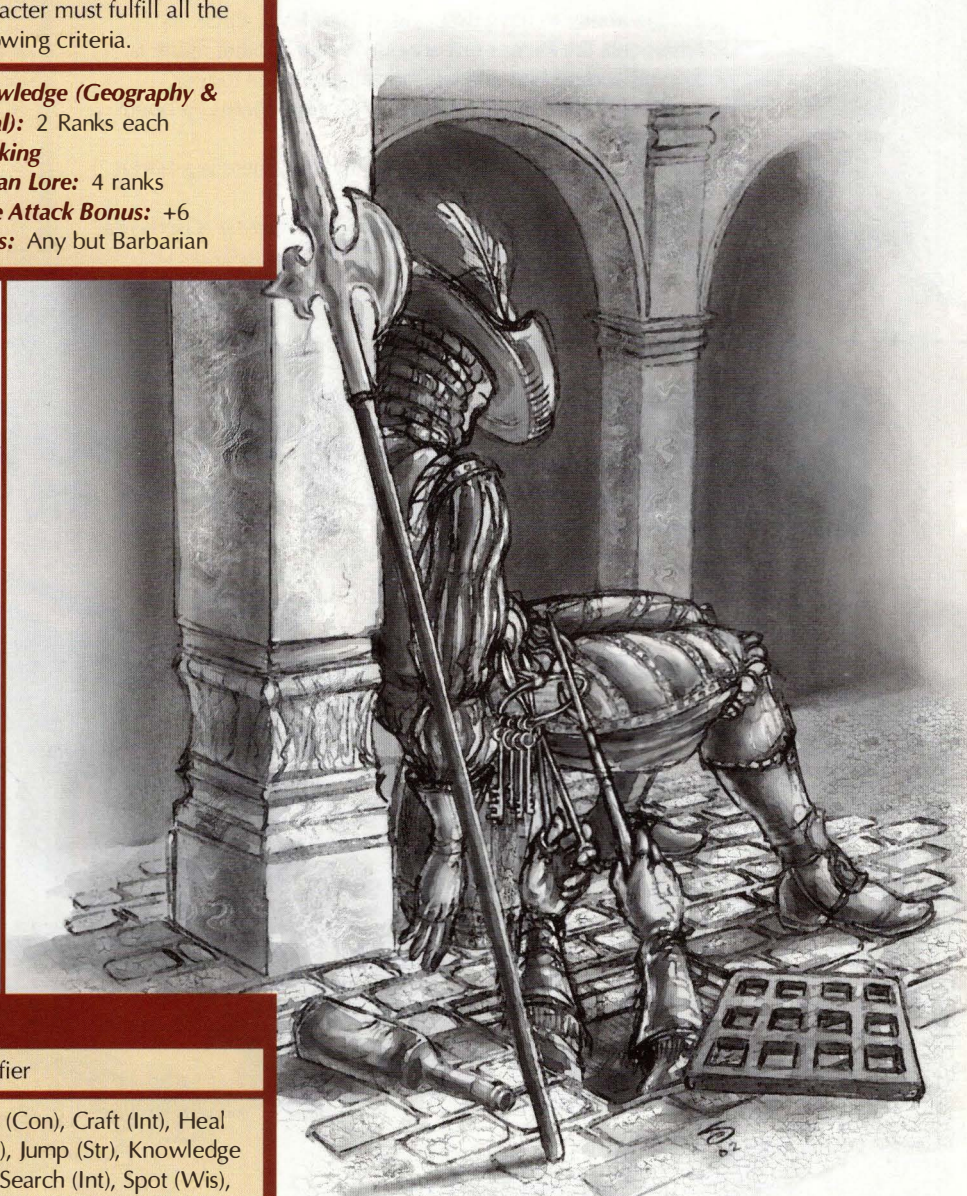
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Task

- | | |
|----|--|
| 10 | Find secure lodging, food, different merchants. |
| 15 | Find guilds, specific people or special goods. |
| 20 | Find hidden organizations, rare items or wanted individuals. |

Note that if these tasks are attempted before sufficient time is spent in the area, penalties of -2 for villages, -4 for towns and -8 for cities will be added to the skill check.

Special: if you have 5 or more ranks in gather information, you get a +2 bonus on Urban Lore checks.



PACER (CITY RANGER)

HIT DIE

d10

Class Level	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Ambidexterity, Pref. Opponent (1)
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	Preferred Opponent (2)
6th	+6	+5	+2	+2	
7th	+7	+5	+2	+2	
8th	+8	+6	+2	+2	
9th	+9	+6	+3	+3	Preferred Opponent (3)
10th	+10	+7	+3	+3	



Preferred Opponent: This is an enemy that has been selected by the Pacer. It is an individual or possibly an animal that has been observed over a short time, and the Pacer is aware of the opponent's nature. Bonuses apply to melee and missile combat. Only one preferred opponent may be chosen at one time. At 5th level, the Pacer gains the ability to have two, and at 10th level, three. To change opponents the Pacer must announce that another figure is being observed and no bonuses will be gained on the former.

- At levels 1-4, there is a +2 to attack rolls. Also, there is a bonus of +2 on the tracking check.
- At levels 5-9, there is a +3 to attack rolls. Also, there is a bonus of +3 on the tracking check.
- At level 10, there is a +4 to attack rolls. Also, there is a bonus of +4 on the tracking check.

PACER SPELL LIST

1st level: Alarm, Delay Poison, Detect Snares and Pits, Magic Fang, Pass Without Trace, Read Magic

2nd level: Animal Messenger, Cure Light Wounds, Detect Chaos/Evil/Good/Law, Protection from Elements, Sleep, Snare

3rd level: Cure Moderate Wounds, Discern Lies, Find Traps, Greater Magic Fang, Neutralize Poison, Remove Disease, Silence

4th level: Cure Serious Wounds, Freedom of Movement, Meld into Stone, Nondetection, Polymorph Self, Wind Wall

SPELLS PER DAY

Class Level	1st Level	2nd Level	3rd Level	4th Level
1	0	-	-	-
2	1	-	-	-
3	1	-	-	-
4	1	0	-	-
5	1	0	-	-
6	1	1	-	-
7	1	1	0	-
8	1	1	1	-
9	1	1	1	-
10	2	1	1	1

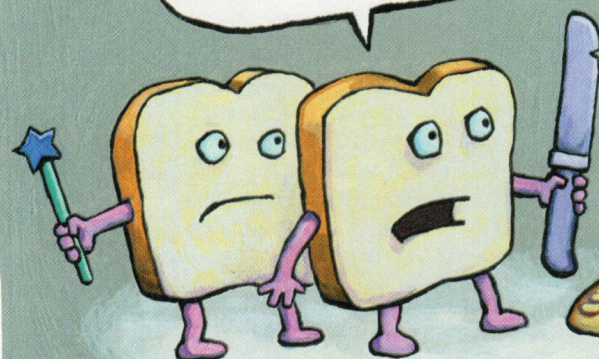
WF

BREAD!

AN ENRICHED d20-SYSTEM
RPG BY RYE N. DANCEY

USE THE WAND OF
WONDER, BRAD!
OR WE'RE TOAST!!

RRRR



TONYM

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Pioneers OLD SCHOOL

Gary Gygax

Interviewed By: Robert J. Williams

Creative Process

GF: What is an average day in the life of Gary Gygax?

GG: I get up around 6am get my coffee, I'm on the computer by 7. I take a couple of breaks a day just to rest my eyes from the computer screen. I usually wrap up around six o'clock with the day's last emails and then get myself a martini.

GF: It must be fun waking up every morning, rubbing your hands together and saying "What will I work on today?"

GG: (chuckles) That's true. You don't get rich writing games but you certainly have a lot of fun.

GF: What do you use as inspiration for your writing?

GG: Oh, everything. Books, movies just everyday life.

GF: Do you gauge yourself by page or word count? What would amount to good day of writing for you?

GG: I just get up early and start working. If I do have a deadline, of course I'll work on it. And when I have something that has to get done I do set a minimum even if I feel bad. I do at least three pages of work on that particular thing. Might go back and throw out two of them the next day and I will usually then aim for 5 to 20 pages. Of course those are manuscript pages.

GF: Do you prefer to write sourcebooks or adventures?

GG: Well I don't know. Sourcebooks are really easier to write than an adventure. Because when you're doing an adventure you can't just throw it together. You have to make it interesting and different.

GF: When I look back at books like *Unearthed Arcana*, it boggles the mind to think you wrote all those spells yourself.

GG: When I'm working on something like that for days on end, whatever I'm doing, I think about what I'm writing. Have you ever seen that old, fairly bad film *The Raven* with Peter Lorre and Boris Karloff? That's where magic missile, shield and a couple others came from. I said these will work great in D&D! But when I'm creating something like that, I'm really boring. Very bad company because I'm not really listening except for stimuli in regard to writing spells.

Current Work

GF: Is *Canting Crew* written in a particular setting?

GG: I had originally devised it for my own *Lejendary Adventure* but its generic enough for any campaign.

GF: Tell us what *Canting Crew* is all about.

GG: One of the things I always wanted to do was give the thief a really big, gritty urban setting. So I developed a city, a large city. It's more of a survey. Here's a city, flesh it out as you like, here's mainly how it's made up. It has twelve wards, with additional liberties within each ward. Each ward is separate from itself and is governed

independently. Who the officials are. What comes into the city, what goes out of the city, imports and exports. What's built up around it. I covered all the different city-thief types, the mountebank, strolling player all the vagabonds and created a hierarchy. The criminal underclass ranked as social classes if you will. Who are the most respected thieves, who's ruling the roost. Priggers of prancers are definitely well-respected. I also went through a dictionary word by word and did a cant to English dictionary in which I used a lot of old, "lost" words that were strictly thief. I threw in a few "Gary words" too. A few originals just for fun. This may get reproduced as a separate item, a pocket thieves' cant dictionary.

GF: How did it come to be decided the *Canting Crew* would be the first book you do for Troll Lord Games?

GG: It was the one the guys here really liked. I was working on *Everyday Life* and the *Canting Crew*. When I started using the thieves cant they said "ooh let's try that". I moved ahead with that and playtested it. Much to my chagrin, because my players started using the cant. I had to learn how to speak cant otherwise they could get away with a lot.

GF: Can you give us a teaser of what's next with Troll Lord?

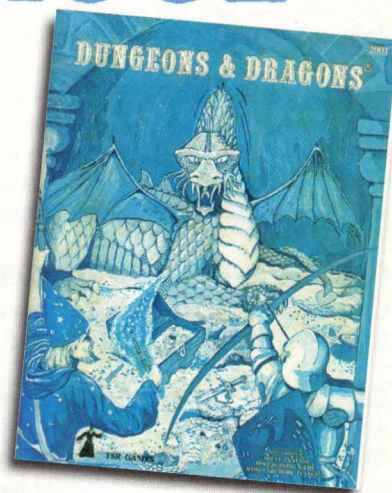
GG: Daniel H. Cross and I compiled lists, a book of lists with facts like different kinds of common trees, what kinds of barrels are there, what you find in a bar, common nicknames, etc. The working title is *Everyday Things*. That will be our next book for Troll Lord.

The third one here is *Everyday Life*. It deals with the socio-economic class, who's in them, what they do. And what would everyday life be like in a D&D and magic-active world. For example, priests have a hierarchy. They would be as prevalent as they were in white Anglo-Saxon early society. Everywhere you look there were monasteries and here it wouldn't just be a matter of faith but magical works as well. The deities are manifest. This makes them a much more important part of society. They are doctors, they stave off drought in the fields, etc.

GF: Any plans to do a d20 conversion book for *Lejendary Adventures*?

GG: No. I would just as soon keep my system which is rules-wise skill based versus the character-base. But we will probably be doing a few crossover books that will have d20 information in it as well.

GF: On your *Slayer's Guide to Dragons* for Mongoose Publishing. Today's dragons aren't that different from what you originally envisioned for first edition. What is possibly left to say about these



creatures that hasn't been covered in the last 30 years? New dragons?

GG: (chuckles) Oh, you just wait. There will be the history of dragons, where they live and how they act. Some new dragons.

GF: Would you call it an ecology of dragons?

GG: Oh, there will be more. We have direction from the publisher. Dragons as player characters. Where dragons came from or could have come from. Ecology, habitat, what is a typical weyr like. An adventure and adventure hooks. Dragon minions.

Gaming

GF: Do you still enjoy going to conventions?

GG: Yes, I do. Although I hate to travel, I like to be places.

GF: Do you have a favorite character class and race from Dungeons & Dragons (old or new)?

GG: No, not really. It's just like saying what's my favorite game. Usually the one I'm playing. But if I had to pick I probably play a mage more than anything else.

GF: I noticed your credited as a playtester for Rob Kuntz's Prisoners of the Maze for Sword & Sorcery. Does that mean you still find time to game?

GG: Oh, that was eons ago! Ha ha Our group is taking a break right now since I'm so busy. But when we play we play in my game, Lejendary Adventures.

GF: What is your favorite game-night snack?

GG: I usually don't snack when I game. I love, for example, Cheetos but first of all it wrecks all your maps. And second, once I start eating whether its pretzels or peanuts, I love dry-roasted peanuts, or chips or whatever I just can't stop. So usually I go through the game without snacking, let the guys eat if they want. It's hard to talk with a mouth full of food. One of my sons brings cigars over occasionally but only when we're playing on the porch.

D20

GF: What do you think of the d20 system license?

GG: I was a little dubious at first, but its turned out to be quite a stroke of genius. They're getting the smaller companies to produce supporting material that isn't remunerative by a large company's standards. While 10,000 units is good for a small company it isn't for a large one.

GF: But at the same time it is content that a lot of the fans were clamoring for.

GG: Absolutely. So it's supporting the d20 system and the new D&D and that's just marvelous. Anything that you want will be out soon.

GF: And if it's not you could go on the forum boards and suggest it and in three months someone will publish it. You can tell that some companies are already scouring for ideas. Between electronic and print publishers there are over 100 active companies.

GG: Which is way too many for our niche market.

GF: There's a good point. Do you think that we should fear that we could have a glut...

GG: Oh, of course!

GF: ...since we have no real quality control?

GG: It's happening, sure. And unfortunately most gamers don't have unlimited pocketbooks.

GF: We're already seeing a sales drop in d20 products. With so many companies producing product I feel we have too much supply to meet demand. Interestingly enough the products that are creating the biggest buzz recently are settings that break away from the traditional fantasy mold. For example: Spycraft and Dragonstar. It's almost like the gamers are looking to these other settings for a change of pace. Historically, though, there have been similar trends over the last 30 years of roleplaying where players try some other genres but the consumers always fall back to fantasy.

GG: You know, TSR tried some other things - Gamma World, Top Secret, Star Frontiers. The problem is supporting them and unless they are really well supported people will lose interest and say 'hey guys, I'm tired of this let's go back to D&D'.

GF: Geez, remember Gangbusters?

GG: Yeah, I had a Polish gang. (chuckles) I hear Jim Ward has the rights to Metamorphosis Alpha.

GF: Isn't Fast Forward Entertainment doing that?

GG: Yeah, I hope they make it work. Metamorphosis is one of my favorites

GF: What would you like to see companies doing with the d20 license that no one is doing right now?

GG: I think that in the next couple of years they will have covered every possible topic. But there is plenty of creativity. One thing you have to say about gamers is they are over-creative.

GF: This isn't a d20 question, but have you seen Kenzer & Co.'s Hackmaster game?

GG: I just saw their initial release. I got an autographed copy.

GF: What's your take on that, because it's an obvious parody of first edition.

GG: Sure it is. There's a big original AD&D website they get I don't know how many hits a day. But I said "all you original D&D players if you don't want to switch to Hackmaster but are looking for original material steal it from Hackmaster! There's all kind of great stuff in here." And it's funny, too. Jolly's got me down so well.

GF: So you don't mind the parody of yourself in Gary Jackson head of Hard Eight Enterprises?

GG: Oh no, Gary Jackson is a terrible hack. A thief and a plagiarist.

GF: Well, of course we don't attribute his bad traits to you.

GG: Oh, you've never seen us on the boards? Gary Jackson and I have had debates online. Even before Hackmaster came out I was complaining about them. (indignantly) How could you do that? (chuckles) You know, on Eric Noah's board to give them some publicity.

GF: With the advent of the open game license there is great opportunity for aspiring writers and publishers. Any advice for them?

GG: There isn't a week goes by that I don't get one or two people calling me and telling me they have this game they are developing and asking my opinion of how to go about producing it. I tell them "don't do it". Don't come out with a new roleplaying game because there is no way you can support it. Do a d20 product. Sure the market is small but it is growing.



MGP
3005

TRAVELLERS' TALES

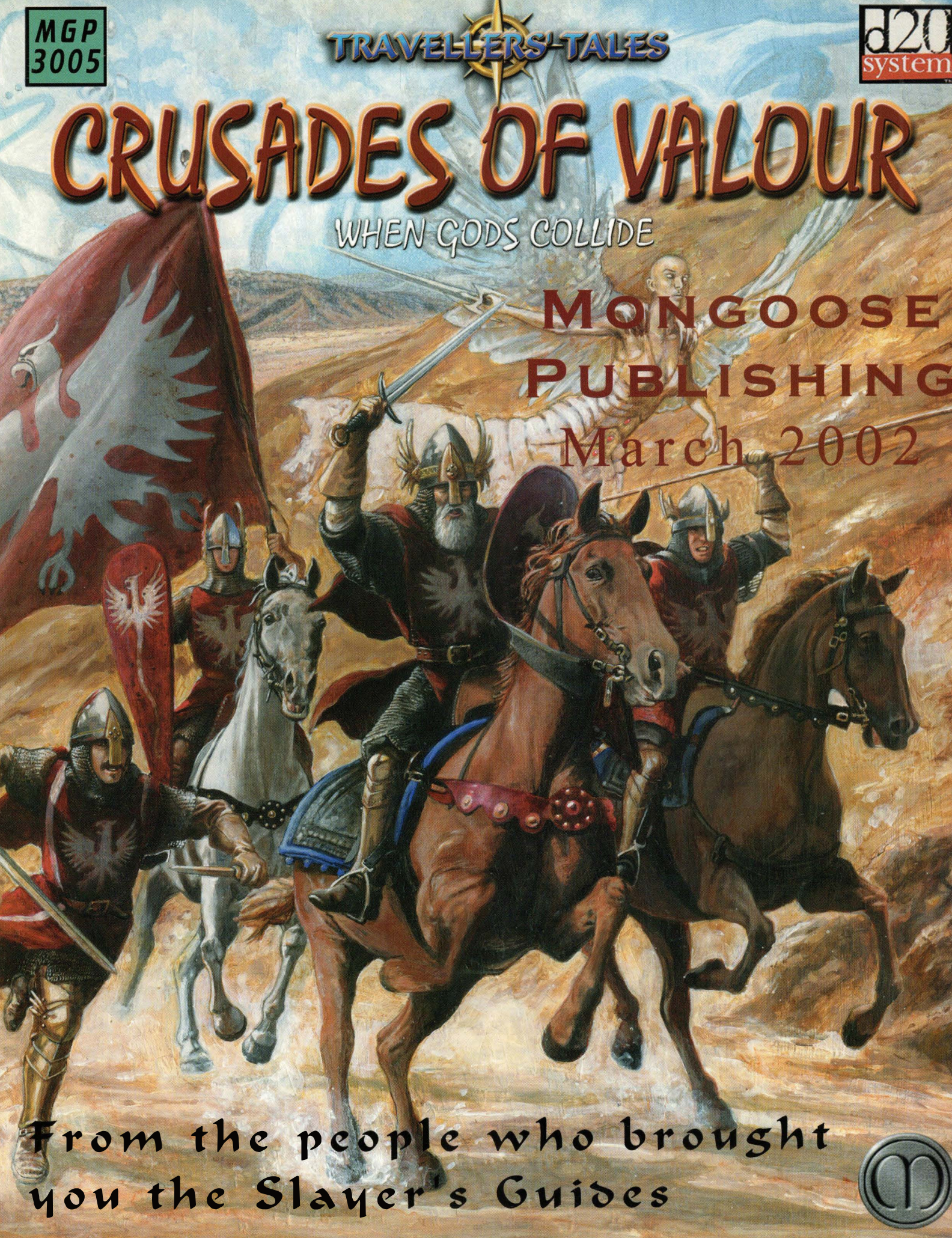
d20
system

CRUSADES OF VALOUR

WHEN GODS COLLIDE

MONGOOSE
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March 2002



From the people who brought
you the Slayer's Guides



UNCHARTED TERRITORY

THE SLAYER'S GUIDE

TO AMAZONS

BY: SANDRINE THIRACHE & KAREN MELTON

ILLUSTRATED BY: STEPHEN SHEPHERD

Throughout history and legend, amazons have always stood firm as the ultimate warrior women, the ideal of female triumph in a male dominated world. But who are the amazons, a race who counts the deepest jungles as their domain and ruthlessly slays any intruder? *The Slayer's Guide to Amazons* from Mongoose Publishing peels back the fog of myth and legend to reveal, for the very first time, the true story of these incredible women.

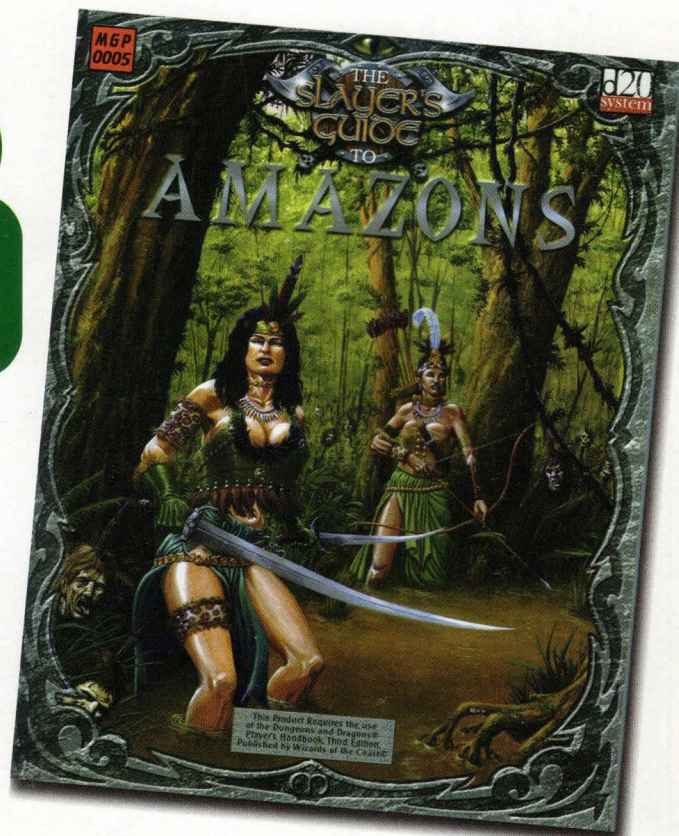
The Slayer's Guide to Amazons created quite a stir when it was first released in December 2001, not least because of the large centrefold depicting Nympha, the amazon ranger no adventurer would wish to tangle with! Far from being a frivolous exploration of warrior women, however, this *Slayer's Guide* took a serious look at the amazons, portraying them almost as a separate race from the humans they have hidden from for centuries. It is inevitable that whilst writing a book of this nature, a great deal of good material never makes it to print, simply because of the space limitations involved with a 32 page supplement.

Never fear, however, for in conjunction with *Gaming Frontiers*, we at Mongoose Publishing are proud to present to you some of this 'overflow' material that was destined for *The Slayer's Guide to Amazons* – new equipment, a new amazon prestige class and an entire tribe to introduce into your existing campaigns.

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Quis Partem Ichneumonis Cupit?



AMAZON

WEAPONS & EQUIPMENT

Dagger of the Moon

This dagger is reserved for the priestesses of the Goddess and, more specifically, to the high priestess during the yearly ritual of Communion. The materials that comprise this weapon are chosen for their symbolism with earth and stone, and therefore no metal of any kind is allowed in the making. The blade is made of the purest black obsidian and the hardened wood handle is crowned by the symbol of the moon at the pommel. Both parts are tied together with dried leather straps.

The Communion

Standing in front of the altar to her Goddess, the high priestess takes the blade while praying, and reverently makes a slight cut on each of her arms. She then holds them both over a wooden bowl, her blood mingling with the herbs and spices contained therein and, after crushing the mix into an aromatic paste, it is burned as an offering to the Goddess.

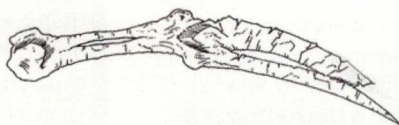
However, the dagger has uses other than for the blood sacrifice. The blade is coated with a hallucinogenic drug that enters the bloodstream of the high priestess as she bleeds herself with it, and sends her into a trance, thus deepening her communion with the Goddess.

The drug is extremely strong and anyone who takes at least one point of damage from the dagger must succeed on a Fortitude save (DC 16) or suffer 2 points of initial temporary Constitution damage. Regardless of the result, the victim will undergo a series of hallucinations one minute later on a failed Will save (DC 18), the drug's duration is 1d8 hours, and the character loses all Dexterity bonus to AC, while enemies have a +2 bonus to their attack rolls, as he loses touch with reality. Wielders not used to dealing with poison risk injuring themselves on a result of 1 on an attack roll; and even when treating the dagger with the substance, the character has a 1% chance of suffering from the drug's effect. The hallucinogenic drug is DC 20 to concoct with an Alchemy or Profession (herbalist) check, provided all herbs are available. Amazon priestesses are trained in the use of this drug and are immune to the Constitution damage, but fail the Will save willingly in order to experience the hallucinations that bring them closer to their Goddess. After one successful use, the dagger must be coated with the drug once again.



Bone Knife

A young amazon fashions this peculiar knife upon achieving her first kill and entering adulthood. Both blade and hilt are crafted from the same bone taken from her first victim, with no further ornaments. The amazon will then keep the knife at her belt at all times until the blade shatters, wearing it as a proof of her adulthood. The knife is her pride and anytime she hunts men, she will use it to finish off her prey by piercing his throat.

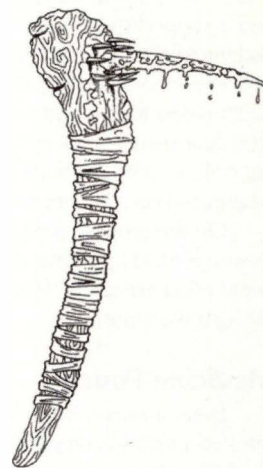


These crude bone knives are consecrated by the priestesses and give their owners a +1 morale bonus on their attack rolls. On an attack roll of 1, the knife takes the damage it would have inflicted on its target. Bone knives have a hardness of 3 and 5 hit points. When her knife breaks, the amazon loses the morale bonus it gave her, but at that point the warrior should be experienced and confident enough in her own prowess.

Needle Club

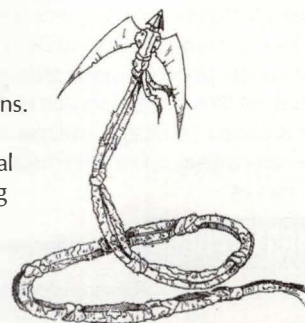
The needle club is probably one of the most vicious weapons created by the amazons. The weapon is made of hard wood, shaped like a slender and slightly curved club, with a smooth spherical end slightly wider than a fist. Its appearance would be silly if not for the thick poison-covered metallic needle that sticks from the side of the ball that hits the enemy.

Amazons create needle clubs exclusively for wars of retribution, when their rage burns cold with the fires of revenge. Prisoners are brought back to camp and executed with the club in front of all the tribe; as only a slow and painful death will calm their angry spirits. The executioner takes special care that her blow does not kill the victim immediately, trusting the poison on the needle to deal a slow and agonising death. The victim must make a Fortitude save against DC 20 or take 1d8 points of permanent Constitution damage. This poison is particularly potent, and the victim must make additional Fortitude saving throws every consecutive minute or lose one Constitution point until his death; only neutralize poison or superior healing magic can save the victim then. Amazons do not use the needled club for hunting or in normal raids. When the war is over, the frenzy of vengeance dies down and the weapons are destroyed.



Resin Vine

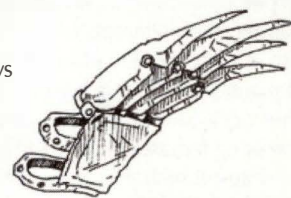
Amazons are the ultimate survivalists in their jungle domains. They have created tools and weapons that exploit their natural expertise in camouflage, tracking and travelling across the woodlands. As climbing allows them to position hard-to-spot sentries high in the trees, they have devoted special care to develop climbing tools like the resin vine.



Fashioned with tree vines, these ropes are dipped into a special herb-based glue that renders them supple and adhesive. It is usual for the vines to have a grappling hook fastened to one end, but a successful Use Rope check (DC 25) allows a character to wrap it around a low-hanging branch or beam without the need for one, thanks to the vine's adhesiveness. An amazon using a resin vine when travelling among the trees can hold on to it with only one hand with no danger of falling, thus leaving her other hand free to defend herself. Characters using the resin vine bare-handed receive 1d2 points of damage when releasing it, as bits of skin stick to the viscous substance.

Iron Claws

Like the resin vine, the iron claws are tools that aid in climbing. They consist in five metallic claws that extend from a hardened leather base that straps to the user's hands



AMAZON WEAPONS

	Size	Cost	Damage	Critical	Range Increment	Weight	Type
Simple Weapons							
Dagger of the Moon	Tiny	-	1d4 + poison	19-20/x2	-	1 lb.	Piercing
Bone Knife	Tiny	-	1d4	19-20/x2	10 ft.	1 lb.	Piercing
Needle Club	Medium	-	1d6 + poison	x2	10 ft.	3 lb.	Bludgeoning

Exotic Weapons

Iron Claws	Exotic	5 gp	1d4	x2	-	2 lb.	Piercing
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AMAZON EQUIPMENT

Item	Cost	Weight
Resin Vine (50 ft.)	12 gp	7 lb
Medicine Pouch	-	-

and wrists. Each articulated claw is independent from one another and is shaped specifically to fit the user's fingers. Experienced scouts and trackers make good use of these claws and prefer them to the resin vine. Though the grip is not as reliable, they are much easier to use and to manoeuvre with. The iron claws give their owner a +3 enhancement bonus to Climb checks, but only a +2 to anybody else. This bonus only applies when used on a wooden or soft surface.

On the ground, a disarmed amazon can use the claws as weapons to inflict significant damage. She cannot wield other weapons while wearing the claws, except for light weapons.

Medicine Pouch

Every amazon living in dangerous monster-infested jungles is taught how to make her own medicine pouch. Pouches are small leather bags carried on the belt or worn around the neck. They are filled with all the herbs and ingredients necessary to counteract poison and treat light and serious injuries. The amazon is expected to gather and mix her own ingredients, which requires a Wilderness Lore check (DC varies, see table) for each type of herbs to store in the pouch.

Medicine pouches make great gifts during festivities, as they symbolise one of the many gifts of life. Every pouch is unique in design and make, as are its contents. A single pouch can contain up to three uses of the medicinal herbs, and their effects can be:

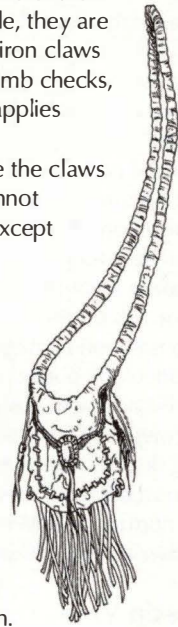
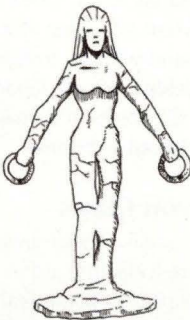
MEDICINE POUCH

Roll 1d20	DC	Random Medicinal Pouch Effect
1-6	12	Heal 1d8 points of subdual damage.
7-11	15	Recover 1d3 hit points.
12-15	18	Restore 1 point of temporary Ability damage.
16-18	20	Delay a non-magical poison as the delay poison spell.
19-20	22	Cure a non-magical disease as per the cure disease spell.

Spouse's Gift

Amazons are free spirits who have released themselves from male dominance. They abhor the institution of marriage and look down on the women living under its yoke. Despite their derision, amazons do not abandon their attempts to rescue these women from a perceived life of misery and subjugation. With this hope, some amazon tribes occasionally deliver a spouse's gift to promising females in civilized settlements.

Infused with the anger of the Goddess, these gifts are crude clay statuettes in the shape of a large-breasted female, with the head usually cut off. Amazons place the spouse's gift at night either on the roof or buried by the front door of the targeted house. The purpose of this item is to turn women against their husbands and sons, and the effect is subtle at first. However, even if the magic is almost always successful, few women have turned to follow the amazons; at best they become irascible, at worst they become insane and a danger to their families. The females in the household must make a Will save every full moon (DC 15) or have their attitude towards their menfolk change gradually for the worse; a result of 1 on the saving throw means that the woman goes into a homicidal rampage



against any male that crosses her path until the break of dawn. All men inside the house suffer a -2 penalty to any roll based on Wisdom, including profession checks and Will saves. A detect magic spell easily locates the statuette, and destroying it stops the situation from getting worse, but it takes a remove curse or break enchantment to get rid of the changes that already took place.

Caster Level: 7th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, Emotion; **Market Price:** 2,700 gp.

PRESTIGE CLASS: PATH SEEKERS

The path seekers can be described as the trailblazers and mappers of amazon society. Always on the road, they are the eyes of their tribe. They know every corner of their territory, and have encountered all its dangers more than once. They discover the pathways through the jungle, from the widest roads to the narrowest trails and record everything in their maps. They retrieve relics from battlefields for the keepers of history, and they keep the ties with remote tribes strong.

The life of a path seeker is a lonely one, returning to the tribe only during the cold season. They travel light, with only the bare minimum of equipment to make room for scrolls to make maps with. Their knowledge of the wilderness provides them with what they need to survive comfortably: they know where to sleep safely in the jungle, which plants are best for healing and which for eating, and how to find drinking holes to hunt animals for food or share the water with them. The path seekers' mission is to record everything they see and experience, as amazons like to know what lies beyond their territory in order to be prepared.

Rangers and druids often choose to become path seekers as they are more attuned to the wilderness than any other class, but fighters and the rare amazon barbarian take well to the challenges of the wild and assume point position in any raid. Spellcasters seldom join the path seekers, as the roads they travel are ones of knowledge and power, not of dirt and vegetation. In any case, path seekers are few in every tribe, as their tasks send them far away from their sisters. It is a life of hardships, but when the cold season comes, their return is celebrated and they enjoy the honours due to warriors of great prestige. At this time they share their knowledge with the high priestess, relinquish to the tribe any interesting item they have found, and submit their maps.

REQUIREMENTS

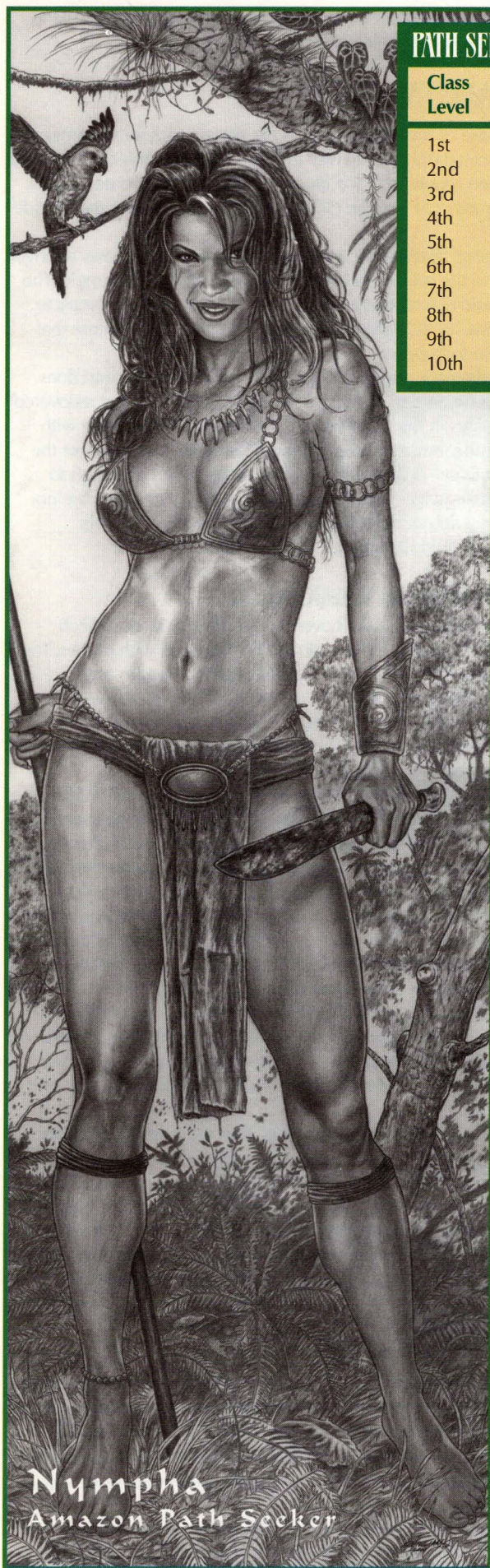
To become a Path Seeker, an amazon must first qualify to the following criteria:

Knowledge (Region): 8 ranks
Wilderness Lore: 6 ranks
Feats: Endurance, Skill Focus (Intuit Direction)
Special: Female and unmarried. The amazons will never teach their craft to a male or those sullied by them.

CLASS SKILLS

Skill Points at each level: 4 + Int modifier

The path seeker's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Balance (Dex), Climb (Dex), Craft (Cartography) (Int), Hide (Dex), Intuit Direction (Wis), Knowledge (geography) (Int), Knowledge (region) (Int), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Wilderness Lore (Wis). See Chapter 4: Skills in the Core Rulebook III for skill descriptions.



Nympha
Amazon Path Seeker

PATH SEEKERS

Class Level	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+0	+0	Find the way +2
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+0	Encrypt map
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+1	Track
4th	+4	+4	+1	+1	Find the way +3
5th	+5	+4	+1	+1	Hide trail
6th	+6	+5	+2	+2	Superior track
7th	+7	+5	+2	+2	Find the way +4
8th	+8	+6	+2	+2	Weather sense
9th	+9	+6	+3	+3	Memory of the trail
10th	+10	+7	+3	+3	Homing instinct, find the way +5

HIT DIE
d10

CLASS FEATURES

Armour and Weapon Proficiency: Path seekers are proficient with all simple and martial weapons. They are proficient with light and medium armour. Note that that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket and Tumble. Also, Swim checks suffer a -1 penalty for every 5 pounds of armour, equipment, or loot carried.

Find the Way: The path seeker becomes adept at finding her way around the thickest forest; it is almost impossible for her to get lost. Like a homing pigeon, keeping track of direction becomes instinctive. The amazon gains a +2 inherent bonus to Intuit Direction checks at first level, then an additional +1 at 4th, 7th and 10th levels.

Encrypt Map (Ex): The amazon receives the teachings of the keepers of history and tradition when she proves capable of walking the land with ease. She is taught various symbols and secret ink recipes to encrypt her maps and documents in case they fall into enemy hands. As she perfects her art, only the mapmaker herself or another path seeker will be able to decipher it. The amazon can roll a Craft (cartography) check to set the Difficulty Class for anyone else to decipher her map with a Decipher Script check. Path seekers can read other path seekers' maps without the need of a check.

Track: The path seeker gains the Track feat for free if she did not have it already.

Hide Trail (Sp): At fourth level, the path seeker gains the ability to move on any ground without leaving a trace of her passage. This is a spell-like ability granted by the Goddess and works as the pass without trace spell as if cast by a 4th level ranger. The path seeker can use this ability once per day.

Superior Track: The path seeker can follow the trails of creatures and characters at her full movement rate with no penalty and receives a +2 competence bonus to all Wilderness Lore checks in relation to following a trail.

Weather Sense (Ex): Due to the time spent in communion with nature, path seekers develop a sixth sense to predict the weather, which allows them to seek shelter long before storms and other forces of nature can surprise her. At eighth level, the amazon can roll a Wilderness Lore check (DC 18) to predict the course of weather in the following 1d6 hours. She can try to predict the weather in the following 1d4 days by beating DC 24 on her Wilderness Lore check.

Memory of the Trail (Ex): Symbols and maps cease to be of any use to the true path seeker except to relay the information to her tribe. At ninth level, the path seeker can retain the memory of the paths, roads and places she has travelled before she renders them on one of her scrolls. This skill is particularly useful when the amazon encounters danger and has to fight for her life before setting pen to paper, or if she runs out of scrolls. If she finds herself in an area she has previously mapped, or for which she previously studied a map, she gains a +4 competence bonus to her Intuit Direction checks. She can also roll her Craft (cartography) checks at no penalty when drafting the map of an area she visited in the current year.

Homing Instinct (Su): Though they spend most of their life abroad, path seekers need to return to their tribe at least once every year. As certain tribes are nomadic, path seekers develop a particular sense of direction that guides them directly to their tribe even if the settlement's location changes. This instinct grows stronger as the cold season approaches and the character needs not roll any skill check to help her locate her tribe. Additionally, the path seeker gains a +2 inherent bonus on her saving throws against magical or supernatural effects that alter or obscure the lay of the land, such as hallucinatory terrain, plant growth or entangle, as long as her efforts are pointed to reaching her home.

SHAOSAI

TRIBE OF THE HIGH PLATEAU

The high plateau stands in sharp contrast with the lush jungle that surrounds it. A colossal rock formation dotted with patches of green, it once served as nesting grounds to a clutch of lizardfolk. The reptilians shared the jungle with several other races, until the colony's numbers increased sufficiently for them to try and assert dominance over their neighbours. Sure of their own strength, the lizardfolk razed the land, enslaving the tribes who surrendered, exterminating the ones who resisted.

That is, until they burned an amazon village to the ground. Other tribes of warrior women learned of this crime, and their wrath was unprecedented. The reptilians were caught unprepared by the ferocious onslaught of the amazons, and their numbers were decimated as the two jungle-dwelling races clashed. Led by the Shaosai tribe, the amazons drove the lizardfolk back towards the plateau, the cries for revenge never quietening.

The last battle at the lizardfolk's nesting grounds was a massacre. The amazons took no prisoners and did not rest until the blood of their sisters' murderers stained the jungle. The lizardfolk colony was no more.

But the warrior women did not stop; judging the rest of the jungle's inhabitants as weak and unfit, they allowed the heat of war carry them onward to conquer and dominate the high plateau area, becoming the monsters they had just slain. The settlements they had liberated soon fell under their control; the skulls of the foolish that tried to oppose them adorned the trees around their boundaries, warning everyone that they had entered amazon territory and there would be no forgiveness for their trespass.

TRIBE COMPOSITION

The Shaosai tribe is composed of 118 individuals, warriors for the most part. At least half of the population is in the village during the day, whilst patrols and designated hunters scout the surrounding area. At night, 85% of the village is present.

- 1 Tribe Leader / High Priestess (3rd Level Fighter/6th Level Cleric)
- 4 Priestesses (3rd to 5th level clerics)
- 3 Path Seekers (3rd to 4th level fighters, scouts, rangers)
- 38 Crones (3rd to 5th level warriors)
- 49 Mothers (2nd to 3rd level scouts and warriors)
- 23 Maidens (1st to 2nd level warriors)

However, the fight against the lizardfolk and the following campaign of conquest took their toll: the amazons had spread their numbers thin, too many warriors had fallen, and the conquered tribes resented their dominance. It was only a matter of time before chaos erupted again. So the remaining amazons, under Shaosai leadership, retreated to the deepest corner of the jungle and now

live where the lizardfolk colony once lay. Patrols and scouts make sure no one violates their territory.

THE AMAZON CAMP

The base of the high plateau is the perfect spot for the amazon village. Located only steps away from a small river, the old lizardfolk lair has been rebuilt to fit the lifestyle of the warrior women. There, the water runs pure and the cliffs offer a safe haven from the outside world.

The camp itself respects the lay of the land and follows the river that flows to the southwest before disappearing into the jungle. The Shaosai avoid cutting more trees than it is absolutely necessary to clear an area for habitation, achieving a balance with Nature that allows them to flourish.

The tribe only numbers a hundred or so members, and does not require expanding its living areas yet as they have not recovered from the losses in the tribal wars of domination. An alliance with another nearby amazon tribe lets the Shaosai keep watch over the jungle, confident in their strength. The village is large enough to accommodate twice its current population and, since they are not farmers, they do not need fields except for the small parcels designated to hold the gardens for the mother's milk.

The Walls and the Watch Towers

Four towers keep watch over the village's main wall. Each wooden tower stands 20 feet tall and is reinforced with planks. The sentry box on top of each provides nine-tenths cover to any occupants, giving archers a +10 cover bonus to their AC and +4 cover bonus to their Reflex saves, while still permitting them to attack any invader without penalty. Five archers can take position in each tower in case of assault.

The towers are mounted over a defensive inner wall made of hardened tree trunks. A narrow strip of barren terrain separates the jungle and the outer wall; providing enough distance to identify potential aggressors and denying them any cover against the archers in the towers. The outer defence is not so much a wall as it is a line of wooden trunks staked deep into the ground at an outwards angle, with the points sharpened into crude spikes. The amazons devised this first line of defence to rebuke the attacks of giant reptiles and dire animals, which are often attracted to the area.

The towers are guarded day and night by at least one guard, replaced every two hours. Crones, mothers and maidens take these posts without discrimination, as all are expected to perform their duty to the tribe. At any time, four are on duty during the day, and eight at night.

Contrary to what can be gleaned from the care the amazons took in designing the fortifications, they do not fear a direct assault to their village, trusting in patrols and sentries to spot threats with enough advance warning, and confident in their warriors' ability to fend enemies off. Shaosai tribeswomen prefer to fight far from their homes, so that the only chance outsiders have of finding the village is to be captured and taken there by the amazons themselves.

The Main Gate

The main gate is the only access to the village and is generally open during the day. A large courtyard extends from the gate to the spikes, but the amazons circle around it to reach the village, as it is really a concealed pit with even more stakes at the bottom. The Shaosai built this trap to stop the biggest reptiles from reaching the village, should they succeed in passing the spike wall, or to stop a raiding party.

The main gate is closed at nightfall by two enormous wooden doors. There are from two to three sentinels posted on either side at

each time, ready to announce the arrival of a patrol or sound the alarm at approaching danger. The guards at the gate have the same rotation pattern as the ones assigned to the watchtowers.

Additional Sentinels

On the cliff of the high plateau itself, the amazons enlarged two small natural openings in the rock and fashioned them as additional guard posts, wide enough to fit only one person at a time. Located higher than the watchtowers and on either side of the royal living quarters, these small caves allow the amazons a better view on what happens farther in the area. In clear weather, a guard can see up to two miles away from this vantage point, so the sentinel can spot the effect an advancing army has on the jungle. The only access to these small burrows is a removable rope ladder. While not enjoying from any kind of cover, these posts are sufficiently concealed by dense foliage camouflage to impose a 20% miss chance on any shot taken at the sentinel. Should the amazon be wounded and tumble down, the 160 ft. fall will probably kill her.

Huts and Living Quarters

Life in the Shaosai village resembles a multicoloured quilt of the young and the elderly, sharing their living quarters in a mix of youthful energy and elder wisdom.

Built in two semicircular rows around the main shrine, the huts are large and spacious, serving comfortably as residence to fifteen or twenty amazons each. The interior of each hut is divided in as many spaces as there are inhabitants, separated by collapsible panels to provide a modicum of privacy. Each individual area contains bed, racks, trunks and enough space to store what its occupant will win during her life. Decorations often include trophies brought back by the best warriors, which are recognized by the entire tribe and bring pride to the house that keeps them. Many of the huts are not fully occupied, as the amazons reserve space for future generations, and keep the living area for the path seekers who scout away from the village for months at a time.

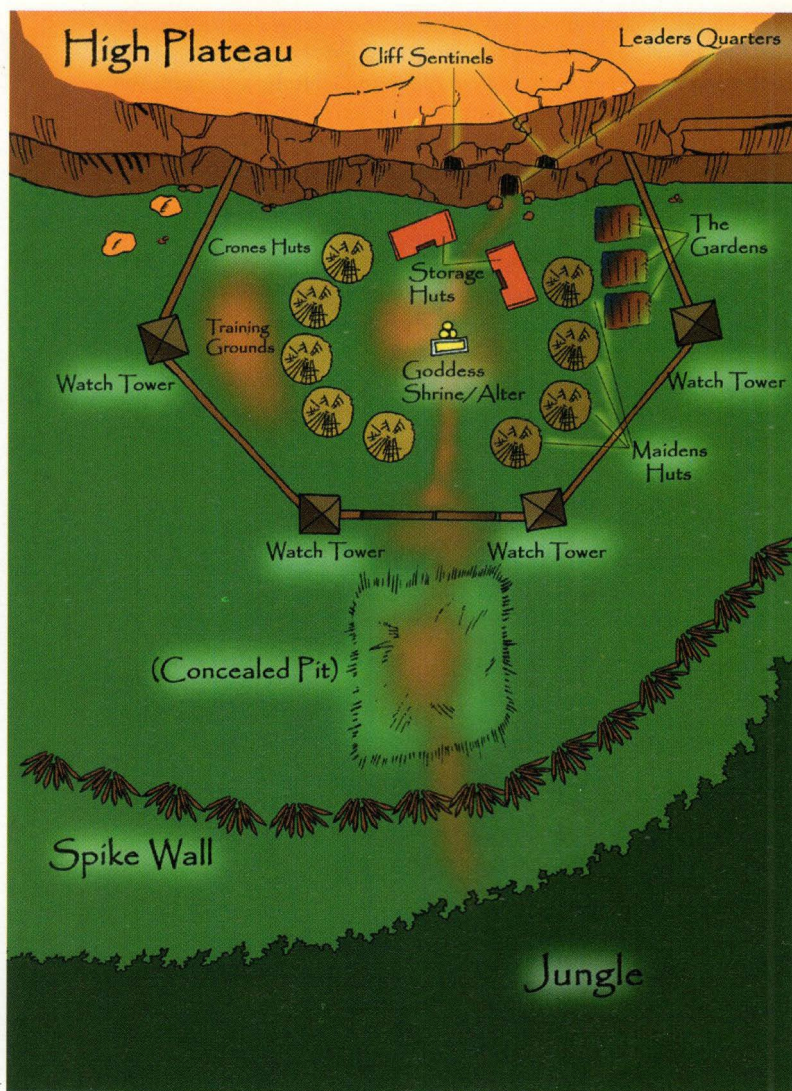
There are five of these large huts on opposing sides of the village, built northwest and southeast from the centre that holds the shrine to the Goddess. Maidens live mainly in the huts southeast, while the crones reside across them in the northwest. Warriors may occupy both sides, living with the maidens or the crones if they are from the same blood.

The amazons learn, teach and practice their unique arts near their homes; various training grounds are located next to and behind the huts, so that several masters can teach the young in their respective areas of expertise at the same time.

Days are noisy with the laughter of the young, while older women lean on their tools, watching with pride how the new generations grow and prosper. This quaint image is falsely reassuring, easily luring males into a false sense of security when brought into the village during the time of the Growling.

Storage Huts

The amazons have placed their storage huts at the northeastern part of their camp, closer to the cliff and the tribal leader's quarters, with one storage building at the end of each semicircle of huts. These buildings serve several purposes: warehouses for tools, storerooms to protect dried meat from bad weather, and even improvised prisons, though the amazons build special cages near



the shrine during the Growling to keep captive males before their execution. The Shaosai tribe also uses the storage huts to dry the herbs used in the making of the mother's milk. Blacksmiths and other artisans are also assigned spaces in the huts for their tools, raw materials and finished products.

The Shrine

The shrine is the absolute centre of the village, where a tall statue of the Goddess blesses the amazon village with its presence. The priestesses perform the sacred rituals and make their offerings at an altar erected at the base of the statue, which represents the three aspects of the Goddess, each with its consecrated symbol: the crescent moon to the north, the sun to the south and the setting sun on the third side. Symbol of life, blood is offered to the Goddess during rituals, but the stains of dry blood do not come only from captured men: during the time of the Communion, the high priestess is expected to shed hers and renew the community's bonds to the Goddess.

The Gardens

Not as sacred as the shrine of the Goddess, the gardens still play an important role in the life and beliefs of the Shaosai tribe, as it is the place where the herbs for the mother's milk are grown. The gardens are located in the southeastern area of the village between the living quarters of the maidens and the defensive walls. The crones and the older women tend to the gardens, as it is a more

peaceful occupation when their bodies can no longer serve them in war. On the other end of life's cycle, young girls help in the cultivation while they wait to grow older and learn how to fight. The field is divided in three main parcels, irrigated by an ingenious system of wooden tubes glued and tied together. A thin fence surrounds the patches, offering a small protection against the activities of the children.

The Leader's Quarters

The quarters claimed by the high priestess are somewhat different from the rest of the village. They are located where the lizardfolk's old nest once lay: the cave system at the side of the cliff. The caverns are wide and offer adequate comfort to the leader and high priestess of the tribe, as well as for the other priestesses. Only a thick leather curtain divides the priesthood from the rest of their sisters, and two guards keep uninvited guests from going inside at all times. None enters the leader's quarters without permission, but everyone is welcome to discuss any matter of interest to the tribe by requesting an audience. The accommodations include the same comforts as the rest of the living quarters, with the only difference being the slightly larger space assigned to each occupant.

DAEVA, HIGH PRIESTESS AND TRIBE LEADER OF THE SHAOSAI

Medium-size Humanoid (Amazon)

3rd Level Fighter / 6th Level Cleric

Moon and War Domains

Hit Dice: 3d10+6 / 6d8+12 (63hp)

Initiative: +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 40 ft.

AC: 14 (+1 Dex, +3 hide)

Attacks: Longsword +9 / +4 melee; or short bow +8 / +3 ranged

Damage: Longsword 1d8+1; or short bow 1d6

Face/Reach: 5 ft. x 5 ft. / 5 ft.

Special Qualities: rebuke undead, +2 bonus against poison, -2 penalty against arcane magic

Saves: Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +9

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 8

Skills: Climb +3*, Concentration +5, Heal +3, Hide +3*, Jump +3*, Knowledge (religion) +4, Move Silently +3*, Spellcraft +3, Wilderness Lore +5*

Feats: Alertness, Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Improved initiative, Power Attack, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Challenge Rating: 9

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Lawful Evil

Spells Prepared: 0 level (5): Create Water, Cure Minor Wounds, Detect Magic, Guidance, Purify Food And Drink;

1st level (5): Bane, Bless, Cause Fear, Cure Light Wounds, Divine Favour; **2nd level (5):** Death Knell, Endurance, Hold Person, Silence, Spiritual Weapon; **3rd level (4):** Deeper Darkness, Dispel Magic, Invisibility Purge, Prayer.

* Included is the amazon's +2 racial bonus to climb, Hide, Jump, Move Silently and Wilderness Lore skills whilst within jungle or forest terrain.



THE GRAVEYARD

Name: John Anstett

Character: Chrysana, 5th Level Elven Cleric

Game: Advanced Dungeons & Dragons
2nd Edition

Chrysana was the kind of henchman that hung out in the back of the party. She was a healer that stayed out of the way of trouble. The party was hunting down a vampire and explored most of his lair. The only item of note that was found was a simple gold ring. Chrysana kept the ring for further investigation. When the party came to the throne room and the final battle with the Vampire, things looked grim. Charmed party members fought each other and the Vampire was protected from the wizard's magic. In a desperate attempt to sway the battle, Chrysana charged with her magic shield, fell through an illusionary floor and plunged into a lava pool under the room, where she promptly turned to ashes. In that brave act-turned-foolish death, she actually saved the day. The magic ring Chrysana wore released a beam of magic Sunlight that slew the Vampire. She shall be missed.

Now's your chance to immortalize your dead PC in the pages of Gaming Frontiers! This is the beginning of a regular monthly feature entitled "The Graveyard", where we'll post the most interesting PC deaths submitted by you, our readers! Did Quicky, your 1st level rogue, get used as a club by a Frost Giant? Did an Ogre take out your 3rd level Barbarian with one hit? Did your 20th level sorcerer toast everyone in the room with a fireball, including himself? We want to know! Please send submissions in the following format: Character Name, Class, Race, Level, Description of Death (no more than 300 words, please) Author name and address.

IMPORTANT: E-mail all submissions to jeff@unitedplaytest.com. These submissions will not be paid for! Having your PCs dearly departed soul finally put to rest by means of a proper funeral should be enough! Thousands of characters die everyday, but yours will be remembered forever!

START SCREAMING



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THE MONSTER LAB

DEVILZENS OF AVADNU

BY: JEFFREY J. VISGAITIS, CHRIS BENNETT, ROBERT DORNEMAN,
JASON ROSENSTOCK, BOB GALLAGHER & MIKE MUMICH

ILLUSTRATED BY: NOEL MURPHY &
JASON ROSENSTOCK

It's the d20 dream come true. A tight-knit group of six gamers, some of whom have been playing together for 20 years or more, decide to take the ideas and concepts that drive their games and put them down on paper. Thus, like dozens of companies before it, Inner Circle Games was born. Their dark fantasy campaign setting, Violet Dawn, differentiates itself from the pack with new races, a new magic system and ambitious demons. Additionally, there are no priests, gnomes, halflings or dwarves, and the elves are nothing like we're used to. Players should expect the unexpected. Gaming Frontiers has been given an exclusive sneak peek at some of the creatures that inhabit the world of Avadnu by Inner Circle Games, and they invite you to visit their website to read the history of Avadnu from its gods to the creation of the races. And, be sure to check out the preview of the nomadic Skarren.

Are you ready for Violet Dawn? Then start screaming.

p r e v i e w

DROTH'YAR

Large Beast

Hit Dice: 3d10 +9 (26 hp)

Initiative: +3 (Dex)

Speed: 60 ft.

AC: 15 (-1 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural)

Attacks: Headbutt +7 melee, Kick +5 melee

Damage: Headbutt 1d8 +4, Kick 1d4 +4

Face/Reach: 5ft. by 10ft./5ft.

Special Qualities: Scent

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +1

Abilities: Str 18, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 3, Wis 10, Cha 6

Skills: Spot +2, Jump +7

Climate/Terrain: Any temperate

Organization: Solitary, Pair, Herd (4-20)

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always Neutral

Advancement: 4-5 HD (Large)



DESCRIPTION

Droth'yar are fast and powerful two-legged herbivores that are often used as mounts or beasts of burden.

Standing atop two mighty legs, a droth'yar is well muscled with a long tail and a thick neck. From the top of its head a single large



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horn spirals backward. Their skin is tough and mottled and its coloration usually matches that of their environment.

Droth'yar are highly adaptable beasts common to most climates and regions of Avadnu. There are several different species of droth'yar known to exist. Those found in the more arid regions are leaner and have longer legs to better regulate their body heat, while droth'yar in the northern regions are stockier and have sleek coats of long hair to keep them warm during harsh winters.

They feed on all types of plants, and being immune to most ingested poisons, droth'yar are able to eat vegetation that is deadly to most other species. In the wild, droth'yar are found in large herds usually led by a single dominant male. During the mating season droth'yar establish dominance over one another by butting their heads against each other. Winners of such contests are determined when one of the creatures is dead or flees from the battle.

Domesticated droth'yar are often used to help plow fields, pull chariots and transport goods between cities. They are also used as beasts of war, carrying high-ranking soldiers into the heat of battle.

COMBAT

Although they can be trained as vicious mounts, a wild droth'yar will only fight if cornered or defending its young. A droth'yar can fight while carrying a rider, but the rider cannot also attack unless he succeeds at a Ride check (DC 10).

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a droth'yar is up to 225 pounds; medium load, 226–500 pounds; heavy load, 501–750 pounds. A droth'yar can drag 3,375 pounds.

PHYSIOLOGICAL USES

Droth'yar are most often used as beasts of burden or as mounts during times of war. They can be harvested for their meat, but to most cultures this would be a great waste of resources.

NIGHTBEAST

Large Magical Beast

Hit Dice: 5d10+15 (42 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 40 ft.

AC: 16 (+1 Dex, –1 Size, +6 Natural)

Attacks: 2 Claws +8 melee

Damage: Claw 1d6+4

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Improved grab, bite 1d12+4

Special Qualities: Bestial roar, bloodgreed, horrid gaze, invisible, light aversion, scent

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +2

Abilities: Str 19, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 9

Skills: Climb +9, Jump +10, Listen +5, Move Silently +15, Spot +6, Tumble +3

Climate/Terrain: Any Land

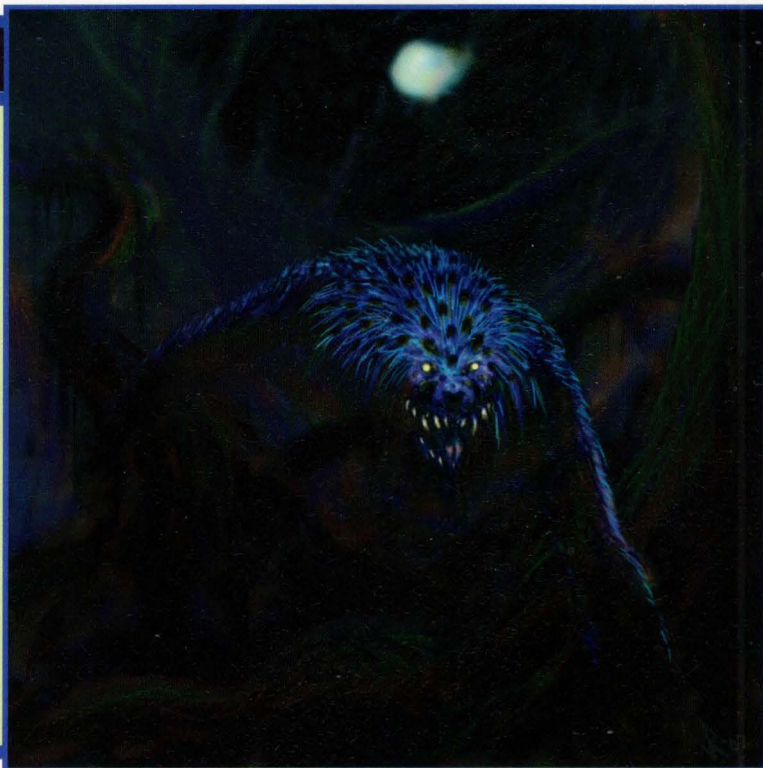
Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 7

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always Chaotic Evil

Advancement: 6–9 HD (Huge)



DESCRIPTION

The nightbeast is an ancient predator which stalks the surface of Avadnu, invisible to mortal eyes.

At the dawn of the world, the nightbeast was one of Karnn's most powerful creations and it was nearly unstoppable. Under the guise of its natural invisibility the creature was free to ravage the land and many humans fell prey to its voracious appetite. Morindalien, the God of Vigilance, watched helplessly as countless humans fell prey to the nightbeast. To give the humans a fighting chance and to slow the creature's relentless slaughter, Morindalien made the creature visible under his light, the light of the moon.

Under the light of Morindalien the nightbeast appears as a semi-transparent creature with piercing yellow eyes. It is covered from head to toe in long blue-black fur and its hands and feet end in short razor sharp talons. Black splotches and patterns cover the beast's eight foot tall, 575 pound frame.

Littered with tattered corpses and surrounded by the fetid smell of decay and death, the beast's lair is made from toppled trees, thick

mud and gathered leaves. The nightbeast is dormant during the day, only coming out of its lair late at night. It is most often encountered in remote areas of the wild. No one knows how many of the creatures exist or if there is only one, but all travelers fear to be caught alone in the wilderness on a moonless night.

All of the cultures of Avadnu share legends of the dreaded nightbeast in one form or another. Among the Skarren the creature is called Barvocca, which roughly translates to "ghost of the night". To the Zeidians it is known as Ar-Khuul, and wherever one is found they will always attempt to destroy it, or at least drive the monster deeper into the wild. The creature has existed since before the twin suns were placed in the heavens and its legend has passed from generation to generation for thousands of years.

The nightbeast speaks no known languages.

COMBAT

A nightbeast is a foe both brutal and cunning. They are patient adversaries and will stalk their quarry from a distance for many

miles before initiating an attack. However, once melee is joined a nightbeast will attack with abandon, using claws and teeth to rend through armor and flesh. A favored tactic of the nightbeast is to take its enemy by surprise and strike fast and without warning.

When engaging a large group, a nightbeast will attempt to single out an individual, using its horrid gaze ability to keep others at bay while it finishes its victim off.

Bestial Roar (Ex): Bellowing a terrible roar, the nightbeast instills fear in all who hear its rage. Each creature within a 30 foot radius of the nightbeast will become shaken for 2d4 rounds unless they succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 12).

Bloodgreed (Ex): If the nightbeast succeeds in killing another creature, it will instantly succumb to an all-consuming desire to feast upon its blood and viscera, often tearing the corpse to pieces in the process. A nightbeast will remain in this state for 1d4 rounds after making a kill, and will only attack if its feast is interrupted.

Horrid Gaze (Su): Repulsion as if cast by a 15th level sorcerer, range 30 feet; Fortitude save (DC 13) negates.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the nightbeast must hit with both of its claw attacks. If it does, the nightbeast can bite.

Bite (Ex): A nightbeast deals 1d12+4 points of damage with a successful grapple check against Large or smaller creatures.

Invisible (Ex): The nightbeast is entirely invisible to the naked eye unless under the glow of Avadnu's shattered moon, Morindalien. The nightbeast always receives a +2 melee bonus to attack, and defenders never receive their Dexterity bonus to AC while in combat. This ability is constant and allows the nightbeast to remain invisible even when attacking. The effects of Invisibility Purge and True Seeing are useless against a nightbeast. Only the light of Morindalien can cause the nightbeast to be seen.

Light Aversion (Ex): If a nightbeast is exposed to bright light (such as sunlight or a daylight spell) it will be blinded for 1d4 rounds. In addition, the creature will suffer a -4 circumstance penalty to all attack rolls, saves and checks while in the illuminated area.

Skills: A nightbeast possesses great inherent stealth and gains a +6 racial bonus to Move Silently checks.

PHYSIOLOGICAL USES

Nothing is known about this creature's true physiological uses, but it is said that the blood of the nightbeast, when ingested, will grant invisibility for one full cycle of the moon.

ZHA'LARI

Medium-size Humanoid

Hit Dice: 2d8+2 (11 hp)

Initiative: +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 16 (+1 Dex, +5 natural)

Attacks: Hookstaff +1 melee (or 2 claws +1 melee); or shortspear +1 ranged
Damage: Hookstaff 1d8, bite 1d4

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Hookstaff, spit venom

Special Qualities: Blood craze, darkvision 90 ft., tireless trackers

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +1

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 9

Skills: Hide +4, Move Silently +2, Spot +2

Feats: Improved Initiative

Climate/Terrain: Any desert

Organization: Group (2-7), Pack (12-24)

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always Neutral Evil

Advancement: 3-4 HD (Medium-size)



Small pits in the side of their skulls serve as ears. Their large, keen eyes glow a pale green in the darkness.

Cunning and brutal, zha'lari are voracious killers, often sending hunting parties out from their homelands in search of food. Often these hunters will use ambush tactics, burying themselves just beneath the surface of the sand and bursting forth to surround their prey. They make no distinction between friend or foe, and will even resort to cannibalizing their own kind when food supplies are low. To make the best use of their prey, a zha'lari's digestive system can break down and process every part of a kill. They waste nothing, feasting upon flesh and bone, blood and viscera.

DESCRIPTION

The zha'lari are a secretive race of reptilian creatures who make their homes deep under the earth or in large natural caves. Feared for their merciless, cold-blooded ways, they hunt and roam in packs across the deserts and dry places of Avadnu.

Zha'lari are large, standing between six and seven feet and weighing between 200-300 pounds. Their tough hides are predominately tan colored, but yellow and red colored zha'lari are not uncommon. A zha'lari's limbs are thick and well muscled and they have short, snub tails. A strong exoskeleton covers most of their bodies which, coupled with their tough skin, makes them very difficult to injure. Their heads are large and armored with scales.

COMBAT

The zha'lari wield exotic, crudely made weapons that are akin to common polearms. The hook staff is their weapon of choice and they wield it with a frightening efficiency. They carry long ropes attached with hooks that they use to drag the bodies of their victims back to their lairs. A zha'lari's teeth, while sharp and deadly, are used for eating rather than combat. They prefer the setting of elaborate ambushes to initiate combat. If the tide of battle quickly turns against them they will attempt to flee. However, once a zha'lari draws blood from his opponent they are thrown into a

blood frenzy and will hunt their prey tirelessly without rest, sometimes for days at a time.

Blood Craze (Ex): Zha'lari hunger greatly for the blood of their foes. If a zha'lari is within 10 feet of a bleeding opponent there is a 15% chance per round that they will go into a fervent blood frenzy. When blood crazed zha'lari gain a +4 bonus to hit and damage rolls. Blood craze lasts for 2d4 rounds after which the zha'lari is fatigued.

Hook Staff: The favored weapon of the zha'lari warrior is the hook staff. A Large exotic weapon, the hook staff deals 1d8 points of slashing damage, threatens a critical hit on a 19-20, and deals double damage on a critical hit.

A zha'lari can also use the hook end of the weapon to make trip attacks. If the zha'lari is tripped during its own trip attempt, it can drop the hook staff to avoid being tripped.

When using a hook staff, a zha'lari gains a +2 bonus on their opposed attack roll when attempting to disarm an opponent (including the roll to avoid being disarmed if they fail to disarm their opponent).

Spit Venom (Ex): A zha'lari's jaws contain a small venom gland that produces a thick, sticky mucous used to incapacitate its enemies. A zha'lari can spit its venom up to 10 ft. 1/day. Opponents must make a Reflex save (DC 12) or become blinded for 1d8 rounds.

Tireless Trackers (Ex): When tracking injured prey zha'lari add a +5 circumstance bonus to all Wilderness Lore checks and they can ignore the effects of fatigue as long as their quarry is within a mile.

ZHALARI SOCIETY

The zha'lari are a simple race. They desire only pure animal survival, living lives of killing, eating and procreating. They live in packs of 7-10, taking shelter in caves. Due to sparse food sources, zha'lari will not stay in one cave for long, but will often set up a network of shelters for their particular pack to use. A pack will mark these caves with bold symbols on the floor or walls in order to ward off other groups. Many zha'lari pack feuds are fought over these precious havens and hunting camps in the unforgiving desert.

Within the pack, one rule is law. The strong prosper and the weak are taken by the desert. In stature the males tend to be broader and stockier, the females longer in limb. There are no gender roles, to hunt and survive is all. There is no leadership in a pack, either. In their cruel habitat, hierarchy is a societal complexity they cannot afford. Instead, the zha'lari put their fairly advanced minds to other tasks, such as weapon crafting and the laying of cunning ambushes and traps. They take pride in these arts above all else, and indeed even the smartest of wanderers in the desert can find themselves at the mercy of a complex zha'lari attack.

The zha'lari look to the desert as their god. They see it as a cruel mother, both providing and killing with the same hand. Many zha'lari cave drawings reflect this harsh relationship.

ZHALARI CHARACTERS

The favored class of the zha'lari is fighter. Strength and prowess in combat dictate their survival.

PHYSIOLOGICAL USES

Zha'lari can be harvested for several uses. Their exoskeleton, when properly skinned and treated, can be used in crafting a variety of armor types. The poison sacks in their throat can be drained or removed entirely for use by assassins and mercenaries. After being harvested, the poison begins to grow increasingly unstable without the creature's own enzymes to sustain it, and thus loses its potency after two weeks.

THE GRAVEYARD

Name: James Manley, Bart Selbig, Harry Walk

Character: Bronic Hasselblad, 10th level Ranger, Pep the Barbarian 10th level, Clark W. Griswold 9th level Fighter/11th level Thief

Game: 2nd Edition Advanced Dungeons & Dragons

When we decided to convert to 3rd edition D&D we wanted to go out with a bang. So we opted to go through one of those campaign-buster adventures Wizards of the Coast released near the end of 2nd edition. We chose *Die Vecna Die!* What better way to leave the old characters behind than to go eye to eye with the appendage-challenged demigod. And if we survived how much stronger we'll be for the new challenges d20 will bring.

Near the end of the first book of the adventure (this module is massive) the heroes had vanquished all remaining creatures and were doing the standard dungeon clean out. Going room to room leaving no stone unturned. All that is left is a string of three antechambers.

Antechamber one: There is a smooth silver door with an 8' x 8' iron statue of a hand standing next to it. Of course the party expected the statue to animate but they were unprepared for the coming slaughter. For this was an iron golem. We had never faced one before and were unaware of the damage they could do. This one walked on its thumb, pinky and palm and attacked simultaneously with its other three digits. First round: Amazingly all three frontlinesmen had +3 or better weapons and could actually hit the thing. The golem's turn to attack: FLICK – FUMBLE (ROLLED A ONE, LOSES ITS NEXT ATTACK) – FLICK. Bronic and Griswold are hit hard but they're still up. "We better take this thing down fast" they all grumble. Second round: FLICK - (no attack with second finger, has to recover from fumble) – FLICK!! Critical hit!! 4d10 doubled. Pep the Barbarian goes splat so ferociously that Griswold next to him takes collateral damage from bone gristle. That same fighter lets swing his sword of sharpness – another critical hit!! Iron golem finger severed!! Round three: FLICK!! ANOTHER CRITICAL!! This time the Bronic the Ranger

Continued On Page 78

UNCHARTED TERRITORY

COMMON GROUND

INSTANT GUARD POST

BY: JEFF COLLEGE ILLUSTRATED BY: FREDERIC SIMONS CARTOGRAPHY BY: JEFF COLLEGE

While planning ahead for each gaming session is critical, often times players do the unexpected. This can leave GMs struggling for quality material on a moment's notice. It is for this reason the Common Ground series of booklets was created. We at Bard's Productions, in conjunction with Gaming Frontiers, are proud to give gamers a sample of what you'll find in the upcoming books, which cover various locales such as Churches, Inns, Merchants and Thieves Guilds.

HOW TO USE THIS ARTICLE

This article will allow GMs to create and stock guard towers along a city wall, ranger stations in the midst of a forest, remote mountain side barracks or other commonly found small military structures. It is designed to provide a map, a commander, patrol leader(s) as well as guards for tiny- to medium-sized focused military structures. Using this material, GMs can also apply racial templates to the base stat blocks found within, allowing him to create anything from patrols of dwarvish mountain fighters to elvish woodland striders.

While the tools provided in this article can assist GMs in planning out a session's adventure, it is designed to aid GMs in creating a site in mid-session. Thus, this article will not provide adventure hooks, battle tactics, nor should it replace pre-session planning.

It is recommended prior to using this material, you read it thoroughly and make copies of the Instant Guard Post Sheet found on page 29. However, this isn't absolutely necessary as it will take about 5 minutes for those unfamiliar with this article to use it to create a patrol or barracks (pencil should be used on the Instant Guard Post Sheet if copies of it aren't available).

As you create the patrol, barracks or outpost, you should mark down your choices on the Instant Guard Post Sheet for reference after the gaming session. This will allow you to make notes of a

more permanent nature when you have time. Until that point, the Instant Guard Post Sheet will provide you enough information to allow you to use your newly created military structure and patrol with little difficulty.

STEP 1:

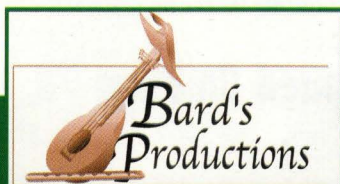
Determine terrain type for the structure:

While terrain can be as varied as the people that live within it, for the purposes of the Guard Post generation only 3 major terrain types will be used: Forest, Plains, Mountains. These 3 options will determine not only what type of equipment and weapons the NPCs will have, but what their stats (Dex, Str, Con, etc) will be as well. These options will also determine what other classes beyond warrior and fighter may be found within the guard post.

When determining which terrain to use, the GM should select the appropriate terrain for where the guard post structure will be located, not necessarily where the PC's meet up with the patrol. When using Instant Guard Post for a patrol within a city, use the terrain type of where the city is located. Further definitions of each type are provided below:

Forest – While this selection obviously covers most areas covered with trees, it is also recommended to use for swamps and jungles. Most of the basic guards found within forests will be armed with bows as well as swords. They will be a bit more agile and wiser than guards found in other terrain types. This is often due to the fact they will have to fend for themselves (hunting with their bows and tending to any wounds) as supplies don't normally come often or easy to a ranger station in heavy forest. The leaders found in these barracks may be rangers or druids, who are clearly at home in these surroundings.

Plains – This selection not only covers farmland and grassy fields, but deserts as well. For very well traveled roads and highways (royal highways, busy merchant roads between cities), this selection would work best. Guards found in plains areas will be a bit more charismatic due to the fact they may be dealing with merchants and important travelers from not only their own kingdom but neighboring ones as well. While the commanders will mainly be skilled fighters, the occasional wizard may also be present. This arcane caster will typically have access to wide area attack and



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defense spells as well as magics to aid travel and communication. Finally, to help them deal with the wide open terrain, each guard will have a horse and will be skilled in mounted combat.

Mountains – This selection should be used for mountainous regions as well as hills and underground settings. Most of the standard guards will have crossbows for heavy hitting from afar and axes for combat in tight surroundings. These guards have been noted as being stronger and hardier due to the rugged land they patrol as well as the altitude effect on the air. While the commanders may be fighters there are also clerics that will be found in these areas. These priests often aid in providing food to remote inhospitable locations, healing as most mountain outposts need to be self-sufficient, and dealing with any dark elements that may come forth from the caves deep within a mountain.

Circle which terrain you selected on the Instant Guard Post Sheet.

STEP II:

Choose the size of the Guard Post structure and its map:

The size of the guard post determines not only the map of the structure, but how many guards reside within it, as well as the post's leader's skill. This aspect can be broken down into 3 options: Small, Medium and Large. This will give the GM a working base from which patrols, reinforcements and other items can be developed as he needs.

It should be noted that the housing limits given below are for how many guards can sleep in that structure at the exact same time. Many commanders, to save space and have more troops, require their guards share quarters (and beds) with each other. As such, one guard may be patrolling while the other is sleeping in the patrolling guard's bunk, then vice versa 12 hours later. Thus, the actual number of guards that report to that location could be up to double the maximum given in the range at the GMs discretion. Finally, the beds indicated in the maps may either be single or bunk beds (GMs choice) to help accommodate the guards housed there.

All guards are equipped with whistles to signal trouble or call for reinforcements.

Small – These structures will house from 2-5 guards and a single patrol leader. In most cases, there will be only 1 of these buildings found within a settlement with 1,000 people or less. In some of the smaller villages (Populations under 500), some of the guards found within may be nothing more than members of the militia or conscript soldiers taking their required tour of duty for the year. For towns between 1,001-5,000, structures this size may be the guard towers that run along the town's wall. These small structures may also be used as outlying guard posts to help patrol nearby forests, roads, mountains, shorelines or other locations from invaders by towns with under 5,000 people.

Medium – These buildings will house from 6-12 guards as well as patrol leaders and possibly a commander. These structures will normally be found as primary barracks or armories for towns with populations between 1,000- 2,500 people. With towns between 2,501 and 5,000 these Medium structures would be secondary barracks or armory, unless quarter sharing (supporting 12-24 guards) is being used, in which case the Medium structures would be primary barracks. The Medium structures may also stand as outposts in military critical areas, such as well traveled roads, strategic

mountain passes or border patrol near hostile areas for towns between 2,501 and 5,000. For settlements of 5,001+, these structures may be used as guard towers that run along the town's walls or as outlying patrol posts found in nearby forests, mountains, swamps, etc.

Large – These fair-sized structures will provide room for 13-20 guards as well as patrol leaders and their commander. These buildings are often used as secondary barracks for settlements with 5,001+ populations. They may be found in locations inside of the town (docks, poor quarter, areas with known thieves guild activity) or outside of the town (critical mountain passes, key bridges across a river, the King's Merchant Highway) that need some extra protection from the normal day-to-day threats.

Once you have determined the size of the structure, select a map from the appropriate group found on page 24. Note that single-level structures may be ground level buildings or the top and only level in a tower (i.e. a forest ranger station that sits upon wood pillars with a long ladder from the exit to the ground). Structures with more than one level work best for guard towers along town walls, or standalone outposts in wilderness areas.

Please note all selections on the Instant Guard Post Sheet.

OPTION 1: FOREST

Choose Guards, Patrol Leaders and Commanders:

While guards, patrol leaders and commanders can vary widely, the choices presented here were designed to fit in most Forest settings. When making the selection for each position, please note that Gender, Race, Names and Alignment will be determined later.

Small – Choose 2-5 guards from A and B, 1 patrol leader from C or D.

Medium – Choose 6-12 guards from A, B and C, 1-2 patrol leaders from C and D, 1 Commander from D or E

Large – Choose 13-20 guards from A, B, and C, 2-3 patrol leaders from C, D and E, 1 Commander from E or F

A) War1: CR 1; HD 1d8; hp 8; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+1 Dex, +3 Studded Leather, +2 Large Wooden Shield); Attack +1 Longsword (19-20/x2) or +1 Dagger (19-20/x2) melee, or +3 Shortbow (20/x3) or +2 Dagger (19-20/x2) ranged; Damage 1d8 Longsword, 1d4 Dagger, 1d6 Shortbow; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Languages Spoken: Common.

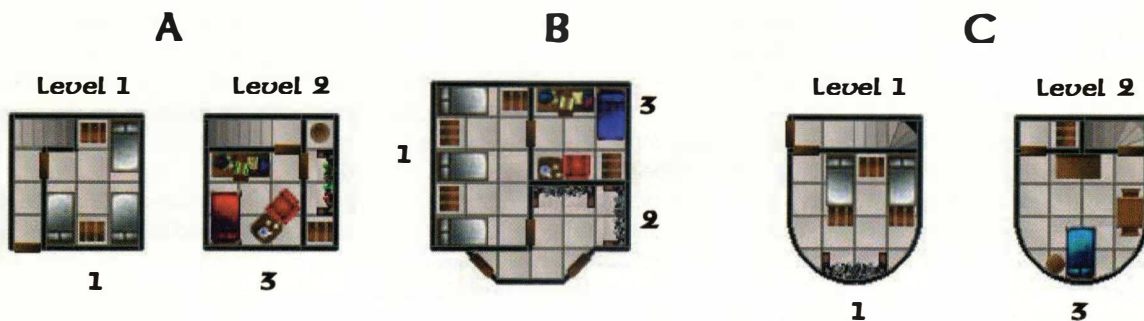
Skills and feats: Heal +2, Intuit Direction +2, Listen +2, Search +0, Spot +1, Wilderness Lore +2; Weapon Focus (Shortbow)

Equipment: Shortbow; Longsword; Dagger; Shortbow Arrows (x40); Large Wooden Shield; Studded Leather; Whistle.

Wealth: 1pp, 7gp, 5sp, 10cp, 1 Gem [7gp Eye Agate]

B) Ftr1: CR 1; HD 1d10; hp 10; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+1 Dex, +4 Chain Shirt, +2 Large Wooden Shield); Attack +2 Longsword (19-20/x2) or +2 Dagger (19-20/x2) melee, or +3 Shortbow (20/x3) or +2 Dagger (19-20/x2) ranged; Damage 1d8+1 Longsword, 1d4+1 Dagger, 1d6 Shortbow; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Languages Spoken: Common.

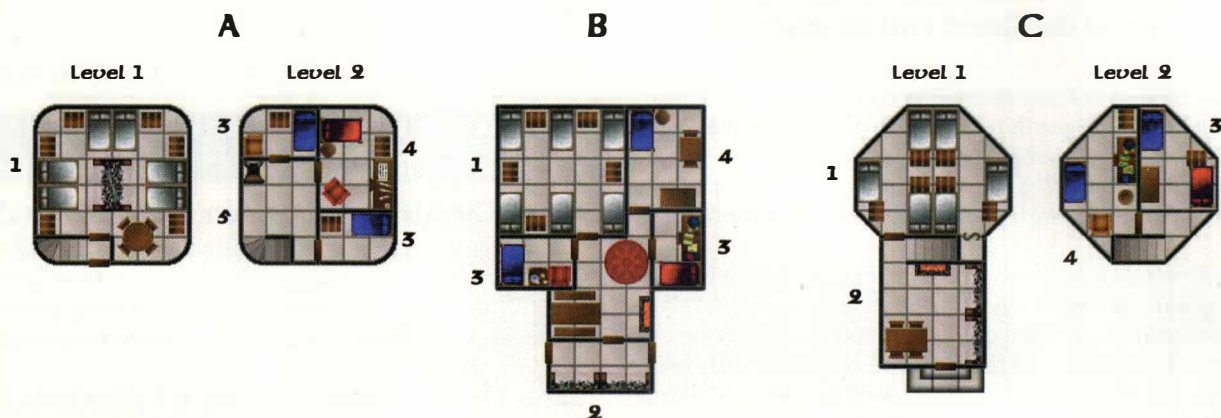


Small Guard Post Maps

Room Key:

- 1—Barracks
- 2—Armory
- 3—Patrol Leader's Quarters

Note: Beds found in Barracks areas may be considered bunk beds as needed.

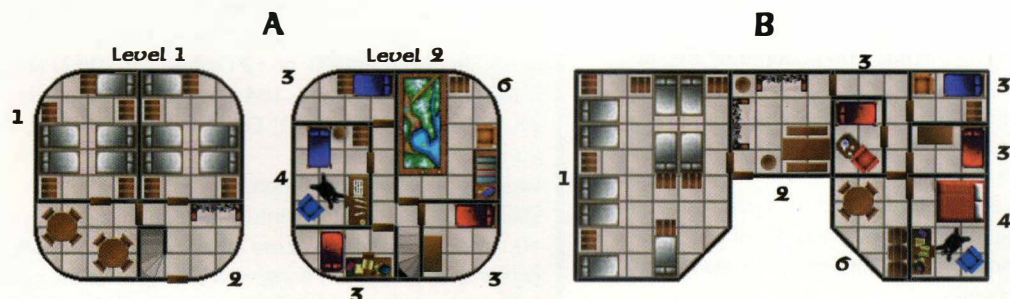


Medium Guard Post Maps

Room Key:

- 1—Barracks
- 2—Armory
- 3—Patrol Leader's/Guest's Quarters
- 4—Commander's Quarters
- 5—Trapdoor to Roof

Note: Beds found in Barracks areas may be considered bunk beds as needed.

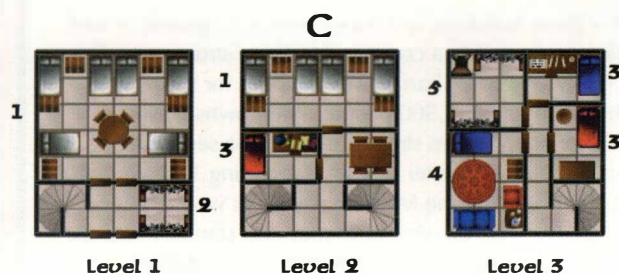


Large Guard Post Maps

Room Key:

- 1—Barracks
- 2—Armory
- 3—Patrol Leader's/Guest's Quarters
- 4—Commander's Quarters
- 5—Trapdoor to Roof/Armory
- 6—War Room

Note: Beds found in Barracks areas may be considered bunk beds as needed.



Skills and feats: Heal +2, Intuit Direction +2, Listen +2, Search +0, Spot +1, Wilderness Lore +2; Lightning Reflexes, Point Blank Shot (Not included in Attack and Damage Modifiers)

Equipment: Shortbow; Longsword; Dagger; Shortbow Arrows (x40); Large Wooden Shield; Chain Shirt; Whistle.

Wealth: 2pp, 18gp, 5sp

C) War2: CR 2; HD 2d8; hp 15; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18 (+1 Dex, +5 Chainmail, +2 Large Wooden Shield); Attack +3 Masterwork Longsword (19-20/x2) or +2 Dagger (19-20/x2) melee, or +3 Masterwork Shortbow (20/x3) or +2 Dagger (19-20/x2) ranged; Damage 1d8 Masterwork Longsword, 1d4 Dagger, 1d6 Shortbow; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 11, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Languages Spoken: Common, Elven.

Skills and feats: Climb +1, Heal +3, Intuit Direction +2, Listen +2, Search +0, Spot +2, Wilderness Lore +3; Iron Will

Equipment: Masterwork Longbow; Masterwork Longsword; Dagger; Longbow Arrows (x20); Large Wooden Shield; Chainmail, Whistle, (For Patrol Leaders only: Potion of Cure Moderate Wounds (x2))

Wealth: 2pp, 32gp, 25sp, 2 Gems [50gp Onyx, 13gp Rose Quartz]

D) Rgr3: CR 3; HD 3d10+3; hp 25; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft.; AC 15 (+2 Dex, +3 Masterwork Studded Leather); Attack +3 Masterwork Longsword (19-20/x2) and +3 Masterwork Short sword (19-20/x2) melee, or +7 Masterwork Might Longbow (20/x3) ranged; Damage 1d8+1 Masterwork Longsword, 1d6+1 Masterwork Shortsword, 1d8+1 Masterwork Might Longbow; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 10. (1 Favored Enemy – GM's Choice)

Languages Spoken: Common, Elven.

Skills and feats: Climb +4, Concentration +5, Hide +5, Knowledge (nature) +5, Listen +4, Move silently +4, Search +5, Spot +4, Wilderness lore +8; Improved Initiative, [Track], Weapon focus (Longbow).

Equipment: Masterwork Longsword; Masterwork Shortsword; Masterwork Mighty Longbow (Str +1); Silver Arrows (x20); Masterwork Studded Leather; Potion of Cure Light Wounds (x2); Potion of Bull's Strength; Potion of Enlarge (5th Level)

Wealth: 2pp, 30gp, 3 Gems [50gp Zircon; 130gp Amber Stone; 60gp Chrysoprase]

E) Drd5: CR 5; HD 5d8+10; hp 39; Init +3 (+3 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+3 Dex, +3 Hide Armor, +2 Large Wooden Shield); Attack +6 Masterwork Scimitar (18-20/x2) melee, or +7 Sling w/ Masterwork Bullets ranged; Damage 1d6+2 Masterwork Scimitar, 1d4 Sling Bullet; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +7; Str 15, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 17, Cha 10.

Languages Spoken: Common, Druidic, Sylvan.

Skills and feats: Animal Empathy +5, Heal +10, Hide +3, Knowledge (nature) +7, Listen +4, Move silently +7, Search +3, Spot +4, Wilderness lore +11; Scribe Scroll, Skill focus (heal).

Equipment: Masterwork Scimitar, Sling, Masterwork Bullets (10), Hide Armor, Large Wooden Shield, Scroll [divine, caster level 5; Call Lightning (x2)], Scroll [divine, caster level 5; Neutralize Poison (x2)], Scroll [divine, caster level 5; Speak with Plants (x2)], Wand of Cure Light Wounds (17 charges), Potion of Invisibility (x2).

Wealth: 1gp, 7sp, 72cp, 4 Gems [6gp Moss Agate; 80gp Carnelian; 50gp Zircon; 60gp Bloodstone]

Druid Spells Per Day: (5/4/3/2) 0 – Create Water, Detect Magic, Flare, Know Direction, Resistance; 1 – Cure Light Wounds (x2), Endure Elements, Entangle; 2 – Animal Messenger, Barkskin, Produce Flame; 3 – Cure Moderate Wounds, Summon Nature's Ally III.

Animal Companion- Brown Bear CR 4; Large Animal; HD 6d8+24; HP 51; Init +1; Spd 40ft; AC 15; Att 2 claws +11 melee, bite +6 melee; Damage Claw 1d8+8, bite 2d8+4; 5 ft. by 10 ft/5 ft.; SA Improved Grab; SQ Scent; SV - Fort 9, Ref 6, Wil 3; Str 27, Dex 13, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6

Skills and feats: Listen +4, Spot +7, Swim +14

F) Rgr6: CR 6; HD 6d10+12; hp 57; Init +3 (+3 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+3 Dex, +3 Masterwork Studded Leather); Attack +8/+3 Masterwork Longsword (19-20/x2) and +8 Masterwork Dagger (19-20/x2) melee, or +9 Might Composite Longbow (+3 Str, 20/x3) ranged; Damage 1d8+3 Masterwork Longsword, 1d4+3 Masterwork Dagger, 1d8+3 Longbow; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 17, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 15, Cha 10. (2 Favored Enemies – DM's Choice)

Languages Spoken: Common.

Skills and feats: Climb +9, Handle animal +6, Hide +3, Jump +5, Listen +5, Move silently +11, Open lock +5, Search +1, Spot +5, Wilderness lore +9; Dodge, Iron Will, [Track], Point Blank Shot.

Equipment: Mighty Composite Longbow (+3 Str Bonus), Masterwork Longsword, Masterwork Dagger, Longbow Arrows (x20), Masterwork Studded Leather, Cloak of Resistance +1 (already included in stats). Eyes of the Eagle, Potion of Cure Moderate Wounds x2, Potion of Endure Elements (Cold x1, Fire x1), Feather Token (Bird), Pearl of Power (1st), Potion of Invisibility

Wealth: 3pp, 60gp, 3sp, 30cp, 4 Gems [11gp Turquoise; 50gp Bloodstone; 9gp Banded Agate; 40gp Peridot;

Ranger Spells Per Day: (2) 1 – Entangle, Speak With Animals.

OPTION 2: MOUNTAINS

Choose Guards, Patrol Leaders and Commanders:

While guards, patrol leaders and commanders can vary widely, the choices presented here were designed to fit in most Mountain settings. When making the selection for each position, please note that Gender, Race, Names, and Alignment will be determined later.

Small – Choose 2-5 guards from A and B, 1 patrol leader from C or D.

Medium – Choose 6-12 guards from A, B and C, 1-2 patrol leaders from C and D, 1 Commander from D or E

Large – Choose 13-20 guards from A, B, and C, 2-3 patrol leaders from C, D and E, 1 Commander from E or F

A) War1: CR 1; HD 1d8+1; hp 12; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+4 Chain Shirt, +2 Large Steel Shield); Attack +2 Battleaxe (20/x3) or +2 Light Pick (20/x4) melee, or +1 Light Crossbow (19-20/x2) ranged; Damage 1d8+1 Battleaxe, 1d4+1 Light Pick, 1d8 Light Crossbow; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Languages Spoken: Common.

Skills and feats: Climb +3, Heal +1, Jump +3, Listen +0, Search +0, Spot +1; Toughness

Equipment: Light Crossbow; Battleaxe; Light Pick; Bolts (x20); Large Steel Shield; Chain Shirt; Whistle.
Wealth: 17gp, 28sp, 31cp, 2 Gems [8gp Garnet; 15gp Peridot;]

B) Ftr1: CR 1; HD 1d10+1; hp 11; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 17 (+5 Chainmail, +2 Large Steel Shield); Attack +3 Battleaxe (20/x3) or +3 Light Pick (20/x4) melee, or +1 Light Crossbow (19-20/x2) ranged; Damage 1d8+2 Battleaxe, 1d4+2 Light Pick, 1d8 Light Crossbow; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Languages Spoken: Common.

Skills and feats: Climb +3, Heal +1, Jump +3, Listen +0, Search +0, Spot +1; Power Attack, Cleave

Equipment: Light Crossbow; Battleaxe; Light Pick; Bolts (x20); Large Steel Shield; Chainmail; Whistle.

Wealth: 3pp, 7gp, 18sp, 2 Gems [25gp Iolite, 13gp Malachite].

C) War2: CR 1; HD 2d8+2; hp 17; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18 (+6 Splint Mail, +2 Large Steel Shield); Attack +3 Battleaxe (20/x3) or +3 Light Pick (20/x4) melee, or +2 Light Crossbow (19-20/x2) ranged; Damage 1d8+1 Battleaxe, 1d4+1 Light Pick, 1d8 Light Crossbow; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +2; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Languages Spoken: Common, Dwarven.

Skills and feats: Climb +5, Heal +2, Intimidate +1, Jump +5, Listen +0, Search +0, Spot +1; Iron Will

Equipment: Masterwork Light Crossbow; Masterwork Battleaxe; Light Pick; Bolts (x20); Large Steel Shield; Splint mail; Whistle. (For Patrol Leaders only: Potion of Cure Light Wounds (x3), Potion of Endure Elements (Cold))

Wealth: 5pp, 17gp, 3 Gems [45gp Carnelian, 11gp Azurite, 5gp Garnet].

D) Clr3: CR 3; HD 3d8+6; HP 22; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+1 Dex, +2 Large Steel Shield, +3 Masterwork Studded Leather); Attack +4 Halfspear (20/x3) melee, or +4 Masterwork Light Crossbow (19-20/x2) ranged; Damage 1d6+2 Halfspear, 1d8 Masterwork Light Crossbow; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 15, Cha 11.

Languages Spoken: Common, Dwarven, Gnome.

Skills and feats: Concentration +5, Craft +5, Intuit direction +3, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (religion) +6, Listen +2, Scry +7, Spot +2; Combat casting, Point blank shot.

Cleric Spells Per Day: (4/3+1/2+1) 0 – Create Water, Detect Magic, Light, Resistance; 1 – Bless, Endure Elements, Obscuring Mist; 2 – Animal Messenger, Summon Monster II (Spontaneous Cure/Inflict Spells, Turn/Rebuke Undead and Domains are determined as needed by the DM)

Equipment: Masterwork Light Crossbow; Halfspear; Light Bolts (x19); Large Steel Shield; Masterwork Studded Leather Armor; Whistle; Potion of Blur; Potion of Cure Light Wounds; Scroll [divine, caster level 3; Summon Monster II; Aid; Bull's Strength]; Scroll [divine, caster level 3; Summon Monster I; Cure Moderate Wounds]

Wealth: 48pp, 93gp, 9cp, 4 Gems [100gp Coral; 40gp Iolite; 60gp Carnelian; 60gp Chalcedony]

E) Ftr5: CR 5; HD 5d10+15; hp 51; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 18 (+1 Dex, +4 Scale Mail, +3 (+1 Large Steel Shield)); Attack +11 +1 Battleaxe (20/x3) melee, or +6 Throwing Axe ranged; Damage 1d8+7 +1 Battleaxe, 1d6+4 Throwing Axe; SV Fort +8, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 11, Cha 14.

Languages Spoken: Common, Giant, Gnome, Undercommon.

Skills and feats: Climb +8, Heal +4, Hide +1, Innuendo +2, Jump +8, Listen +4, Move silently +1, Ride +4, Search +2, Spot +4, Swim +5; Alertness, Lightning Reflexes, Iron Will, Weapon focus (Battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (Battleaxe).

Equipment: Throwing Axe (x2); +1 Battleaxe; +1 Large Steel Shield; Scale Mail; Potion of Cat's Grace; Potion of Cure Light Wounds (x2); Cloak of Resistance +1 (already included in stats);

Wealth: 10pp, 3gp, 5 Gems [110gp Amethyst; 8gp Malachite; 40gp Zircon; 12gp Tiger Eye; 70gp Rose Quartz;]

F) Clr6: CR 6; HD 6d8+12; HP 48; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 20 ft.; AC 21 (+3 Dex, +6 Breastplate +1, +2 Large Steel Shield); Attack +7 Masterwork Heavy Mace melee, or +7 Sling ranged; Damage 1d8+1 Masterwork Heavy Mace, 1d4 Sling; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +8; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 17, Cha 10.

Languages Spoken: Common, Giant, Orc.

Skills and feats: Diplomacy +8, Disable device +5, Hide +3, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (religion) +6, Listen +4, Move silently +3, Search +3, Spellcraft +3, Spot +4, Use rope +4, Wilderness lore +4; Craft Wondrous Item, Improved Initiative, Weapon focus (mace, heavy).

Cleric Spells Per Day: (5/4+1/4+1/3+1) 0 – Detect Magic, Detect Poison, Guidance, Purify Food and Drink, Resistance; 1 – Bane, Doom, Entropic Shield, Sanctuary; 2 – Aid, Animal Messenger, Resist Elements, Spiritual Weapon; 3 – Create Food and Water, Dispel Magic, Summon Monster III. (Spontaneous Cure/Inflict Spells, Turn/Rebuke Undead and Domains are determined as needed by the DM)

Equipment: Masterwork Heavy Mace; Sling; Sling Bullets (x20); Whistle; +1 Breastplate; Large Steel Shield; Potion of Blur (x2); Scroll [divine, caster level 3; Aid; Summon Monster III]; Pearl of Power (1st); Necklace of Prayer Beads (Blessing), Dust of Illusion (2 doses)

Wealth: 2gp, 8sp, 80cp, 6 Gems [11gp Obsidian; 11gp Obsidian; 11gp Eye Agate; 40gp Rose Quartz; 80gp Rose Quartz; 110gp Coral]

OPTION 3: PLAINS

Choose Guards, Patrol Leaders and Commanders:

While guards, patrol leaders and commanders can vary widely, the choices presented here were designed to fit in most Plains settings. When making the selection for each position, please note that Gender, Race, Names, and Alignment will be determined later. All guards in Plains areas are considered to have a Light Warhorse with appropriate riding gear.

Light Warhorse

CR 1; Large Animal ; HD 3d8+9 ; HP 22 ; Init +1 ; Spd 60 ft; AC 14 ; ATK 2 hooves +4 melee; bite -1 melee ; Damage Hoof 1d4+3; bite 1d3+1; 5 ft. by 10 ft./5 ft. ; SQ Scent ; SV - Fort +6 , Ref +4 , Wil +2 ; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 6 Skills/Feats: Listen +7, Spot +7

Small – Choose 2-5 guards from A and B, 1 patrol leader from C or D.

Medium – Choose 6-12 guards from A, B and C, 1-2 patrol leaders from C and D, 1 Commander from D or E

Large – Choose 13-20 guards from A, B, and C, 2-3 patrol leaders from C, D and E, 1 Commander from E or F

A) War1: CR 1; HD 1d8; hp 8; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+3 Studded Leather, +1 Small Wooden Shield); Attack +1 Scimitar (18-20/x2) or +1 Dagger (19-20/x2) melee, or +1 Dagger (19-20/x2) ranged; Damage 1d6 Scimitar, 1d4 Dagger; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Languages Spoken: Common, Dwarven.

Skills and feats: Handle Animal +3, Intimidate +3, Listen +0, Ride +4, Search +1, Spot +1; Mounted Combat

Equipment: Scimitar; Dagger; Small Wooden Shield; Studded Leather; Whistle; Light Warhorse.

Wealth: 3pp, 17gp, 15sp, 10cp

B) Ftr1: CR 1; HD 1d10; hp 10; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+3 Chain Shirt, +1 Small Wooden Shield); Attack +2 Scimitar (18-20/x2) or +2 Dagger (19-20/x2) melee, or +1 Dagger (19-20/x2) ranged; Damage 1d6+1 Scimitar, 1d4+1 Dagger; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Languages Spoken: Common, Elven.

Skills and feats: Handle Animal +3, Intimidate +2, Listen +0, Ride +4, Search +1, Spot +1; Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack

Equipment: Scimitar; Dagger; Small Wooden Shield; Chain Shirt; Whistle; Light Warhorse.

Wealth: 3pp, 27gp, 38sp.

C) War2: CR 1; HD 2d8; hp 15; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+5 Breastplate, +2 Large Wooden Shield); Attack +3 Scimitar (18-20/x2) or +3 Dagger (19-20/x2) melee, or +3 Dagger (19-20/x2) ranged; Damage 1d6 Scimitar, 1d4 Dagger; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 13.

Languages Spoken: Common, Orc, Halfling.

Skills and feats: Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +4, Listen +0, Ride +5, Search +1, Sense Motive +2; Spot +1; Mounted Combat

Equipment: Masterwork Scimitar; Masterwork Dagger; Large Wooden Shield; Breastplate; Whistle; Light Warhorse. (For Patrol Leaders only: Potion of Endurance, Potion of Invisibility, Potion of Endure Elements (Fire))

Wealth: 3pp, 17gp, 15sp, 10cp

D) Ftr3: CR 3; HD 3d10+6; hp 26; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 18 (+2 Dex, +4 Scale mail, +2 Large Wooden Shield); Attack +8 Masterwork Scimitar (18-20/x2) melee, or +7 Masterwork Shortbow with Masterwork Arrows (20/x3) ranged; Damage 1d6+3 Masterwork Scimitar, 1d6 Masterwork Shortbow; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +4; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Languages Spoken: Common, Elven, Halfling, Goblin, Orc.

Skills and feats: Appraise +5, Diplomacy +3, Forgery +5, Handle Animal +6, Heal +2, Ride +7, Search +4, Sense Motive +2 Spot +2; Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-by Attack, Weapon focus (Scimitar).

Equipment: Masterwork Shortbow; Masterwork Scimitar; Large Wooden Shield; Masterwork Shortbow Arrows (x20); Scale mail; Large Wooden Shield; Whistle; Light Warhorse; Cloak of Resistance +1 (already included in stats); Potion of Cure Moderate Wounds.

Wealth: 7pp, 41gp, 4 Gems [40gp Citrine; 130gp Deep Green Spinel; 50gp Zircon; 40gp Citrine;]

E) Ftr5: CR 5; HD 5d10+10; hp 49; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+2 Dex, +6 Breastplate +3, +2 Large Steel Shield); Attack +10 (+1 Scimitar 18-20/x2) melee, or +7 ranged; Damage

1d6+6 (+1 Scimitar); SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 16, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 13.

Languages Spoken: Common, Elven.

Skills and feats: Climb +6, Handle animal +2, Hide +2, Listen +4, Move silently +2, Ride +7, Search +2, Spot +4, Swim +8; Mounted Combat, Power attack, Ride-by Attack, Weapon focus (scimitar); Weapon Specialization (scimitar).

Equipment: +1 Scimitar; +1 Breastplate; Large Steel Shield; Whistle; Light Warhorse; Potion of Cure Moderate Wounds, Potion of Haste;

Wealth: 12pp, 16gp, 7sp, 78cp, 2 Gems [130gp White Pearl; 30gp lolite]

F) Wiz6: CR 6; HD 6d4+6; hp 23; Init +3 (+3 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+3 Dex); Attack +4 Masterwork Dagger (19-20/x2) melee, or +7 Masterwork Dagger (19-20/x2) ranged; Damage 1d4 Masterwork Dagger; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 11, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 17, Wis 12, Cha 13.

Languages Spoken: Common, Goblin, Halfling, Orc.

Skills and feats: Alchemy +8, Handle animal +5, Hide +3, Innuendo +5, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (planes) +8, Listen +2, Ride +7, Scry +7, Search +3, Spot +2; Craft wondrous item, Dodge, Mounted Combat, [Scribe scroll], Brew Potion.

Equipment: Masterwork Dagger (x2); Whistle; Light Warhorse; Potion of Fly; Scroll [arcane, caster level 5; Haste; Protection from Arrows]; Helm of Comprehending Languages & Reading Magic; Cloak of Resistance +1 (already included in stats) Potion of Cure Moderate Wounds (x2), Potion of Invisibility, Potion of Fly

Wealth: 31pp, 46gp, 6 Gems [10gp Obsidian; 50gp Smoky Quartz; 10gp Obsidian; 40gp Peridot; 100gp Deep Green Spinel; 10gp Eye Agate;]

Wizard Spells Known (4/4/4/3):

0th – Arcane Mark, Dancing Lights, Daze, Detect Magic, Detect Poison, Disrupt Undead, Flare, Ghost Sound, Light, Mage Hand, Mending, Open/Close, Prestidigitation, Ray of Frost, Read Magic, Resistance.

1st – Color Spray, Endure Elements, Enlarge, Expedious Retreat, Mage Armor, Mount, Shield, Sleep, Unseen Servant.

2nd – Cat's Grace, Fog Cloud, Invisibility, Summon Monster II, Protection from Arrows.

3rd – Dispel Magic, Fireball, Fly, Sleet Storm, Stinking Cloud.

STEP III:

Choose The General Alignment and Race, Gender and Name for each NPC (note modifiers as listed for each race):

Choose a single alignment for the entire guard post. All NPCs found within this particular structure will have this alignment. Any exceptions to this rule should be noted by the GM on the Instant Guard Post Sheet.

Assume that any racial adjustments to Ability scores (Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, etc.) are already included in the scores provided in the NPC stat blocks listed above. Adjustments applied directly to AC, Attack, Skill and Save modifiers, are not included in the stat blocks listed above and should be adjusted as needed. Additional Languages listed below should also be added to the language list provided above. Note race selections for each NPC on your sheet.

A) Human – Additional Feat: Alertness (+2 to Spot and Listen), Additional Skills Points (3 + Level) all assigned to Profession (GM's choice), add Wisdom modifier to find final skill modifier

Female names – Saeunn, Hallgerd, Azeezeh, Arnora, Marina, Erin, Lunael

Male names – Rhorvald, Guthum, Bodvar, Urabi, Hengist, Erik, Haeldon

B) Dwarves – Darkvision 60', +2 Saves vs. poisons, spells, and spell-like effects; +1 Att vs. orcs and goblinoids, +4 Dodge bonus vs. giants, Speaks Dwarven

Female names – Lifthild, Donya, Bruennil, Graendin, Rildyn, Raina

Male names – Horace, Brommard, Darg, Walborg, Gruennald, Korronil

C) Elves – +2 Saves vs. Enchantments, Immune to magic Sleep, Lowlight vision, +2 to Listen, Search and Spot, Speaks Elven

Female names – Suenael, Faelyn, Nimurase, Toreana, Kyndal, Hilfaen

Male names – Eilfen, Theinlik, Dallen, Morifen, Shaelfyr, Reist, Yalindael

D) Gnome – +1 to AC, Atk rolls for size, +4 Hide for size, Lowlight vision, +2 Saves vs. illusions, +1 Atk vs. Kobolds and goblinoids, +4 Dodge vs. giants, +2 Listen and Alchemy, Speaks Gnome, If Int is greater than 10, gnomes can cast Dancing Lights, Ghost Sound, Prestidigitation as 1st level caster once per day.

Female names – Ellyn, Roymil, Shawyn, Duvamip, Caranab, Laramil

Male names – Fonbo, Roonkin, Sinnock, Bildar, Garrickyn, Hoferick

E) Half-Elves – Immune to magic Sleep, Lowlight vision, +1 to Listen, Search and Spot, Speaks Elven

Female names – Flestrianna, Drusaile, Sinua, Aelia, Valanthe, Thindear

Male names – Aulis, Himmael, Quorcian, Saedar, Endaerlyn, Ryn, Corith

F) Half-Orcs – Darkvision 60', Speaks Orc

Female names – Volvak, Shauka, Bakmon, Meenong, Egi, Nargin, Rakee

Male names – Shont, Genk, K'gar, Brock, G'rok, Rumtun, Jarrik

G) Halfling – +1 to AC, Atk rolls for size, +4 Hide for size, +2 Climb, Jump, Move Silently, +1 on all Saves, +2 on Saves vs. Fear, +1 Atk for thrown weapons, +2 Listen, Speaks Halfling

Female names – Iris, Corlia, Merinia, Vermina, Cyphiam, Daupheen, Billyn

Male names – Elathe, Aldin, Gariborne, Nikolo, Gage, Danrik, Cothiler

6) Miscellaneous Details

Below are stats for Doors, Locks, Traps and other items that may be needed during the use of the guard post. While not required, the GM should note any use of these details under the Notes section on the Instant Guard Post Sheet.



Doors

Simple wooden (Hardness-5, HP 10, Break DCs—Stuck 13, Locked 15)

Good wooden (Hardness-5, HP 15, Break DCs—Stuck 16, Locked 18)

Strong wooden (Hardness-5, HP 20, Break DCs—Stuck 23, Locked 25)

Stone (Hardness-8, HP 60, Break DCs—Stuck 28, Locked 28)

Iron (Hardness-10, HP 60, Break DCs—Stuck 28, Locked 28)

Locks

Very Simple Lock (Open Lock DC 20)

Average Lock (Open Lock DC 25)

Good Lock (Open Lock DC 30)

Excellent Lock (Open Lock DC 35)

Amazing Lock (Open Lock DC 40)

Traps

The CR of the trap should be equal to or lower than the level of the highest level NPC found within the guard post.

Hail of Needles: CR1; no attack roll necessary (2d4) Reflex Save (DC 10) for half damage; Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 22)

Flame Jet: CR2; 1-ft-wide, 10-ft-long stream of flame (2d6+3); Reflex Save (DC 15) avoids for all within the path; Search (DC 23); Disable Device (DC 23)

Poison Needle Trap: CR3; +13 melee (1, plus poison; Injury DC 15; Initial Damage 1d4 Str, Secondary Damage 1d4 Con); Search (DC24); Disable Device (DC24).

Multiple Arrow Trap: CR 4; +14 ranged [x5] (1d8/x3 Crit); Search (DC 25); Disable Device (DC 27)

Wyvern Blade Trap: CR 5; +10 Melee (1d4 plus poison); Poison (Wyvern poison, Fort Save (DC 17) resists, 2d6 Con/2d6 Con); Search (DC 25); Disable Device (25).

INSTANT GUARD POST SHEET

Name: _____
 Size: Small Medium Large
 Map: A B C
 Terrain: Forest Mountain Plains
 Alignment: Lawful Neutral Chaotic
 Alignment: Good Neutral Evil

Details found on pages 23 (Forest), 25 (Mountain), 26 (Plains)

Commander: D E F

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female
 Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling
 HP: _____ AC: _____ Att: _____ Damage: _____

Patrol Leader: C D E

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female
 Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling
 HP: _____ AC: _____ Att: _____ Damage: _____

Patrol Leader: C D E

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female
 Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling
 HP: _____ AC: _____ Att: _____ Damage: _____

Patrol Leader: C D E

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female
 Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling
 HP: _____ AC: _____ Att: _____ Damage: _____

Notes:

Human – Additional Feat: Alertness (+2 to Spot and Listen), Additional Skills Points (3+Level) divided evenly between Spot and Listen +.5 ranks per point)

Dwarves – Darkvision 60', +2 Saves vs. poisons, spells, and spell-like effects; +1 Att vs. orcs and goblinoids, +4 Dodge bonus vs. giants, Speaks Dwarven

Elves – +2 Saves vs. Enchantments, Immune to magic Sleep, Lowlight vision, +2 to Listen, Search and Spot, Speaks Elven

Gnome – +1 to AC, Att rolls for size, +4 Hide for size, Lowlight vision, +2 Saves vs. illusions, +1 Att vs. Kobolds and goblinoids, +4 Dodge vs giants, +2 Listen and Alchemy, Speaks Gnome, If Int =>10 can cast Dancing Lights, Ghost Sound, Prestidigitation as 1st level caster once per day.

Half-Elves – Immune to magic Sleep, Lowlight vision, +1 to Listen, Search and Spot, Speaks Elven

Half-Orcs – Darkvision 60', Speaks Orc

Halfling – +1 to AC, Att rolls for size, +4 Hide for size, +2 Climb, Jump, Move Silently, +1 on all Saves, +2 on Saves vs. Fear, +1 Att for thrown weapons, +2 Listen, Speaks Halfling

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Guards

Details found on pages 23 (Forest), 25 (Mountain), 26 (Plains)

Stat Block: A B C

Class: _____ **Level:** _____ **Quantity:** _____

HP: _____ AC: _____ Att: _____ Damage: _____

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Stat Block: A B C

Class: _____ **Level:** _____ **Quantity:** _____

HP: _____ AC: _____ Att: _____ Damage: _____

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Stat Block: A B C

Class: _____ **Level:** _____ **Quantity:** _____

HP: _____ AC: _____ Att: _____ Damage: _____

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

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Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Name: _____ Gender: Male Female

Race: Human Dwarf Elf Gnome Half-Elf Half-Orc Halfling

Mac's Corner

Seeking (a d20 System) Shakespeare

By: **Mac Golden**

Mac Golden, formerly of Troll Lord Games, gives us his "been there, done that" point of view in this, his first installment in Gaming Frontiers. With capsule reviews to boot! Welcome aboard, Mac.

Dungeons & Dragons® longevity received a much needed booster with the release of the Third Edition Player's Handbook at Gen Con 2000. The revision of the time-tested rules, loved by many, were inspired, logically streamlined, and presented with style. The over 1 million core rulebooks sold by Wizards of the Coast® since their release proves that old gamers and new are enjoying the roleplaying game that started them all, once again. Some of the sales success has to be attributed to the decision by Wizards of the Coast® to open up D&D's core rules for use by anyone and by other publishers via the Open Gaming License and the d20 System Trademark License.

WotC's impetus was spearheaded by Ryan Dancey, the former Vice President for tabletop RPGs and the D&D brand manager. His conception, development, and authorship of Open Gaming, the Open Gaming License, the Open Gaming Foundation, and the d20 System Trademark License is arguably the third landmark event in the history of RPGs behind the original release of Dungeons & Dragons® and the release of Vampire the Masquerade® by White Wolf Publishing. More importantly for the average gamer, the d20 System license has greatly expanded the amount and diversity of published material for use with D&D and provided an much easier avenue to becoming a published RPG author.

No longer are D&D players and DMs limited to the "official" publications that make their way into the world stamped with the WotC logo. As most have discovered in visiting their local game shop, the shelves are crammed with d20 System books, campaign settings, sourcebooks, and adventures. Some compete directly with WotC's official offerings, and some fill niches that will never be explored by WotC. And all have their own style setting them apart from one another and the official releases. Whatever style of game your group enjoys playing, be it high fantasy, dark fantasy, historical adventure, or even science-fantasy, there is a d20 System book for you.

And if there is not, you can do something about it.

No longer must you be one of the select few authors hired by WotC to pen official D&D publications. Via the d20 System

Trademark License and the Open Gaming License, you can directly influence the game you love by putting pen to paper.

3 Steps to becoming a published d20 author!

1. Learn all you can about the d20 System Trademark License, the Open Gaming License, and the concept of Open Gaming.

Wizards of the Coast maintains a d20 System webpage with a wealth of information, FAQs, and the officially released rules (<http://www.wizards.com/D20/>).

The Open Gaming Foundation (<http://www.opengamingfoundation.org/>) maintains a complete copy of the released and planned-to-be released sections of the rules, details on other open gaming systems, and a registry of most all open gaming publications released to date.

Be sure to join the email discussion lists about the Open Gaming Movement, the Open Gaming License, the d20 System and the d20 System Trademark License (<http://www.opengamingfoundation.org/maillinglist.html>).

2. Conceive and write an adventure, race, prestige class, spell, monster, or magic item. Use correct grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Revise it, and add some spice. Have someone else edit it. Revise again. Edit again.

3. Seek out and familiarize yourself with one of the appropriate publishers below. Read and follow their submission guidelines (this cannot be stressed enough). Send in your creation. Here is a list of some of the major d20 publishers and what they are looking to buy. Expect to be paid between 3 to 5 cents a word.

Atlas Games is seeking encounter submissions for En Route II: By Land or By Sea. Tentative deadline is August, and more info regarding Atlas' submission policies, their Penumbra D20 Styleguide, and En Route II can be found at their website (www.atlas-games.com/pen_submit.html).

Bastion Press (www.bastionpress.com) accepted submissions for Spells & Magic (May release), so it will likely do so again in the future for similar products.

Mac's Corner

Mac's Bookshelf

Player's Handbook (Wizards of the Coast, 286+ pgs, \$29.95): The perfect revision of the already classic rulebook updated with flair and style. Applause. The only drawback is that the font and page design can be hard on the eyes.

Grade: A -

Death in Freeport (Green Ronin, 32 pgs., \$7.99): Overrated beginning chapter of the Freeport saga. Use it as background material, weave your own introductory adventure, and proceed post-haste to the next adventure in the series.

Grade: D

Defenders of the Faith (Wizards of the Coast, 96 pgs, \$19.95): Great prestige classes and spells. Buy one copy and share it among your group.

Grade: B -

Dragon Lords of Melnibone (Chaosium, 208 pgs, \$23.95): Finally! The best of previously published source material for adventuring in the world of Elric of Melnibone combined with all-new rules and stats for D&D players. And it's all bound in a single volume.

Grade: B+

Dungeon Master Screen (Wizards of the Coast, screen plus 8 pgs., \$9.95): An essential buy for all DMs. The insert contains a handy combat planner, town generation tables, disease and poison tables, weapon charts, and grenadelike weapon rules.

Grade: A

Mythic Races (Fantasy Flight Games, 176 pgs., \$24.95): A well done, lengthy tome detailing twenty-seven new races, all interesting, that can be used in any suitable campaign world, or perhaps, upcoming d20 System science-fiction games.

Grade: B +

Rappan Athuk (Necromancer Games/SSS, 48 pgs., \$9.99): Is this adventure for you? Read the first paragraph of the introduction, and if it doesn't make you want to call up your group for an impromptu gaming session, put it back on the shelf. An old-school, deadly dungeon romp providing many nights of gaming mayhem and fun that easily adapts to any campaign setting. Gets a minus because of the maps.

Grade: A -

Ravenloft (Arthaus/SSS, 226 pgs, \$29.95): Excellent update of the brooding campaign setting for third edition with lots of crunchy bits. Would have scored an "A", but the failure to name each domain's darklord was a major error.

Grade: B

Relics & Rituals (Sword & Sorcery Studios, 226 pgs, \$29.95): Deserves the "core rulebook" designation. Lots of meat and drink for players and DMs alike.

Grade: A

Three Days to Kill (Atlas Games, 32 pgs, \$8.95): Superbly written, but more tailored for neutral or evil aligned parties.

Grade: B -

Citizen Games has an open submissions policy, and is seeking writers

(<http://www.citizengames.com/about.htm>).

Fantasy Flight Games does not accept unsolicited submissions, but it does hire freelancers for their d20 line based upon review of writing samples

(<http://www.fantasyflightgames.com/submit.html>).

Green Ronin Publishing has an interesting matching payment program if you write an article or adventure for a print magazine (like Gaming Frontiers) that ties into a Green Ronin product

(<http://www.greenronin.com/submissions.shtml>).

Kenzer and Co. accepts adventure submissions set in their Kingdoms of Kalamar campaign setting

(<http://www.kenzerco.com/>).

Mongoose Publishing is seeking submissions for a wide variety of products

(http://www.mongoosepublishing.com/writer_submission.htm).

Monkeygod Enterprises has an open submissions policy

(<http://www.monkeygodenterprises.com/contact.html>).

Necromancer Games has requested adventure submissions and encounters submissions in the past, and will probably do so again in the future

(<http://www.necromancergames.com/>).

Privateer Press has posted guidelines for writers interested in working with the company

(<http://www.privateerpress.com/corporate/freelancing.shtml>).

Sword & Sorcery Studios has in the past called for submissions to its various d20 hardback series such as Creature Collection and Relics & Rituals, and will probably do so again in the future

(<http://www.swordsorcery.com/>).

Thunderhead Games is currently seeking aspiring writers

(<http://www.thunderheadgames.com/submissions.asp>).

Troll Lord Games accepts adventure proposals and their guidelines are posted on their website

(<http://www.trolllord.com/id99.htm>).

Editors note: United Playtest, Inc. accepts proposals of all kinds. Guidelines are posted on our website.

(<http://www.gamingfrontiers.com>)

Hopefully, not only will you become a published d20 author, but perhaps you will inspire someone to run your adventure, start a campaign in your world, or even put pen to paper themselves. And perhaps, just perhaps, you will become the first "Shakespeare" of the d20 System.



ADVENTURE

Jacob's Haunt

An original Gaming Frontiers d20 adventure

By: Jeffrey S. Carter

Concept & Editing: Robert J. Williams

Illustrated By: Eric Lofgren

Cartography By: Edward Bouelle

Author Acknowledgements: Rob for the creation, my wife Norma for the inspiration, Karl for the visualization, Mountain Dew for the libation, Iron Maiden and Amorphis for the pulsation and WotC for the reincarnation.

INTRODUCTION

Jacob's Haunt is a short adventure-mystery for four 2nd-4th-level player characters (PCs). Characters can be of any class and race. The adventure is not tailored to any specific setting, and can be easily integrated into any existing campaign with a small port city and nearby forest.

WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

Jacob's Haunt isn't just a tavern. It's a haunted tavern, where the ghost of a bard puts on a show that knocks 'em dead. It's standing room only night after night as people crowd in to be possessed by the jovial spirit and made to tell a rousing good tale or dance the jig! Mugs of ale fly mysteriously into patrons' waiting hands, and troublemakers pick themselves up by their own collars and throw themselves out into the street! But for the last few weeks, Jacob hasn't made a peep. The customers are getting antsy, the owner is getting anxious, and it's up to the PCs to solve the mystery behind Jacob's disappearance.

Welcome to Jacob's Haunt, where it's easy to scare up a good time!

Author's Warning: Up until the final conflict, this adventure is roleplay intensive, so groups who prefer more hacking than talking may not enjoy Jacob's Haunt. But, who knows, the experience could prove to be a worthwhile change of pace. Read on!

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Welford Wrest once owned a modestly successful tavern, the Wrest's Nest, aided by his scalawag brother Elon, who had been given a job simply because he was family. One night, an extremely talented bard named Jacob Jacinth strode into town and struck up a deal with Welford, which allowed the entertainer to perform for several nights a week at the Wrest's Nest. The deal turned out to be a good one for both owner and bard, as Jacob's renown as a master storyteller and singer often brought in more customers than the

Wrest's Nest could handle, and Welford paid Jacob a generous percentage of the nightly take. Welford and Jacob became very good friends during the following months, much to the chagrin of Elon, who very much wanted to become a partner in the tavern and saw his chances slipping away.

Elon's fears became reality not more than a month later, when Welford broke the news that he had offered Jacob a partnership in the Wrest's Nest. Brimming with rage and the burning ember of betrayal, Elon confronted Jacob alone in the tavern one night. Jacob backed down, insisting that he wasn't aware of Elon's strong feelings. The last thing he wanted to do was come between two brothers. In truth, Jacob had intended to turn down the offer for fear that he would lose his bardic freedom if he took on such responsibility. But this wasn't enough for Elon. He stormed out and broke into Welford's room, stealing a dagger he had given his brother that had Welford's name clearly inscribed on the hilt. Finding Jacob still alone in the common room of the tavern, practicing one of his melodies, Elon stabbed him in the back, killing the bard.

Elon then proceeded straight to the authorities. He claimed that Jacob had come to him with a partnership deal, which he had refused. Being the good brother he was, he told Welford about the bard's machinations, which drove the owner into a murderous rage. Before Elon could stop him, Welford flew into the Wrest's Nest and killed Jacob where he stood. This story, plus the appearance of a bloody shirt in Welford's room, cemented Welford's guilt.

Within a few days Welford was sent to rot in the prison known as Deephold, while Elon took full control of the Wrest's Nest by right of kin.

Since Jacob's death resulted in a grave injustice, his spirit returned a few days later as a ghost. Not knowing who had killed him, he decided to continue to entertain in his new form, with which he could stretch the boundaries of his art like never before. Word quickly spread through the city that the Wrest's Nest was haunted. But, instead of shunning the place, people flocked to it for the chance that the ghost would appear and possess them, using

their voice to tell a rousing tale of heroism, or use their body to dance like they never could. Jacob used his newfound powers to make the fireplace flicker, mugs of ale fly into the waiting hands of patrons, and every so often used his frightful moan to scare off troublemakers. Though Jacob didn't completely trust Elon, he had learned enough through listening to gossip that almost everyone believed Welford was guilty. He and Elon made an agreement that Jacob would continue to bring a crowd to the tavern, as long as the name was changed. Thus, the Wrest's Nest became Jacob's Haunt.

During this time, Welford was spinning his tale of woe to his cellmate, an evil thief named Yrasil who was nearing the end of his sentence. Welford didn't keep one detail to himself, and Yrasil was a very attentive listener. Being familiar with backstabbing himself, Yrasil pieced together the events and came to the correct conclusion that it had been Elon who had killed Jacob, but didn't think much of it – until he was freed. Once out of jail, Yrasil learned of the massive hit Jacob's Haunt had become after Jacob had come back as a ghost. Consulting Danesh, an old partner in crime, Yrasil confirmed his theory about Jacob's death, when Danesh explained that ghosts only exist when something out of place about their deaths has yet to be righted.

Yrasil devised a plan to capture Jacob and use the ghost to his own devious ends, with the help of a strange magic item that he had stolen from a powerful wizard shortly before his incarceration. His companions (Liseth, his sometimes lover, a fighter/thief and Danesh, a hired cleric) needed gold to convince them the effort was worth it. Thus, pretending to be a sect of undead hunters, this group approached the owners of all the rival taverns in the city. They promised each of the owners that, for an exorbitant fee, the group would rid Jacob's Haunt of its sole attraction. Only one man took them up on their offer - Dunkin Ingras, the owner of the Battered Hatch, a desperate, bitter man who wanted nothing more than to

see Jacob's Haunt's success come to a crashing halt. He paid them a handsome amount to not destroy the ghost, but rather to return Jacob to the Battered Hatch, thinking he could convince Jacob to come work for him, but the group had no intention of doing so.

Yrasil and his companions entered Jacob's Haunt that same night, and using the Amulet of Restless Souls, managed to "relocate" Jacob to the confines of the item. Though Jacob attempted to fight back, Danesh kept his powers in check using a scroll of control undead. Once they were in private, Yrasil told Jacob his knowledge of what really happened on the night Jacob was murdered. Yrasil spun a tale about befriending Welford while in prison, and how he wished to see the good man released and Elon brought to justice. Detailing the extraordinary relocating powers of the Amulet of Restless Souls, Yrasil made it clear to Jacob that he could continue performing once the crime was solved, since the radius of the amulet effectively became his new permanent location, unless of course he tried to escape. All Yrasil wanted from Jacob in return were a few minor favors.

Of course, Yrasil has no intention of ever seeing Welford released...and begins a spree of crime and mischief.

Elon Wrest is now a nervous wreck. His business is flagging, and most of all; he's worried that the truth will come out about Jacob's murder.

That's when the PCs stroll in.

THE AMULET OF RESTLESS SOULS

You can find a fully detailed description of the new magic item used in this adventure, the Amulet of Restless Souls in Appendix II: New Magic Item. The amulet has been carefully designed to be potentially powerful, but mostly dangerous to the unprepared. While the idea of carrying around an undead that must obey your



Jacob Jacob



commands may seem appealing, wearers of the amulet often tire of the constant threat of attack from that same spirit. Only the most powerful wizards and clerics can truly use the item to its full potential – lower-level PCs will find themselves in over their heads rather quickly.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

The PCs arrive in town several weeks since Jacob made his last appearance. They hear rumors about the popular tavern and decide to visit. Once inside, Elon Wrest approaches them and asks them to find Jacob. He gives them a short list of people he believes may hold some information, that leads the PCs to several colorful characters, all of whom carry a piece of the puzzle (and some misinformation as well). The PCs overhear rumors of strange happenings throughout the city, i.e., people are giving their money away without remembering it. After a few leads, the PCs return to Jacob's Haunt to deliver news of their progress, when they are approached by a local drunk who spends his days tavern-hopping. The owner of the Battered Hatch has spoken to him in confidence about being scammed by a sect of undead hunters. At the Battered Hatch, an angry Dunkin Ingras offers the PCs money to find the mercenaries, describing them in detail. The next night, an annual street festival is to take place. The PCs go to the festival in the hopes of catching Yrasil's group in the act of using Jacob, since there are sure to be wealthy individuals about. In the middle of the festival, Jacob, realizing that Yrasil has no intention of making good on his promise, uses his powers to make a plea to the crowd. The PCs witness this and the ensuing crowd panic. They give chase, but only get close enough for Jacob to deliver a message – find Welford in Deephold!

The PCs travel to Deephold, and talk to Welford Wrest, who is shocked at the recent developments, and is eager to get the PCs to help free him. He remembers that during his conversations with

Yrasil, the brash thief mentioned a secret hideout that he kept not far from town. The PCs seek out the hideout. If GMs desire, random encounters occur during the trek, and the PCs finally confront Yrasil and his group in the climactic showdown at the hideout. With any luck, the PCs retrieve the amulet (and Jacob!), who tells them his story and pleads with them to help free Welford. The adventure ends here, but further adventure hooks are laid out for enterprising GMs.

HOW IT STARTS

The tavern is where the entire adventure begins, so it's important that the PCs start there. While getting PCs to enter a tavern isn't usually very difficult, here are several hooks to help you get the PCs into Jacob's Haunt

- If your PCs city of operation is large, perhaps Jacob's Haunt is located in a part of it they've never been to before.
- One rainy night the PCs enter a small city based in your campaign (it should have a forested area nearby). When they ask around for a good place to get some ale and temporary shelter from the inhospitable weather, the locals point them to Jacob's Haunt.
- Have one of your PCs know of Jacob's Haunt and the minor details of Jacob's story (the version everyone believes, that Welford killed Jacob.)

THE BEGINNING

(Refer to the map of Jacob's Haunt)

1. Common Room
- 1a. Jacob's Stage
2. Welford's Old Room
3. Elon's Room
4. Kitchen/Brewery

When the PCs enter the tavern, read or paraphrase the following boxed text:

The inside of Jacob's Haunt purposefully resembles the interior of a long abandoned house. Cobwebs hang from the rafters. A lone fireplace provides the only available light. Long, flickering shadows dance menacingly across the walls and the faces of the other patrons. Hand-carved wooden signs are the only decorations, each of them providing a nugget of undead wisdom. One reads, "Grave robbing is a crime," and another, "Death isn't bad – it's the dying part that hurts." An empty, darkened stage runs along the west side of the tavern. A mandolin, which has obviously seen much use, rests beside a large chest and a lone stool.

A swarthy brute of a man tends the bar, sweating profusely as he serves the patrons. He seems to focus his attention on your group for a minute, and then goes back about his business. A ruddy dwarf in the corner suddenly shouts out, "Hey Elon! Where's Jacob? This place is dead without him." The entire tavern erupts into laughter. A dark look passes over the face of the man behind the bar, but he simply mutters, "He'll be back...he'll be back," before turning his back on the crowd.

The man behind the bar is Elon Wrest. He doesn't serve the tables – someone from the group must go up to the bar in order to get food or drink. The tavern is full of locals, none of whom stand out as being anything but commoners. When one of the members of the group do approach the bar, Elon will greet them with the following text:

"Drinks are on the house, friend. I've got a proposition for you and your companions. Stick around for an hour or so, and I'll close early so we can talk."

If the PCs decide to stick around, Elon does indeed scuttle everyone out within the hour. Once he has the PCs alone, he draws himself up an ale and a chair, and relates the following to the group:

"My name is Elon Wrest, and I own this tavern. I need the help of sell-swords like you to get me out of an awful fix," says the big man, wiping sweat from his prominent brow. "You see, my ghost has gone missing. His name is Jacob, and he was once...well, he still is...a talented bard. When he was still alive, he worked for my brother, Welford. They were good friends as well, as anyone in town will tell you. Jacob was very popular, and brought a lot of money into the place. But apparently Jacob wasn't content with the deal he had struck with Welford, because one night he approached me and proposed that he would help me take over the business. That didn't sit well with me, Welford being my brother and all, so I refused and told my brother what had happened. Welford flew off the handle. He valued friendship above all things, and the betrayal was too much to take. Right before my very eyes he stormed in here, to the very spot you see there," he points to the empty stage, "And stabbed Jacob square in the back with a dagger I gave him for his birthday..." The sentence trails off, a look of sadness crossing Elon's face. He resumes, "That's in the past. What matters is that Jacob came back as a ghost, and still wanted the job! Now, he's more popular than ever...if he were here he'd show you why. But now, I believe he's been kidnapped!" A look of desperation comes into his eyes. "What's important is that I get Jacob back! I'll be out of business within six months if I don't get him back. You've got help me, please. I've got money. I'll pay you."

Elon, being a man who only cares about material things, doesn't even think to appeal to the PCs sense of greater good. Elon is rather unpleasant in both appearance and personality, so he should be played as the base brute he is. If the PCs accept his offer, Elon goes on to explain that the bar was especially full around the time of Jacob's disappearance, but he knows where a few of the patrons can be found. He gives the PCs a short list of names, locations and times, and suggests they start by questioning the people on the list for clues. The names on the list are three people who frequent Jacob's Haunt the most. Elon suggests these regulars because he feels he can trust them to keep their traps shut about Jacob really being gone (and tells the adventurers to instruct the witnesses on this point). He also knows these people are busy bodies who always horn in on other people's goings-on – thus, he figures they will have heard something at the very least.

A successful Sense Motive check (DC 15) against Elon will reveal that there is something "not right" about Elon. His nagging anxiety over the possibility of being found out is becoming less easy to conceal as the days wear on.

He offers the PCs 200 gp each should they bring Jacob back dead. Which, in Jacob's case, is a good thing (he's a ghost, remember?) He will go as high as 400 gp per person.

He asks that once the PCs have visited everyone on the list, they return to Jacob's Haunt to report their progress to him.

Should the PCs care to take a look around the tavern, Elon will be more than willing to accommodate them. He got rid of the



Elon Wrest

Elon Wrest (Com 2): CR 1/2; Size M (5 ft. 6 in. tall). HD 2d4; hp 8; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AC 10; Atk +1 melee (1d4 dagger, crit 19-20/x2) and +1 ranged; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 10, Dex 9, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 7.

Skills: Profession (Tavern Owner) +5, Listen +4, Spot +2, Handle Animal +2, Ride +2

Feats: Alertness, Skill Focus

Possessions: In his room connected to the bar, Elon keeps 30 pp, 2520 gp, 609 sp, a star rose quartz worth 50 gp and various items of clothing in a locked chest underneath his bed.

Lock: Hardness 10; hp 10; Break DC 20; Pick DC 25. Chest: 1 inch thick; hardness 10; hp 20.

Elon's Thugs (War 3): CR 2; Size M (6 ft. tall). HD 3d8; hp 18; Init +4; Spd 30 ft; AC 12 (+2 leather armor); Atk +3 melee (1d6 short sword, crit 19-20/x2) and +1 ranged (1d8 light crossbow, crit 19-20/x2); AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +5, Swim +5, Intimidate +4

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Toughness

Possessions: Equipment as noted above, 10 gp each.

evidence of his crime long ago, or so he thinks. Should anyone think to check Jacob's mandolin, they may find a hidden compartment where Jacob stored the original contract offered to him by Welford Wrest (treat as Search DC 30 – the compartment is very difficult to reveal). The contract details a partnership deal between

the former owner and the bard, and Welford's signature can be clearly read across the bottom of the page.

Note: After the PCs take the job and leave Jacob's Haunt, Elon hires two professional thugs as "protection" should anything go awry. These two ruffians will be present during any visits the PCs may make to the bar after this encounter.

THE LIST

Copy the following note and cut it out. Hand it to the PCs as a reference. If you'd like to place this adventure into an existing campaign, feel free to change locations and to match those in the city of your choice.

*Rose Vaneish - works the market
selling wind chimes most mornings*

Zaren - in the Temple anytime

Esmerelda - in the Weeping Willow at night

A SERIES OF "DEAD" ENDS?

You can run the following encounters in any order, depending on whom the PCs decide to visit first. These encounters are meant to be entertaining and fun, but they will also prove to be informative for diplomatic PCs.

THE MARKET

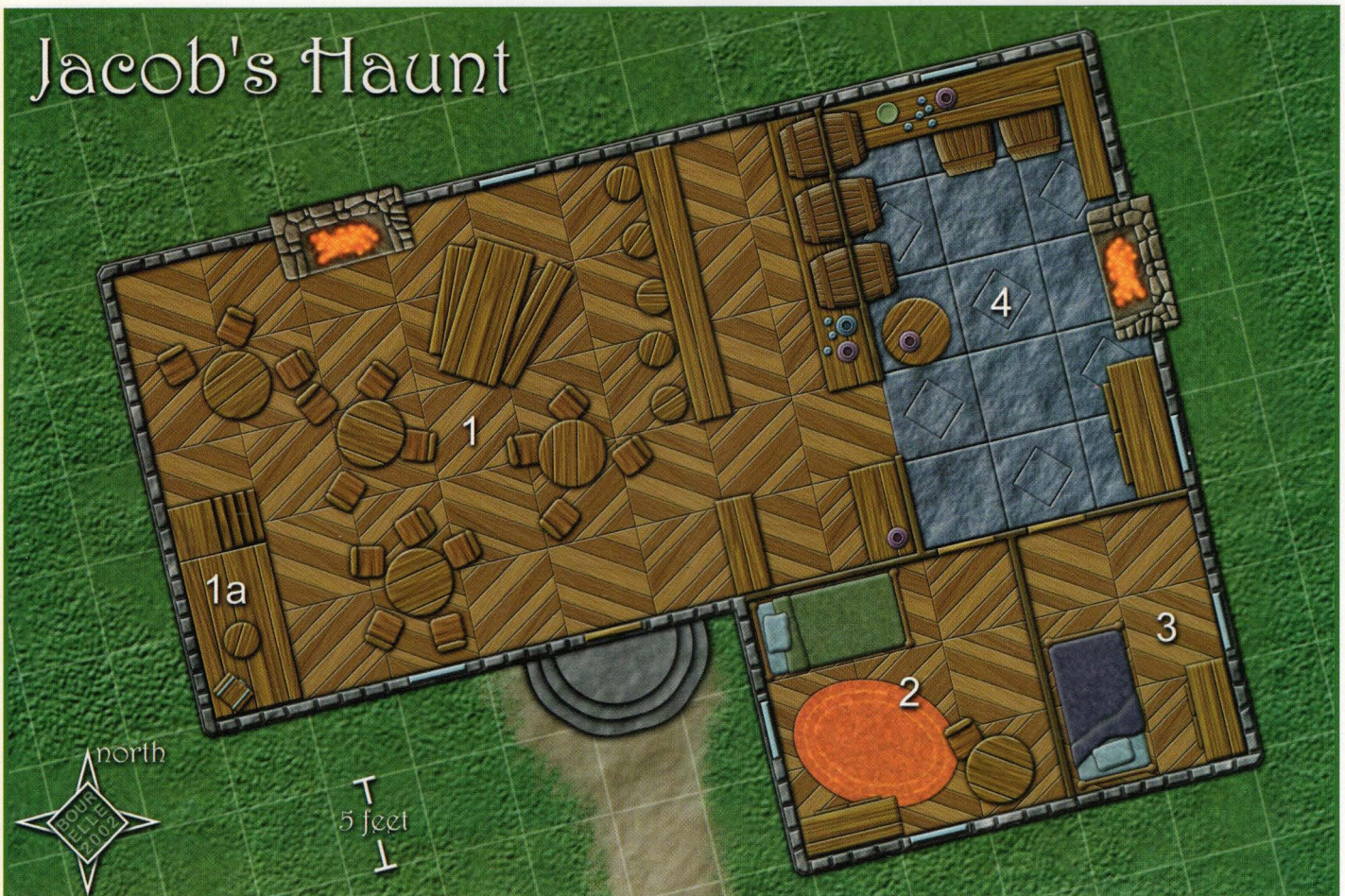
In this encounter, the PCs will meet Rose Vaneish, an "eccentric" craftswoman.

Read the following text aloud to the players when they enter the market:

A cacophony of noise hits your ears like a wave as you enter the market. Though it is still early in the day, the plaza is filled with people of every persuasion looking for a good deal. The rich smell of spices and cooked meat permeates the air, as well as the less pleasant odor of dozens of unwashed bodies and blood from freshly slaughtered beef. Through the haze of a misty morning fog lifting off dew-wet flagstones, you scan for any sign of Rose's wagon. Just then, you hear the distinct sound of wind chimes originating from the southwest corner of the market.

As the PCs approach Rose's wagon, read the following:

Rose Vaneish is a short, plump middle-aged human woman dressed in a patchwork robe of various colors and fabrics. Her long, salt-and-pepper colored hair is tied in a ponytail. She is sitting on a stool attached to the wagon, carefully constructing a new wind chime. Wind chimes cover every square inch of the wagon, all ringing in discordant tones with one another. It's impossible to hear yourself think, and you have to raise your voice to make yourself heard above the din.



When the PCs address Rose, she examines them with her wild, unsteady gaze. One look into those orbs will automatically tell anyone that Rose is indeed insane. She is happy to see the PCs, thinking them potential customers, and launches into a spiel about the high quality of her wind chimes, and how she believes they help to ward off evil spirits.

As soon as the PCs mention Jacob's Haunt during the conversation, Rose stops her blabbering and grasps a nearby wind chime before saying the following:

"He's gone isn't he? Yes, yes, that's why you're here! I knew it! The chimes told me! For the last two weeks, the chimes have been silent, and that's how I knew he had left this mortal coil for good! Ah, free spirit! What he doesn't know is that he gave me power...the power to imbue my chimes with an extra 'kick' against evil spirits. Stole it from him, I did, and he didn't even know it! But now...what will I do? I must find another good spirit to help me. Do you know of any?"

Rose Vaneish

Rose Vaneish (Exp2)

Roleplaying tips: The deranged fortune-teller. The wide-eyed mystic. The weirdo standing in the corner talking to herself. Rose Vaneish is all of these personas rolled into one. In conversation, she sprinkles her non-stop patter with references to the spirit world. She drifts from topic to topic with no apparent rhyme or reason. All the while, she smiles from ear to ear and looks desperately at her listeners for some sign of understanding. She speaks in a high-pitched screech (as to be heard over the wind chimes).

Quotes: "Even children know that chimes help keep away malevolent spirits – but mine are especially enchanted to do so!" "You say you have no permanent residence and thus have no need of my wares, but I have a feeling you need a chime more than you may think! I see evil in your future....EVIL!"

Rose doesn't know anything substantial about Jacob's disappearance. Rose is very knowledgeable about the spirit world, and if any of the PCs have questions about such, she's more than happy to launch into a diatribe about specific types of spirits, such as ghosts, spectres, etc. She claims to go to Jacob's Haunt not to drink, but for Jacob – he fascinates her (it's true, she doesn't drink a drop while she's there.)

The following are the rumors Rose knows – a successful Diplomacy check (DC 15) will get these out of her, or the rumors can come out during roleplay:

- Ghosts like Jacob exist because something about their crime involved an injustice – either against themselves or someone close to them. Solving their crime will let their souls rest in peace. (True)
- A visiting merchant claimed that a group of men approached him in the night, and, calling forth a spirit from a strange amulet, robbed him of all his valuables (True)
- An evil, more powerful entity has taken over Jacob's Haunt, but remains silent. (False)
- Jacob hated working for Elon, and was plotting to kill him. Elon found out about the plot and had the ghost removed with the help of an evil cleric. (False)



THE TEMPLE

In this encounter, the PCs will meet Zaren, a drunken cleric of any good-aligned god of your campaign (feel free to call The Temple what you wish).

Read the following text aloud to the players as they approach the Temple:

The Temple is made of solid white marble, which augments the reflection of the sun, making it seem as if the entire structure is alight. Atop the high middle steeple is a huge carving of (your selected deity). Two large wooden doors lead to the inside of the church.

There are only acolytes in the main chamber of the temple. Should the PCs ask for Zaren by name, read the following text:

The acolyte enters a chamber in the northeast corner of the temple, and emerges minutes later accompanied by a cleric – a man of about 40, with black hair and a goatee, wearing gold and white robes. He dismisses the acolyte and approaches your group, a puzzled look on his face. "I am Zaren," he says, nodding. You can smell the alcohol on his breath from where you stand. "You have something to discuss with me?"

Zaren is an alcoholic who frequents Jacob's Haunt, in addition to many other taverns. When the PCs mention either Jacob or Jacob's Haunt, the priest will become flustered and upset, and ushers the PCs into a nearby alcove.

Zaren

Zaren (Clr3)

Roleplaying tips: The appearance of the PCs makes Zaren nervous and fidgety. He pulls at his robes, strokes his goatee, rubs his bloodshot eyes, and constantly looks over his shoulder. His voice is a low rumble, and he takes constant sips from a small gold flask he keeps hidden within his robes.

Quotes: "I assume that's water in your waterskin. A shame."
"I'm sorry, what were your names again?" "Would you care to make a donation to our lovely Church?"

"Shhhh!" exclaims the cleric, looking over his shoulder nervously. He whispers, "My brethren don't appreciate the qualities of a finely brewed ale, if you get my meaning. Now then, speak your business and leave. I've got students waiting."

Zaren was there on the night Jacob was taken – he was outside leaned up against a wall, retching and trying to steady himself for the walk back to the temple. He witnessed the scuffle between Jacob and the three kidnappers, but his memory is awful. Read the following to the PCs at the appropriate moment in the conversation, or paraphrase if necessary:

The cleric takes a deep breath and says; "I did see something several weeks ago. I was outside...er...taking in some of the clean night air...when four figures cloaked in black emerged from the bar, looking to be in quite a hurry. The spirit, Jacob, hovered above them looking rather agitated. Suddenly, one of the figures raised his hands, uttered a few words, and entangled the poor spirit in ghostly chains of some sort. Then they ran off, the lot of them. I wish I could give you a description of these fellows, but everyone looks the same when under the haze of the liquid demons that reside in bottles, which cloud the mind and dull the senses, may the Gods save us all." He then looks around nervously, and takes a sip from a gold flask he carries under his robe.

Zaren explains that he can't join the good fight with the PCs due to his teaching duties, but says upon their return he'd love to hear the outcome. Over drinks, of course.

The following are the rumors Zaren knows – a successful Diplomacy check (DC 15) will get these out of him, or the rumors can come out during roleplay:

- Over the last two weeks, late at night, people have heard Elon Wrest desperately calling Jacob's name inside Jacob's Haunt. (True)
- Ever since Jacob disappeared, strange things have been happening around town. People have claimed being robbed, but can't remember giving away their money. They claim to have acted as if "possessed" (True)
- There are rumors that a sect of undead hunters is in the area. They may have been lured by talk of ghouls that supposedly terrorize the graveyard. (The so-called "undead hunters" are really Yrasil's gang.)



- Welford Wrest is a charming, affable fellow who values friendship above all other things. This is why he felt so betrayed when Jacob tried to form a partnership with Elon. (Welford is charming and affable; the remainder of the tale is false).

THE WEEPING WILLOW

In this encounter, the PCs will meet Lady Egress, who runs the Weeping Willow, and Esmerelda, a courtesan.

The Weeping Willow is a run-down brothel in the not-so-nice section of town. It's a ramshackle, two-story building. A sign hangs out front that depicts a badly drawn weeping willow tree with the torso of a female as the trunk. As the characters enter, read the following:

The smell of perfume and sweat hits you like a wall of force as you step inside the brothel. You enter a large common room, with five couches covered in a blue velvet-like material set in a semi-circle. A winding, wooden staircase dominates the center of the room, and several closed, wooden doors lead off to antechambers. The muffled sounds of laughter and...other things...can be heard from upstairs.

It is assumed that PCs followed the directions of Elon's note and arrive here at night, when The Weeping Willow is at it's busiest. Three of the five couches are occupied with female courtesans and their male clients.

After they enter, the madam, Lady Egress, will greet the PCs. Read the following aloud to the PCs:

Lady Egress

Lady Egress (Com2)

Roleplaying tips: Lady Egress, while not the most attractive person in the world (at least to non-dwarves), exudes a worldly confidence that makes her likeable. She has a forceful personality that has allowed her to maintain control over her girls. She is brash, coarse and full of good humor. She speaks in a booming voice.

Quotes: To female adventurers, "You could fetch a pretty penny if you come work for me. Give it some thought, girly." To male adventurers, "Is that a sword in your belt or are you just happy to see me? Let me introduce you to some of my girls!"

Esmerelda

Esmerelda (Com1)

Roleplaying tips: Esmerelda makes a lot of money for the Weeping Willow, and with good reason. Her natural Charisma entices male patrons to shell out top coin for her services. She uses her body to her advantage, and almost always gets what she wants. She pouts constantly, and speaks in a low, seductive voice.

Quotes: "You look tired. Would you care to join me upstairs...alone?" "Have you slain many beasts...I bet you have, just look at your muscles!"

A dwarven woman emerges from one of the antechambers. She wears a frilly pink nightdress and a cadre of jewelry. Her wide smile belies that she is more than happy to see new customers.

"Greetings, and welcome to the Weeping Willow! My name is Lady Egress, but you may call me Lady, though perhaps not after tonight!" Her protruding belly shakes with the force of her laughter.

"What services can we provide for such a fine collection of strapping young adventurers like yourself? We aim to please here; so don't be afraid to ask for whatever your little mind desires. But, I must warn you, you must be careful what you wish for – you just might get it!"

If the PCs ask for Esmerelda, Lady Egress smiles widely and relays the following:

"And may I be so bold as to ask what business you may have with one of my finest employees? I assume you intend to pay her for her time, no matter what it is. Please wait here and I'll retrieve her," the dwarf says, winking. "She's between jobs, so you're right on time."

Lady Egress ascends the stairs, followed by Esmerelda's descent a few minutes later. Esmerelda is a plain but pretty half-elven woman that looks 5 years older than she should at 30 years. She wears a flowing red dress that accentuates her generous figure, and she flirts with male PCs during the entire conversation.

Lady Egress



Esmerelda often visits Jacob's Haunt because it's a good place to pick up potential customers. People tend to hang out at Jacob's Haunt far longer than they do at other taverns, because Jacob's appearances are so sporadic that no one wants to miss them. Thus, the amount of drinking these patrons do during their visit is almost double that of anywhere else. Esmerelda uses her visible charms to woo the men back to the Weeping Willow, where Lady Egress pays her a percentage for the nightly take.

Esmerelda will provide the PCs with the only good lead they've had so far. She tried to pick up Yrasil that night, and she remembers the occasion because he was especially rude to her (he was afraid she would draw undue attention to him and his two companions.) She remembers him well, but not his group and can describe him to the PCs in detail (you can find his description in Appendix I: Major NPCs). She remembers that he wore a necklace of exquisite design.

Besides that knowledge, the following are the rumors Esmerelda knows – a successful Diplomacy check (DC 15) will get these out of her, or the rumors can come out during roleplay:

- Jacob's Haunt was once known as the Wrest's Nest, but that was before Jacob was a ghost. (True)
- When he was alive, Jacob was a bandit, and came to the Wrest's Nest to hide out from the authorities. Welford Wrest took him in because Jacob paid him a great deal of money. (False)
- All the other tavern owners in the area were extremely jealous of the success of Jacob's Haunt (True)
- A patron of Jacob's Haunt killed Jacob. This person was embarrassed by the antics Jacob made him perform one night. (False)

A HAUNTING RETURN

When the PCs return to Jacob's Haunt to relay their progress to Elon, he seems unimpressed with the information they've gathered thus far, except for the description of Yrasil, which intrigues him. He visibly exerts his mental capacity trying to remember the fellow, but can't. He gruffly suggests that they use their "adventurers skill" to seek out more information. If the PCs ask him for more to go on, he rapidly becomes irritable, a side effect of his ever-growing paranoia. He belittles them for their lack of resourcefulness and retires to the back room, slamming the door in anger.

As the PCs are either getting ready to leave Jacob's Haunt, or if they decide to take a table and wait for Elon to return, the following occurs:

An elderly, withered man with straw-like blonde hair, bloodshot eyes and the stench of alcohol approaches your group. His remaining three front teeth are revealed as his cracked lips pull back in a smile. He constantly scratches at himself as if suffering from lice or some other side effect of bad hygiene.

"I know something you don't know," he says in a singsong voice. "But, I'll tell you for the right price."

The old man calls himself Rash, and he is a self-proclaimed worthless waste of flesh. He isn't really suffering from lice – it's just the jitters from all the drink he's put down his gullet over his many years.

Rash is a drunk, and spends his days tavern-hopping from one to the next. When one closes, Rash moves on to the next, but his two favorite drinking holes are Jacob's Haunt and the Battered Hatch, owned by Dunkin Ingras. The Battered Hatch has seen better days since Jacob's Haunt became a success, and Dunkin has taken to watering down the drinks quite liberally in order to save some coin here and there. This means that whenever Rash is drinking there, he's in a mental state which is the closest to sober he'll ever be.

Dunkin, thinking that Rash will never remember anything he's told due to his constant inebriation, has been grumbling as of late about the "undead hunters" who scammed him out of a substantial amount of money. During one of his complaint sessions, Dunkin inadvertently let Elon Wrest's name slip out as the true target of his wrath.

Rash, though not terribly bright, has put together the connection, and will relate it to the PCs if they pay off his bar tab at Jacob's Haunt, which is in the neighborhood of 15 gp. Elon will be curious as to why the PCs are taking pity on the drunkard, but not overly interested – he'll assume the PCs are simply gullible.

The PCs will either decide to tell Elon where they're headed or head there without telling him. If they tell Elon the entire story, he rants and raves, declaring war on Dunkin Ingras. He tells the PCs that if they kill Dunkin, they'd be doing him a favor (thus giving them a little insight as to his true nature.)

THE BATTERED HATCH

In this encounter, PCs will meet up with the owner of the Battered Hatch, Dunkin Ingras

The Battered Hatch is laid out similarly to Jacob's Haunt. It's a one-story tavern that serves medium quality food and drink. No matter what time of day the PCs decide to go there, they'll find the tavern filled with 1d10 customers (all local commoners).

The owner, Dunkin Ingras, is a wiry, middle-aged man with a balding pate and bad skin. When the PCs bring up the subject of

Jacob and his involvement, Dunkin beckons them to his back room. Read the following boxed text to them, or paraphrase if necessary:

"That damnable spirit has been the bane of my existence even before he became a spirit," says Dunkin, looking sour.

"What I'm about to tell you must be kept in the strictest confidence, you understand? If this comes back to haunt me, you'll regret the day you ever set foot in here."

"About 2 weeks ago, 2 men and a woman approached me, claiming to be from a sect of undead hunters. They said they could rid Jacob's Haunt of its ghost, but I wanted them to bring him back to me. I figured I could bargain with the dead bastard. I paid them well, but I have seen neither hide nor hair of those miserable characters since. I've heard stories of people being possessed and giving up their belongings, and I'll wager my tavern that it's them, using the ghost for their own foul purposes," he says with a scowl. He drums his fingers upon the wall and fidgets in his chair. He regards you for a moment, and then continues, "I'll offer you 200 gold pieces each to get back what I paid for. There's a festival tomorrow night, the Festival of Tides. All the richest merchants and nobles will be in attendance, and where's there's money, you're sure to find thieves."

Dunkin Ingras

Dunkin Ingras (Com2)

Roleplaying tips: Bitter and in an eternal foul mood, Dunkin's face looks like he's constantly sucking on a lemon. He speaks in a scratchy voice, and scratches his balding head every minute or so. He wants his involvement in this situation to be kept under the radar, so to speak. He relays this to the PCs every chance he gets.

Quotes: "Where's Elon Wrest's damn puppet show now? Serves him right."

Dunkin is willing to pay as much as 500 gp, but will go no higher. He remembers Yrasil and his two companions well, and gives their descriptions to the PCs (you can find these descriptions under Appendix I: Major NPCs). Dunkin strongly suggests that the PCs attend the Festival of Tides, a city celebration that is scheduled to take place the next evening in the town square. This is the latest in a month-long series of themed festivals the city leaders came up with to boost morale (previous festivals include the Festival of Light, the Festival of Harvest, and the Festival of Moons - feel free to change the Festival of Tides to any other Festival that fits your campaign, along with any other place big enough to hold at least half the city). He suspects that the lure of easy money will draw Yrasil's group there – and he's right.

THE FESTIVAL OF TIDES

On the evening of the Festival of Tides, a good number of the citizens of the town gather in the city square. Sideshows such as fire-breathers, jugglers and plays keep the folks entertained, and a parade serves as the main attraction. Merchants are out hustling their wares, including but not limited to food, drink, baubles, weapons, and whatever else may be appropriate to your campaign.

Use whatever descriptions are in your arsenal to give the feeling that the streets are alive tonight – people are boisterous and

spirits are running high. This may be a good time to have the PCs overhear a conversation in which two people speak of the strange occurrences that have plagued the town for the last two weeks, simply to serve as reminder to the party.

Of importance to this encounter is a large wooden stage, which has been constructed for this event. The town leaders, along with the wealthiest merchants and most affluent nobles, are all either on the stage or centered around this area. The Festival of Tides does not officially begin until the Mayor (or whatever figure of power fits into your campaign) rises to give his speech. The crowd knows this, and thus people begin to gather around the stage in order to hear it (the PCs should be aware of this and be encouraged to join them). Yrasil's group is in this crowd, attempting to get as close as possible to the stage in order to take advantage of all the wealth surrounding it. This is when things get a little strange.

Jacob, knowing fully well by now that he must find his own way of the situation he's in, uses his malevolence power to take possession of the Mayor. Read the following boxed text to the PCs:

The Mayor rises from his chair and waves to the crowd, smiling broadly. There is a smattering of claps and a fair share of boos from within the unruly crowd. He clasps his hands together and addresses everyone.

"My dear townsfolk! It is with great pride that I welcome you to the Festival of Tides! As you well know, the tides are of great importance to our economy – now is the time of year when merchant ships from all across the world can dock in our ports, and we have some of those esteemed guests visiting with us right now!" He indicates several gentlemen dressed in finery and glittering jewelry.

"So, let's begin..."

Suddenly, the Mayor seems to lose focus. He blinks several times, and sways dangerously close to falling off the edge of the stage! Frowning, his brows knit together as if he's concentrating

on something. The crowd begins to get restless, and a low murmur of confusion arises from within.

"...I apologize," he says, his tone now grave. "It seems we have a matter of great importance to deal with. I have just been informed that the strange possessions and robberies that have been occurring over the last two weeks are not the doing of some magic user. A group of miserable kidnappers, using the spirit of one of our esteemed citizens, the bard Jacob, have been the perpetrators of these acts most foul! Guards, grab those men right there!"

Heads turn as the Mayor points directly into the crowd. There seems to be a ripple in the sea of people, and that's when all hell breaks loose. The form of a disembodied spirit rips from the body of the Mayor, who falls to the ground. Widespread panic takes over, and the scene becomes chaotic. People run in every direction, and you are in danger of being trampled. All the while, the spirit, who is being visibly dragged against his will, screams out a message! "Find Welford in Deephold" comes the frantic cry, "He's the only one who can help me! It's Jacob! JACOBI!"

The PCs should be nearby when this happens, but not so close that they are able to catch Yrasil's group as they run from the scene.

When Jacob does manifest, he will cause a widespread panic as citizens flee from his ghostly visage. PCs will have a hard time making their way through the tide of people to get close to Yrasil's group (have them make continuous Reflex saves and Ability checks (Dex) to keep from falling or to emulate the effects of being pushed around). There are simply too many people running in different directions to make catching the kidnappers a possibility.

Play out the scene however you like – just remember these two key facts: At least one of the PCs must hear Jacob's message, and the PCs should not be allowed to catch Yrasil's group. Use every

Jacob and the Mayor



GM trick at your disposal to make these two things happen, so that the group will be able to enjoy the climatic showdown at the end.

Should the PCs decide to speak with the Mayor, they'll find him frazzled and furious. When Jacob possessed the Mayor, he told him rapid-fire details about his kidnapping at the hands of Yrasil and his cronies. The Mayor remembers that Jacob said something about a hideout close to town, and that Welford might hold the key to finding it. He demands that the PCs do whatever is in their power to solve the crime, and guarantees that the city will be grateful for their efforts.

DEAD MAN WALKING

By this point, the PCs should realize that something is wrong. Why would Jacob call out for Welford, his supposed murderer, in lieu of Elon? This should convince the PCs that going back to Elon with this information might not be wise, and that they should head directly to Deephold to speak with Welford. While visiting hours are common in today's correctional institutions, such wasn't always the case. Prisoners were isolated from the world, left to rot for their crimes, and weren't allowed to see family or friends unless the situation was extremely dire.

The PCs will have to be clever and resourceful in their approach to this unique problem. One of their group could pose as a dying relative of Welford's, who only wishes to say goodbye to everyone in the family before departing from this mortal realm. If your campaign has a structured judicial system, the PCs could pose as barristers, who wish to go over some new details of Welford's case. Or, the rogue in the group may volunteer to go in alone. Of course, the PCs may also choose to get the jump on the guards and steal their uniforms – if so, they have a half hour before the prison goes into "lockdown" mode, and 25 guards begin looking for them (use the template below for guard stats).

Try making sure that Deephold seems like a well-fortified, dangerous place in order to keep the PCs in check.

If worse comes to worse, guards were meant to be bribed, and any amount in excess of 100 gp. (for both guards at the gates) will get the PCs a private meeting with Welford.

If the PCs are not going to force their way in, read the following text.

Deephold. The final resting place of many men, guilt or innocence aside. Birds of carrion caw as they circle the foreboding stone walls of the prison. A wide dirt road leads up to the front gates, where two men in black chain mail armor stand guard, short swords ready at their sides. Two more guards patrol the wall, crossbows at the ready. A caged wagon filled with prisoners sits just inside the gates, the groans of the doomed men carried on the breeze to your ears. When you get within 10 feet of the gates, the guard on the left calls out to you, "Stand where you are and state your business at Deephold."

If the PCs are going to sneak their way in, read the above, but leave out the part about the guard stopping them. Instead, make opposed Spot/Listen checks to see if either side is aware of the other.

Depending on the approach the PCs took to the problem of getting in (see above), the end result should be the same – a private meeting with Welford Wrest.

If the PCs did not enter by force, read the following:

The guards lead you to what feels like the belly of the great stone beast that is Deephold. Miserable moans and the occasional scream serve as a constant reminder of just where you are. The guards lead you to a cramped room with a table and two chairs, and tell you to wait. The walls seep with

Welford Wrest



moisture, and the air is thick with the smell of sweat, vomit, and human misery.

The guards bring poor Welford down within ten minutes, clanging shackles and all.

If the PCs did enter by other means, then it will be necessary for them to find Welford on their own. This should require a bevy of Hide/Move Silently/Bluff/Listen/Open Lock checks as appropriate. They'll find Welford in his cell.

Once the PCs get the chance to speak to Welford, read the following (you may have to improvise if they find him in his cell):

For a moment, your heart jumps, as you believe you see Elon Wrest before you. The similarities are incredible! But, as you take a closer look, you realize Welford Wrest is thinner and has a much kinder face than his brother.

"Yes?" he says, looking at you with a mixture of confusion and what seems like hope. "I am Welford Wrest. Do you have news of my brother?"

Welford Wrest

Welford Wrest (Com2)

Roleplaying tips: Welford is a kind man, and tends to seek out the best in everyone. He is an optimist and overlooks people's faults. While he's not meek or quiet, he tends to be a doormat to people with stronger personalities.

Quotes: "Elon isn't evil. He's simply misguided."

Welford is mild-mannered and friendly, and is shocked at the recent developments. When the PCs describe the men who have Jacob to him, Welford immediately recognizes the description of Yrasil as his former cellmate. Welford tells the PCs that during one of their many long talks, Yrasil had mentioned that he kept a hideout in the nearby woods, near the sound of rushing water.

If the PCs ask Welford why Jacob would care to seek him out, since Welford was the one who supposedly killed the bard, Welford tells them the entire true story of what happened between he, Elon and Jacob. He still does not know whether or not Elon is the one who killed Jacob, but he does believe his brother is certainly capable of it.

At the end of the conversation, Welford pleads with the PCs to not forget him. He is, after all, an innocent man. Good-aligned PCs should feel compelled to help him.

Deephold Guards, male humans (25) (War2): CR 2; Size M (From 5 to 6 feet tall). HD 2d8; hp 14 each; Init +0; Spd 30ft; AC 12 (+2 leather armor); Atk +2 melee (1d6 short sword, crit 19-20/x2) +2 ranged (1d8 light crossbow 10 bolts, crit 19-20/x2); SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 12.

Skills: Intimidate +4 Listen +4 (Alertness feat), Spot +2 (Alertness feat), Jump +2, Climb +1

Feats: Alertness, Endurance

area surrounding the town are temperate plains for the sake of generating encounters, but feel free to adapt the surroundings to your campaign.

YRASIL'S HIDEOUT

(Refer to the map of Yrasil's Hideout)

Before Yrasil got thrown in Deephold with Welford Wrest, this one-story cabin was his base of operations. It will take determined PCs 1d10 hours of searching in the woods before they hear the sound of a rushing river. Happening upon the cabin is easy after that. Read the following as the PCs get within sighting distance of it.

A slightly worn path leads up to a large cabin, surrounded by trees. Vegetation has overtaken the place, which gives it the appearance of being in disrepair. Pale light emits from the front window, but no shadows can be seen within. Wind blows eerily throw the branches overhead, and an owl hoots forebodingly in the distance. You know that you are an uninvited guest to this house, but the only question is: Are the owners expecting you?

The development of this encounter depends largely upon the actions of the PCs. Yrasil expects to be followed here, and the place is prepared for an assault. Depending on the time of day, use Table 1 to determine the whereabouts of the 3 NPCs according to map of Yrasil's Hideout.

THE DEAD OF NIGHT

The trek from the city to the forested area takes about 2 days by foot. There are no planned encounters for this section.

Use the Wilderness Encounters section from the DMG (pgs. 132-136) for random encounters. This adventure assumes that the

1. Pit Traps

Two large pit traps have been strategically placed 30 feet from the front of the cabin, on either side of the worn path leading to the door. Any PC falling in will immediately alert all three members of Yrasil's gang.



Table 1: Time of Day / NPC Location

Time of Day	NPC Location
Late evening / early morning	Liseth – Roof Yrasil – Northwest bedroom, resting Danesh – Sitting in a chair beside the back door
Late morning	Liseth – Northwest bedroom, resting Yrasil – Roof Danesh – Outhouse
Afternoon	Liseth – Roof Yrasil – Main room, playing cards Danesh – Main room, playing cards
Evening	Liseth – Main room Yrasil – Roof Danesh – Wandering the grounds in back of the cabin

Spiked Pit Trap (x2) (40 ft. Deep): CR 3; no attack roll necessary (6d6), +10 melee (1d4 spikes for 1d4+5 damage per successful hit); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20)

2. Main Room

A large oak table dominates the center of this room, with 4 accompanying chairs. Atop the table sits a small, lit hooded lantern and the remnants of what appears to have been a card game. An unlit fireplace is off to the right, and there are two closed doors to the left.

Searching the table reveals 20 sp, 3 half-full mugs of good ale, and a complete deck of playing cards with gold trim (worth about 10 gp on the market)

3. Bedrooms

Both bedrooms contain 2 cots and some cobwebs. There is nothing of interest in either one.

4. Outhouse

The outhouse is a round wooden structure with one door. There is nothing of interest inside.

5. Storage Room

This small structure is locked (Hardness 10; hp 10; Break DC 20; Open Lock DC 30). Inside, characters will find a medium-sized locked small chest (Hardness 10; hp 10, Break DC 20; Open Lock DC 25). Inside the chest are 500 gp, a gold comb shaped in the form of a couatl with blue gems for eyes (400 gp), 2 potions of cure moderate wounds, 1 potion of invisibility and 1 potion of glibness. The storage room also contains 2 framed, hung pictures. Yrasil stole these from an art collecting noble. They are worth 350 gp each.

Group Tactics:

When the PCs get within 40 feet of the house, make opposed Spot checks for both parties. If Yrasil or Liseth see the PCs first, they'll alert the others by yelling, and will begin raining bolts or arrows down on the PCs, then follow their tactics as listed below.

The roof is 10 feet high for purposes of determining movement, and you can consider Liseth

or Yrasil to be under three-quarters cover (+7 AC Bonus, +3 Reflex save bonus).

It's Danesh's job to watch the back of the cabin. Make opposed Spot or Move Silently/Listen checks as appropriate. If Danesh gets the drop on the PCs, he'll shout warnings to the others, then follow his tactics as listed in Appendix II: Major NPCs

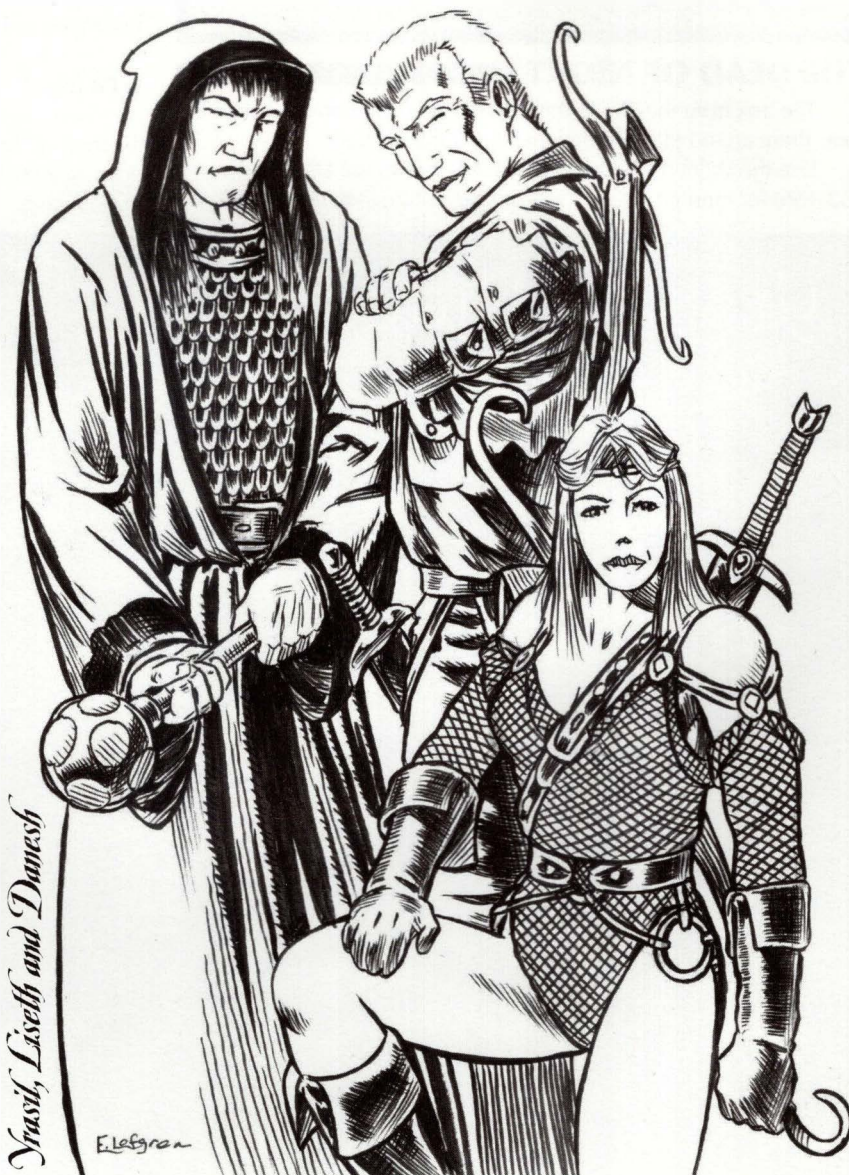
THE CONCLUSION

So, the PCs foiled Yrasil's plans and are headed back into the city with Jacob safe in the Amulet of Restless Souls.

Now what?

When the conflict is over, Jacob will tell the PCs the entire chain of events, from his life with Welford, to his imprisonment in the Amulet of Restless Souls. Jacob will certainly want the PCs to help him free his former friend and employer, and see Elon come to justice. He knows that the Amulet of Restless Souls now serves as his new location, so even if his crime is solved he will still be able to perform at Jacob's Haunt.

Depending on the motivation of the PCs, the story could swing several ways. If all they're after is money, and don't feel morally obligated to free an innocent man from prison, then turning Jacob over to Elon would net them whatever price they negotiated, end of story. Jacob won't be too pleased about the situation, however, now



that he knows the truth. He may even try to stop the party from returning him to Jacob's Haunt until Welford is freed.

Again, if money is the central issue at the core of the party's desires, they could wage an auction of sorts between Elon Wrest and Dunkin Ingras, both of whom would pay top dollar to get Jacob. Good-aligned characters in the group shouldn't go along with this kind of behavior. Again, Jacob would most likely make life difficult for the PCs should they decide to go this route.

The noble thing to do is to try and figure out how to get Welford out of jail. If the PCs bring Jacob with them to the local authorities, it will be enough to get the wheels of justice turning. Should the PCs succeed in that endeavor, Welford would be more than happy to provide them with drinks and food on the house for the rest of their lives, and, of course, the best seat in the house on the nights that Jacob holds a performance.

If the PCs do manage to free Welford and send Elon to jail, Jacob's soul does not move on to the ethereal plane even though his mystery has been solved. As long as his soul remains in the Amulet of Restless Souls, he is free to stay on the material plane.

Soon after his release, Welford refurbishes Jacob's Haunt to move the bar to the middle of the room. That way, he can wear the Amulet of Restless Souls and have Jacob move in a 30 ft. radius around the entire tavern.

Then, Jacob's Haunt is yours to bring to life (or death, as the case may be)! On nights Jacob decides to perform, the place should be a lively, exciting tavern where the thrills never end. Jacob uses his malevolence, telekinesis, frightful moan, spells, and other abilities to their fullest when entertaining the crowd.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

Here are some ideas for continuing the adventure beyond these pages.

- If Yrasil managed to escape during the fray, then the PCs have made an enemy for life, especially if they harmed Liseth. Vice versa with Liseth if the PCs kept her alive but killed or harmed Yrasil in any way. These two characters can become recurring thorns in the sides of your PCs.
- A few of the merchants who had their riches stolen by Jacob while under Yrasil's control come calling to Jacob's Haunt. They want their money back.
- Elon sits plotting in the cold stone belly of Deephold. Now that Jacob and the PCs have completely ruined his life, he's hatching a plan of revenge.
- The original owner of the Amulet of Restless Souls, the arch-mage Kaseith, has received news of the recent happenings in the city. He wants his item back, but unfortunately it's around Welford's neck! (This plotline is the subject of the next chapter in the Jacob's Haunt saga.)

XP AWARDS:

Besides the XP value of the combat with Yrasil's gang, the safe retrieval of Jacob and the Amulet earns the party a 500 XP story bonus. Going beyond the call of duty and seeing Elon come to justice and Jacob's Haunt returned to its rightful owner nets the party an additional 500 XP. Parties who decide that they'll just turn Jacob over to either Elon or Dunkin Ingras get nothing besides the value of the combat with Yrasil and his thugs. Evil is its own reward, we suppose.

We at Gaming Frontiers hope you've enjoyed this adventure!

COMING SOON...THE NEXT CHAPTER IN THE JACOB'S HAUNT SAGA!

APPENDIX I: MAJOR NPCS

Jacob Jacinth

Jacob Jacinth (Ghost/Brd6): CR 8; Size M (Incorporeal Undead). HD 6d12; hp 45; Init +3 (+3 Dex); Spd Fly 30 ft. (perfect); AC 16 when manifested (+3 Dex, +3 deflection) or 13 on ethereal plane (+3 Dex); Atk +5 melee (no weapons) or +7 ranged (no weapons); SV Fort +2, Ref +10, Will +4; Str 12, Dex 16, Con -, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 17.

Languages: Common, Elven, Draconic

Class Feature: Bardic music (see Core Rulebook I) – Jacob can only use this class feature when he's inhabited the body of another via his malevolence attack.

Special Attacks: Manifestation, malevolence, telekinesis, frightful moan (see Core Rulebook III)

Special Qualities: Undead, incorporeal, +4 turn resistance, rejuvenation

Skills: Balance +5, Bluff +11, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +5, Escape Artist +5, Gather Information +5, Hide +5, Knowledge (Geography) +3, Knowledge (History) +4, Knowledge (Arcana) +3, Knowledge (Nature) +3, Knowledge (Religion) +3, Listen +3, Move Silently +5, Perform +14, Speak Language (Draconic) +1, Tumble +6, Use Magic Device +5

Feats: Ambidexterity, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Bluff), Skill focus (Perform)

Arcane Spells (6/4/3): (0) dancing lights, light, mage hand, mending, open/close, prestidigitation (1) charm person, ventriloquism (2) cat's grace, enthrall, hypnotic pattern

Background / Description: Jacob Jacinth had renown long before his death at the hands of Elon Wrest. His wide breadth of knowledge and skills lead him to become a master of entertainment. The son of the owner of a traveling circus, Jacob learned various tricks of the trade from clowns, musicians, magic users and storytellers, and became a jack-of-all-trades. When he left the circus, he joined an adventuring group by the name of The Wyverns, and together they did what dozens of other such groups did – looting dungeons and saving the world. But soon, Jacob became tired of that life, preferring instead the thrill of holding an entire audience in the palm of his hands.

In life, Jacob was a very handsome man, with short brown hair, a full mustache and a winning smile.

Roleplaying tips: Everyone loves Jacob, and he works hard to make sure of it. Witty, intelligent and polite, Jacob is perhaps one of the nicest people (er...ghosts) the PCs may ever chance upon. Play him with a constant smile on your face, and always be ready with a quip.

Quotes: "Performing is my life. Without it, I am but a hollowed tree, bereft of the very sap that keeps me alive."

Tactics: Though Yrasil will use Jacob once during the fight to harm one of the PCs, once the command is over Jacob is on his own, within a 30-foot radius of the amulet. He'll do everything in his power to keep Yrasil from escaping, including possessing one of the PCs to attack him, or using his telekinesis to throw objects in the way.

Yrasil

Yrasil, male human (Rog4): Size M (5 feet 9 inches tall). HD 4d6+4; hp 22; Init +8; Spd 30ft; AC 16 (+2 padded armor, +4 Dex); Atk +4 melee (1d4+1 dagger, crit 19-20/x2 or 1d6+1 short sword, crit 19-20/x2) +7 ranged (1d8 light crossbow, 20 bolts, crit 19-20/x2); SV Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 13.

Skills: Appraise +5, Balance +8, Bluff +6, Climb +5, Diplomacy +4, Disable Device +6, Disguise +3, Escape Artist +8, Forgery +7, Gather Information +4, Hide +8, Jump +5, Listen +7, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +8, Perform +5, Pickpocket +8, Read Lips +5, Spot +6, Tumble +8

Feats: Dodge, Improved initiative, Mobility

Languages: Common, Elven, Orc

Possessions: +1 padded leather armor, short sword, dagger, light crossbow (20 bolts), 50 gp, 20 sp, 120 gp gems (x6), 2 potions of cure light wounds, 1 potion of spider climb, 1 potion of neutralize poison, 1 potion of haste, the Amulet of Restless Souls (new magic item, detailed in Appendix 1)

Background / Description: Yrasil grew up the product of a broken home, and started his life of crime at the age of 9. Petty theft and panhandling soon led to more serious infractions against the law, and Yrasil has been in and out of jail more times than he can count. His heart isn't completely cold, however. 5 years ago, Yrasil met and fell deeply in love with Liseth, a human fighter whom he tried to pickpocket. She caught him in the act, but found him so charming that the two immediately hit it off. Tragically, his last big scam, involving the reported treasure horde of the arch-mage Kaseith landed him a spot next to Welford Wrest in Deephold for 4 long years. Liseth has been waiting for him the entire time, even picking up a few tricks of the trade in his absence.

Yrasil is a tall, thin man with cropped black hair and a face bereft of facial hair. He often wears dark maroon colored outfits, fitted with various secret pockets and compartments in which to keep his pilfered items. He prefers to wear his short sword on his right side, slung low on his belt, and wears his crossbow strapped to his back.

Roleplaying tips: Yrasil is a weasel, but he is a charming weasel. His hands often get him into trouble, but his mouth often gets him out. He will plead, beg and bribe the PCs in order to escape the sharp end of a sword.

Quotes: "I think we can all agree that its money that makes the world spin. Let's drop the heroic act and think pragmatically here."

Tactics: If Yrasil is on rooftop duty when the PCs show, he'll yell to his companions and begin pelting the PCs with crossbow bolts for 5-10 rounds, or until it's disadvantageous to do so. He'll then down his potion of haste and pull out the Amulet of Restless Souls. He'll target the PC who seems to pose the biggest threat, and command Jacob to possess the character, or use his frightful moan ability to send the PCs scattering. Once that's done, he'll run for the storage room, where he hopes to get some of his treasure and beat a trail. Engaging in melee combat is a last result for Yrasil, unless Liseth is in any way harmed. He will then brandish his short sword, calling her name and wading into the fray like a madman. Otherwise, he'd rather fast-talk his way out or run than die. If he thinks throwing the Amulet at the PCs on his way out will slow them down, so much the better.

Liseth

Liseth, female human (Ftr4/Rog1): Size M (5 feet 4 inches tall). HD 4d10 +4 plus 1d6+1; hp 37; Init +6; Spd 30 ft; AC 15 (+3 studded leather, +2 Dex); Atk +7 melee (1d10+4 +1 bastard sword, crit 19-20/x2 or 1d4+3 punching dagger, crit X3) +7 ranged (1d8+1 masterwork composite longbow, 20 arrows, crit x3, additional +1 to hit and damage); SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 15.

Skills: Climb +4, Handle Animal +3, Move Silently +2, Pickpocket +2, Ride +4

Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Improved Initiative, Power Attack

Languages: Common

Possessions: Studded leather armor, +1 bastard sword, punching dagger, masterwork composite longbow, 20 arrows, 29 gp, 53 sp, ring of protection +1 (she's not wearing it – she doesn't know what it is), 1 potion of endurance, 1 potion of cure moderate wounds.

Background / Description: The epitome of beautiful but tragically dumb people the world over, Liseth has had the wool pulled over her eyes by Yrasil since day one. She is deeply in love with the evil thief, but only because she doesn't realize his true nature, which he keeps hidden from her. She is the daughter of simple farmers from a nearby village, and being the only girl amongst 14 male siblings, learning to fight became a matter of survival.

Liseth has a very attractive face, and a blonde mane of hair that sweeps down to her lower back. She prefers to wear her treasured bastard sword "Blik" on her back, on the opposite side of her wonderfully crafted longbow. She keeps her dagger in her boot for emergencies. While Liseth isn't tall, she has a sculpted, body-builders form that is intimidating enough.

Roleplaying tips: Liseth isn't smart, but her extraordinary beauty lets her get by. She'll use this to her advantage if dealing with male PCs. Her voice is lilting and soothing – unless she's in battle – then she screams bloody vengeance and becomes a completely different person. She's not really evil - she's simply naïve. PCs should recognize this and avoid killing her if they can – they could possibly make an ally.

Quotes: In battle: "Blik will taste your blood, and so will I!" Out of battle: "You were a worthy adversary. Perhaps you could teach me some of your technique?"

Tactics: Liseth has one goal throughout the encounter – keep Yrasil from coming to harm. Wherever he is, Liseth is right beside him, sword at the ready. She will fight to the death if he is killed, but if he manages to escape she will stop fighting in the hopes of staying alive to see him again.

Danesh

Danesh, male human (Clr3 - Domains: Death and Evil): Size M (6 feet 1 inch tall). HD 3d8; hp 18; Init +4; Spd 20 ft; AC 16 (+6 scale mail armor); Atk +3 melee (1d8+1 heavy mace (ghost touch), crit X2) or 1d6+1 sickle, crit x2) +2 ranged; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 14, Cha 13.

Skills: Concentration +4, Knowledge (Religion) +3, Scry +3

Feats: Combat Casting, Improved Initiative

Languages: Common

SQ – Turn Undead

SQ – Death Touch (Su): Once per day, if Danesh succeeds at a melee touch attack against a living creature, roll 1d6 per cleric level (3d6 in this case). If the total equals the creature's current hit points, it dies.

Prepared Divine Spells (4/3/2): (0) Detect Magic, Detect Poison, Inflict Minor Wounds, Light (1) Bane, Cause Fear, Doom (2) Death Knell, Inflict Moderate Wounds
Possessions: +2 scale mail, ghost touch heavy mace, sickle, 39 gp, 32 sp, 40 gp gems (x3), 1 potion of blur, 3 cure light wounds scrolls.

Background / Description: Danesh is the son of a grave-robbing thief who brought the boy along on his nightly trips to local graveyards. He grew into a man obsessed with death, and found his calling in the dark rituals and beliefs of the, god of death, evil and trickery. When Yrasil approached him in the temple, and asked if he could help ward against undead, Danesh became intrigued with the possibilities contained within the Amulet of Restless Souls. He is secretly coveting the item, and is simply waiting for a time when Yrasil and Liseth are apart so he can kill Yrasil and take the amulet for himself (he's afraid of the burly female fighter with the big sword – and who can blame him?)

Danesh's looks are as dark as his interior. Long, raven black hair is shoulder length, and the dark circles under his black eyes reveal many late nights of reading texts dedicated to the undead. He wears black scale mail armor, covered by a dark red hooded robe tinged in black.

Roleplaying tips: Dour and evil to a fault, Danesh has all the qualities of a venomous serpent. He despises goody-goody types and hisses curses and threats upon the PCs as they battle.

Quotes: "You will soon feel the cold touch of death clench your soul – and it will be by my hand."

Tactics: When Danesh is patrolling the grounds, he keeps his ghost touch heavy mace in his hands at all times (he's worried that Jacob will try to attack him). When an alert is sounded, Danesh will head straight for the fray, showing no signs of fear. The PCs are a threat to his plan to get the amulet, and he's not happy about it. His first action will be to down his potion of blur, after which time he'll alternate between casting doom and inflict moderate wounds, and using his ghost touch heavy mace to inflict damage in melee combat. When a PC appears to be badly wounded, he'll use his Death Touch ability to try and snuff out their life. Danesh is probably the most dangerous opponent the PCs face during this encounter, because he will fight to the death.

APPENDIX II: NEW MAGIC ITEM

Amulet of Restless Souls

Type: Major Wondrous Item

Description: This amulet is a masterfully cut and polished blue diamond set in gold, wrapped in thin copper wire, hung by a gold chain.

Powers: The Amulet of Restless Souls allows its wearer to trap the souls of intelligent incorporeal undead who were once human, such as ghosts or spectres. The intended undead target of the amulet must be within 30 feet of the wearer, and is allowed a saving throw (Will negates DC 20) to resist entering the amulet. The amulet may contain only one soul at a time. Once trapped, the amulet becomes the soul's new "location" to which it is helplessly tied (similar to the way it is tied to the place it originally died). The soul is free to wander within a 30-foot radius of the amulet, making this item dangerous for anyone not prepared to deal with the constant threat of an angry undead spirit.



The wearer may initiate a telepathic conversation with the soul at any time, regardless of language barriers. The wearer may also telepathically issue a specific command to the undead soul once per day, which the soul may resist by making a saving throw (Will negates DC 20), or must carry out to the best of its ability. The command can be up to a maximum of 15 words long, must specify an action and a target, and must be something which the trapped soul is capable of doing, which will bring the trapped soul no harm, i.e. "Possess the orc wielding the club and make him run off the cliff's edge." In this example, if there are 5 orcs wielding clubs, the command has to specify which orc is the target.

The trapped soul's powers, whatever they may be, act only within a 30-foot radius of the amulet. The trapped soul cannot directly attack the wearer of the amulet, but can use powers such as telekinesis or malevolence to harm the wearer with flying objects or the possessed body of another person.

Beginning exactly one week from the time that the soul was initially trapped, the soul may attempt to permanently escape the hold of the amulet once per week by making a saving throw (Will negates DC 20). Once the soul escapes, he immediately dissipates and returns to its place of origin with 2d4 days. The wearer may permanently release the trapped soul at any time. This requires one round of concentration.

The amulet may hold a soul of up to 8d12 Hit Dice. If the soul that is trapped exceeds this, the item is automatically destroyed. If the Amulet of Restless Souls is destroyed, any soul trapped within immediately dissipates, and the soul returns to its place of origin within 2d4 days.

Caster Level: 8th; **Prerequisites:** Create Wondrous Item, control undead, trap the soul; **Market Price:** 75,000 gp

UNCHARTED TERRITORY

THE FORSAKEN OF GLIMM

BY: JOSEPH CARRIKER, ANDREW BOURELLE & EDWARD BOURELLE ILLUSTRATED BY: EDWARD BOURELLE

SkeletonKey Games provides us with an exclusive outtake from an upcoming product, Orcs: Savage Legacy, which will be available this summer. The book will contain information on orcish religion (including new gods), orcish spells and magic items, fighting tactics, rituals and an overview of orcish society.

- GF

The Black Tusk was not always the hotbed of infighting and uncomfortable questions that it is now. Once, they were a noble and proud tribe of orcs, strong in arms, whose faith in their mighty ancestors allowed them to seize and hold large swathes of territory for the tribe, challenging and besting any foolish enough to enter it.

But then a rift developed. Centered on the whelp Glimm, this dispute had nothing to do with claiming the best part of loot, the most attractive mate or any of the other petty goals that normally drive orcish life. Rather, the birth of Glimm of the Eye raised uncomfortable questions among the Black Tusk, questions of faith and belief. Blessed – or cursed – with an angry third eye set in the socket with his perfectly functional left eye, Glimm was always strange from his youth. Haunted by a whispered susurrus that he claimed was the voice of the One-Eyed-One, Glimm's first words were a prayer to that God-King of Orcs.

The shamans of the tribe were at a loss as to what to do – though they, like the rest of the Black Tusks, had heard the stories of the unsleeping god-king of the orcs, the tribe's worship was reserved for their ancestors alone. However, they dared not give the words of Glimm more credence, for fear that the Black Tusk might turn from the old ways to the active worship of the spear-wielding One-Eyed King. Despite their reticence and ill-treatment of Glimm – or perhaps because of it – some of the orcs of the Black Tusk began to listen to what the tiny orcling had to say, his normal, beady eyes downcast and uninterested in the way of a whelp, but that single burning eye fixing them with a gaze the equal of any seasoned warrior. His lips spoke words beyond the ken of even many of the warriors who listened, to say nothing of the child that uttered them.

These orcs gathered into an unspoken conspiracy, working to protect the whelp from the shamans and chieftain of the tribe, giving him extra food and listening to his spoken words for any trace of a message that might come from the One-Eyed King. By the time the shamans and chieftain realized what was going on, it was too late – a small order of fanatics had developed, intent on defending their

three-eyed messiah so that the words of the God King might continue to flow. When Glimm reached adolescence, his cabal of followers comprised a significant body of the tribe, so much so that no one could stop them from building their own fires apart from the main body of the tribe so that the boy might speak freely, without fear of the hissed warnings and angry glares of the shamans and chieftain. Many in the Black Tusks practically worshipped Glimm; many more feared him. But none could deny the power of that eye's gaze, which filled even the chieftain and his strong sons with awe, for something greater than young Glimm gazed out at them through that eye.

On the night that the young orcs of his generation were to undergo their rites of adulthood, Glimm was wracked with fever, calling aloud strange words and invocations. The shamans of the tribe recognized these utterings as words of power and refused to heal him, saying that he was cursed, while secretly hoping that he might die of the fever. It was at the apex of the darkened moon – black like the sundered eye of the God-King – that Glimm worked his first miracle. It was too late for the shamans. Glimm's followers, who called themselves the Believers, began to proselytize to their fellows, bringing more and more of their tribesmates into the worship of the One-Eyed One, with Glimm as messiah and prophet. The voice in Glimm's head now spoke clearly, if confusingly and the young cleric often spent long periods simply listening to the voice.

Glimm offered his divine gifts freely to his tribe, working great healings and powerful miracles that allowed him to defend them. The price of his aid was his fevered recounting of legends and prophecy, the words of the Orc-God. His magics were soon beyond the ken of even the most powerful shaman of the tribe, who quickly complained to the chieftain. Indeed, even the chieftain was forced to admit that the young prophet had garnered a powerful influence in the tribe, perhaps even beyond his own. So, he ordered the young cleric to cease spreading the word of his god to the tribe and to disband his followers. The orders of the chieftain were met with Glimm's cool gaze, contrasted by the furious crimson glare of the Third Eye. Glimm spoke not a word, but turned away from the chieftain and departed his tent, despite commands to return.

The next night, the gathering of the tribe was somber despite the day's successful attack on a party of elven travelers and plentiful loot for all the warriors. Many were surly from being forbidden to go to their customary places to listen to Glimm, who was forced to sit by the side of the chieftain, quietly. During a lull in the conversation and boasting, Glimm rose to his feet, raised his fists high into the night sky and began to intone a prayer of thanks to his god for the prosperity granted to the tribe and victory in battle. Many of the tribe's gaze were fixed upon Glimm in rapt fascination and



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reverence; the rest, however, fixed their eyes upon the chieftain, to see what he would do in the face of this open defiance.

Snatching up a still-burning log from the fire in front of him, the chieftain smote Glimm to the ground, ordering him to be silent. Glimm rose quietly to his feet, the shocked silence of the tribe all around him.

"Never. So long as there is breath in my lungs, strength in my tongue and the voice of our god in my mind, I shall speak of his glories. To him we owe all we are – I will not bow my head nor give my worship to the ancestors, who all existed and won battle by his hand! Never speak to me of your lunatic worship of petty ghosts and frail specters! Were they at hand, I would bind them to the will of the God-King to show you his power!"

With a snarl of rage, the chieftain sprang forward, striking the young cleric with his bare fists, knocking him to the ground again. His hand went to his belt to draw his blade, but found a sharp, wicked knife's edge at his throat instead. The tribe's shock was obvious as Bruun, the chieftain's half-breed daughter, pressed her blade to his throat.

"We are leaving. I hoped that you might one day see the truth that Glimm brings, my father. But it is not to be, I can see this now. Your eyes are too blinded by the funeral shrouds of our ancestors – and by the clever trickeries of the shamans. We are leaving, he and I. And you are coming, too, that we might vouchsafe our retreat." Glimm stood and gathered his things, secreted in the blankets at his feet all along.

The three departed the camp. Though the shamans screeched for the warriors to pursue them, the chieftain's sons gainsayed them and ordered the warriors to remain, though whether out of concern for their father or the hope that the cleric and their half-breed sister might slay him, none could say. At dawn, the chieftain stumbled into camp with rope burns on his wrists and ordered hunting parties after them, with war dogs – all to no avail. The two had disappeared completely.

Those who once supported Glimm were now watched carefully – indeed, many who tried to escape the camp and join Glimm were hunted down and executed. Many, but not all – the one-armed warrior Mokk, for instance, disappeared one day, a year after Glimm and Bruun's departure. Though everyone knew that Mokk had once been counted among the Believers, the chieftain claimed that he had been slain by the cleric and his treacherous daughter, for the shame of admitting that one of his finest warriors had deserted the tribe for the heresies of Glimm of the Three Eyes was too much.

Since then, others have joined their cause, from the young apprentice shaman-turned-acolyte Erhun to the berserker and unholy warrior Grimmhuul. They are now known as the Forsaken of Glimm, a wandering band of fanatics dedicated to two things – joining the orcish people in worship of the One-Eyed God-King and waging a holy war against the elven people. Some tribes accept what they have to say; others scorn and try to slay them.

But the Forsaken know that theirs is a holy endeavor and they continue ever onward, burning with the fires of their fanaticism, driven by the gaze of the Third Eye.

GLIMM OF THE THREE EYES

Appearance: Undoubtedly the dominant characteristic of this burly but misshapen orc is the baleful third eye that glares out from beside his left eye, sharing socket and eyelid with it. This third eye, which does not seem to inhibit his vision in the least, is angry-seeming, bloodshot and jaundice-yellow.

Though strong of frame, Glimm is also somewhat warped of body, with a slightly withered right leg that he often hides beneath a

scale mail skirt. His head and neck are misshapen and twisted even by orcish standards, but they jut forward, giving him a fevered, anxious air even when relaxing, as though he were being driven forward at every moment – which he may be.

Glimm tends to go bare chested, save during the very coldest of weather (and even then, he is known to use spells to resist the effects of the cold). He is armored in a scale skirt, copper shoulder guard carved in the likeness of his god and a wooden buckler carved to resemble a baleful eye, which has been consecrated as a holy symbol, allowing him to use it as a divine focus during spellcasting and preparation.

Background: When the whelp Glimm was born, he was nearly set out by the midwife to die in the wild for his deformity. Hidden by his mother, it wasn't until the young Glimm was very nearly crawling that the males of the tribe saw that he gazed upon them with not two, but three eyes. Where his two natural eyes sat in his skull normally, the third glared out at the world with seeming hatred, blood-shot and yellow. After his mother proved that the whelp could indeed see, he was allowed to live, despite the unnerving gaze of that wicked orb, which sometimes seemed to gaze upon those around Glimm independently of the young orc's will.

All of his life, Glimm expected to leave the tribe – the voice told him that he would, and the voice had never lied to him. The voice told him a great many things, sometimes things that he didn't want to hear. Nonetheless, the voice speaks on, always whispering, the eternal gibbering that has defined Glimm's existence. The voice was often responsible for the wracking fevers that assail him sometimes and for the monstrous headaches that are nearly a constant companion, but Glimm knows that these are a small price to pay for being the vessel of the God-King's will.

It was in his youth, before he fled the Black Tusks, that he learned of the only thing that gave him relief from the voice. A raiding party returned to the tribe with several elven prisoners and as a reward for the healing he gave to the chieftain's son, Glimm was allowed the honor of killing the elf himself.

He gazed upon the strange creature, having never seen a living elf before. Somewhere in the back of his mind, the voice raised to a piercing shriek of purest hatred and Glimm was overcome with the image of a slim elven blade arcing like lightning toward his third eye. He was overcome with piercing, sanity-shattering agony and when he returned to his senses, the elf lay before him, horribly slain – by his hand. Half of the tribe was on its feet, crying aloud the name of Glimm and the God-King, enwrapped in the fervor of the sacrifice to their god; the other half was speechless with shock and uncertainty at this strange turn of events.

But Glimm noticed none of them. All he knew was blessed silence within his mind, for the voice was, for the first time in his life, quiet. He knew it was still there, at the back of his consciousness, but it was sated on ecstatic violence, mollified by the taste of elf-flesh on Glimm's tongue.

It was then that Glimm knew his purpose in existence – though the voice returned, he somehow knew that if he could give his god the death of every elf in all the world, he might know peace.

Roleplaying Notes: Glimm the Prophet. Glimm of the Three Eyes. Glimm the Mad. All of these names are appropriate for the misshapen orc who would be the messiah to bring all the orcish tribes of the world to worship the One True God-King. Glimm's only regret is his impulsive departure from his home tribe – older and wiser now, he realizes that had he but waited a while, biding his time and building alliances, he might have taken more of his tribesmates with him, or even seized control of the tribe and sacrificed its shamans upon the altar of his god.



GLIMM OF THE THREE EYES

Glimm, Male Orc, Clr11 of the One-Eyed Orc-King: CR 11; SZ Medium Humanoid (6 ft., 1 in. tall); HD 11d8+22; hp 74; Init -1 (-1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (-1 Dex, +2 Scale-mail skirt, +1 Buckler); Attack +15/+10 melee (1d8+6, +1 unholy shortspear), or +7/+2 ranged; SA Rebuke Undead; SQ Darkvision 60ft., light sensitivity; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +2, Will +9; Str 20, Dex 8, Con 15, Int 7, Wis 15, Cha 8.

Skills: Concentration +6, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +2, Spot +2. **Feats:** Combat casting, Leadership, Craft totem-stick*, Martial weapon proficiency (shortspear), Weapon focus (shortspear).

Languages: Orc.

Possessions: +1 unholy shortspear, Totem-sticks* of magic circle against law and protection from elements, Masterworks light crossbow, 32 light crossbow bolts, Scale-mail skirt (+2 armor bonus), Wood buckler/holy symbol, Clay jar filled with elf eyes.

Cleric Domains: Chaos, War.

Cleric Spells Per Day: 6/6+1/5+1/4+1/3+1/2+1.

*See *orcish magic item sidebar*.

decorated with tattoos and she wears her hair in thick braids to keep it out of the way in combat. She wears a fine suit of black leather armor that seems to merely add to her deadly appeal – a trait accentuated by the throwing weapons that adorn her armor.

Background: Born to a human slave kept in the chieftain's tents, Bruun's earliest memories are of her mother's suicide and of the chieftain's rage against his other mates when he discovered it. Furious at the loss of such a pretty slave, he beat the others in his harem for failing to keep her alive. That night, Bruun received her first true thrashing at the hands of the she-orcs, who sought only someone to lash out at for their own punishment.

Growing up, Bruun tried to avoid being within arm's reach of the females of the tribe, who were only too happy to have someone even more wretched than they to take their frustrations out on. Though she was never allowed to learn the arts of war with the males, she often ran into the wilderness alone. When she was beaten for her willful ways, she did not stop – rather, she always made sure to return with some kind of food, as an excuse for her absence.

The males of the tribe saw her as quite the trophy, for she was the daughter of the chieftain and a wild woman, not like the other females of the tribe. This, of course, caused the she-orcs to hate Bruun even more, though they soon learned that Bruun's hunting knives could cut more than rabbits and left her alone. The males, however, had no such compunctions and easily overpowered her comparatively slight frame.

Her eye was keen, however and her wits sharp – it wasn't long before she knew how to anticipate their unwelcome advances. By her thinking, they may be able to overpower her, but they should have to get close enough first. Her throwing arm became notorious, the cause of more than a few scars in the tribe.

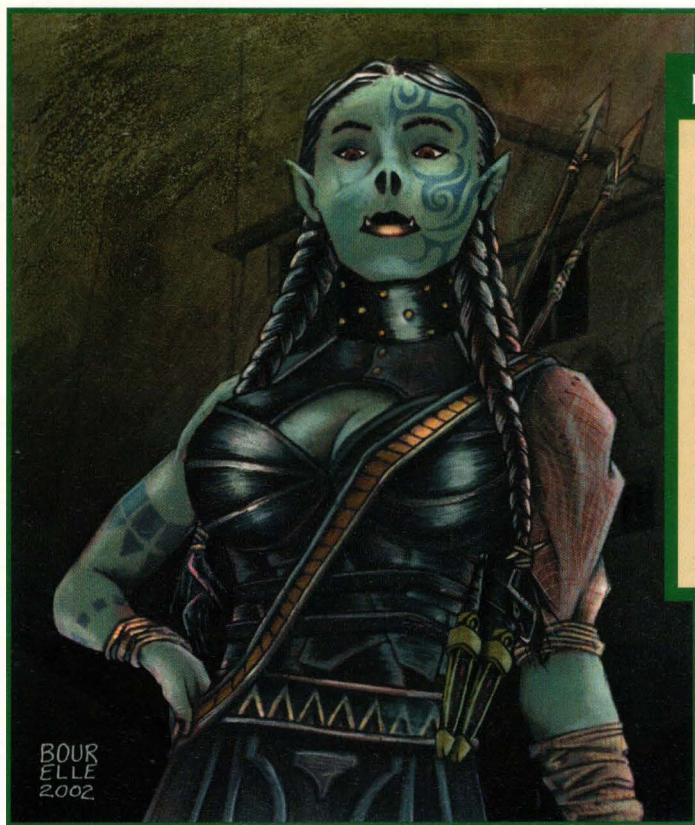
Her wits served her well in other areas. By the time she reached adulthood, she was a competent fighter, hunter and tracker. She spent most of her time in the woods, away from her tribe, but never truly daring to leave it. In time, she earned some measure of acceptance as a provider and wild spirit in the tribe. Indeed, she earned the grudging respect of many of the warriors and while she was not allowed to go on war parties with them, they did not treat her as chattel, either.

Worship of the One-Eyed God-King defines Glimm's existence. Nothing he does is without religious considerations. He ever strives to complete the two goals given him to accomplish – as such he cares little for those who are not elves or orcs, unless he feels that they may be of some use or danger to him. Under his direction, the Forsaken take neither slaves nor prisoners from the field of battle, rather performing horrific battlefield sacrifices that are swift but brutal. Glimm has nearly lost his life at the point of elven blades many times, arrogantly refusing to retreat from battle with those hated enemies of his god. After a battle, Glimm joyously cuts the eyes from the skulls of any fallen elves and stores them in a jar of brine – a gift for his god.

Glimm meditates each day during the hour before sunrise to receive his divine powers. He prefers using spells that protect him from harm, cause damage to his opponents or give him power to animate or control the dead. Glimm may reserve a few healing spells for himself but he will not heal his companions, allowing them to pass into the glory they have earned for themselves.

BRUUN

Appearance: A tall, muscled woman, there is no question that Bruun is quite attractive, despite her orcish heritage. Her face and arms are



Bruun

Bruun, Female Half-orc Rog6/Rgr2: CR 8; SZ Medium Humanoid (5 ft., 4 in. tall); HD 6d6+12 + 2d10+4; hp 53; Init +5 (+5 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+3 Dex); Attack +10/+5 (1d4+3, Masterwork dagger) melee, or +12/+7 (1d4+3, Masterwork dagger / 1d6+3, Masterwork Javelin or Masterwork throwing axe) ranged; SA Sneak attack +3d6; SQ Darkvision 60ft., Evasion, Uncanny dodge; SV Fort +7, Ref +10, Will +3; AL NE; Str 16, Dex 20, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 16.

Skills: Animal empathy +6, Appraise +9, Bluff +9, Climb +10, Hide +16, Intimidate +12, Knowledge (religion) +3, Move silently +16, Spot +14, Use magic device +12, Wilderness lore +2

Feats: Far shot, Point blank shot, Rapid shot, Track.

Languages: Common, Orc.

Possessions: +1 shadow leather armor, Masterworks daggers (x3), Masterworks throwing axes (x2), Masterworks javelins (x4), Potions of cure moderate wounds and spider climb.

rarely found far from Glimm and prefers the use of either ranged weapons or her blades from a flanking position.

Roleplaying Notes: Bruun has finally found something that she can believe in. She knows that she has strong feelings when it comes to Glimm. Sometimes she thinks these emotions are a fanatic's belief in the god that Glimm worships; other times, she is sure that it is simply love for the deformed cleric. But no one knows of these emotions, least of all Glimm. Bruun maintains a cold, stern demeanor, quite the counterpoint to the normal fiery bluster of orcs.

This ended the day she returned to the tribe with a pair of elven ears strung on braided bowstrings around her neck. She told the tale of encountering a pair of elven scouts while she was hunting. She slew them and hid their bodies, returning to the tribe to bear the tale. Her father praised her dedication and valor, calling her his "deadly flower," praising her as "elf-slayer." By his word, she was given a place in the war parties, where she outperformed many of the warriors.

Jealousy grew among the warriors of the Black Tusk. Resentments boiled and the only reason she wasn't killed by her fellow warriors was because of the chieftain's pride in her. She was, however, effectively outcast, spurned in the tribe. She fell in with the Believers for a short period, though many of the males that listened to the words of Glimm tried to chase her away, claiming that a female had no business there.

Glimm countered this, saying that the God-King was lord of all orcs, male and female alike. Bruun had slain elf; this was enough to grant her a place with them. Bruun befriended the deformed prophet and the two spent much time together, she listening while he spoke of the words that burned in his mind. In time, what was merely a convenient place where she was welcome turned into a cause for Bruun, though she was careful to share her thoughts and feelings only with Glimm.

After Glimm was bidden to silence, Bruun was forbidden by her father from seeking him out for friendship any longer. Despite this, she snuck out of the chieftain's tents during the day when the tribe slept and the two wandered into the forest, Bruun unaffected by the sunlight thanks to her human heritage, leading Glimm by the hand.

Bruun's true allegiances remained unknown right up until the point where she held her blade to her father's throat. Now, she is an important member of the Forsaken, the one most likely to be found in urban areas. It is her responsibility to enter settled areas for supplies when the Forsaken have need of them. In battle, Bruun is

MOKK OF THE BLADES

Appearance: A tall, scarred warrior, Mokka has only one arm, the legacy of childhood cruelty. His hair is shorn close to his skull, in order to make wearing his horned helm easier. When expecting combat, Mokka wears battered scale-mail armor with criss-crossing bandoliers from which hang numerous daggers, blade down. He straps a short sword to the remainder of his left arm, allowing him to deliver gut-wrenching stabs with. In his other hand, he wields a long sword, taken from his first elven quarry.

Background: Mokka's father was, simply put, mad. It was whispered that the battle-frenzy held him too often and too tightly, breaking his mind. The fierce warrior was unpredictable and capricious in his cruelty – regardless of who happened to be its target. Even if that target was his own son.

When Mokka was a young whelp, perhaps a year before his rites of manhood, his father set one of his war dogs on him, without reason or even warning. The mad orc laughed as the dog savaged the boy's arm, flung up in front of his throat to protect himself. The chieftain himself slew the dog and saw that the boy's wounds were treated. Though Mokka lost his left arm just below the elbow, his father's only regret was that he'd lost a valuable hunting dog in the incident. Mokka spent the rest of his boyhood in the chieftain's tents. Mokka became fast friends with Uuktur, one of the chieftain's sons.

As a young warrior, Mokka strove to overcome his handicap, wading into battle without a shield and wielding but a single axe. When he slew his first elf, he seized up the elf's weapon, finely balanced for use in one hand and waded back into battle. Despite his battle prowess, Mokka never manifested the berserk fury that would have made him one of the tribe's great warriors and he remained the butt of his peers' jokes.



MOKK OF THE BLADES

Mokk, Male Orc, Ftr7: CR 7; SZ Medium Humanoid (6 ft., 1 in. tall); HD 7d10+28; hp 68; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 18 (+3 Dex, +4 Scale mail, +1 ring of protection); Attack +13/+8 (1d8+6, +1 longsword) melee, or +10/+5 (1d6+5, Throwing axe) ranged; SQ; Darkvision 60ft., AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 21, Dex 17, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +14, Hide +3, Jump +14, Listen +3, Move silently +3, Spot +3.

Feats: Ambidexterity, Endurance, Improved initiative, Power attack, Two-weapon fighting, Weapon focus (longsword), Weapon focus (shortsword).

Languages: Gnomish, Orc.

Possessions: +1 longsword, +1 ring of protection, shortsword, Daggers (3), Throwing axe, Scale mail, Horned helmet.

One evening, Mokk fled the campfire of the warriors, ears burning from the drunken abuse heaped on him. He nearly ran into Glimm, who merely stared at him with that ineffable gaze. Snarling, Mokk made as if to strike Glimm down, but stopped when he saw something strange in that one, burning eye. The cleric spoke.

"Our tribe holds that the disfigured and the maimed have no place, save as the subject of scorn and mockery. This I know and understand, all too well."

"Bah! Do you think my maiming is like your twisted features, Three-Eyes? I should strike you down for even suggesting that I have anything in common with a mad freak like you!" Mokk spat in his face.

"You misunderstand," the young cleric said, smiling slightly. Mokk fell back a step, wondering if that eye would burn right through into his soul. Glimm continued.

"Our tribe is misled. The damage of body, whether inborn or earned in life, is as nothing before the God-King. Is not he himself missing an eye?" he said, caressing the side of his face where the socket was distended with an extra orb. "Our bodies are frail and no measure of either spirit or faith can be reflected in them. Before him, there is no dishonor, save if you fail to turn your weakness into a strength. Go back to them, Mokk, if you wish to wallow in pity – they and the rest of the Black Tusk have plenty to give you, in equal measure with abuse. At the altar of the Unsleeping One, you are expected to be a whole warrior. There is no pity there for you – only the strength that he lends all his favored children. And who is more favored than those who bear scars and mutilations upon their bodies, as he does? Think on it, Mokk of the Sword-Hand."

The cleric then faded back into the darkness, towards the small, holed tents he slept in, leading Mokk to stare after him in bewilderment. Mokk glanced back over his shoulder and then down at his stump – and then strode after the cleric, his jaw clenched in resolution.

Glimm revealed that he had seen a vision of Mokk, with a blade of steel growing from his mutilated arm. The cleric explained

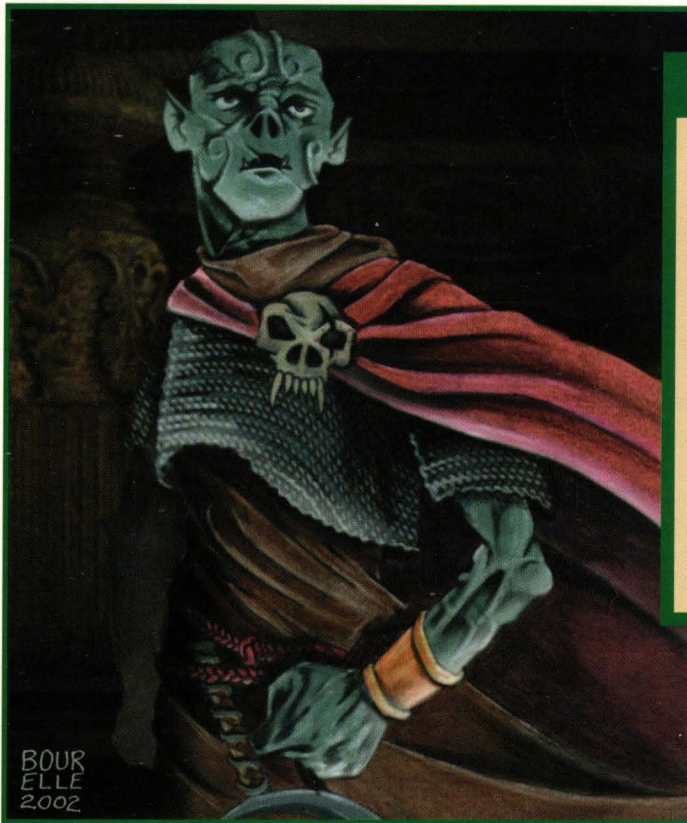
to Mokk that if he continued to allow others to mock and humiliate him for his wound, it would ever remain a limitation rather than a weapon. Humiliation must be repaid with pain, he explained and though the faithful turn their wounds into weapons, the source of that damage must never be forgotten – only vengeance would repay the debt owed.

The following night, Mokk joined the warriors planning a raid around the fires. Mokk's father first welcomed his son and then warned him that he would need two hands to carry away the loot, offering to prepare him a bag like those that horses feed from so that he might pull his weight with his teeth. This led into a chorus of mockeries, ably led by Mokk's father. Mokk narrowed his eyes and waited until his father was nearly breathless from laughter, when the muscles of his stomach would be clenched the tightest.

Then, he threw off the cloak that covered his torso to reveal the short sword blade, newly affixed to his stump and drove it through those tensed muscles. Mokk's father looked at the hatred in his boy's eyes and then down at the blade, not understanding why it was growing from the stump. Mokk withdrew the blade and in two deft motions cut off his father's arms and then cast him to his own war dogs, who were driven to frenzy by the smell of blood. Mokk crouched down, watching as the dogs fought over his father's body, while the other warriors quietly backed away, whispering that Mokk was as mad as his sire. When his father was dead, Mokk killed the dogs, too and piled all their bodies into the bonfire, spitting on the grisly, sizzling mound and walking away.

The first orc he saw was Glimm and the two shared a night of fervent prayers of thanksgiving and offering. From that day forward, Mokk fought with a burning desire to excel, where before he sought only to suffice. His twin-sword fighting style became known and feared among the elves, spawning the legend of the "reaper orc," who danced the blades as fiercely as any elven warrior. Young warriors sought him out to learn his style of battle, and his peers even jokingly suggested cutting off their own arms that they might share in his glory.

His closest friend was Uuktur, the son of the chieftain and together the two waged war as few had before. They both sat at the chieftain's side while at camp, and it was generally agreed that Mokk might as well be part of the chieftain's family. There were even rumors among the warriors that Mokk intended to claim Bruun as his own with the chieftain's blessings, when the proper time came. Mokk listened to these things, gazing upon the chieftain and his daughter and told himself that they were all true.



ERHUN

Erhun, Male Orc Adp2/Clr2 of the One-Eyed Orc-King: CR 3; SZ Medium Humanoid (6 ft., 2 in. tall); HD 2d6+2 + 2d8+2; hp 21; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 Chain shirt); Attack +7 (1d6+4, Masterwork sickle) melee, or +3 ranged; SA Rebuke Undead; SQ Darkvision 60ft., light sensitivity; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +8; AL NE; Str 19, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 13.

Skills: Concentration +2, Diplomacy +5, Heal +7, Hide +5, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (religion) +7, Listen +2, Move silently +1, Spot +2, Wilderness lore +4.

Feats: Combat casting, Dodge.

Languages: Giant, Orc, Undercommon.

Possessions: Masterwork sickle, Chain shirt, +1 Robes of resistance (treat as a cloak of resistance), Amulet/holy symbol.

Adept Spells Per Day: 3/2.

Cleric Domains: Evil, War.

Cleric Spells Per Day: 4/3+1.

ERHUN

Appearance: Erhun is a thin, wiry young orc, with a shaven head and ritualistic scarring on his cheeks and scalp. He wears long robes belted at the waist with braided leather, with a shirt of chain over it. At his belt hangs the sickle that he took from his mentor, now wrapped with the leather made from the old orc shaman's scalp. Erhun has the vulpine look of a predator and cunning shines in his beady black eyes.

Background: Erhun was raised in the Seven Fangs tribe of orcs, a thin orc with little overt muscle. Despite this, few ever tried to take advantage of his smaller size, for Erhun was known as a clever and wicked lad, fond of torturing animals, studying their reactions to pain. Those who ran afoul of his seething temper learned that he did not limit his attentions to helpless animals – he was fond of using poisonous berries and wickedly barbed nettles in unexpected locations as punishment for those who drew his ire.

Erhun was taken in by the old shaman of the tribe, a burly orc of waning years. Rumors had that the old orc didn't want the boy, but the chieftain of the Seven Fangs insisted, as he didn't want the boy to be taught the use of weapons, feeling that he would become dangerous. The old shaman's protests fell on deaf ears, which suited Erhun fine – he knew that as a shaman, he would be far more dangerous.

Eventually, the boy equaled his master in lore and understanding; the old shaman was never a very powerful adept and had little to teach Erhun, who was a voracious learner. When the Forsaken arrived, Erhun took one look at Glimm and saw power there – power he wanted. He began to ingratiate Glimm to himself, claiming interest in the ways of the One God-King. When the old shaman heard of the arrival of these messengers of the Unsleeping One, he bade the chieftain to cast them out, or slay them and take their belongings.

The chieftain, an avaricious sort who had been eyeing the fine arms of the Forsaken, elected to react with violence, calling his men to his side in the wee hours of the dawn, after the guests had been shown to a tent. They fell upon the tent, hacking through it at the shapes within – shapes that turned out to be nothing more than decoys. Glimm pronounced a curse upon them, calling unholy fire

Perhaps that was why he was so shocked when Bruun seized her father and drug him away from the tribal camp that unforgettable night. It was Mokka that forbade anyone from pursuing them. He himself did not know what he would do if he caught up to them – he wasn't about to let anyone else do so, either. His relief at the chieftain's return at dawn was overshadowed by that doubt.

Finally, in time, he fled the tribe's camp. He was driven by two urges – the first was to join Glimm and help spread the word of the Unsleeping One. The other was to find Bruun and drag her back to the Black Tusks, claiming her as his own. He left, not even knowing what he would do when he found them. He never did – instead, they found him. He came upon them in a clearing, obviously they were waiting for him. Bruun was wary and armed, but Glimm was welcoming, claiming that he had seen a vision that told him where to wait for the mighty Mokka of the Blades, champion of their god.

Mokka has remained with the Forsaken of Glimm, assisting them in their endeavors. He is uncomfortable with battling other orcs, though and dreads the day when they encounter the Black Tusks once more, for he knows not where his loyalties truly lie.

But every night, he finds that dire orb gazing at him, even when Glimm himself is not and he wonders if he will have a choice.

Roleplaying Notes: Mokka is more reserved than most orcs (though, in all fairness, he is positively hot-headed in comparison with Glimm and Bruun). He has a savage, merciless brutality to him, but it isn't an unthinking one. He does not "leap without looking," as the saying goes and he tends to be fairly quiet, letting his silence intimidate more than blustering words. Mokka fights with his two weapons, becoming a savage machine of whirling steel. Mokka prefers to aim for limbs, taking a delight in maiming others as he was maimed. He also has very strong reactions around dogs, which usually leave him shaking and clench-jawed, but none are sure if it is because he fears them or he hates them. Not even Mokka himself truly knows that.



GRIMHUUL

Grimhuul, Male Orc Bbn7/Blk1: CR 8; SZ Medium Humanoid (6 ft., 7 in. tall); HD 7d12+21 + 1d10+3; hp 84; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Attack +15/+10 (1d12+10, Masterwork greataxe) melee, or +9/+4 ranged; SA Rage 2/day; SD; Uncanny dodge; SQ Darkvision 60ft., fast movement, light sensitivity; SV Fort +12, Ref +6, Will +5; AL CE; Str 24, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills: Hide +2, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +1, Move silently +2, Pick pocket +5, Ride +9, Spot +1, Wilderness lore +7.

Feats: Cleave, Sunder, Track.

Language: Orc.

Possessions: Masterwork greataxe, spiked (studded) leather, +2 cloak of resistance, Septum Ring of Valor*.

Blackguard Spells Per Day: 1

*See *orcish magic item sidebar*

But what Erhun doesn't realize is that worship of the God-King for power alone is sufficient for the Unsleping One, whose creed is power by any means. Erhun believes he is somehow fooling Glimm, but the reality is Glimm is fully aware of Erhun's treacherous nature and trusts him only so long as he keeps power over the acolyte. The day that Erhun believes he can overcome Glimm, the Three Eyed One intends to cast him out of the Forsaken.

But by then, Erhun will have already tasted the power that the One True God offers and he will go into the world to do the Unsleping One's work – whether he knows it or not.

GRIMHUUL

Appearance: Whereas most of the Forsaken tend to be at odds with the stereotypical orcish appearance, Grimhuul practically defines it. He is barrel chested, with powerful muscles. He wears a brass ring through the septum of his nose and his body is criss-crossed with

from the skies and slew them all. The last thing the chieftain saw was the thin form of Erhun behind the powerful cleric.

Erhun departed with the Forsaken, but not before he had slain his master as a sacrifice to the Unsleping One and took the old shaman's favored sickle and scalp both. Erhun now wanders with the Forsaken, learning the ways of the Unsleping One at Glimm's feet.

Roleplaying Notes: Erhun is absolutely untrustworthy. All he respects is power and if worship of the God-King is what it takes to get it, then surely that is a god worth worshipping. He is careful to maintain a front of piety for Glimm.

ORCISH MAGIC ITEMS

Totem-sticks: These items are sticks and lengths of bone decorated with feathers, precious stones and the claws and teeth of totem animals. They are created in precisely the same fashion as scrolls are, though with an entirely different feat — Craft Totem Stick. Though the resultant magical item is very different in appearance from the standard scroll, the rules for creating them is identical; simply use the Scribe Scroll feat for such rules, replacing the term "scroll" with "totem stick" where appropriate.

A totem-stick is used much like a wand is, though it holds only one spell. Often, the stick is broken as the spell within is discharged, though if it is broken by someone unable to use the spell the item is destroyed.

Those who come from a culture that does not use these items often have some difficulty using them. In such instance, using a captured totem-stick requires a Spellcraft roll (DC of 22 + spell level) to determine what spell it contains. After that has been determined, the totem-stick can be used just like any normal scroll. Those who come from cultures that utilize totem-sticks are

usually unable to utilize standard scrolls, generally due to issues of simple illiteracy.

Septum Ring of Valor: In many orc tribes, acts of bravery are recognized with some kind of small ceremony. In many tribes, this is the piercing of the septum (the flap of skin and cartilage that separates the nostrils) with a bone or ring of brass or silver. Those who have proven themselves multiple times may be granted this spirit-crafting by the shaman of the tribe, particularly if that shaman is trying to win the favor or support of that warrior.

The septum ring of valor grants the orc a +2 bonus to Strength, as well as a +4 bonus to saving throws to resist fear. This item is always a unique item crafted specially for orcs, for it would not do to allow outsiders to benefit from the orcish token of valor.

Caster Level: 3rd; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wonderous Item, bull's strength; **Market Price:** 5600 gp; **Weight:** —

scars. Grimhuul wears the spiked leather of his former order, though now marked with the One Eye of the Unsleping One.

Background: Little is known of Grimhuul, save that when the Forsaken visited the Blood Axe tribe, the first to come to them seeking help was Grimhuul. A mighty berserker of his tribe's elite Crimson Axes, Grimhuul suffered from horrific headaches and nightmares, which not even the shamans of the tribe could cure. In his childhood, he was forced to imbibe large amounts of alcohol in order to dull the pain and sleep fully, but as he used more and more of the tribe's fire-waters, their effects began to dull. His last recourse for rest was now chewing the chago roots used by the shamans to cause euphoria and unconsciousness, if taken in large enough amounts.

But there was a single problem – Grimhuul lost the berserk when he was under the influence of the root. As a result, he was cast out of the Crimson Axes. So, when Glimm and his Forsaken arrived in the camp of the Blood Axe tribe, proclaiming the worship of the God-King, it was Grimhuul, in a drugged stupor, that challenged them to show him the power of their god. Glimm only smiled and told him that when he was done with him, Grimhuul would have no need of drugs or fire-water again. Grimhuul agreed to remain in the tents given to the Forsaken for their stay.

Days passed and the drugs wore off. Grimhuul shook with want, his headaches returning fourfold. Several times he nearly raged, but Glimm's magics bound his body from motion, forcing him to shake past his anger and pain trapped in a body that did not obey his commands. A week passed and, for what seemed to be the hundredth time, Grimhuul awoke from a horrific nightmare to find

Glimm staring at him. The mighty warrior collapsed, sobbing, begging for fire-water, root or anything to make the nightmares and pain stop.

"I swore that you would never need them again, Grimhuul. And you shall not. Do you not see? Your rage is a gift from the One God, Grimhuul. Your rage is so great, it wracks your mind with visions of carnage while you sleep, and wracks it with agony when you are awake. But when you rage, you feel no pain. This is what the Unsleping One wants, Grimhuul – your pain is a weapon to be used, like Mokka's maimed arm, or my own twisted face. If you allow yourself to be weakened by it, turned into a drooling waste of an orc by chago, you are wasting that gift."

Grimhuul settled into his furs again, then, weary with pain. What he experienced then, he has never told anyone, but others have gathered that instead of his normal nightmares, he experienced some kind of vision. When he awoke, he laid his great axe down at Glimm's feet and took an oath to forever serve the Unsleping God. The Forsaken departed the camp of the Blood Axe the next evening, taking with them Grimhuul of the Rage.

Roleplaying Notes: Grimhuul is a fury-driven champion of the One-Eyed King, and he does not hesitate to fly into a berserk frenzy with little warning. He has found new purpose to his rages, believing that they serve, along with his newly discovered divine powers, his god. Few in the Forsaken are quite as fanatical as Grimhuul in his worship of the One-Eyed King; indeed, it might be argued that he is even more faithful than Glimm, who, after all, hears the voice of his god and needs no faith to believe.



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TREASURE CHEST

One Adventurer's Trash is Another Monster's Treasure

By: Hal Greenberg, Jeffrey Quinn, and Andrew Troman

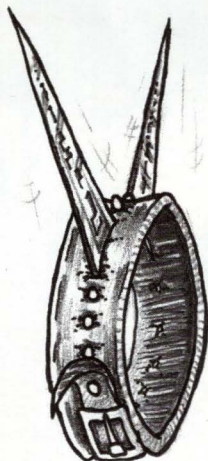
Edited By: Matthew Mosher Illustrated by: Scott Purdy

Your players have vanquished the evil hordes in the dungeon and are now tallying up their loot. That's when one of your players turns to you and asks the dreaded question, "So what is on the altar?" Searching fiercely through your notes you come up with a few items, and then another purist asks, "You mean to tell me that a kobold shaman uses the same meditation incense that our cleric uses?"

What follows is a short list of magical items of devious and demonic design to place on your altars and within your lairs. Not all of these items are usable by regular player characters, but neither do your characters use the items for the monstrous denizens and evil enemies.

Combat Collar

The combat collar is worn by trained hunting dogs and other animals of Medium-Size. Crafted from fine leather, the only apparent offensive features of the combat collar are very small blades, little more than spikes mounted on the sides and top of the collar. When the command word is spoken (or barked) a small blade extends out to 2-feet in length. The blade acts momentarily as a long sword (only one attack a round may be made with the collar) causing 1d8 points of damage and scoring a critical hit on a 19-20/x2. The first time the attack is employed the target suffers a -2 penalty to their effective AC due to the surprising appearance of the blade. There are several versions of this collar, one intended to be used by a rider of the creature wearing the collar and another intended to be activated by the creature itself. Lastly there is an even superior version that allows a creature to both activate the blade and grant them the ability to use the Ride By Attack feat. In order for a creature of animal intelligence to use the combat collar it must be explicitly trained to use it or posses an intelligence of 6 or greater.



Caster Level: 5th, **Prerequisites:** Craft Magical Weapons and Armor, (Lesser - rider activated only) spiritual weapon or shillelagh, (Standard - rider or creature activated) spiritual weapon or shillelagh, speak with animals, (Greater - rider or creature activated plus grants Ride By Attack feat) spiritual weapon or shillelagh, speak with animals, Ride By Attack feat;

Market Price: (Lesser) 4000 gp, (Standard) 6000 gp, (Greater) 12,000 gp; **Weight:** 1 lb.

Dragon Hammers

Kobolds have a fascination with all things related to dragons. The shamans and priests of their dragon cults commonly use a dragon hammer when entering combat. These magical weapons are usually made in the form of a light mace, heavy mace, light hammer, or war hammer. Regardless, they carry a +1 enhancement bonus but are also enchanted with a special power based on the dragon they revere. These special powers are always command word activated and the command word is hidden among runic symbols and markings on the weapon's head or half.



- **Flame Dragon Hammer** - flame arrow 1/day as cast by a 5th-level caster.
- **Acid Dragon Hammer** - melf's acid arrow 1/day as cast by a 6th-level caster.
- **Frost Dragon Hammer** - chill touch delivered by a spectral hand 1/day as cast by a 5th-level caster.
- **Shock Dragon Hammer** - shocking grasp delivered by a spectral hand 1/day as cast by a 5th-level caster.

Caster Level: 6th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, (Flame) Flame Arrow, (Acid) Melf's Acid Arrow, (Frost) Chill Touch and Spectral Hand, (Shock) Shocking Grasp and Spectral Hand; **Market Price:** 7,000 gp (all); **Weight:** 4 lb.

Thunderhead Games
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Fear Blade

These magical blades appear to have screaming faces swirling within the metal; the hilt is shaped in the hideous design of two snakes striking out. This greyish +2 longsword, when drawn, creates an aura of fear in a 30-foot radius and is otherwise identical to a fear spell cast by a 12th-level sorcerer (Will save, DC 16). The blade does not distinguish between friend and foe. If the save is successful this blade cannot affect the targeted creature for one day. Even when the blade is not drawn anyone within five feet of the blade must make a Will save (DC 12) every 10 minutes or become shaken until they move to at least 30 feet away. However, the blade carries a curse that activates the first time the weapon is wielded in combat (whether its powers are known or not). The person holding the blade when it is first drawn cannot rid himself of the blade. Only a remove curse or a dispel magic versus a 12th-level caster separate the bearer from the blade. The person, once cursed, is immune to the weapon's fear aura whether sheathed or drawn. However, the same cannot be said for his companions who must immediately save against the weapon's fear, as normal.

Caster Level: 12th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Fear, Bestow Curse; **Market Price:** 120,000 gp; **Weight:** 8 lb.

Fiendish Claws

These black, twisted and hideous looking claw-like nails will magically meld on to any evil creature's hands. When this is done the wearer's own nails grow and take on a hideous claw-like look. The claws may be used to deliver a melee attack as if the wearer was wielding a spiked gauntlet. It is rumored that these nails are taken from a freshly killed pit fiend and an unholy cleric must

perform an unspeakable ritual that will keep these nails' power of disease permanent. A creature struck by the fiendish claws must make Fortitude save or be inflicted with demon chills (as the pit fiend ability), however the incubation is 1d4 rounds instead of the usual 1d4 days and causes 1d4 points of temporary Strength damage. There after, the victim suffers the usual effects of the disease.

The claws come in three varieties; lesser fiendish claws, fiendish claws, and greater fiendish claws. The lesser claws



have a save DC of 16 and are considered a +1 weapon, the standard claws have a DC 20 and are a +2 weapon, and the greater claws have a DC 25 and are a +3 weapon. All of the fiendish claws have an aura of cold surrounding them and the person that the claws have melded to. Other creatures within five feet can feel this somewhat chilly aura. The aura does not cause damage or protect the user from any damage, but it does identify the wearer as being unnatural. Creating this item often requires the willing participation of a demon or devil. To create the item the claws must be harvested while the creature is still alive or given to them.

Fiendish claws are evil items and any good character touching them gains two negative levels. These negative levels remain as long as the claws are held and disappear when dropped. These negative levels never result in actual level loss, but they cannot be overcome in any way (including restoration spells) while they are held. Likewise, crafting such a weapon is considered an evil act.

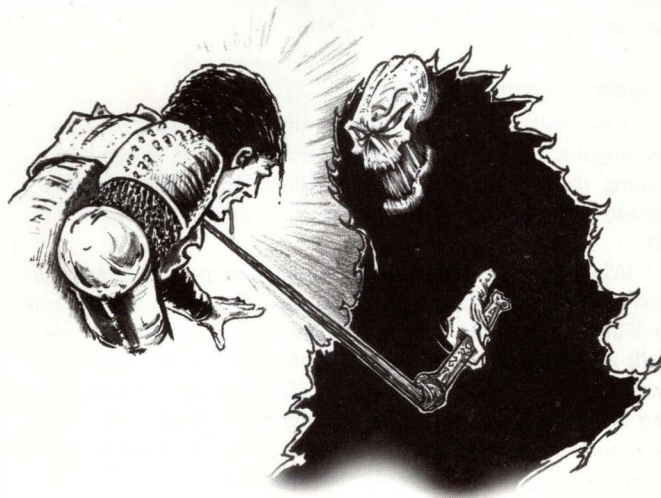
Caster Level: 10th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magical Arms and Armor, Contagion, (Lesser) the claws of a CR 6-9 demon or devil, (Standard) the claws of a CR 10-14 demon or devil, (Greater) the claws of a CR 15+ demon or devil; **Market Price:** (Lesser) 50,000 gp, (Standard) 125,000 gp, (Greater) 300,000 gp; **Weight:** 4 lb.

Freak Lash

The handle of this unholy whip is crafted from a thighbone, bleached but bearing a pinkish hue as if stained with blood and is marked with symbols and runes. The lash is crafted from the tightly wound hairs of the sentient races. The freak lash acts as +2 whip, the whip however causes intense pain and the person struck must make a Fortitude save with the DC equal to 10 plus twice the damage caused or lose their next action. They are not considered stunned and suffer no other ill effects for losing their action.

The freak lash has an additional ability when a critical hit is scored. In addition to causing extreme pain, should they fail their Fortitude save, the target loses their next 1d4 actions. The whip also wraps itself around the neck of the victim and fastens tightly. A Strength check (DC 25) is required to remove it within the first two rounds, otherwise only a remove curse, limited wish, wish, or miracle spell will loosen its grip. The victim with the whip wrapped around their neck has their mind flooded with horrifying visions and their senses are overloaded. Each round the person is unable to escape the whip's hold around their throat they suffer 1 point of temporary Wisdom damage unless they are able to make a Will save (DC 20, DC 15 if no one is wilding the lash).

After the victim has accumulated 10 points of temporary damage their mind is forever overwhelmed, and the temporary damage becomes 1 point of permanent damage. Only a wish or miracle



spell will recover all this permanent Wisdom damage. A remove curse or restoration spell has a 50% chance of removing one point of damage, but in doing so the victim's body is wracked in pain causing 1d10 points of subdual damage for each attempt whether it is successful or not. The process repeats until the victim is able to escape the lash or the victim suffers 6 points of permanent Wisdom damage. After which time the lash will loosen and can be removed. The victim is now under the effect of an insanity spell, which may be dispelled as normal but the permanent Wisdom drain remains unless restored via a remove curse, restoration, wish or miracle spells as mentioned before.

The crafters of this unholy item prefer to use it on a captive target, taking pleasure in the victim's squeals of torment. The lash automatically wraps around the neck of a helpless victim, with no need for a critical hit to be scored first.

This lash is extremely evil, and a neutral character attempting to wield it gains two negative levels and a good character receives four negative levels. These negative levels remain as long as the lash is in hand and disappear when the lash is no longer wielded. These negative levels never result in actual level loss, but they cannot be overcome in any way (including restoration spells) while the lash is wielded. Likewise crafting such a weapon is considered an evil act.

Caster Level: 13th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magical Arms and Armor, Insanity, the creator must be evil; **Market Price:** 360,000 gp; **Weight:** 5 lb.

Harness of Shape Control

The creation of the harness of shape control can be attributed to a sect of lycanthropes and their leader, a sorcerer afflicted by her lycanthrope lover. Her strong will aided her in the control over the curse, but still the unpredictability of her situation worried her. Research led her to possible answers. She constructed a harness from soft leather straps and suede, and fastened with brass buckles and loops. After working her magical spells over the harness, the sorceress donned it, and felt the beast within submit to her will.

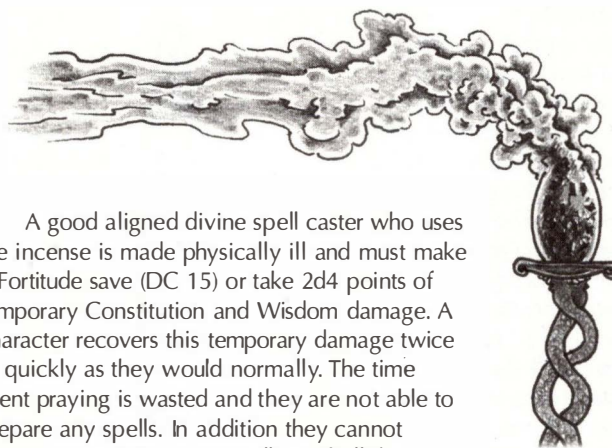
The harness of shape control is useable by those afflicted with lycanthropy. It is made from a mix of soft leather and suede, with rings, loops and ties covering the harness. The armor is treated as +1 padded armor (granting a +2 armor bonus to AC), and requires the wearer to be proficient in light armor to wear it. However, the harness may be worn under or over clothing without drawing attention to itself. The harness has a 0% Arcane Spell Failure, and the primary purpose of the harness is to grant the wearer a +10 circumstance bonus to Control Shape checks for those with lycanthropy.

Caster Level: 5th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Magical Arms and Armor, Suggestion, the creator must have 1 rank in the Control Shape skill; **Market Price:** 5000 gp; **Weight:** 10 lb.

Incense of Demonic Dreams

This small rectangular block of pungent incense is visually indistinguishable from nonmagical incense until lit. When it is burning, the special fragrance and red/black-hued smoke of this incense is recognisable by anyone making a Spellcraft check (DC 15).

When a divine spellcaster of evil alignment lights a block of incense of demonic dreams and then spends 8 hours praying and meditating nearby, the incense enables him to prepare all of his spells as though affected by the Heighten Spell metamagic feat of two levels higher. However, all the spells prepared in this way are at their normal level, not at two levels higher (as would be for use of the regular metamagic feat). Each block of incense burns for 8 hours, and the effects remain for 24 hours.



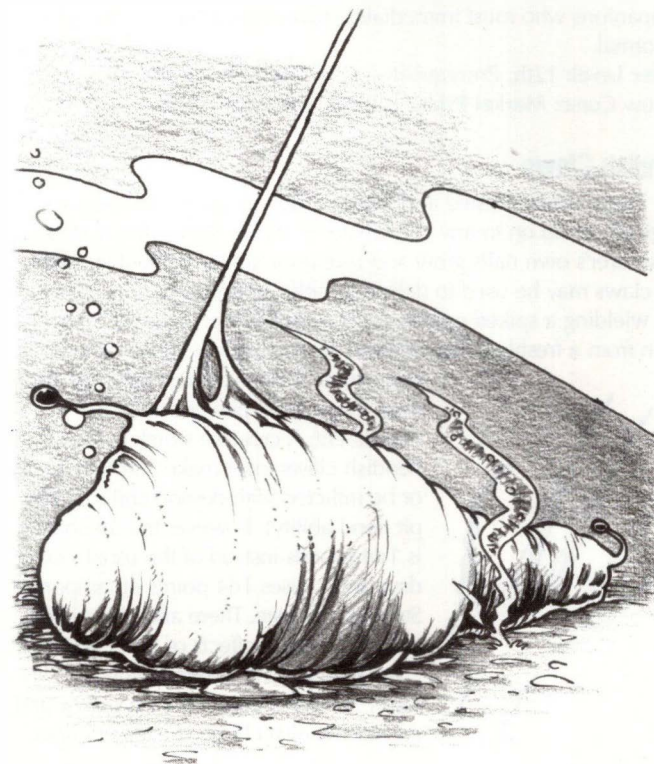
A good aligned divine spell caster who uses the incense is made physically ill and must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or take 2d4 points of temporary Constitution and Wisdom damage. A character recovers this temporary damage twice as quickly as they would normally. The time spent praying is wasted and they are not able to prepare any spells. In addition they cannot attempt to again prepare spells until all the temporary Wisdom damage has been recovered.

Neutral aligned spellcasters do not gain any benefit from the incense but suffer no ill effects either.

Caster Level: 7th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, Heighten Spell; **Market Price:** 4,900 gp; **Weight:** 1 lb. each.

Kua Toan Net of Floundering

The kua toan net of floundering appears like a miniature version of a traditional fighting net. It is used to entangle opponents and to capture a large number of creatures in an area. Once the miniature net is thrown it travels up to 50 feet with perfect accuracy even in water. When its command word is spoken, the net suddenly grows to massive size and attempts to grapple everyone within 10 feet of its current position. All targets of size Large and smaller within the area of effect are allowed a Reflex save (DC 20). Targets of size Huge must make a Reflex save (DC 15) to avoid the net. If a target fails, they must make an opposed grapple roll against the net or be entangled. The net of floundering has a +16 bonus to its grapple check for size and Strength. If the attack is successful, the target is entangled. The entangled creature can escape with an Escape Artist check (DC 30) and is considered a full-round action.



The net has 20 hit points, a hardness of 20, and can be burst with a Strength check (DC 50, also a full-round action). A target grappled by the net is considered pinned until they can break free of the pin, then they must escape or break free of the net. The net automatically seeks to grapple any target it grabbed initially but makes no effort to grapple additional targets moving through its area or targets that managed to avoid becoming entangled in the first place. Anyone attempting to free a grappled target gains an additional +4 bonus to his grapple check to help free an entangled ally.

For example – the net is thrown at 5 creatures; two of them manage to make the Reflex save to avoid the net. The remaining three are caught in the area of effect and must make opposed grapple checks against the net. One of the three barely manages to succeed and escapes being grappled the other two are pinned until they are able to get free. The following round one of the three that escaped the net attempts to help one of the two still caught in the net get free. Because they escaped the net the net does not attack them further. They are able to help break the pin the net has on the ally and gets a +4 bonus to their attempt as the net ignores them. The net may only be activated once per a day.

Caster Level: 13th; **Prerequisites:** Craft Wondrous Item, Bigby's Grasping Hand; **Market Price:** 32,000 gp; **Weight:** 15 lb.

Mask of Fiends

These masks are made from the skins sentient races and cover the entire face. When living creatures wear these masks, they temporarily gain the Evil descriptor and the following fiendish powers: smite good three times per day, darkvision 60', cold resistance 10, fire resistance 10, damage reduction 5/+1, and spell resistance 10. Note: all of these abilities are the same as the fiendish creature template.



The mask of fiends is an evil item, and any good character touching them gains two negative levels. These negative levels remain as long as the mask is held and disappear when dropped. These negative levels never result in actual level loss, but they cannot be overcome in any way (including restoration spells) while the mask is held.

Caster Level: 11th;
Prerequisites: Craft wondrous Item, Planer Ally, creator must be evil;
Market Price: 130,000 gp;
Weight: 2 lb.

Slaadi Chaos Bands

These bands may be used up to 3 times a day. When activated they grant the wearer one of the following effects.



d%	Effect
0-30	Consult the table of slaadi chaotic variations in Core Rulebook III. And gain 1 new ability for the next 1 minute
31-50	Consult the table of slaadi chaotic variations in Core Rulebook III. And gain 1 new ability for the next 1d6 minutes
51-70	Consult the table of slaadi chaotic variations in Core Rulebook III. And gain 1 new ability for the next 1d4 Hours
71-75	Consult the table of slaadi chaotic variations in Core Rulebook III. And gain 1 new ability for the next 1 day
76-80	Chaos Hammer: as the spell, cast at 10th level of ability
81-85	Implant: as the red slaad ability
86-90	Disease: as the blue slaad ability
91-96	Summon Slaad: as the death slaad ability
97-98	Banish slaad back to the chaos planes, affects all slaad within 50 feet
99	Consult the table of slaadi chaotic variations in Core Rulebook III. This ability is gained for 1 Year.
00	Slaad Explosion: kills the slaad instantly and causes 3d6 points of fire damage to all within 20 feet plus stun for 1d6 rounds (Fortitude save DC 18 negates stun)

The bands have 1d6+4 x 1d4+1 charges when created (the bands rarely have 50 charges). The number of charges remaining on the bands may not be determined. Often slaadi wear the bands not realising they contain any more magic. Slaadi may only safely activate the bands. Any non-slaadi that activates the bands must make a save with their lowest save at a DC 20 or take 1d4+1 points of permanent Charisma and Constitution damage. They also gain one of the above affects from the table but unless the ability is obvious they unaware of any temporarily gained chaotic variation. Non-slaadi of lawful alignment suffers a -2 to all their saves while wearing the bands. Non-slaadi of chaotic alignment gain a +2 to their save to avoid permanent Charisma and Constitution damage only.

Caster Level: Special (See 'grey slaad' in Core Rulebook III);
Prerequisites: Creator must be a Grey Slaad, must be created on the Slaadi home plane; **Market Price:** 50,000 gp; **Weight:** 1 lb.

UNCHARTED TERRITORY

THE SHADOWS ACADEMY OF NATH REX

BY: MARIO BARBATI

CARTOGRAPHY BY: O'BULLY

In Oone Roleplaying's forthcoming adventure, *The Twenty Sides of The Evil*, the heroes who fought in the legendary fortress of Draman Del will move through Arthad in order to face new enemies and to prevent the invasion of the Evil forces, eventually reaching the ominous city of Nath Rex.

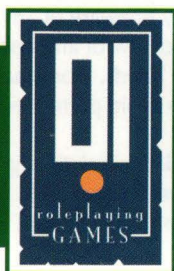
Nath Rex, also called *The City Of The Fading Shadows*, is a dark maritime city teeming with spies and rogues, as well as merchants and traders. The Nath Rex port, in the Bay of Salt, is the largest trading port in the White Ocean as well as a major smuggling paradise. PCs looking for anything exotic or unusual are sure to find it here. The many channels that serve as roads through the city, called Waterways, serve as the main means of transport. Weaving through stone and earth alike, these arterial channels are the lifeblood that pumps Nath Rex's black heart.

The Nath Rex palace, a small city within itself, is situated in the easternmost part of the city and is surrounded by the deep water of the Royal Lagoon. During the day, a raised bridge connects it to the rest of the city and at night, when the lift bridge is up, there are at least ten illegal entry points. The city also houses a famous arena called the Graystone, where every year the world-famous tournament of the Golden Scimitar is held. In the middle of the Bay of Salt lies The Black Eye Island. Beyond the fortified walls of this isle, one will find the famed Shadows Academy, where the Shadow Masters, the most skilled spies of the Nath Rex government, undergo their training.

For more details about the Shadow Masters, see *Oone Roleplaying's Heroes and Magic Sourcebook 2nd Edition*, available for free on their website: www.Ooneroleplaying.com

GMs who dare to take their players through the challenge of *The Twenty Sides Of The Evil* will find that the Shadows Academy is not detailed fully. Gaming Frontiers is proud to present this material to you now in the hopes that it will make your game that much better. This content is also ready to be adapted to your ongoing campaign, no matter where it may be set.

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THE NATH SECRET SERVICE

The Nath Secret Service has been called "a nation within the nation". It is an extremely independent organization that has a no military link with the Royal Palace. The organization has strong business interests in Nath and other nations, interests that are unofficially supported by the Royal Palace. The Chief of the NSS is a man named Foxand, also called the One that is Never Seen.

No one knows Foxand, even those agents that work the closest with him. Foxand communicates with his subordinates in a number of strange ways. At times, one may hear his voice at their back in a crowded area and when they turn, they see nothing but empty air. Others have reported that a smuggler led them to a secret location where, in complete darkness, they listened to a voice that seems to come from everywhere.

Anyone who has tried to discover the true identity of Foxand has suddenly disappeared into nothingness. Only the King Redeer, the Queen Osan and Spades know how to directly contact this man who has evolved into a mysterious force.

THE SHADOWS ACADEMY

What happens beyond the gray walls of the Shadows Academy on the Black Eye Island is a mystery. No one who lives in Nath Rex knows its secrets and no one who has entered the Academy uninvited has lived to tell about it.

The Academy forges the famed Shadow Masters - the best spies in the world. It is not a school for young rogues or rookie thieves; only the craftiest rogues can try to gain admittance to the Academy, and not every rogue who gains such admittance becomes a Shadow Master. A rogue can enter the Academy only upon a recommendation of the King

or the Queen, Foxand or Spades. Typically, only a Nath is allowed to get training in the Academy but sometimes other races are allowed.

One thing is clear to everyone who enters the Shadows Academy: from that point on he will never, in his lifetime, leave the Organization. The people who do not gain the title of Shadow Masters remain forever on the Black Eye island or act as supporters of the Shadow Masters within the city of Nath Rex. Few people in history have left the organization and lived for more than a year. Elite forces of Shadow Masters, called The Dark Eyes, are enlisted with the duty to seek and eliminate deserters. They rarely fail.

The Training

Training in the Shadows Academy lasts approximately two years. The students who do not become Shadow Masters are hired by the Secret Service, retained for different kinds of duty. Some of them remain within the Shadows Academy as trainers or personnel; others begin work for the Organization within the city. The newly created Shadow Master usually disappears from the Black Eye Island and fades into the shadows of Nath Rex by changing their identity. Foxand, Spades or the King and the Queen are the only people who know the Shadow Master's identities and are able to communicate with them. Some Shadow Masters are also sent to distant cities to act as spies.

The training is very unusual. It combines classic methods of teaching with something altogether different; a challenging series of tests commonly referred to as "The Game".

When students begin their training they are divided into four Towers: The Hawk Tower, The Dagger Tower, The Wolf Tower and The Hook Tower. The names are derived from the four towers that lodge the students (see The Building for more details). Only one Shadow Master per Tower is chosen at the end of the training period.

During the day, all the students from the four Towers gather into the Academy, the central building within the walls, to get lessons both theoretical and practical.

The theoretical disciplines vary from month to month and include: Poison Use, Foreign Languages, Sign Language, Traps, Diplomacy and Etiquette, Symmetrical Architecture, Ancient Gods, History, and Geography.

Practical disciplines include: Shadow Disciplines (hiding, move silently), Sword and Dagger, Pick Pocket, Open Locks, Acrobatic and the like.

In the morning, the students typically follow practical lessons in the Academy or near the building. In the afternoon, the students receive theoretical lessons within the Academy. After dinner every student goes into his room in order to open the books and study but very often they perform other activities.

"The Game" begins the first night of the academic year and lasts two years.

Spades receives every new student to the Academy in his room, and gives them their "secrets". Every secret is a phrase taken from a base text written by Spades. The Master of the Academy waits until the newbie has memorized the phrase, and then asks him to destroy the paper. All the phrases given to a Tower of students put together make a logical text, usually lyrics of a whimsical nature. After their visit with spades, the beautiful Shadow Master Farmalys gathers all the students into the assembly room and explains the rules of "The Game".

The students have two years to discover all the phrases of a Tower of students; the Towers should deliver their discovered text along with their own text at the end of that time. The Tower that fulfills the task gains an extra nomination for a possible Shadow Master. The rules are pretty simple: the students can do everything in

order to obtain the text, except to threaten Spades or go outside the walls of the Academy. Even murder is acceptable, but that does not happen often because every member of a Tower has his own phrase that must be delivered to Spades at the end of the two years; thus, the Towers tend to protect their members, at least until, for one reason or another, one of their own reveals his phrase. Within a Tower, knowing the phrase of a colleague means that that person is one of the walking dead.

The Game is made of secret allegiances, pacts between the factions, bribe and bargains, false love affairs between the students, night intrusions into the other towers in order to get some clues about the phrases. The Game never rests; in every moment of every day the students hunger for new information. The teachers also take part in The Game - some students find themselves mysteriously helped - or hindered - according to the whim of their masters.

The Building

The building that houses the Shadows Academy was once a fortified castle built to sight enemy ships in the Bay of Salt. A 40-foot high wall surrounds it, and four towers rest within. All around the Academy there are facilities for the training of the students: a sword arena, a trap-making area, a swimming pool, and some walls for climbing. Also inside the castle there are some authorized shops that sell goods exclusively to students.

1-Walls and the main entrance

The walls are no longer the menacing obstacle they once were, as they no longer serve for defensive purposes. Beyond the main entrance there are a number of secret doors and passages that lead outside, used mainly by the students for night raids into the city. These raids do not happen often because the teachers usually make random appearances during the night. Students not found within the walls during these surprise inspections instantly lose the right to become a Shadow Master (even though their training does not stop). The walls connect to the four towers by means of a very wide external walkway that houses a number of passages. The main entrance is a 20-foot wide wooden door with steel bands nailed to it. It is always closed and constantly guarded. These guards let the shopkeepers and the teachers come and go, and have the duty to inform Spades every time a different person asks to enter the Academy.

2, 3, 4, 5-The towers

These four towers lodge the students during the training period. Each tower bears a name: The Hawk, The Dagger, The Wolf and The Hook. These symbols are engraved over the main entrance of each tower. Each tower has four levels: two for the bedrooms, one with the library and the space for studying, and the last one, underground, with thermal baths. Needless to say, these towers are rife with secret and concealed doors that link the towers to the passages within the walls.

6-The Academy

The Academy is a huge four-story building. On the first and second floor are the classrooms; on the third floor there is a large library, as well as the catering area. In the uppermost level are all the teacher's rooms and the assembly room that lies underneath a beautiful dome. This room also features a very large terrace from which it is possible to see the entire Bay of Salt. The Academy is a very old building; its interiors are covered with mahogany panels engraved with rich bas-reliefs; its walls are replete with paintings and statues from every corner of Arthad, including renditions of some of the more infamous Shadow Masters of the past. The Academy is the sole building (perhaps in all of Nath Rex)

The Shadows Academy

Black Eye Island, Nath Rex

- 1-main entrance
- 2-hawk tower
- 3-wolf tower
- 4-hook tower
- 5-dagger tower
- 6-the academy
- 7-training areas
- 8-shops
- 9-beacon



0 30 60
feet



dagger tower



wolf tower



hawk tower



hook tower

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to be free of secret doors. At night it is closed to the students. The Academy has an underground level where the kitchens and the servant's quarters are located.

7-The training areas

Outside the Academy there are some training areas where the students learn the art of the Sword, backstabbing, the bow and crossbow, and the rope. Swimming pools and some multifunctional areas for climbing, preparing traps and the like can also be found here.

8-Shops

Within the walls there are some shops that sell a bit of everything. The shops are for the students only and often are a precious source of information for the students who do not dare to exit from the Academy, as the Shopkeepers (always people belonging to the Organization) tend to peddle more than just goods.

9-The Beacon

The sole feature outside the walls of the Academy in the Black Eye Island is the Beacon tower. A very old man named Kiros controls the tower, still a fully functional lighthouse. The beacon has a tunnel that connects it with the Hawk tower.

MAGIC IN THE WORLD OF ARTHAD

It is fairly obvious that the use of magic would utterly ruin The Game. A sorcerer, wizard or cleric could win The Game easily by using magical means. But, things are different in the world of the Seven Avengers. Magic is extremely rare. Wizards and sorcerers are hated by the common people and live hidden from view. Spellcasters of both ilk use Symmetry magic, a kind of magic that has its roots deep in history. Clerics are also rare but are commonly accepted by the people. Clerics gather themselves into Brotherhoods (see Gaming Frontiers Volume 1 for an example) or become Staregs (pilgrims). There are many healers scattered in the world, they are called mystics and do nothing else but heal and aid the poor. Clerics use Harmony magic, a magical energy that comes from the earth and living beings, because the gods are all dead. Every type of magic produces a Wave, a noise that can be heard in the heads of other spellcasters that often makes evident the presence of a magic user.

PERSONALITIES

Spades

Spades is a middle-aged retired Shadow Master. He is a personal friend of King Redeer and has gained the title of Master of The Academy in recent times, when Redeer became King. It is said that he performs some difficult deeds for the Secret Service but these occurrences are rare since he is very busy with the Academy. Spades lives for the Academy now. He is a good Master and takes the time to teach his students well. He often gives lessons in two weapon fighting (shortsword and dagger), an art he very much enjoys. One of his favorite things is to monitor the progress of "The Game". Spades often disguises himself among the students and watches the newbies, sometimes offering advice, or adding only obstacles, depending upon his mood.

SPADES

Spades, M Nath Rogue10 Shadow Master8: Size: M; hp 99; Init +10; Spd Walk 30'ft.; AC 19 (Studded Leather (Masterwork)); Atk melee +18/+13/+8, (Sword Short MW) +18 (Dagger MW), ranged +20/+15/+10, (Dagger MW);

SA: Evasion, Sneak Attack +9d6, Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC), Uncanny Dodge (can't be flanked), Improved Evasion, Poison Use, Fast Disguise, Fascinate; AL:LN; SV Fort +5, Ref +14, Will +6; Str 12, Dex 22, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Balance +11, Bluff +14, Climb +10, Craft (Trapmaking) +10, Decipher Script +10, Diplomacy +15, Disable Device +10, Disguise +20, Escape Artist +11, Forgery +10, Gather Information +20, Hide +16, Innuendo +10, Listen +11, Move Silently +20, Open Lock +11, Pick Pocket +10, Read Lips +10, Search +15, Sense Motive +10, Spot +15, Tumble +20,

Feats: Ambidexterity, Bargain, Improved Initiative, Street Crawling, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse (Dagger), Weapon Finesse (Sword (Short)) Weapon Focus (Sword (Short)), Weapon Focus (dagger)

FARMALYS

Formalys (female, Nath, Rogue9, Sorcerer1, Shadow Master8):

Formalys is the right arm of Spades and a master in the use of poisons. She is a beautiful woman who is aware of the fascination she causes, and uses it for her own foul purposes. She is a deadly woman whose knowledge of poisons has proved fatal to more than one man. She uses poison not only to kill but also to subdue, or worse. It is also rumored that she is addicted to "The Flower Of Dreams", a flower used by Zenith Shamans to have visions. The students call her "She-Vampire" for her pale skin and her tendency to wear tight black dresses.

Being a natural sorcerer and expert of Symmetry she has proved useful to Spades to detect Waves within the academy. Rarely does a student know magic, but Spades wants to be aware of all that occurs within his domain.

KIROS (STATUS UNKNOWN)

The old man is known to be, for unknown reasons, very close to the royal family. Some gossip would lead people to believe that Kiros, once a Shadow Master, did some very special tasks for the King Redeer before he held the crown. Many tales are told about this old man. Some say he has a secret link with Foxand, while others say that under the Beacon there lies a terrible secret over which he is the keeper. The old man remains a mystery for most. He has been known to aid students from the Academy that seek out his wisdom.



UNCHARTED TERRITORY

DINOSAURS AND PSIONICS: THE PROTO-PSYKERS

BY: FRED BUSH

ILLUSTRATED BY: TIM BURGARD, NOEL MURPHY & V. SHANE

Dinosaur Planet: Broncosaurus Rex is a science fiction world combining dinosaurs, the wild west, space travel and the Civil War. Published by Goodman Games, it incorporates an unusual perspective on dinosaurs as intelligent, strategic, tool-using creatures. This article, which is all new material exclusive to Gaming Frontiers, expands upon the protoceratops, distant cousins of the triceratops and one of the most intelligent species on the "dinosaur planet" of Cretasus. For more information, check out www.broncosaurusrex.com.

In the world of Dinosaur Planet: Broncosaurus Rex, the basic principles of psionics were theorized by Jack Campbell, the Confederate polymath machinist who also developed, along with Dean, the interstellar drive responsible for Confederate space expansion. Campbell's catalog of psychic powers was one of his many theories which remained unproven until long after his death. In fact, for years after coming face-to-face with psychic creatures on the so-called Dinosaur Planet of Cretasus, humans didn't realize what was going on right under their minds.

It's well known that dinosaur cries and rumblings travel for miles, and can even cross from valley to valley on occasion. Thus it went unnoticed for some time that raptor tribes from across the planet might display deep knowledge of new Confederate military tactics the instant they were developed; or that protoceratops linguists who had never before been in contact with humans would greet explorers in perfect Common. Scientists scoffed at stories of tyrannosaur "tyrant kings" striking their foes dead with a curse from miles away. Few believed Professor Calhoun Carey when he claimed to have had a heart-to-heart mental conversation with a wise old pteranodon; the chair of Grant University publicly suggested that the whole experience was caused not by psychic powers, but psychoactive powers, notably some bad mushrooms.

Cretasus dinosaurs are clever, sneaky, and often very dangerous. The planet itself remains largely unexplored and unmapped, and the perpetual skirmishing between the Union and the Confederacy makes it difficult for researchers to undertake a

leisurely and thorough study of dinosaurs in their natural habitats. All of these factors contributed to the belated discovery of strange powers among the dinosaurs.

A bizarre incident involving the alien Scray finally revealed the existence of these strange powers. Hunters discovered a small group of the enigmatic aliens beset by an entire tribe of protoceratops. The usually peaceful dinos were stamping, hooting, and throwing themselves at the Scray in a berserk fury. Despite the terrible Scray beam weapons and powerful shield technology, most of the aliens had been torn to pieces by the time the hunters arrived. The hunters managed to destroy the maddened protoceratops, and the grateful surviving Scray gave the hunters several strange weapons. Lab analysis on one of these devices revealed that the cerebrospinal fluid of live protoceratops was an important facet in the weapons manufacture: the Scray had been a scavenging party, seeking the raw materials to construct more of these weapons. Unluckily for them, the protoceratops realized what they were doing and took their revenge for the violation of their kindred.

Once the psychic potential of the protoceratops mind was established, experiments on captured protoceratops began in earnest, and still continue. Cretasus' protoceratops are, as far as paleontologists and biologists can tell, altered versions of Earth protoceratops. Professor Carey has suggested that the protoceratops may have been modified by the Scray precisely to produce the fluid necessary to power their psionic weapons, becoming a sort of living refinery of psychic energy. While the Confederacy has banned experimentation on the brains of live protoceratops, there are rumors of a heavily guarded lead-shielded cavern just south of Fort Lincoln where the Union carries out tests involving protoceratops, schizophrenics and quartz crystals. "The Jangled Night", where every citizen in Fort Lincoln awoke screaming in the throes of nightmare, is proof that the Union hasn't yet figured out how to master psionic powers, but they keep trying.



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PSIONICS WITHIN PROTOCERATOPS SOCIETY

Protoceratops are usually quite chatty, but on the subject of psionics they refuse to talk, recognizing perhaps that their abilities are a great advantage in the struggle for survival and the less said about them the better. While other dinosaur species have been rumored to possess psionic powers, none of them have such a



systematic integration of psionics into their tribal structure as do the protoceratops, nor do they use their powers so carefully to protect the race. Among other dinosaurs, psionics are the province of the hermit and the outsider; among protoceratops, the tribe as a whole benefits from their talents.

One of the few things protoceratops will say about their powers is that they view psionics as a talent like any other, possessed by the entire species to a greater or lesser degree. They compare it to the ability to stand on two legs (tricky, for a squat, dense quadruped), or keeping a good poker face.

Most protoceratops don't have any useful psionic powers, although they do share an empathetic understanding and emotional link with other protoceratops of their tribe even deeper than that of most humans with their family. Perhaps it is these deep emotional ties which give them the potential to manifest the more startling psychic powers.

Those protoceratops who are naturally gifted with psionic powers, and those who choose to further develop their inborn talents, are venerated within the tribe, revered both as a source of wisdom and a disciplined master of a difficult science. Mastery of psionics is known as the "path of the inner horn," contrasted to the outer, bony shell and horn which is the chief characteristic of other protoceratops. Indeed, the beaks and bony crests of psionic protoceratops are usually noticeably weaker and smaller than those of their brothers. As protoceratops expand their psionic powers, they develop control over their skeletal growth and structure, and often expand their skulls, at the expense of their bony crest and horned

beak. Thus, they are slightly weaker and less dangerous in melee combat than the average protoceratops. Others sculpt their horns into ornate, runic patterns, but this is often viewed as showy and ostentatious.

The best-known way of following the Path of the Inner Horn is the way of root and cave. Protoceratops bring themselves into the deep caves where generations of their ancestors have dwelt, and spend years without leaving the chamber. After months have passed, they grow unable to move, and are said to have sunk roots into the ground. Other protoceratops bring food and water, and also line the cave with reflective stone, which apparently aids in concentration. Finally, the protoceratops experiences an inward revelation, the Radiance, that is expressed in a blinding flash of light that sets the reflective stones aglitter. (These stones sometimes retain psionic energies after the Radiance of a particularly powerful protoceratops.) The psionic, now known as a Luminary, then emerges to reassume a place in society.

A Luminary retains a link to the chamber where she attained Radiance, and her powers are enhanced while she remains within the chamber. Often a Luminary spends much time underground further perfecting her powers and aiding the tribe by observing far places within the chamber of Radiance. Luminaries always sparkle when they use their powers, and someone who is watching carefully will detect a faint, telltale glow over the entire body of the creature when it performs an extraordinary task.

Luminaries often serve as a connecting link between distant tribes, and they are prized for their ability to communicate and share knowledge with other protoceratops hundreds of miles from their tribe. They are also shrewd negotiators, due to their ability to read minds, although they are cagey and never reveal their abilities to an unsuspecting adversary, often staying in the background while other protoceratops do the talking, advising them secretly with telepathic communications.

Luminaries rarely use their powers for combat, since their abilities can do little more than send a foe reeling. Their tribe will usually not permit them to risk themselves in battle, and only if the tribe is threatened with extermination will a Luminary emerge from the caves to do battle. Nevertheless, if a tribe is attacked by a single large dinosaur, sometimes a Luminary will sally forth and attempt to slow down the foe so that the other protoceratops can overwhelm it.

While Luminaries can see quite a long distance, they are unable to penetrate the thick armored walls of military facilities and cave complexes. Alien ruins and spacecraft incorporate psi-dampeners, further limiting their powers. Vehicles with metal walls and even ordinary houses can sometimes defeat their skills. However, there is little that happens on the surface of Cretasus that is not eventually observed by the protoceratops, and they sometimes share this information with triceratops herds or raptor tribes. It is thought that large human hunting parties which return empty-handed are sometimes the victims of protoceratops warning their prey.

Humans have also begun to suspect the presence of a Cretasus-wide network of psychic dinosaurs, whose ultimate goal is unknown. This group, whose name translates as "The Circle of Scale and Bone," is supposedly headed by a thousand-year-old protoceratops living deep underground, near the planet's core, who convenes a psychic council at least once a year. The ultimate goals of the Circle are unknown. The raptor shaman who told this story was soon smothered by moths, a bizarre fate which suggests that she might just have been telling the truth.

PSIONIC PROTOCERATOPS

Medium Animal

Hit Dice: 2d10+6 (19 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 20 ft.

AC: 16 front (+6 natural), 13 flank (+3 natural)

Attacks: Beak +4 melee

Damage: Beak 1d6 +2

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Psionics

Special Qualities: Scent

Saves: Fort +9, Ref +3, Will +11

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 18, Cha 16

Skills: Bluff +8, Diplomacy +10, Gather Information +6, Intuit Direction +4, Knowledge (nature, dinosaurs, psionics, geography, history, local, human society) +8, Psicraft +6, Sense Motive +12, Speak Language (1d4 languages), Spot +6, Wilderness Lore +10

Climate/Terrain: Any

Organization: Solitary or pair, sometimes within a tribe of normal protoceratops

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: often Lawful Good

Advancement: By character class (always psion)

Special Qualities:

Telepathy (Su): The protoceratops can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 feet that has a language.

Use these descriptions of abilities if you don't own the Psionics Handbook (published by Wizards of the Coast):

Creature Empathy (Sp): The protoceratops can detect the surface emotion of any creature it can see within 100 feet.

Mental Link (Sp): Once per day, the protoceratops can establish telepathic communications with a willing participant within 100 feet, and maintain that communications for an hour no matter how far apart the two travel. Once a protoceratops has performed a mental link, it can use its mental link ability to link to that creature again on another day, no matter how far apart the two are, if both are willing.

Mind Strike (Sp): The protoceratops targets one victim within 50 feet and makes an attack roll with a +6 bonus, which becomes the DC for the victim's will save. On a failed saving throw, the victim is stunned for 1d4 rounds.

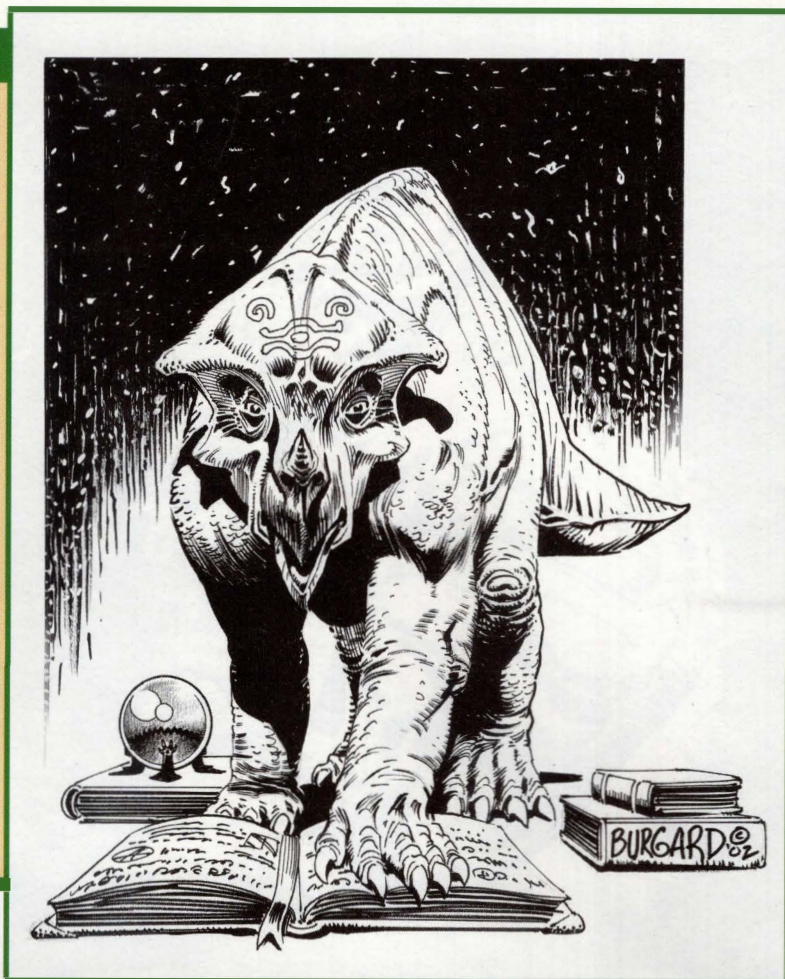
Light (Sp): As the spell, cast by a 6th level priest.

Use these stats if you own the Psionics Handbook:

Psionics (Sp): At will—my light, empathy, lesser mental link. These abilities are as the powers manifested by a 6th level psion.

Attack/Defense Modes (Sp): At will—Mind Thrust, Empty Mind

Individual protoceratops are quite capable of the discipline it takes to develop their talents. The way of cave and root leads protoceratops to become psions in the schools of clairsentience or telepathy. The head of the Circle of Scale and Bone has mastered the metaconcert ability.



NEW PSIONIC POWERS FOR PROTOCERATOPS

REPTILE MIND

Telepathy (Cha)

Level: Psion 3

Display: Au

Manifestation Time: 1 action

Range: Medium (100 ft + 10 ft./level)

Target: One mammal, reptile, or bird

Duration: 10 minutes/level (D)

Saving Throw: Will negates

Power Resistance: Yes

Power Points: 5

Protoceratops use this ability to tap into the primeval reptilian realms of the mind. The subject is engulfed by reptilian thoughts and reverts to ancestral instincts. The subject becomes quadrupedal. Any subject not naturally quadrupedal is now prone, suffering a -4 penalty to melee attack rolls, and is unable to use a lasso. Melee attacks against a prone character have a +4 bonus, and ranged attacks against a prone character have a -4 penalty. Movement rates for non-quadrupeds are cut to a third (crawling). The subject gains the descriptor: Animal.

The subject can choose either to battle the effect or to let animal instincts take over. A subject which gives in to its animal instincts is able to move at normal speed, use natural weapons without penalty, and no longer has an armor class bonus or penalty for being prone. However, the subject loses the ability to manipulate objects with hands, to read and speak, and to understand technological devices. The subject loses its non-psionic buffer, and in addition gets a -4 penalty to Will saves to resist further protoceratops psionics.

A subject which fights the effect can attempt a new saving throw versus the effect as a full-round action every three rounds. Meanwhile, the subject can also attempt normal actions, but all actions which involve speech, a bipedal stance, or the use of hands become one step more time-consuming (talking becomes a partial action instead of a free action, and firing a gun becomes a full-round action instead of a move-equivalent action.) The subject maintains the penalties for being prone.

RUNESPEAK

Clairsentience (Wis)

Level: Psion 2

Display: Au, Me

Manifestation Time: 1 action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Target: Carved or written message

Duration: Concentration, up to 1 minute/level or 1 question/level

Saving Throw: None

Power Resistance: No

Power Points: 2

Lovers of learning, protoceratops maintain vast historical records carved with their beaks on the walls of caves. The protoceratops use the runespeak ability to fully understand the nuances and intentions of a written document by reading the psychic residues left behind by the writer. Runespeak works on protoceratops carvings, as well as handwritten or painted messages of any kind, but not on printed or typewritten matter or on non-linguistic works like sculptures. The psionic is able to understand and analyze the thoughts and intentions of the creator of the document.

It takes one round of concentration to determine the feelings of the writer when they wrote the document (like empathy) and two rounds to read the surface thoughts of the writer (like detect thoughts.) Furthermore, a psionic can use this ability to ask questions relating to the document. This represents the ability to discern stray thought patterns entwined with the writing. The psionic can ask one question per level, and the questions must be related to the message in some form, or there will be no answer. The writer will "answer" to the best of their knowledge, although the GM has the final say on what the writer might or might not know, and the writer is not always correct.

BASK

Psychometabolism (Str)

Level: Psion 1

Display: Ol

Manifestation Time: 1 minute

Range: Personal

Target: You (Protoceratops)

Duration: Until interrupted by darkness or movement (D)

Power Points: 1/hour

The protoceratops use this ability to relax in the sunlight and focus their mental strength. This ability can only be used while motionless in direct sunlight or in the chamber where the protoceratops attained Radiance. As long as these conditions are met, the psionic gains a +1 circumstance bonus to the use of all psionic powers, and is considered to have the feat Empower Psionics for all applicable powers, effectively doubling their range. In addition, the psionic heals 2 hit points per full hour of basking. However, the psionic is sluggish and torpid after emerging from basking, and upon emerging is slowed for a number of minutes equal to the number of hours spent basking.

All lizard psions can learn this power, even though it's normally limited only to Egoists.

PSIONIC WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT

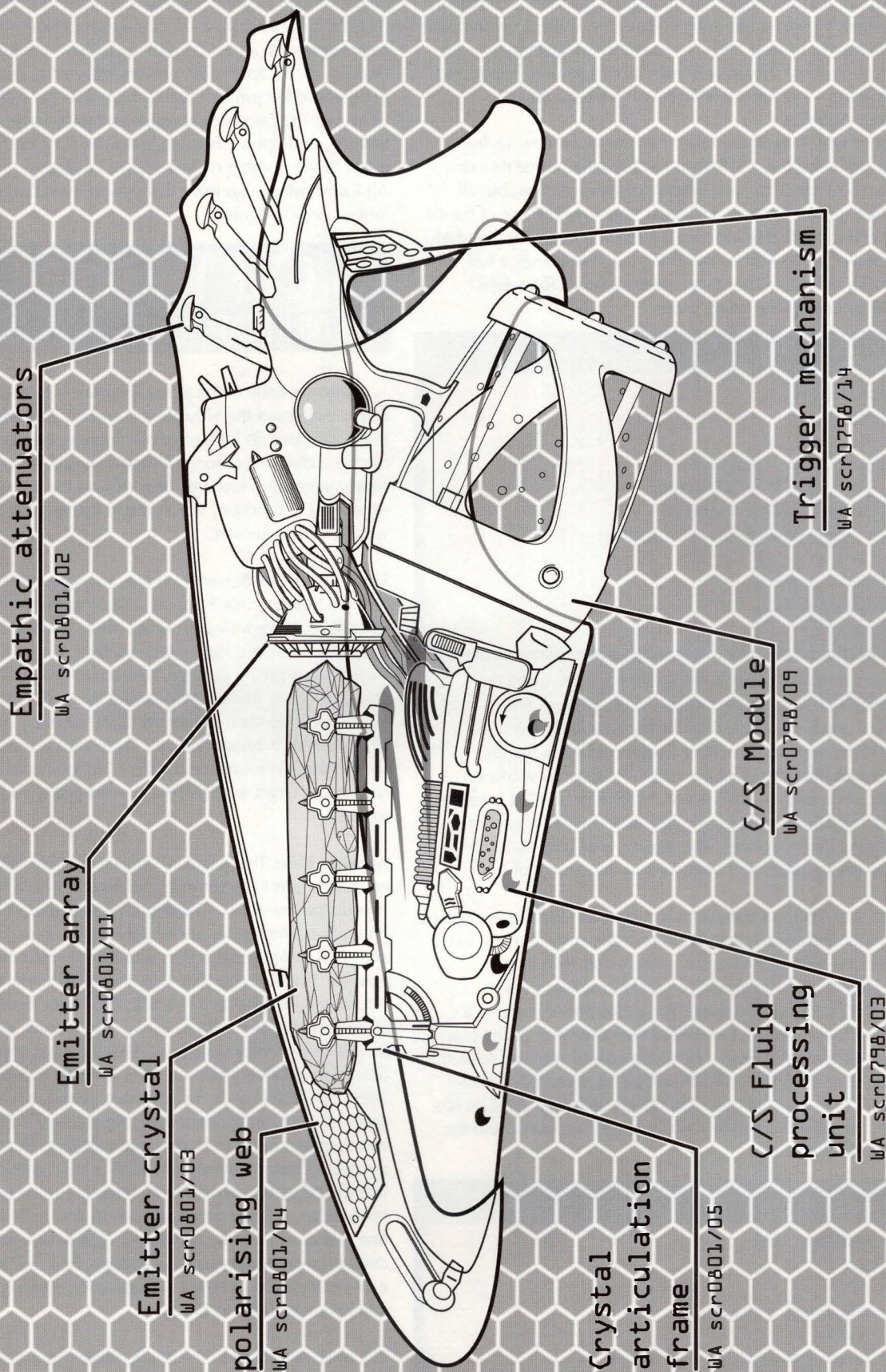
Intense study of the Scray weapons has revealed the characteristics of the Shiverbeam and the Amnesia Rifle. Although these weapons do little physical damage, they both have the ability to stop a charging dino (or Union Ironclad) in its tracks and are nearly priceless. However, they rely on the brain fluid of living organisms to function, which might cause some raised eyebrows were it widely known.

Shiverbeam: The Shiverbeam taps into primal fear reflexes. A C/S module powers it for 20 shots. Like all psionic devices, it's crystalline. It has a smooth black finish that catches the eye. When activated, it emits a high-pitched whine. The Shiverbeam fires an invisible ray, hitting its target with a successful ranged touch attack. The target must make a Will saving throw (DC 18) or be panicked for 2d4 rounds, then shaken for 2d10 minutes, and suffer 1d4 points of temporary Wisdom damage. If the save is made, the target is shaken for 2d4 rounds and suffers 1d2 points of temporary Wisdom damage. A target with psionic powers gets a +4 competence bonus to its save.

Amnesia Rifle: This beam weapon scrambles memory patterns and causes victims to forget who and what they are for a time. A C/S module powers it for 15 shots. Like all psionic devices, it's crystalline. The Amnesia Rifle splits light like a prism. When activated, colored lights play around the rifle's clear quartz-like exterior. The Amnesia Rifle fires an invisible ray, hitting its target with a successful ranged touch attack. The target must make a Will saving throw (DC 18) or be confused for 1d6 rounds, and completely unable to remember who and what they are, although able to defend themselves normally. This amnesia is potentially permanent. The target suffers a -2 circumstance penalty on all actions except saving throws, and cannot use a Knowledge skill. A new save can be attempted once an hour; a successful result means that the target regains all lost memories, although a cruel game master can rule that the target has permanently forgotten some small bit of knowledge. A target who succeeds in the initial save is dazed for one round and slightly discombobulated, suffering a -2 cumulative circumstance penalty to future attacks from the Amnesia Rifle within a 24 hour period. A target with psionic powers gets a +4 competence bonus to its save.

C/S Module: Warm to the touch, these sophisticated storage tanks preserve cerebrospinal fluid from psionic creatures and are used to power Scray psionic weapons. An empty C/S module will preserve any biological sample.

SCRAY "SHIVERBEAM" WEAPON ANALYSIS



R&D Section 12 /scr-0801

ALIEN WEAPONS—RANGED

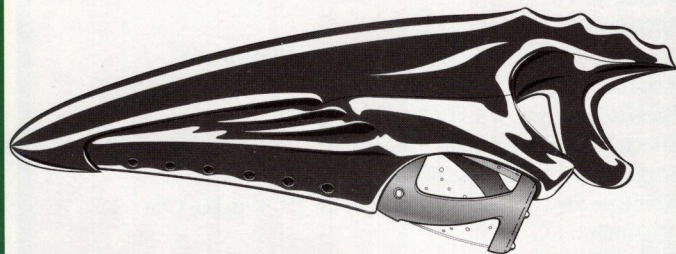
Weapon	Size	Cost	Damage	Critical	Range Increment	Targeting Range*	Weight	TL*	Type
Shiverbeam	M	3,000	**	**	40 ft.	30 ft.	20 lb.	16	Special
Amnesia Rifle	M	4,000	**	**	100 ft.	70 ft.	15 lb.	16	Special

* Targeting Range and Tech Level are fully explained in the *Dinosaur Planet: Broncosaurus Rex* Core Rulebook.

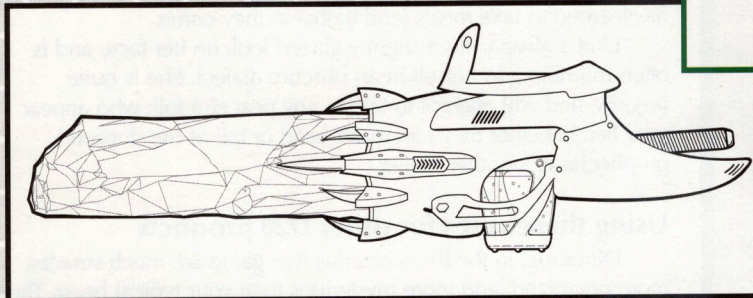
** See description.

EQUIPMENT

Item	Cost	Weight	Tech Level
C/S Module	500	1 lb.	16



SHIVERBEAM



AMNESIA RIFLE

R&D Section 12 /scr.0801

NPCs

CADMON THE SEEKER

Protoceratops Psi(Ego)6

Sz M (animal)

Hit Dice: 2d10 + 6d4 + 32; (58hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 20

AC: 22 (+8 natural, +4 inertial armor) front, 17 (+3 natural, +4 inertial armor) flank

Attacks: Horn +7 (1d8 + 4 + 1 [talons] + 1d4 [psionic fist] + 1d8 subdual [painful touch])

Face/Reach: 5 ft. x 5 ft / 5 ft.

Special Qualities: Scent, Psionics

Saves: Fort +11 Ref +5 Will +16

Abilities: Str 20, Dex 10, Con 19, Int 15, Wis 16, Cha 15

Alignment: LN

Skills: Autohypnosis +10, Bluff +8, Concentration +10, Diplomacy +4, Gather Information +8, Intuit Direction +4, Knowledge (nature, dinosaurs, psionics, geography, history, local, human society) +8, Psicraft +12, Sense Motive +8, Speak Language (Common, Scray, Protoceratops, Raptor), Spot +10, Wilderness Lore +12

Feats: Inertial Armor, Psionic Fist, Psychoanalyst, Psychic Inquisitor

Power Points: 24

Powers: Ego Whip, Empty Mind, Mind Thrust, Thought Shield, Tower of Iron Will, Mental Barrier, Mind Blast, Burst, Elfsight, Lesser Natural Armor, Talons, Stomp, Spider Climb, Body Adjustment, Painful Touch, Reptile Mind, Displacement.

Cadmon is a rare protoceratops who focuses on physical techniques rather than mental. After his siblings were "harvested" by the Scray, he dedicated himself to learning powerful mental disciplines to stop them, and has developed an impressive group of abilities to help him accomplish his task. Right now he hunts down and kills humans involved in experiments on protoceratops, and stays on the lookout for Scray, who are too dangerous for him to tackle on his own. He usually works with local raptor tribes to stop the Scray.

He's not that subtle for a protoceratops; he'll often ask people straight out if they're mucking around with dino brains, since his psychic inquisitor feat prevents people from lying to him. He uses his elfsight ability for its darkvision, and his ability to spider climb to surprise his foes. He uses his mind blast ability mind-flayer-style to take out groups of opponents, and stalks single opponents using his displacer-beast-like displacement ability to avoid damage. If necessary, he uses his Body Adjustment to heal himself of 3d6 points of damage. If you don't have the Psionics Handbook, you can just let Cadmon use his powers one per round, for a total of 25 rounds of powers/used. His feats are always active; his powers can only be activated once a round.

Cadmon is a strapping young protoceratops, much larger than usual. He does not anger easily, but if he does get angry he bears a long grudge. He frequently bumps into people and tramples smaller animals in his eagerness to seek his prey. He speaks with a slight lisp.



UMBA THE PEREGRINE, SEER OF THE WHITE HILLS

Protoceratops Psi(See)8

Sz M (animal)

Hit Dice: 2d10 + 8d4 + 20; (41 hp)

Initiative: +0

Speed: 20

AC: 16 (+6 natural) front, 13 (+3 natural) flank

Attacks: Horn +6 (1d8 + 3)

Face/Reach: 5 ft. x 5 Ft / 5 ft.

Special Qualities: Scent, Psionics

Saves: Fort +12 Ref +6 Will +17

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 11, Con 15, Int 19, Wis 20, Cha 19

Alignment: LG

Skills: Bluff +10, Concentration +12, Diplomacy +10, Gather Information +10, Intuit Direction +8, Knowledge (nature, dinosaurs, psionics, geography, history, local, human society) +12, Psicraft +15, Sense Motive +12, Speak Language (Common, Raptor, Protoceratops, Allosaur, Tyrannosaur), Spot +15, Wilderness Lore +10

Feats: Inner Strength (x3)

Power Points: 52

Powers: Ego Whip, Empty Mind, Mind Thrust, Thought Shield, Tower of Iron Will, Mental Barrier, Psychic Crush, Detect Psionics, Inkling, Catfall, Missive, Telempathic Projection, Float, Know Location, Bask, Object Reading, Psycholuminescence, Sense Link, Augury, Clairaudience/Clairvoyance, Sensitivity to Psychic Impressions, Runespeak, Remote Viewing, Dimensional Slide, *Divination, *Teleport

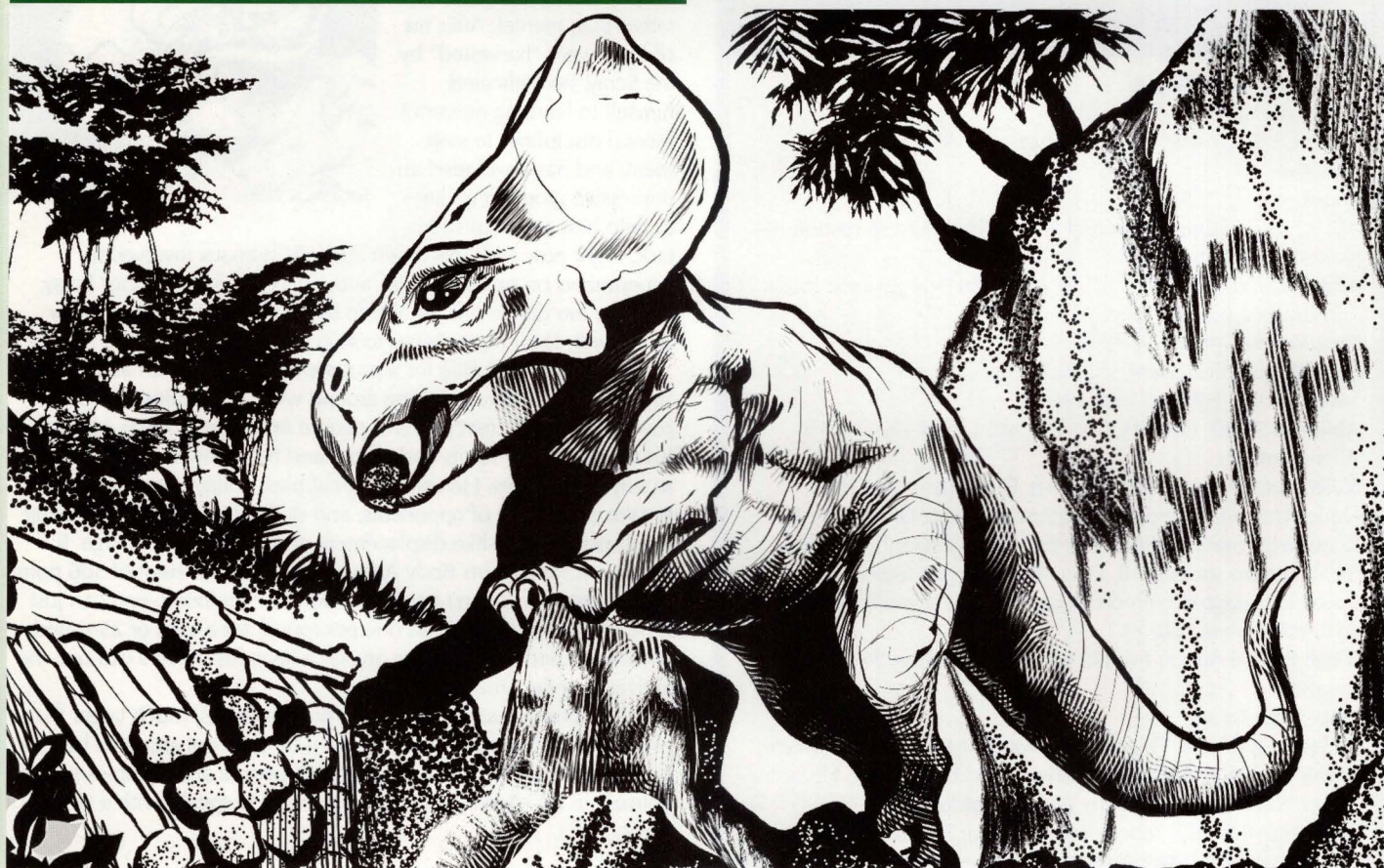
Umba, seer of the White Hills, went too far in her attempts to master the ability of teleportation and went mad as a result. Unable to control her teleportation, she travels wildly from place to place, at the whim of fate. She never appears in a location that's being observed, but she always appears within 50 feet of a sentient creature. This means she's constantly popping into hidden corners and nooks and crannies, emerging from chimneys and holes in the ground, and rising from bathtubs and small ponds. Umba is slowly losing control of her other abilities as well: her divination ability now kicks in whenever she's asked a direct question, and she whirls around prophesying wherever she goes.

Umba has never teleported offworld, although she's seen most of Cretasus' valleys by this point. She's pretty much given up on living a normal life, and has taken to attempting to rhyme her prophesies, just for the heck of it. She's often ravenously hungry, since there's no telling if she'll be near food after a teleport, and she has learned to take meals (and baths) as they come.

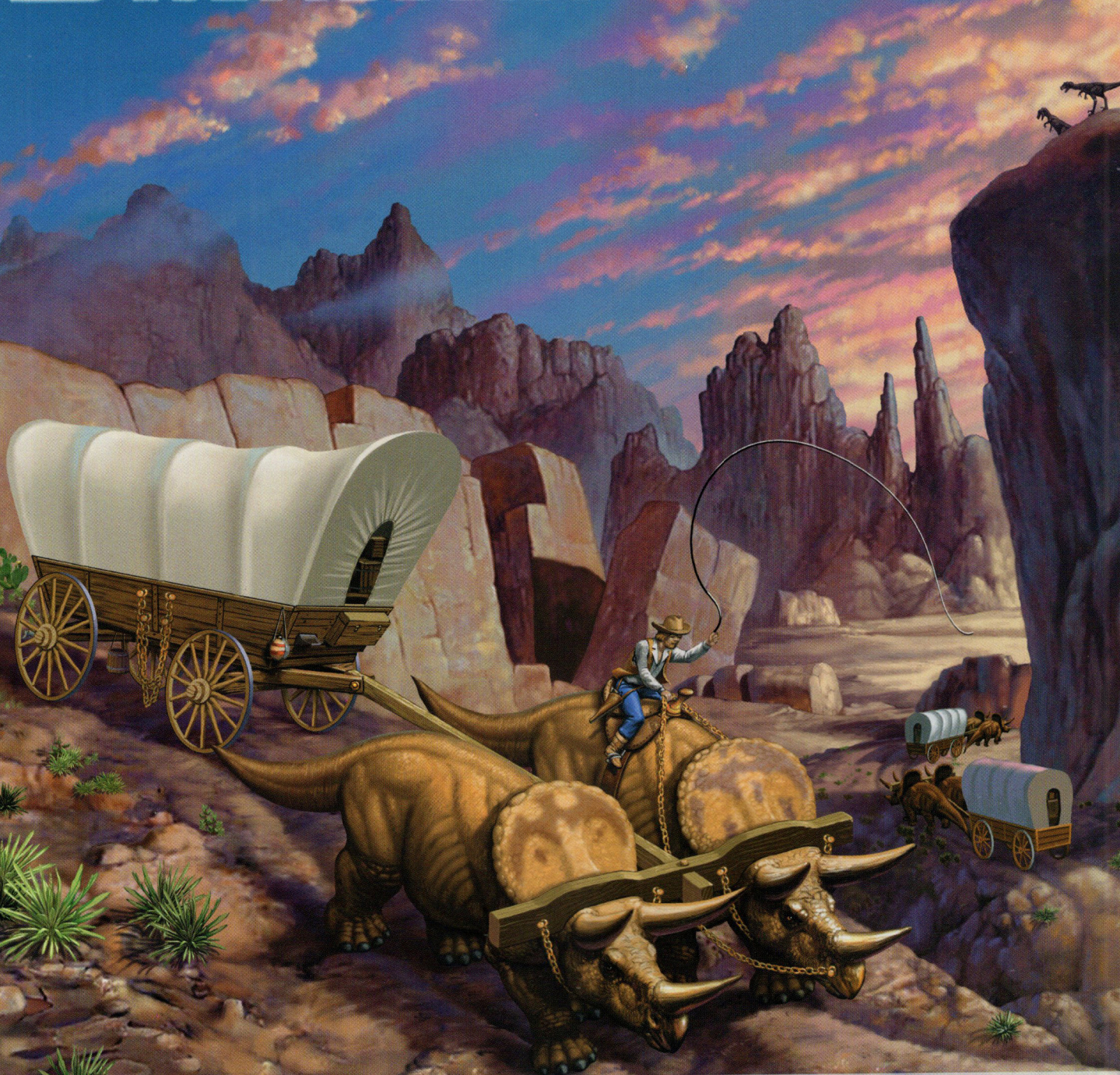
Umba always has a slightly glazed look on her face, and is often mumbling to herself in an obscure dialect. She is quite friendly, and will attempt to talk to any peaceful folk who appear near her. Whether they can make head or tail of her doggerel prophesies is another matter.

Using these rules for other D20 products

Dinosaurs in the Broncosaurus Rex game are much smarter, more organized, and more mysterious than your typical beast. They have similarities to D&D's dragons and pseudodragon, Cthulhoid lizard-beasts, and Deadlands horrors. In general, adding psionics to a physically weak race can allow them to challenge overconfident and physically-powerful PCs in possibly unexpected ways. In science fiction games, it gives non-tool using sentients an "equalizer" against powerful weapons.



Broncosaurus Rex



In the year 2202, dinosaurs have been discovered on the planet Cretasus. But these dinosaurs are just as smart as the humans now flocking to their home. Velociraptors trade in alien weapons, leptoceratops guard their desert secrets, and T-rexes protect their nests from egg raiders. Despite the dinosaurs, human pioneers arrive in droves at New Savannah's busy spaceport. Lured by free land, gold, and simple freedom, they yearn for a new life. Their wagon trails soon trudge west on the rutted path of the Tecumseh Trail, bringing new adventures to Cretasus. Published by Goodman Games.

Free PDF preview at www.broncosaurusrex.com



A Sailor's Tale

By: Keith Sloan

Illustrated by: Corte Real

The body fell to the deck with a dull thud,

its lifeblood slowly spreading out with the rocking motion of the ship, first one way, then another. A cruel laugh, soon joined by others, accompanied the murder as an evil-looking man with a knife began to look for his next sport.

Lanwulf continued to look down at the deck as a trickle of blood came into his view, afraid to make eye contact with any of the pirates. They'd already slain three of their five prisoners in cold blood and it seemed they were bent on finishing the last two as cruelly as possible. Lanwulf willed himself to not shake, though in truth he was sick with such fear as he had never imagined. His sole hope to be sold into slavery was quickly dwindling.

He was a lowly seaman, a crewman who had moved from ship to ship as the fates, and the occasional press gang, had decreed. This latest vessel, the White Dolphin, had been at sea thirteen days, bound for the Goblin Coast with a load of eastern spices when the pirates attacked. The crew had been quickly overwhelmed by the well armed and numerous sea wolves, though they had managed to kill a few of the attackers.

"You!" bellowed a voice. The murderous pirate grabbed the other survivor by his shirt and hauled him to his feet. "What first, say ye? An ear? A toe? How about a nose?" His fellows laughed and the frightened sailor quaked in fear. "I know, a hand!" he yelled, while the other half-dozen pirates cheered him on. He pushed the sailor to the deck while another pirate stretched out his arm and held it. The sailor whimpered in fear.

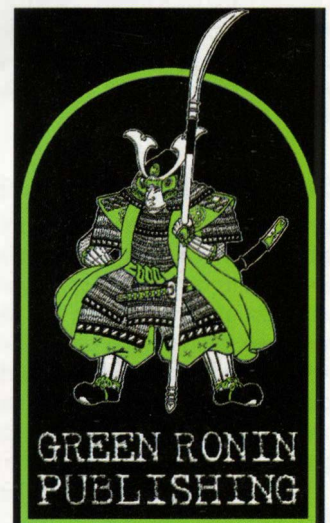
"What's all this, now?" said a voice from behind the pirates. Lanwulf looked up slightly. Behind them stood a tall man, somewhat older and well dressed, with a stern expression; their captain, Lanwulf surmised.

"Just having a bit o' fun with the lads, Cap'n sair. Nothing to concairn yerself with, sair." The pirate did not release his prisoner nor even look behind himself as he spoke, and Lanwulf caught an evil glint in his eye.

"I told you before, Rollo, there will be no execution of prisoners by my crew without my permission. Remember the Code. Release him, now!" the Captain said forcefully.

"'Tis expected that unnecessary prisoners be killed, sair. They eat our food, drink our grog, and ain't worth a spit outside o' the flesh markets down south. I've sailed a dozen vessels and this is how I've always done it." Rollo grumbled as he said this, and a number of grunts indicated the other pirates present felt as he did.

"You are on my ship now, and you'll do as I say or I'll use you to fish for sharks, or worse."



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**“What of him?” one finally asked,
motioning to the maimed pirate.
“Hang him from the yard arm.”**

“Well, maybe it should not oughta be yer ship, Cap’n sair,” he spit. Like lightning, he spun and thrust his knife towards the Captain.

But the Captain was far quicker. He leapt backwards out of the kneeling pirate’s reach, drawing his cutlass as he did so. With a fast sweep, he swung his blade down at Rollo’s arm, severing it below the elbow. Arm and knife flew to one side.

Rollo’s fellows began to draw swords and daggers of their own, but suddenly relented, and Lanwulf saw three men with crossbows come up behind the Captain. Rollo writhed upon the ground, howling in shock and pain.

“You men are new to my crew. If you don’t wish to end your service prematurely, know that I will brook no mutiny. Now, let those prisoners up.” The mutinous pirates let Lanwulf and the other prisoner stand slowly, though none moved to help Rollo.

“What of him?” one finally asked, motioning to the maimed pirate.

“Hang him from the yard arm.”

“Now then, what be yer names?” asked the Captain. He stood with the prisoners in the master’s cabin of the White Dolphin. They had come below with him even as Rollo struggled against the rope around his neck and the other mutinous pirates scrubbed clean the bloody decks of the merchant beneath him.

“I am Lanwulf, sir. This is Henwyr.” The other sailor was still shaking uncontrollably and seemed on the verge of a breakdown of some sort. He was unable to even speak.

“Well, lads, I am Captain Bessel of the Dark Rover. You may call me sir, or Captain. I don’t ask for much. Serve me well and you’ll live, otherwise you’ll join the rest of your crew.” He looked carefully at both men for a moment, ensuring they understood him completely. When neither spoke, he continued.

“Well, then, I think you’ll be remaining on this ship. I’ve a mind to sell its cargo in Freeport; there’s a great festival or some such in the works there and the market should be most profitable. I think I will stay aboard this ship until we sell the cargo.” He glared at the two men. “I’ll be keeping an eye on you two, mind; you, and others.”

The White Dolphin made good speed towards Freeport,

manned now by a prize crew from the Dark Rover. The pirate ship had sped off to avoid being associated with the captured merchant vessel and its cargo. Lanwulf found himself treated as a near slave by the rest of the new crew. Life for himself and Henwyr was poor. They were given little to eat or drink, and some of the pirates took great delight in constantly threatening them with blades for sport. Rollo’s companions were by far the worst, and though they seemed cowed by the Captain’s presence aboard, they still took out their aggressions and frustrations on the two prisoners.

Lanwulf threw himself into his work, and never let himself be idle if he could help it. From the rigging to the bilge, he was constantly at some task. Within a few days, he had gained at least

some grudging respect from the better-natured pirates, if not any friendship. Henwyr did not fare so well, and though Rollo’s friends treated them both poorly, they directed their most vile mirth at him. He did not speak, even to Lanwulf. They seldom saw the Captain, and Lanwulf believed he spent much of his time inspecting his captured treasure.

Four nights had passed since the pirate attack. Lanwulf was in the deepest bilge checking on the ship’s pumps and looking for leaks in the hull, an excuse to be alone. He knocked his head into a beam from the low overhead and dropped his lantern into the ankle-deep water. Cursing, he fumbled about in the darkness of the cramped space for several minutes. He had finally retrieved his lantern, now hopelessly soaked, when he heard a loud grating sound and saw a light – someone had opened the hatch leading to the cargo hold above.

“Arrgh, there’s none down here. Let’s go.” It was the voice of Kallim, one of Rollo’s fellow mutineers. He dropped down into the bilge just as Lanwulf slipped behind a pile of stones used as ballast. Five other men, the other would-be mutineers, followed the pirate.

When they had all gotten below, they dimmed the light and shut the hatch. And though they spoke in whispers, Lanwulf heard them clearly.

“’Tis time to make our move,” said Kallim.

“Aye, but we be only six against a full dozen and the Cap’n. How are we to sail this tub to Freeport with only six men?”

“Fool!” said Kallim. “We keep them two prisoners alive to help us. It makes fer a tough business, but we be only two days out o’ Freeport. We can all lose a bit o’ sleep to split this cargo. You’ll just have to get yer drinkin’ and wenchin’ a little later.”

The second pirate laughed quietly. “Aye, ’tis possible. How’re we to do it?”

“Tonight, when I has the Deck, there’ll be but a few others awake. I’ll rouse ye all and we’ll take the watch at unawares. Then we’ll kill the rest o’ them while they sleep, including the Cap’n. Garn him and his Code! We’ll sail this ship to Freeport, sell the wares and the ship, and live like kings until we sign articles with a new crew; one more to our liking.”

They all laughed quietly at this and agreed with Kallim’s plan. They continued for some time to discuss what each would do with his share of the profits, until finally they doused their light and slipped from the bilge. Lanwulf waited several minutes in darkness before leaving himself.

“And you’re sure of this?” asked the Captain. “If you are lying to me, boy, I’ll carve you like a fish and nail your insides to the mast while you yet live.” Lanwulf had already been nearly slain trying to slip into the Captain’s quarters quietly and unobserved. He did not trust anyone aboard enough to tell them what he’d heard. The old man seemed to have a sixth sense, however, as when Lanwulf opened his door the man was standing with a drawn cutlass waiting for him.

“Aye, Captain. It’s all as I said. They plan to kill you all tonight, in a few hours.” Lanwulf’s heart was still racing from the blade still held at his chest.

The Captain looked at him closely for several moments, his eyes boring into the young sailor. Finally, he spoke. “Why have you told me all this? You say they meant to let you live, at least until the ship reached Freeport. You could have jumped ship there and been free – they’d be too busy to bother hunting you down.”

Lanwulf considered his words a moment. “Mayhap, sir. But you saved my life from these scum. I owe you that much, at least.”

The Captain looked at him with interest for a moment. “Honor is a rare commodity these days, boy.”

"Maybe among pirates, sir," Lanwulf quipped, growing bolder. The older man laughed slightly. "Indeed! Well boy, you may regret casting your lot with me before this is all over."

"What is that great tower ahead of us?" Lanwulf stood near the bow with the Captain, who in the past two days seemed to have taken a liking to the young sailor. The other pirates had come to accept him, as well. Once the mutiny had been put down, and the would-be mutineers all hung, the workload for all the remaining hands had increased dramatically, and there was no time for harassing prisoners. The bodies of the mutineers had been cut down and thrown overboard just before dawn.

"That, boy, is the great Lighthouse of Drac," the Captain responded. "The Sea Lord of Freeport, Milton Drac, is building it. The wonder of the known world, many call it. Others call it Milton's Folly, for it has nearly bankrupted one of the richest ports on these seas. It is to be dedicated in a few months."

Lanwulf continued to watch as the great spire seemed to rise up out of the sea as the ship sped north into the heart of the Serpent's Teeth islands. The lighthouse was immense, more than two hundred feet high, of white stone. It stood encased within wooden scaffolding, and as they came closer Lanwulf could see many workers on it. The sheer immensity of the tower awed the sailor, and even the grim pirates seemed affected by the mammoth structure.

The ship rounded the small isle upon which the lighthouse stood and entered a sheltered area. Before them was Freeport, a city Lanwulf had never before seen. It was quite large, even compared to continental cities, and had a vast waterfront that stretched both east and west. Dozens of ships from across the known world were moored at its innumerable piers and wharves; longships from Snowland, soahrs from the Eastern Islands, cogs from Olmatia, and even Orcish triremes from the Goblin Coast rested side by side. It was an impressive sight, even for a seasoned sailor like Lanwulf.

A small pilot boat met the White Dolphin as it entered Freeport's harbor, and escorted the merchant vessel to a pier near the center of the waterfront. Shorthanded as the ship was, Lanwulf and the others became very busy handling sails and lines, and in mooring the ship, for some time. But at last the lines were finally tightened and the chaos of mooring subsided. The gangplank was set in place and port officials came aboard to welcome the newcomers and collect the requisite bribes, and Lanwulf had time to study his new surroundings.

Directly across the pier was moored an Orcish trireme, an unaccustomed sight on the eastern seas where Lanwulf had most often sailed. It was in poor condition, sloppily maintained as was typical of such vessels, he'd heard. A few of the grim-faced goblins watched the White Dolphin with interest. At the head of the pier was a road that wound along the entire waterfront, and across which stood numerous warehouses. There was much traffic on the road, both afoot and of cargo wains. People, and creatures, of every race imaginable were visible.

Lanwulf looked about the waterfront, wearily but with interest, and he considered his future. It would be a small matter to jump ship and join another merchant crew in a place such as this. He would be free of the pirates, and might even be able to get a ship heading homeward. How long had he been away, he wondered. Four, no five years now. But go home to what? He had left that cold, joyless northern land for a reason: terrible boredom. Farming turnips was not for him. And though the life of a merchant sailor held a terrible boredom and monotony all its own, at least it was punctuated by the excitement of seeing new lands. And when was the last time a Snowland farmer fought a battle with pirates? So why not just join another merchant crew?

But something made him hesitate, and Lanwulf pondered this while the Captain continued to haggle the price of the mooring fees. He felt no desire to escape and find another ship. The adventure was gone out of it, he decided finally. Now that his fear of being killed had faded, he realized that the past week since the pirate attack had been exciting. He was not sure he wanted it to end, not yet anyway.

A loud bellow summoned the crew to the Captain. "Men, all the mooring arrangements are made. I'll go into the city to arrange a buyer for both ship and cargo. The Rover will be here in a week to collect us, so we have some time. However, I want you all to stay aboard for the time being. There are precious few of us, and I like not the looks of that goblin ship across from us. No wenching or drinking until we get our money for this tub, understand?" There was a good deal of grumbling at this, but none spoke out openly. "Now then, I'll take one of you scum as an escort."

"I'll go," said Lanwulf quickly. A few of the pirates laughed, while others glared at him.

The Captain looked at him, his expression a mixture of surprise and approval. "Very well, boy. Get yourself a sword and dagger. We leave in ten minutes." Lanwulf ignored the angry looks of the other pirates and went to prepare himself.

He followed the Captain through the crowded thoroughfares of the city. As they went, the older man spoke at length about Freeport, its history as a haven for pirates in ancient times, its rise as a merchant city, and its wars with the great maritime powers. He seemed to relish every story, and was obviously very familiar with the city. He showed Lanwulf many points of interest, detailing their significance. The young sailor found the sights, sounds and smells of the city to be intoxicating after his long sea voyage.

They passed through a gate under a great wall into the Old City, a chaotic warren of ancient buildings, many dating back to the city's founding centuries past. The Captain threaded the streets like a native-born Freeporter.

"Well, lad, here we are at last." Here was a dingy tavern, an old, two-story structure of stout timbers blackened with great age. A sign hung from above a doorway pronouncing this as the Black Rose. The Captain led Lanwulf inside.

The young sailor had expected that the pirate Captain would take him to one of the rougher establishments, where sea dogs and sea wolves were common. But the Black Rose was no such place. Even at this early hour, the common room was nearly filled with a crowd of people, mostly merchants to look at them. And despite the dirty exterior, the inside was a fair deal finer than the dives Lanwulf was accustomed to.

"Buy yourself a drink and stay out of trouble. I'm going to find a buyer for the cargo." The Captain handed Lanwulf a few coins and moved off. Lanwulf smiled; the Captain moved like a wolf in a sheepfold among these fat merchants.

Lanwulf moved to the bar and bought an ale, and for a time was more than content with his drink, the first beer he had tasted in weeks. But soon, he began to listen to the talk of people around him. And on every tongue was talk of the great lighthouse. Most dismissed it as "Milton's Folly" and lamented its great cost. But even so, Lanwulf could hear excitement in the voice of even the most ardent criticizer of it. Everyone, it seemed, was excited about the impending dedication of the lighthouse, and the unprecedented festival that was to accompany it.

After a time, the Captain returned. "Well, boy, that was far easier than I'd expected. More profitable, too. This lighthouse dedication has everyone in the city in an uproar – there is a huge demand for our spices to supply the city's eateries. It seems they are expecting a huge crowd of people from all over to be here." The

The Captain's voice went cold.

"Know, vermin, I will not let this outrage stand."



Captain seemed well pleased with himself, and bought himself and Lanwulf another ale, and then another. Soon, they were both quite inebriated, and the older man began telling Lanwulf stories of his piratical exploits. Some of the other patrons joined their jollity, any fear of drinking with a pirate seemingly subdued by his great humor and wonderful stories. Lanwulf enjoyed himself, as he had not for longer than he cared to remember. In the end, the Captain paid for rooms at the Black Rose – neither was in any condition to return to their ship that night.

Lanwulf woke with a splitting headache that was only somewhat repaired by his huge breakfast with the Captain, who seemed unaffected by the previous night's revelry. After paying their bill, the two left the inn for the docks to inform the others of their success and to await the buyer, who had promised to come down later that day to complete the transaction.

The morning light hurt Lanwulf's head, and he was happy the Captain chose not to continue his instruction on the history of Freeport. They walked in silence, the Captain leading, and passed back outside the walls of the Old City and back to the docks. Lanwulf paid little heed to their surroundings this time, and when the Captain stopped suddenly at the head of their pier, the young sailor nearly walked into him. "Something's wrong, boy," hissed the Captain.

Lanwulf looked at the ship; he could see nothing amiss. The deck watch was not visible, but he might simply be behind the mast or even below decks for a moment. The Captain proceeded slowly, and Lanwulf followed.

They came to the gangplank that angled up to the ship's main deck. Suddenly, a figure stepped out of the main cabin and moved to block the plank. "What you wants?" the figure asked with a heavy, snarling accent, its hand on the sword hilt at its side. Lanwulf stared a moment, then his jaw dropped in surprise. It was an Orc!

"Where is my crew?" was all the Captain could manage as he seethed in anger.

"You at wrong ship. Go away or I kills you, human." The Orc patted its sword threateningly.

"What's going on?" Lanwulf was silenced by an angry gesture from the Captain.

The Captain stared at the Orc, and Lanwulf saw others appear now from the cabin. Across the pier, Orcs on the trireme had appeared, as well, and were watching the confrontation with great interest.

"Human," the Orc snarled, "be good now. Run along. No come back. Our ship now. You go or die, too."

The Captain's voice went cold. "Know, vermin, I will not let this outrage stand."

The Orc laughed, then said something in its guttural language to the others now gathered behind it. Then, it glared at the Captain. "You steal ship. We steal from you. Sometimes win, sometimes lose. You lose. Go now." The Captain turned and left at a brisk pace,

Lanwulf following at a trot to keep up with the long-legged man's stride. Orcish laughter from both ships followed them.

"An interesting story, to be sure. But how am I to know this is truly your ship and not the Orc's?" The officer of the Sea Lord's Guard looked at the Captain with mock sympathy. They stood on the docks a quarter-mile from the White Dolphin.

The Captain's anger and frustration were evident on his face. His story of the theft of the ship, less the minor details of his own piracy, had met with surprising disbelief and a complete lack of action by the city guard. This officer even refused to so much as go the ship and talk to the Orcs.

"Your own clerk met us yestermorn!" the Captain shouted. He pointed to the pudgy man standing nearby, who had a look of fear on his face, though of whom was not clear. The soldier looked to him. "Well, Ranulf?"

"I had so many arrivals yesterday. I can't be expected to remember everyone. I'm sorry," he added lamely.

"I will take this to the Captain's Council!" the Captain shouted.

The guardsman frowned. "No, I would not do that, were I you. They are busy with the upcoming dedication of the lighthouse and other matters, and would merely defer it back to me. You waste your time, and mine. Now, good day." The man walked off, the Captain's eyes on his back.

The clerk lingered a moment until the guardsman had gone. He looked at the Captain sympathetically. "Sir, I am truly sorry, but the Orcs have paid the guards off well. And with their numbers so thin on the docks to pay for that damned lighthouse, they would be very loath to challenge dozens of well-armed Orcs."

"But this is outrageous!" the Captain said. "The Freeport of old would not tolerate such behavior. Alas for the Captain's Code."

"Aye, the city is run by the Captain's Council," said the clerk, "but in truth they are all politicians, not real Captains anymore. The old Code of the Pirate Captains is largely forgotten by them, at least where money and power is concerned. The Orcs leave for the Goblin Coast in two days, they say. I am truly sorry for you, but there is naught to be done." He turned and left, disappearing into the crowded street.

"Now what?" asked Lanwulf.

The Captain turned and looked at the young sailor for a moment. "Nobody steals from me and lives. Follow me, boy."

He led Lanwulf a long distance eastward to a decrepit part of town. Here, the streets were clogged with refuse, and dirty urchins begged for scraps of bread. It was far quieter than the bustling docks, and smelled terrible. Scurvytown, the Captain said it was called. He walked through it as unerringly as he had walked through the Old City, stopping finally before a door to a rude shack erected amidst the squalor. He knocked.

"Be off, ye verminous bilge rats!" The door opened slightly, and a haggard old face appeared. "I want nothing ye've got and got nothing ye wants!"

"Open the door, Pike, before I knock your house down around your ears."

The door opened fully now and an old man peered at his visitors through eyes glazed with cataracts. "Cap'n Bessel, is it? Here to collect for the widows and orphans fund, no doubt."

"Glad to find you still alive, Pike. Now, let us in."

They entered the shack into its only room, a crude square space with a dirt floor and the crudest of furnishings. The old man motioned them to sit, which they did, atop two small crates that served as furniture. No one spoke for several moments.

"This ain't no social call, is it," said Pike. "I'm not so blind that I don't know that look, Cap'n."

"Indeed it's not, old friend. I've been robbed," he said grimly.

The old man laughed heartily, revealing a mouth with few teeth remaining, and most of those blackened. "That's nothing new. Who by this time?" The Captain quickly sketched out the situation to the old man, and it was apparent to Lanwulf that this old man was once a pirate with the Captain.

"So, that's where things stand. I am looking for some good men to help me retake the ship, lads not afraid of some real bloodshed. I'll be damned if I let those over-sized Goblins steal from me." The Captain crossed his arms.

The old man shook his head. "You don't care a whit for the loot, do ye? Ye never did. It was always the damned Pirate's Code." Pike spit, then looked at Lanwulf for the first time. "Equality of every Cap'n? Bah! Know this, boy; there ain't no honor among thieves, Code or no Code."

Pike's eyes bored into Lanwulf. "Yer thinkin' this be an excitin' adventure and ye'd have a great fun life as a pirate, ain't ya lad? Well, look around ye." He motioned around his dirty hovel. "This be the reward of a pirate who lives, and there be few that do to my ripe old age. Think o' that, lad, if ye live through this."

"Then why did you sail with the Captain?"

The old man laughed. "Because I was a bored merchant sailor like you!"

"Can you help me?" the Captain interrupted, ignoring the old man's sarcasm.

"Aye, I know some stout lads what'll help for a share of the loot. But it'll have to be a big share, mind. I'm guessing ye've not much to pay 'em ahead o' time. But they'll be good for this work; I think some of 'em be sons of mine, though ye never know. But these Orcs; they've been trouble since they arrived. The damned Sea Lord's Guard is too busy fleecing merchants in the Old City to deal with 'em." He smiled. "Time was, Cap'n, when we'd have taken real advantage o' that." He sighed, his mind drifting into old memories.

"Have them meet me outside the Crusted Binnacle at midnight tonight." He paused a moment and looked at the old man. "And Pike, thank you. Once again I owe you."

"Thank ye, Cap'n. If I were a bit younger, I'd come with ye. I'm guessin' it'll be more fun than Swagfest." He turned to Lanwulf again. "You stick with the Cap'n, boy. You'll learn more than you ever needed to know!"

Lanwulf paced slowly along a warehouse near the end of the pier, doing his best to look casual and remain inconspicuous, all the while watching for activity on either the Orc trireme or the White Dolphin. The Captain had sent him here a few hours after dark while he went to organize the men Pike was gathering. His job was to determine the Orc's numbers and their degree of watchfulness. Easier said than done, thought Lanwulf. Though he'd seen a few Orcs come and go, he had no idea how many of them there were. At least they did not seem overly watchful, at least to his mind. He could not even see watches on the decks most of the time, though both ships had lanterns lit.

About an hour after midnight, the Captain appeared. Lanwulf quickly reported what little he'd seen. "I'm afraid I've not been of much help," he ended.

"Nonsense, boy. I have eight men here ready for this; that should be enough, though it might get hairy. Here's what I want you to do..."

Lanwulf walked slowly down the pier, staggering like a drunkard, all the while his heart racing. His mind also raced, and he

questioned his decision to aid the Captain. He certainly did not owe the Captain anything; and Orcs were a mean lot, not to be trifled with. They'd just as soon kill you as look at you, he knew. But he'd come this far, and in some strange way he was enjoying his time with the Captain; it was too late to run back, in any case. He reached the gangplank of the White Dolphin and started to walk up to the ship.

"Aargh, where be you going, human?" An Orc had appeared and blocked his way up the plank.

Here goes nothing, thought Lanwulf. In his best impression of slurred drunkenness, he spoke. "Good evening, shir. I am looking for a mishter Dorrim. Have you sheen him?"

"Wrong ship. You go now."

"No, shir. I am sure he is aboard thish veshel. I musht she him. He owesh me gold." Lanwulf moved closer to the Orc.

"You go or I kill you. I..." The Orc was cut off as Lanwulf pretended to stumble into him, and stuck a dagger into his throat. The voiceless, dying Orc fell into the harbor with a splash. Lanwulf looked to the pier and saw a group of men rapidly approaching, led by the Captain. They quickly reached the gangplank and came aboard.

"Good work, boy! Now, lads, heave off the gangplank!" Several of the men pushed the heavy wooden plank from the ship. It fell into the water after a loud crash against the hull.

"That's it boys. Look to your blades!" The men drew their swords, while three with crossbows stood at the ready. Moments later, the door to the cabin burst open, and several Orcs poured out, all armed.

The first three dropped to the deck almost immediately, a crossbow bolt in each chest. The crossbowmen dropped their weapons and drew swords, as additional Orcs reached the group of men. A fierce melee erupted on the weather deck, as ever more Orcs poured out.

The Orcs, though just awoken, fought savagely, and soon outnumbered the ten humans. The men stood in a semi-circle, containing the vile goblinoids and preventing them from taking advantage of their superior numbers. The Captain fought like a wild man, and Lanwulf was amazed by his skill with the cutlass. For himself, the young sailor was inexperienced in swordsmanship, and could do little more than avoid hitting friends or being hit himself by Orcish blades.

The battle raged for several minutes and the humans seemed to be gaining the upper hand. Near a dozen Orcs lay dead or dying on the deck, and only two humans had been killed. But suddenly, an arrow slammed into the back of the man next to Lanwulf. He dropped to the deck, dead before he landed.

Lanwulf spun and looked towards the pier; a half dozen Orcs with bows stood there, shooting at them. More were pouring off the trireme, and some were beginning to shimmy across the mooring lines.

"Cut the lines!" shouted the Captain.

Dodging arrows, Lanwulf rushed to the nearest lines and hacked them until they cut. A loud splash told him that at least one Orc was now in the water. He ran towards the other lines but an Orc suddenly sprang aboard; Lanwulf could see others close behind that one.

Lanwulf swung his blade sideways at the Orc, which parried his stroke with a vicious slash. The Orc then struck at him, and the clash of the blades nearly jarred Lanwulf's sword from his hand. The Orc struck again, sensing its advantage, and the young sailor was beaten back, away from the lines. Additional Orcs were nearly aboard now.

The Orc lunged suddenly at the sailor, driving him backwards. Lanwulf tripped over something in the dimness and fell backwards.

The Orc was cut off as Lanwulf pretended to stumble into him, and stuck a dagger into his throat.

But as the Orc pushed forward to finish him, an arrow suddenly impacted the triumphant Orc's side. The dead creature fell atop him; it had inadvertently saved his life by pushing him from the arrow's path.

Lanwulf rolled the Orc off himself and stood up. At the mooring lines stood the Captain. He swung downward, cutting them, and several more Orcs fell into the harbor. Lanwulf looked about the ship. All the remaining Orcs onboard were slain, and the ship was slowly drifting away from the pier. The Orcs on the pier continued to shoot arrows for several minutes, but finally gave up to help their fellows climb from the cold water, and returned to the trireme.

"Well, lads," said the Captain, "let's say we put some sail on her and find an empty pier a bit down from these Orcs?" A loud "aye" came from the remaining men and they went to work, each obviously familiar with ships.

The Captain and Lanwulf quickly searched the ship and soon found four of the Captain's pirates imprisoned in the bilge, wounded and ill-treated, but alive. The bodies of Henwyr and the other pirates were all piled up in the cargo hold. The survivors quickly joined the other men in getting the ship moved to a new pier.

"You did quite well, lad." The Captain and Lanwulf sat in a tavern near the docks. The theft of the ship from the Orcs had caused quite a stir in Freeport, but as no one much cared for the Orcs anyway, the city guard had been easily persuaded to pretend it never happened. The Orcs had been sullen, but the loss of so many of their crewmen seemed to dissuade them from attempting to recapture the ship. They had left later the next day, and no one was sorry to see them go. Meanwhile, the sale of the cargo and ship had gone forward, and the Captain now had a sizable chest of gold in his room.

The two men were silent for a time. Finally, the Captain spoke again. "So, lad, now that you have a sack of coin, what are you going to do with yourself?"

Lanwulf looked at the Captain for a moment. "I'm not sure, sir. This lighthouse dedication looks to be quite interesting; I might just linger in Freeport for a few months to see it for myself. You've given me more than enough gold to live well for a while."

"Aye, and you've earned it."

"And where are you off to next, Captain, if I may ask?"

"The open sea, m'lad; the only place an old sea wolf like me feels at home. The Dark Rover will be here tomorrow to collect me. There are many more merchants out there ripe for the plucking!"

"Then mayhap we will meet again, Captain. Either here in Freeport, or on the sea."

"Mayhap we will, lad. Mayhap we will."

THE GRAVEYARD

Continued From Page 21

becomes wallpaper! Knowing his time is up Griswold somehow deals enough damage in secondaries to end the horror. Fortunately for the fallen this was the first time characters had gone down and they had a cleric of high enough level to do something about it. Some praying, some casting and a couple days of rest and the party was ready for door #1.

Antechamber two: I'll spare you the details of the trap but two party members got the green slime burned off them one round before they melted away down the drain. They got past this room with only third-degree burns and gouges from grappling hooks.

Antechamber three: We open the obsidian door and what is inside but THE hand of Vecna. Standing there in a glass case housed in a room with base reliefs of heads, hands and eyes decorating the wall. Our heroes decide this has got to be destroyed and after a few precautionary measures scoop the hand out of the case and turn tail running. One round later the base relief sculptures in the wall animate and begin chanting. "Join us!! Jooin ussss!!!" Saves versus death magic all the way around the table. Griswold fails and feels irresistibly drawn back to the room. His body is pulled by some unseen force, hurtling back through the door as the party desperately tries to stop his flight. Pep tries to close the door to no avail. Everyone else grabs onto Griswold and attempts brute force. No effect. Pep now stands in the doorway. "I dig in and block the way!" No good! Pep the barbarian is dragged along all the way to the back wall of the chamber. WHUMP! Against the wall. But Griswold doesn't stop. His body becomes intangible and goes THROUGH Pep's and INTO the wall. Griswold is now the newest base relief sculpture to decorate the room.

Even though the party survived (or were raised from the dead) all this to go on to many more adventures none of them will ever forget that night of death.



Shootin' from the Hip

The Price is Wrong

By: Jeffrey S. Carter, Head Writer

When we do reviews here at Gaming Frontiers, we have a checklist of things we look for in order to help us arrive at a final conclusion. One of those things a product needs to demonstrate is value for the money. This little category has been giving me a lot of trouble as of late, and here's why: I don't know what anything should cost anymore.

Let's start with adventure modules, which typically cost around \$10. Why \$10? I guess you can blame it on WoTC, who published their first 48-pagers for \$9.95, and everybody else just followed suit. Here's the problem though – not everybody agrees that the value of 48 pages of content is worth \$10. Some d20 publishers want to give you more (up to 96 pages) while others want to give you less (sometimes 32, and even as low as 28 pages). "So what?" you're saying, "Jeff, just pay the ten bucks and play the game". I will, but not after I throw a few more thoughts your way.

If we agree that on average, 48 pages of black-and-white content is worth around \$10, then why do some sourcebooks that come in at that page count cost \$15? Is it because it's a sourcebook, and that alone justifies the cost? Is it because the publisher thinks you'll get more use of a sourcebook than an adventure, therefore it's more valuable? Or is it because the publisher is a small company and had to push the price up to afford printing costs?

It also seems we've agreed that 96 pages of black-and-white content is worth about \$20, which is strange, because I remember paying \$20 for the Core Rulebooks, which were 250-page-plus full-color hard covers. Now, word on the street is that the Core Rulebooks will be jumping in price up to \$29.95, but that's still only ten dollars more for a book that's more than twice the size of those 96-pagers, hardcover and full-color. I'm not calling this out in order to compare d20 publishers to WoTC, since WoTC also has 96-page black-and-white books that cost almost \$20 (and, in doing reviews, we compare d20 products to d20 products – WoTC is not part of the equation). I'm calling it out because even WoTC is guilty of confusing us. They give us those nice Core Rulebooks at \$20, and then ask us \$10 for 48 page modules. Last time I checked, 48 was not half of 250, so what gives?

Here's another good one – you know those little 16 page mini-adventure thingies that cost \$5? Seems like a good deal, right? After

all, 16 is half of 32, so they're on target as far as price goes. The problem is that they're small. Real small. About the size of an 8 x 11 piece of paper folded in half, which means they're really only 8 pages long.

8 pages for \$5. Something is wacky here.

And, don't even get me started on d20 publisher hard covers. Some folks want to charge you \$20, some \$25, some \$30 or more. Some publishers seem to want to slap a hard cover on everything for no good reason, which boggles the mind. Oh neat, a 150 page hardcover for \$28. I don't think so. Some publishers don't want to put a hard cover on their books and still charge you the \$28. I'm at a loss.

Even the product you're holding in your hand is something of an anomaly. 140 pages of full-color for \$17.95. Where does that fit into the scheme of things? Don't ask me, I'm not the accountant.

So, what's the point? For me, the point is that comparative analysis is going to take a real backseat in my reviews from now on. When reviewing or buying products, each and every product will receive a score based on their own merits, regardless of price. Comparisons just aren't going to fit into the equation anymore. End of story.

For you, the customers, it means that you've also got to determine what you consider to be a value. The market only works as long as you and the publishers maintain that silent agreement that the price they have assigned to their product is right. If not, well, you've been pretty good about letting your wallet do the talking, since it speaks louder than words, so keep it up.

In the end, I suppose we should all be thankful that our favorite role-playing system isn't a monopoly, and that we live in an age where we can enjoy the wide variety of products we do from such a wide range of creative minds. If a little price zaniness here and there is the price we have to pay...it's worth it.

Things could be worse, you know. We could not have a choice in the matter, and feel obligated to shell out \$20 for a product just because we're starving and it's the only thing out there. But that's sooo Second Edition, and I'm not eager to go back there, thank you. I like my d20 just fine.

Roll initiative.

~~\$2.99~~

~~\$9.99~~

~~\$19.99~~

THE MONSTER LAB

JUST WHEN YOU THOUGHT IT WAS SAFE...

BY: KENNY LEWIS

ILLUSTRATED BY: SCOTT DROUIN

ARCHER URCHIN

Small Animal

Hit Dice: 1d8+1 (5 hp)

Initiative: -1 (Dex)

Speed: 10 ft. (cannot run)

AC: 10 (-1 Dex, +1 natural)

Attacks: Bite +0 melee

Damage: 1d8

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./0 ft.

Special Attacks: Projectile spines, poison

Special Qualities: Blindsight

Saves: Fort +2, Ref -1, Will +0

Abilities: Str 8, Dex 9, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 10, Cha 8

Skills: Listen +5, Spot +5

Climate/Terrain: Temperate or warm aquatic

Organization: Solitary or group (2-4)

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 2-3 HD (Small); 4-6 HD (Medium)

An archer urchin is a unique type of sea urchin capable of projecting its spines. They appear as small black balls, 4 feet in diameter, covered in 5-foot long needle sharp spines. They have a specialized mouth on the bottom of their bodies that consists of three jaws used for scraping food off of coral and rocks. Also, on the bottom of their bodies is a series of small tube-like feet each equipped with suction pads that allow them to adhere to nearly any



surface. Archer urchins are extremely aggressive and will not hesitate to launch one of their spines at anything that gets too close.

COMBAT

Archer urchins always attack by shooting off one of their poison spines. If

that doesn't drive the intruder off they will not hesitate to fire another. The location of their mouth makes it hard for them to bite an opponent unless they happen to be on top of it.

Projectile Spines (Ex): An archer urchin can fire one of its spines per round. This is done with special air sacs on the base of each spine. The spine has a range of 15 ft. and does 1d6 points of piercing damage. The attack is made like a normal ranged attack with the urchin receiving a +5 racial bonus to hit. Spines lost this way grow back within three days. A normal-sized archer urchin has 75 spines.

Poison (Ex): The spines and mouth of an archer urchin contain venom glands that secrete a poison that causes intense pain and irritation. Whenever a living creature is bitten by or is poked by one of the urchin's spines that creature must make a Fortitude save (DC 20). If this save fails, that creature receives a -8 penalty to all actions for 1d6 hours from the excruciating pain caused by the venom.

Blindsight (Ex): Archer urchins are able to interpret vibrations picked up by their spines and turn them into visual images. All archer urchins have Blindsight with a 50-foot range.



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SARGASSUM STRANGLE WEED

Medium-Size Plant

Hit Dice: 2d8+4 (12 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 0 ft.

AC: 14 (+1 Dex, +3 natural)

Attacks: Slam +3 melee

Damage: Slam 1d4+3

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./15 ft.

Special Attacks: Improved grab, constrict 1d4+3

Special Qualities: Blindsight

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +0

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int -, Wis 13, Cha 9

Skills: -

Climate/Terrain: Temperate or warm aquatic

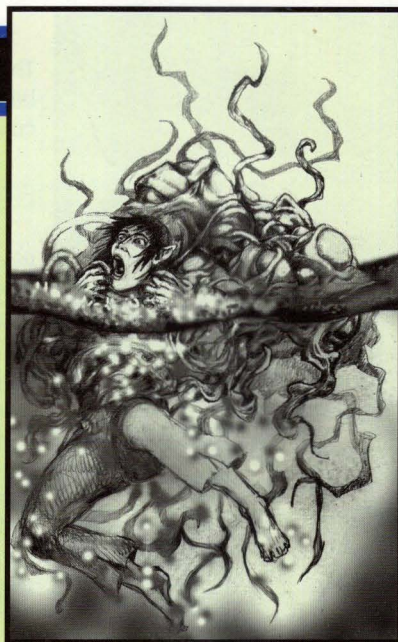
Organization: Solitary or bed (2-6)

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 3-6 HD (Large); 7-11 HD (Huge)



Sargassum strangle weed is a type of salt-water plant that floats on top of the water and is carried around by the tide. It looks like a tangled mass of vines, leaves, and bulbs that are tan in color. These weeds are highly carnivorous plants that feed on other creatures of the sea by catching them and strangling them with their vines. Once a creature has been killed by a sargassum strangle weed, its body juices are drained and stored in the plant's bulbs until needed.

COMBAT

The sargassum strangle weed attacks by using its vines to grab and crush its opponents until they are dead.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability the sargassum strangle weed must first hit with its slam attack. If the slam attack is successful, then the weed can automatically begin to constrict as a free action without drawing attacks of opportunity.

Constrict (Ex): A sargassum strangle weed deals 1d4+3 points of damage with a successful grapple check against medium-size or smaller opponents.

Blindsight (Ex): Sargassum strangle weeds lack visual sensory organs, but are equipped with specialized cells that act like eyes and ears and grant the weed Blindsight with a range of 50 feet.

SPONGE FIEND

Large Aberration

Hit Dice: 4d8+5 (36 hp)

Initiative: -2 (Dex)

Speed: 10 ft. (cannot run)

AC: 8 (-2 Dex)

Attacks: 2 slams +2 melee

Damage: 1d4

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Suction

Special Qualities: Blindsight, fast healing 5, sponge body

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

Abilities: Str 10, Dex 6, Con 20, Int 1, Wis 10, Cha 8

Skills: Listen +3, Spot +3

Climate/Terrain: Temperate or warm aquatic

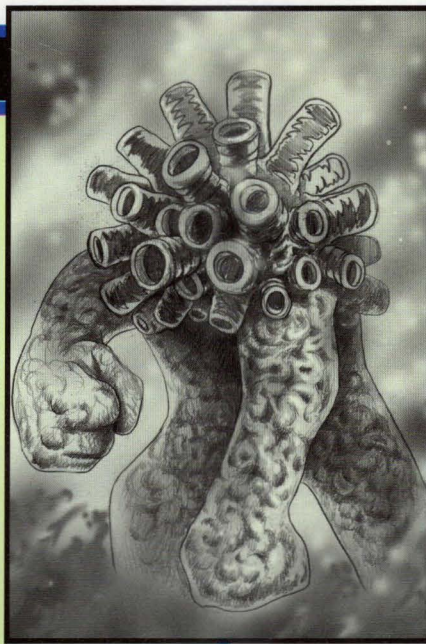
Organization: Solitary or colony (2-5)

Challenge Rating: 1

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 5-7 HD (Large); 9-12 HD (Huge)



moving around the sea floor catching whatever they can. Once something is caught, it is placed into one of several large tube-like openings on the fiend's body to be digested. If the food item is too big to fit into one of these tubes, it is torn into pieces small enough to fit.

COMBAT

Sponge fiends attack by slamming their opponents with their arm-like appendages in an attempt to stun them. Once something is stunned it is eaten as described above.

Suction (Ex): Sponge fiends are porous and able to pass water through their bodies with the help of specialized cells. Some sponge fiends use this ability to draw prey towards their bodies to help better catch it. When this ability is used, the sponge fiend causes an extremely fast current to sweep through one side of its body forcing anything that is within 20 ft. to be pulled towards or pushed away from it depending on which side

the opponent is on. In either situation the opponent being affected must make a Reflex save (DC 20, -1 for every rank of swim possessed by the opponent). If this save fails, the opponent is either pulled 10 ft. towards the fiend or pushed 10 ft. away.

A sponge fiend can maintain this ability for 2d6 rounds but may take no other action while doing so.

Blindsight (Ex): Each individual cell is able to interpret vibrations in the water into the semblance of something visual. All sponge fiends have Blindsight with a range of 50 feet.

Sponge Body (Ex): Sponge fiends only take 1 hp worth of damage from bludgeoning weapons, regardless of the wielder's strength thanks to their soft, spongy bodies.

A sponge fiend is not really a single creature; it is a colony of single-celled organisms living and functioning together for survival. Sponge fiends appear as large, vaguely humanoid creatures made entirely out of sponge. They can be found in any color of the rainbow with the most common colors being purple and green. Unlike normal sponges, sponge fiends actively hunt for food by

GIANT ANEMONE

Medium-Size Animal

Hit Dice: 2d8+6 (18 hp)

Initiative: +0 (Dex)

Speed: 5 ft. (cannot run)

AC: 12 (+2 natural)

Attacks: 1d6 Tentacles

Damage: See below

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Stinging paralysis, digested

Special Qualities: Pedal Disk

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +2

Abilities: Str 15, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 11, Cha 9

Skills: Listen +3, Spot +1

Climate/Terrain: Temperate or warm aquatic

Organization: Solitary or bed (2-10)

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 4-6 HD (Medium); 7-10 HD (Large)



Giant anemones look like large, colorful underwater flowers; however they are not plants at all but are a specialized type of sea animal related to jellyfish. The body of an anemone is tube shaped, on top of which lies a ring of tentacles. In the center of these tentacles is the anemone's mouth, which makes up most of its body.

They come in many different colors, but most are brightly colored. Most anemones can be found in coastal areas near coral reefs or large tidal pools.

COMBAT

Anemones wait for something to stray too close to one of their tentacles at which time they will attempt to touch it. Once something is touched, special cells on the tentacles release a toxin that stings and paralyzes its prey so that it may be moved to the mouth and ingested with little difficulty.

Stinging Paralysis (Ex): Any living creature touched by an anemone's tentacle suffers 1d4 points of subdual damage from the stinging toxin and must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) or become paralyzed for 1d4 rounds.

Digested (Ex): Any creature that has been moved into the mouth suffers 1d4 points of damage per round from the digestive process of the anemone. An anemone can hold no more than 1 Medium-size, 2 Small, 4 Tiny, 8 Diminutive, or 16 Fine-size creatures in its belly at one time.

Pedal Disk (Ex): The bottom of an anemone is capable of attaching to any surface. This disk functions like a suction cup adhering the anemone to whatever it touches. Such is the suction power of the disk that it would require something with a strength at least equal to or greater than that of the anemone's to remove it from whatever it has attached itself to. This disk also functions like a foot, allowing the anemone to move up to 5 ft. per round.

AMBUSH CRAB

Medium-Size Animal

Hit Dice: 3d8+6 (18 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft., burrow 10 ft.

AC: 16 (+1 Dex, +5 natural)

Attacks: 2 claws +5 melee

Damage: Claw 1d6+3

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Qualities: Burrow

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +2

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 8

Skills: Listen +3, Spot +1

Climate/Terrain: Temperate or warm aquatic

Organization: Solitary or bed (2-10)

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 4-6 HD (Medium); 7-10 HD (Large)



claws used for grabbing prey; the other eight are equipped with scoops and spikes that allow the ambush crab to burrow. When buried beneath the sand the only part of the ambush crab that is visible are its long feathery antenna that are commonly mistaken for plants. Ambush crabs have no food preference and will usually attack anything that happens to wander too close.

COMBAT

Ambush crabs lie in wait under the surface of the sand until something comes within striking distance. They use their antennae to pick up vibrations made by any nearby creatures. These vibrations are then interpreted by the crab's brain into visual images that will let the crab know how big a creature is as well as how many are present, and most

importantly, how far away it is.

Burrow (Ex): Ambush crabs are excellent burrowers and can burrow 10 ft. straight down per round through sand.

Ambush crabs are voracious predators that burrow themselves just beneath the surface of the sand at the tide line. Their bodies are ovoid in shape and covered with a thick-segmented carapace that protects their fragile limbs. Two of their legs are equipped with small

The Definitive d20 Spy And Espionage Game Period

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The secret's out... Spycraft is a roleplaying game set in a world of dark secrets and high espionage, where players become larger-than-life superspies poised to take on threats of global scale — power-mad dictators, eccentric billionaire industrialists, and criminal masterminds obsessed with global domination. Join a team of highly trained professionals outfitted with the latest cutting-edge gadgets and a worldwide information network, then shoot, seduce, or speed your way through the deadliest missions your Gamemaster can devise.

The Spycraft Espionage Handbook is a 288-page hardbound book containing everything you need to design and play your favorite secret agent and equip him with the latest tools of the trade. The Espionage Handbook also contains all the rules required for the heart-pounding, cinematic flavor of your favorite espionage serial, playing through frame after frame of thrilling action.

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SPYCRAFT

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NO BOUNDARIES

QUEEN of the NORTH

By: **B.D. Flory** Illustrated by: **Storn Cook, Richard Pollard & Paul H. Way**



"The Colonel will see you now."

"About time," Hunter grunted. Four in the morning was way too early to be kept waiting outside Control's office – especially when the wait might end in a reprimand.

The receptionist cleared her throat gently. "John?"

"Yeah?"

"Twenty bucks says he chews you out."

Despite the hour, Hunter couldn't suppress a grin. "You're on, Karen." He opened the door with a soft click, and stepped inside.

Dietrich sat behind his desk, glaring at a deep stack of folders tagged "Eyes Only". He scratched at his clean-shaven chin, but gave no sign he'd noticed Hunter's arrival. After a few moments, he snorted, "What good is a secretary if she can't organize my in-box?" "I wouldn't know, Sir," Hunter answered. Dietrich was bedecked in his Marine Corps uniform. Old habits – especially old military habits – died hard.

Under his breath, Dietrich rumbled, "Gonna have to do something about Karen's clearance." He opened a drawer and flipped the lid of a cigar box up. "Smoke?"

"No, Sir."

"Good. Cuban's aren't cheap." Dietrich lit the cigar, took a couple of puffs, and gestured to the chair opposite his desk. "At ease, Orion."

Dietrich took the top file off the stack and tossed it to Hunter. "This is background. As of right now, you're on duty." Dietrich picked up a remote control from the corner of his desk and flipped on the monitor set in the wall. A lanky, black haired man with a

bushy mustache was frozen on screen, peering over his shoulder – probably searching for the photographer. "Know him?" Dietrich asked.

"That's Triton. Company man."

"He was a Company man," Dietrich countered. "He disappeared when the Shop broke away from the Foundation. The file in your lap contains everything we have on him." Dietrich paused for another puff on his cigar. "You can review it on your way to San Francisco."

"What's in San Francisco?"

Dietrich waved at the monitor, pungent smoke trailing behind his hand. "He is, and whatever he knows. He contacted me late last night. Says he wants a meeting." The Colonel paused. "Can you handle it?"

"Do I have a choice?"

"No," Dietrich answered flatly.

"Then yeah, I can handle it."

"Good. Phoenix will go with you." Dietrich stubbed out his cigar in an ashtray on his desk. "Now that that's out of the way, there's one more matter we need to address: Florida." Dietrich picked up another folder – a rather thick one – and dropped it in front of Hunter with a thud. "These," he spat, "are the repercussions of your little stunt in the Keys, and the resources dedicated to making it look like just another day at the beach."

"Sir—"

"As long as I'm in charge of this outfit, Hunter, you'll toe the line. I keep a neat office, and I don't want things like this cluttering my desk. Dismissed."

"Sir, if that boat—"

"Get out!" Dietrich thundered.

Hunter stopped, speechless. He stood, saluted bitterly, and stalked out of the office. Without a word, he dropped a twenty-dollar bill on Karen's desk and left the building.

...

"You're sitting in my chair, buddy."

Hunter turned slowly, and fixed the interloper with a deadly stare. "What are you going to do about it?"

Calmly, he replied, "Nothing. I'll just sit in this one." The man grabbed a chair from a nearby empty table, and joined Hunter and Gage. Hunter had recognized Triton on sight, but one couldn't be too careful – the Shop, after all, invented Memory Flesh. They could have easily replaced Triton with an impostor.

"Well?" Hunter pressed impatiently.



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"The Shop's preparing to launch a new operation. I don't know what it is. I couldn't get close enough to it to find out."

"Why not?" Hunter demanded, still suspicious of the intelligence windfall. "You've got the best training in the business."

"So do they," Triton countered. They were Foundation too, remember?"

"Yeah," Hunter retorted menacingly. "Convenient that you came along when you did."

"Look," Triton almost pleaded, "trust me or not, I'm giving you all the information I can without blowing my cover." He passed Hunter a photograph. "This is Nautilus. He's in charge of the operation."

"I know him," Hunter said curtly. "Cleaner. He's good."

Triton nodded. "He was with them all along. Mopped up when anyone got too close to the Shop's plans before the break."

"Except for you, obviously," Gage added doubtfully.

Triton nodded. "I was lucky." He passed Hunter another stack of photos. "This is the Queen of the North, an icebreaker ship. He's aboard, along with his equipment."

"What kind of equipment?"

"I don't know exactly. Something new, but you'll know it when you see it. It takes up about half of a forward cargo hold - it's tough to miss."

"So what's so important that you had to risk your cover over it?"

"Nautilus is a player. He's got real power in the Shop. Whatever this is, it's big enough that he's personally overseeing the project. He's aboard that ship."

"So we've got to stop Nautilus," Hunter finished. "Good. I never liked him."

...

"Can't we just sabotage the ship?" Gage complained.

"Maybe, but there'd be questions," Hunter responded. "And I wouldn't want to clutter up Dietrich's desk."

"Alright," Gage acquiesced. "So what's the plan, then?"

"I'm getting on that ship," Hunter lowered his micro-binoculars and passed them to Gage. "You stay here, and let me know if anyone else comes aboard. I don't want any unexpected company."

Change the World... In an Afternoon!

Agents of the Archer Foundation routinely face criminals, terrorists, and madmen, each with a dastardly plot to be foiled. The Foundation's goal is to not only protect the world from these fiendish foes, but to ensure the world never discovers how close we come to the brink of destruction. Now, it's your turn. Below, we've included a solo adventure, perfect for rookie agents. You'll need a d20, 2d8, and a d6, along with a piece of scratch paper and a pen or pencil.

You are John Hunter, and you must infiltrate the Queen of the North, locate Nautilus or his device, and foil his test. To aid your efforts, Gage will observe from his position outside the ship, and offer advice - as well as the occasional warning.

Finally, when you've foiled Nautilus (or he's foiled you), log on to www.seriesarcher.com for debriefing. Your results will be compiled with other agents from around the world, and the final tally will determine the direction of the Shadowforce Archer story line. It's all in your hands, Agent Hunter.

The world is counting on you.

A Spycraft Moment...

Periodically, we'll include short asides detailing the features of the Spycraft Espionage Handbook (the rules upon which the

Shadowforce Archer roleplaying setting operates). This material has been declassified for your edification, and explains how the Spycraft rules come into play in the current scene.

There are a couple of notes you should make before beginning play, however: your starting Vitality and Wound point total (67 and 16, respectively), as well as your starting action dice (4). As these resources are expended during play, be sure to reduce your total accordingly.

For the purposes of the following solo serial, we've simplified a number of elements, including the combat system. Whenever you must fight one or more non-player characters (or NPCs), their statistics will be presented in the following form:

Name (and type)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
x	x	x	x	x	x

At the beginning of combat, you must determine the order of initiative for yourself and your opponents. Roll a d20 and add your Initiative Bonus to total (+7), then roll another d20 for your opponents, and add their Initiative Bonus. If you are fighting more than one NPC, add each NPC's Initiative Bonus to the roll separately, and note each total.

After Initiative Order is determined, the combat round begins. Whoever has the highest Initiative total may act first. Attacking is a half action, so each character may attack twice on their turn (in the full Spycraft game, more combat options are available, including a variety of half and full actions). To make an attack, roll a d20 and add the attacking character's Attack Bonus to the roll. If the total is equal to or greater than the target's Defense, the attack hits. Otherwise, the attack misses. If the attack is successful, roll the listed damage for the NPC - or 2d8 for your attacks - and subtract the total from the target's Vitality. If the damage total is greater than the target's remaining vitality, subtract the difference from the target's wounds total. When a character is reduced to 0 wounds, he is unconscious, and may make no further attacks. If reduced to -10 wounds, the character is dead.

If you roll a 20 on your own attack, you may spend one of your action dice to score a Critical Hit. If you are attacking a minion, he is immediately reduced to 0 wounds. Otherwise, your damage is applied directly to the target's wound total, ignoring vitality. Alternately, you may spend one of your action dice to augment a roll. Simply note the expenditure, and roll a d6. If you roll a 6, you may roll again and add the new result to 6, continuing in this fashion until you stop rolling sixes. Add the final result to your initial roll to determine the total roll.

After each character has acted in order of Initiative, the combat round ends. Unless directed otherwise by the text (or you or all of your opponents are reduced to 0 or less Wounds), continue to a new round of combat in which each character may act again, in the same order as the previous round.

Background

The Company's premier field team is headed up by a second-generation Navy SEAL culled from the Farm, where his father trained new cadets until his suicide in 1996. John Hunter was personally recruited into the Company by Col. Alan Dietrich, though recent events have placed tremendous strain on their relationship.

Hunter believes in the Archer Foundation's mission, but sees the Company crumbling under the weight of four generations of "old school" hard-liners who want to use it as a private army, stamping out evil without regard for innocents caught in the crossfire. He still

remembers his father's only explanation for leaving the Chamber: "I can't tell where the enemy stops and we start any more," and, though he could not understand then, he is beginning to now.

John Hunter is one of many Archer agents who are classified "fragile" (that is, wavering in his dedication to the cause), but he is not yet "broken," and still has much to offer. Rugged, industrious, and adventuresome, John is perfect for difficult missions in unusual terrain (though some argue that his affinity for peril stems from a desire to meet his maker). Hunter also has the uncanny ability to fit in anywhere. Once, after dispatching four enemy divers off the coast of Russia, he dragged himself onto shore, stripped off his wetsuit, splashed vodka on his face, and stepped into an elegant party with no one the wiser.

Hunter, John D.

Codename: ORION

Archer Identity Number: 09-991607-539

Nationality: United States of America

Gender: Male **Handedness:** Right

Height: 6'1" **Weight:** 205 lbs.

Eyes: Hazel **Hair:** Long, Dirty Blonde

Psion Class: Non-latent

Place of Birth: Bethesda, Maryland, USA

Date of Birth: 1968.01.23

Distinguishing Characteristics: Three dog-tags (one his father's)

Chamber: The Company

Department: Military Operations

Class: Pointman/Soldier **Level:** 3/3

Strength: 16 **Dexterity:** 16

Constitution: 16 **Intelligence:** 12

Wisdom: 12 **Charisma:** 11

Vitality: 67

Wounds: 16

Defense: 15 (+2 class, +3 Dex)

Initiative Bonus: +7 (+4 class, +3 Dex)

Speed: 30

Fort: +11 **Ref:** +7 **Will:** +5

Skills: Balance +8, Climb +7, Demolitions +7, Driver +9, First Aid +5, Intimidate +5, Jump +7, Profession (Military) +6, Spot +7, Survival +5, Swim +7, Tumble +9

Feats: Martial Artist, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Punching Basics, Snap Shot, Surge of Speed

Attacks: 7.62x51 assault rifle +8, .45 service pistol +8, Survival knife +8

Damage: 7.62x51 assault rifle 2d10, .45 service pistol 1d10+2, Survival knife 1d6+3

Equipment: Hollow-point ammunition

Common Gadgets: Sub-cochlear implant, "snake suit" (all options), endorphin patches (3)

1

You check your gear as you approach the Queen of the North: you have everything you'll need. The icebreaker sways gently in the tide, moored to the wharf with knots of rope nearly twice as thick as your arm. The wharf is crowded with dockworkers, loading and unloading nearby vessels.

Your radio earpiece crackles, and Gage's voice resolves itself out of the static. "First thing's first, Orion: you've got to get aboard. Knowing you, I wouldn't try the direct approach; you've never been that good at bluffing, and that gangplank is guarded. The mooring line on your far left doesn't have anyone watching it, so you might be able to climb aboard there."

If you attempt to climb the mooring line, read entry 2.

If you ignore Gage's advice, and try to bluff your way aboard the Queen of the North, read entry 3.

2

You lose yourself in the crowd of dockworkers, and make your way to the mooring line. It's solid and thick, and should be fairly stable. You step onto the rope, balancing carefully...

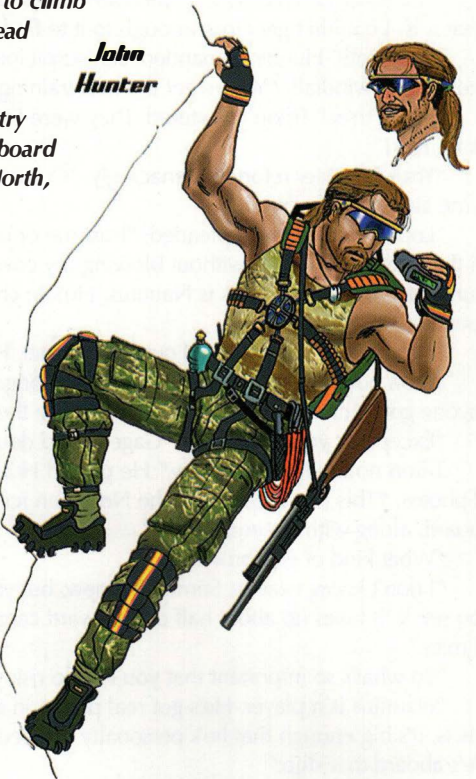
Roll a d20 and add Hunter's Balance skill to your roll (+8) to attempt a Balance check.

If you roll a 7 or better, read entry 4.

If you roll less than 7, read entry 5.

If you roll a 1, read entry 6.

John Hunter



A Spycraft Moment...

When an agent comes up against an obstacle of some sort, he must often utilize his skills to bypass the situation. This is called a skill check. In this case, Hunter needs to make a Balance check to cross the mooring line. To make a skill check in Shadowforce Archer, you roll a d20 and add your ranks in the appropriate skill to your result. If you meet or beat the DC, you succeed, if you do not, you fail.

3

You scoop up a small crate and balance it on your shoulder, doing your best imitation of a dockworker as you stride toward the icebreaker. When you arrive at the gangplank, you're challenged by the guards.

"Where do you think you're going, buddy?"

Roll a d20 to make a Bluff check..

If you roll a 14 or better, read entry 7.

If you roll less than 14, read entry 8.

A Spycraft Moment...

Frequently, an agent's skill must be measured against that of a minion or mastermind. This is called an opposed check. Here, you must make a Bluff check, opposed by the guard's Sense Motive skill. In order to make an opposed skill check in the normal game, you simply roll a d20 and add your ranks in the skill to the roll. The Game Control then does the same for the character opposing you. In this case, we're assuming the guard rolled an 11 on his Sense Motive check, and added his skill ranks (+3) to the roll.

Unfortunately, Hunter doesn't have the Bluff skill, so you don't get to add anything to your roll.

4

You slowly make your way up the mooring line, and climb onto the deck of the Queen of the North. Compared to the bustling wharf, the Queen of the North seems nearly deserted, with only a lone guard patrolling the area.

You draw your pistol - a silenced 9mm - and duck behind a vent.

Gage's voice crackles in your ear again. "If you can take that guard down without alerting anyone, you'll have the run of the deck. No one else is up there. If I were you though, I'd climb into the vent to get below decks. Of course, I'm not you." Gage pauses, then adds wryly. "Thank God."

If you ambush the sentry, read entry 9.

If you sneak into the vent, read entry 10.

If you've alerted the guards, read entry 11.

5

The mooring line sways slightly in the breeze, spoiling your balance. You manage to avoid a fall into the water below, but your progress is incredibly slow.

Roll a d20.

If you roll a x or better, read entry 4.

If you roll less than an x, return to the beginning of this entry.

If you roll a 1, read entry 6.

6

You lose your footing on the unsteady line, and tumble into the water below with a loud splash. You've alerted the guards! **Make a note of this, then read entry 12.**

A Spycraft Moment...

Whenever a d20 is rolled, be it for a skill check, attack roll, or saving throw, there's a chance for the acting character to totally botch whatever he was attempting. This is called the Error Range. Most of the time, the Error Range is 1, meaning on a natural 1 (a roll of 1 before any modification), the Game Control may cause you to suffer a catastrophic failure by spending an action die. In this case, he did.

7

"I got perishable cargo for the Queen of the North here," you bluff, "and I gotta get it into the refrigeration unit yesterday. You wanna explain to your boss why he's gotta eat his breakfast with sour milk?"

The guards look at each other doubtfully, then the first waves you past. "Go on."

Casually, you make your way up the gangplank. The deck is deserted, save for a lone sentry on patrol. Out of sight of the guards on the wharf, you duck behind a nearby vent and draw your silenced 9mm pistol.

Gage's voice crackles in your ear again. "If you can take that guard down without alerting anyone, you'll have the run of the deck. No one else is up there. If it were me, I'd climb into the vent to get below decks. But then, it's not me." Gage pauses, then adds wryly. "Thank God."

If you ambush the sentry, read entry 9.

If you sneak into the vent, read entry 10.

If you've alerted the guards, read entry 11.

8

"Gimme a break, pal," you groan. "I'm just doing my job."

"So am I," he retorts. "Stroll on. I don't want to see your face again." As you lose yourself once again in the crowded wharf, Gage cracks, "Smooth, Orion," over the radio. "Looks like you're crossing the mooring line."

Read entry 2.

9

You take careful aim with your pistol, drawing a bead on the unsuspecting sentry.

Sentry (minion)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+2	+2	1d10 (9x19mm)	11	12	10

Since the sentry is unaware of your presence (and thus surprised), you gain a number of advantages during the first round of combat: first, the sentry does not get to act during the first round, and thus may not attack you. Second, since the sentry has been caught flat-footed, he does not receive his Dexterity bonus to his defense for the first round of combat. This reduces his Defense to 10 until round 2.

If you eliminate the guard in one round of combat, read entry 13.

If you eliminate the guard, but it takes longer than one round, read entry 14.

If the guard defeats you, read entry 15.

10

As quietly as possible, you remove the vent cover and slip inside.

Roll a d20.

If you roll a 14 or greater, read entry 16.

If you roll less than a 14, read entry 17.

If you roll a 1, read entry 18.

11

Before you can make a decision, you hear another guard's booted feet hit the deck. Peering around the vent, you see the two sentries conferring. They both seem alert and ready for action. Looks like they were warned about you.

If you wish to attack the sentries, read entry 19.

If you try to sneak into the vent, read entry 20.

12

You plunge into the chilly waters, and quickly kick your way back to the surface. You can hear guards shouting on the docks above. As quietly as possible, you swim to a nearby support and grab hold, ducking low in the water to avoid detection.

Roll a d20, to attempt a Hide skill check.

If you roll a 12 or above, read entry 21.

If you roll less than a 12, either spend an action die (see A Spycraft Moment..., below) or read entry 22.

A Spycraft Moment...

This is an opposed skill check, utilizing your Hide skill versus the guards' Spot skill. For more on opposed skill checks, see the Spycraft Moment for entry 3.

This could be a particularly important skill check, as if the guards spot you, you'll be extremely vulnerable. It might be wise to

spend one or more action dice to enhance your roll. At the beginning of each session of play, each agent receives a certain number and type (i.e. d4, d6, d8, etc) of action dice based on his level (in your case, that's 4d6 action dice). You may spend these action dice for a variety of reasons during play. Here, you may roll one of your action dice, and add the number rolled to your Hide skill check total. If you roll the maximum number possible on an action die (in this case, y), you may roll it again and add the result to your initial roll, continuing in this fashion until you roll less than a y on a single die. If your final total is still below 12, you may continue to roll additional action dice until you reach 12, or you may stop at any time.

In any event, note how many action dice you have remaining (four minus the number spent here) and read the entry appropriate to your final total, noted above.

13

The guard falls to the deck with a flat thud. You quickly hide his body in an out of the way location and step through the hatch, descending a steep metal staircase into the Queen of the North.

Read entry 22.

14

The guard falls to the deck with a flat thud, but not before he shouted an alarm. You can see the two guards from the wharf running up the gangplank, and the hollow clank of metal stairs as another guard ascends from below decks.

Hurriedly, you pop the cover off the nearby vent, and descend into the Queen of the North.

You've alerted the guards! Make a note of this, and read entry 23.

15

You awaken to Gage's worried voice in your ear. "Orion, this is Phoenix. Come back." He pauses, then repeats the call.



Artwork From Spycraft Espionage Handbook

With a groan, you sit up, and a spike lances through you, emanating from your recent wounds. You've been captured. "This is Orion. I'm alive." You take quick stock of your sparse surroundings: a cot and a sink in a small metal room. A solid metal hatch dominates one side of your cell. "Looks like I'm in the brig."

"Thank God."

Obviously, your captors didn't find the radio receiver in your inner ear, nor the microscopic transmitter disguised beneath the top button of your shirt. Though your gun is missing, it's a good bet they didn't find your other toys. You knew that laser watch you requisitioned from R&D would come in handy.

You flip back the cover of the super science device, revealing a tiny electronic mechanism. You point the lens at the door, estimating the location of the latching mechanism. With a quiet hiss, the laser cuts through the steel door, severing the lock mechanism.

You gently swing the heavy door open, and step out into the hall, somewhere below decks aboard the Queen of the North.

You've rested six hours, and thus may restore 36 points of Vitality to your current total. Set your Wound point total to 1.

For the duration of the serial (or until you can locate a weapon), you may only make unarmed attacks in combat. Since you have the Martial Arts feat, these attacks do 1d6 damage on a successful hit. If subsequently defeat any sentries, you may take one of their weapons before proceeding. Simply use the damage rating listed for that minion for the duration of the serial.

If you've alerted the guard prior to this entry, they are no longer expecting trouble from you; the guards are not considered to be alerted any longer, unless you do so again.

Make a note of this, then read entry 22.

A Spycraft Moment...

At the beginning of each adventure, agents requisition gear, selecting from a wide variety of possible equipment. Some of these items are gadgets - super advanced devices, often disguised as everyday items.

Ordinarily, each agent chooses his own gear and gadgets, based on an allowance defined by his class and level. For the purposes of this adventure, however, Hunter's equipment has already been selected.

Also, since you've rested leading up to this scene (even though it wasn't voluntary), you may restore Vitality equal to the number of hours rested multiplied by your class level (or 36 Vitality points).

18

Silently, you remove the mesh cover and slip inside, taking care to replace it once inside. Carefully, you descend into the Queen of the North.

Read entry 22.

17

The hinges of the vent cover creak as you swing it open, alerting the sentry.

Gage's alarmed voice warns you, "The sentry's heading your way, Hunter!"

If you ambush the sentry, read entry 23.

If you scramble down the vent before he can find you (making a fair amount of noise in the process), read entry 24.

18

You fumble with the heavy mesh vent cover, finally dropping it on your foot. You try to stifle a pained grunt, but it's too late. You can hear the sentry radio for backup.

You've alerted the guards! Make a note of this, and read entry 11.

19

You open fire on the pair of guards.

If you eliminate the guards in one round, read entry 25.

If you eliminate the guards, but it takes longer than one round, they are able to raise the alarm. You've alerted the guards! Make a note of this, and read entry 25.

If the guards defeat you, read entry 15.

20

As quietly as possible, you remove the vent cover and slip inside.

Roll a d20.

If you roll an 18 or greater, read entry 16.

If you roll less than 18, read entry 17.

If you roll a 1, read entry 18.

A Spycraft Moment...

Since there are two guards opposing your Move Silently check, each makes his own Listen skill check (for more on opposed skill checks, see A Spycraft Moment... for entry 3). We're assuming that one of the guards rolls a 15. The other's result, since he rolled lower, is largely irrelevant.

21

Thanks to the deep shadows underneath the docks, you are able to escape detection by the guards. Eventually, you find a ladder leading topside, and haul yourself onto the wharf, soaked to the bone.

If this is the first time you've read this entry, make a note, and read entry 26.

If this is the second time you've read this entry, the mission is scrubbed. Read Debriefing, below.

22

"Good work, Hunter," Gage comments. "You're in."

You take quick stock of your surroundings. The hallway is lit, but not well, and the drab gray bulkheads do little to improve the mood.

"Uh, Hunter..." Gage hedges.

"Yeah?" you respond apprehensively.

"It's Triton. He's coming aboard."

"Damn!" you hiss. "Double cross?"

"I don't know, but you'd better get the lead out. You've got two choices, by my count. You can head for the bridge and look for Nautilus - incidentally, it looks like that's where Triton's headed - or you can search for his device. But if this is a double cross, there might not be a device to find."

"One more option, Gage," you say grimly.

"Listen to me just this one time, Hunter: you cannot sink this ship. You said it yourself. There'd be too many questions."

"The rules have changed," you counter. "That was before Triton showed up. Besides, I can sink the ship: I've got the explosives I need. Control just won't be happy about it."

There's a hiss of static in the radio as Gage sighs resignedly. "Fine. Whatever. You're the one who has to get off before she goes under."

If you head for the bridge to look for Nautilus, read entry 27.

If you search for Nautilus' device, read entry 28.

If you head for the boiler room to destroy the ship, read entry 29.

If you try to intercept Triton before he reaches the bridge, read entry 30.

A Spycraft Moment...

If you're injured, now might be a good time to regain some lost vitality. During a non-combat situation (now, or during any entry that does not list a set of NPC stats), you may spend an action die to regain Vitality equal to the roll of the die. As with all other Vitality rolls, if you roll a 6, you may roll again and add to the total, until you stop rolling sixes.

You may not regain lost Wounds in this fashion.

23

You take careful aim with your pistol, drawing a bead on the advancing sentry.

Sentry (minion)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+2	+2	1d10 (9x19mm)	11	12	10

If you eliminate the guard in one round of combat, read entry 13.

If you eliminate the guard, but it takes longer than one round, read entry 14.

If the guard defeats you, read entry 15.

24

Hurriedly, you crawl inside the vent, careful to stay as low and as quiet as possible. Unfortunately, in your rush to escape the sentry, that's not very quiet at all! As you begin climbing down into the ventilation system, you hear the guard radio in a warning to his compatriots.

You've alerted the guards! Make a note of this, then read entry 22.

25

The second sentry falls to the deck with a flat thud. You quickly stash the guards' bodies in an out of the way location and step through the hatch, descending a steep metal staircase into the Queen of the North.

Read entry 22.

28

When you finally hook up with Gage again, he has obvious difficulty stifling a laugh. "You look like a wet dog, Hunter." He grins, then his expression quickly turns sour. "So now what? Scrub the mission, or wait until the guard changes - so they won't recognize you - and try again?"

If you decide to scrub the mission, go to Debriefing.

If you try again later, return to entry 1.

You turn toward the aft of the ship, in the general direction of the bridge, and begin making your way down the dimly lit passage. You can feel the Queen of the North sway gently in the tide.

Shortly, you can hear the regular interval of booted feet on the deck above. You peer around the next corner and see a lone sentry standing guard at the base of a set of stairs. By your judgment, those stairs should lead almost straight up to the bridge - with a convenient hatch at the top, to muffle any noise you make here.

If you attack the guard, read entry 31.

If you try to sneak past, read entry 32.

If you wait for Triton to arrive, read entry 33.

28

You carefully make your way to the front of the ship. Quietly, you peer around a corner, and spy two guards posted at the cargo hold hatch. A hand made sign, written with firm pen, declares 'No Admittance, No Exceptions.'

You're going to have to get past them before you can get inside, and you doubt they'll be easily distracted.

Sentry (minion)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+2	+2	1d10 (9x19mm)	11	12	10

Sentry (minion)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+2	+2	1d10 (9x19mm)	11	12	10

While you should obviously attempt to take the sentries by surprise when you engage them in combat, they do have a chance to notice your attack (and avoid being caught flat-footed). Make a listen check for each sentry, opposed to your own Move Silently check. To do so, roll a d20 for yourself and record the total. This is the DC of the sentries' listen check.

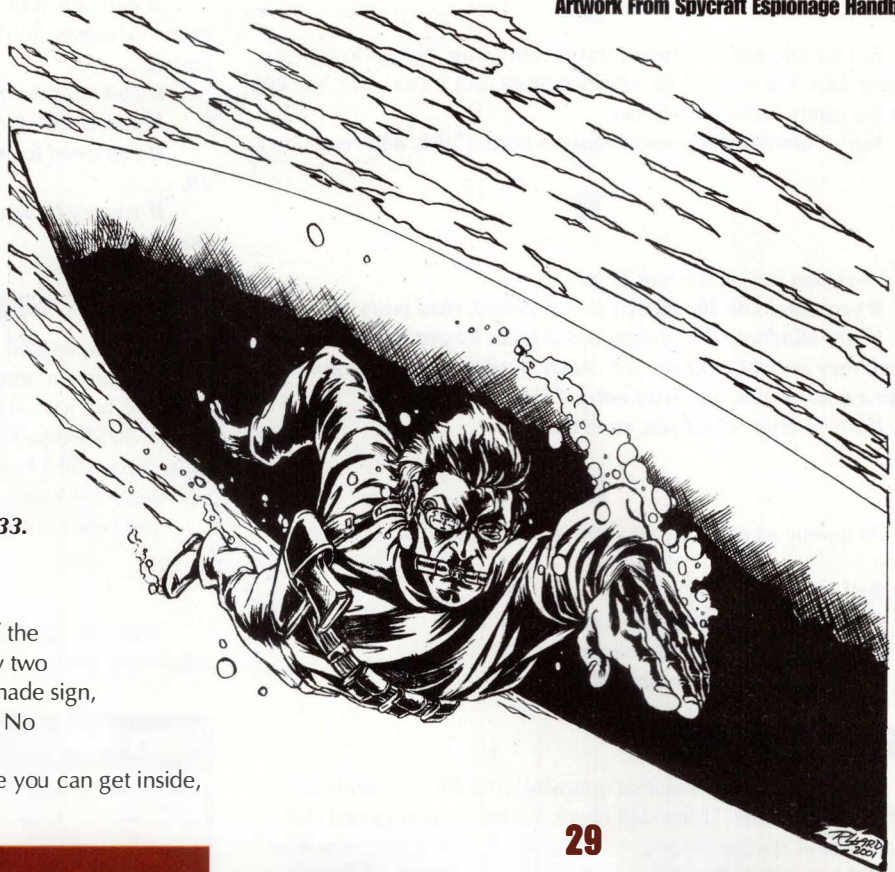
Next, make a d20 roll for each sentry, adding +3 for their Listen skill. If either of them rolls a total lower than the DC, they fail the Listen check, and are caught by surprise. For the first round of combat, any sentry who failed this check may not act, and his Defense is considered to be a 10.

At first opportunity, an acting sentry will use a half action to sound the alarm. The first time one of the sentries acts during this combat, he sounds the alarm, then attacks you once. If this happens, you've alerted the guards! Make a note of this.

If you defeat the sentries, and neither of them sounds the alarm, read entry 34.

If you defeat the sentries, but one of them sounds the alarm, read entry 35.

If the sentries defeat you, read entry 36.



29

You head for the rear of the ship, descending deeper whenever you see a staircase down. As you approach the engineering section, the rumble of the ice breaker's boiler grows steadily. It may be enough to muffle even the noise of combat.

As you approach the engineering section, you hear someone shouting: "Look, I'm warming up the boiler. The Queen ain't a new ship, but she'll be ready to go when Nautilus says." A few seconds later, you hear the slam of a hatch being closed, and booted feet coming in your direction. You slip into the shadows as the sound approaches.

Roll a d20 to make a Hide check.

If you roll a 12 or greater, read entry 37.

If you roll less than a 12, read entry 38.

30

"I'm going to try to head off Triton," you tell Gage. "Maybe then I can find out what's going on."

"Gotcha," Gage answers. "Just be careful."

Nobody can see you, but a crooked grin crosses your face anyway. "Aren't I always?"

As you carefully make your way to the deck access hatch, Gage keeps you informed of Triton's position. You reach the hatch only scant moments before Triton enters the ship.

If you duck into a nearby hatch, read entry 39.

If you boldly confront Triton, read entry 40.

31

Sentry (minion)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+2	+2	1d10 (9x19mm)	11	12	10

If you defeat the sentry before he is able to make an attack, read entry 41.

If you are defeated by the sentry, read entry 36.

32

Silently, you draw your good luck coin from your pocket, and gently kiss the face of JFK. "Time you asked what you can do for your country again, Sir," you mumble wryly. You wait for the guard to look away, and toss the coin past him. It clinks softly against the metal deck.

At the noise, the guard shifts his gaze, following the sound. He draws his pistol, and steps slowly down the passage - away from you.

Roll a d20 to make a Move Silently check.

If you roll an 11 or better, read entry 42.

If you roll less than an 11, read entry 43.

33

You silently sink into the shadows, and wait. After minutes, you hear footsteps approaching from the same direction you came in. Triton, no doubt.

If you let him pass, read entry 44.

If you attempt to drag him into a side passage to interrogate him, read entry 45.

34

Hurrying now, you holster your weapon as you reach the hatch. Locked and sealed. You flip the cover off your laser watch, and begin to burn your way through the bulkhead. After what seems like an hour, you finally create a gap in the hatch large enough for you to climb through.

As you enter the cargo hold, you hit the lights. Before you stands a mammoth machine - Triton wasn't exaggerating the size one bit. Examining it quickly, you don't see any easy access panels. This is going to take some time.

Or some explosives.

If you attempt to sabotage the device, read entry 46.

If you use your explosives to destroy it, read entry 47.

35

Alarm klaxons ring through the ship as you rush to the hatch. Locked and sealed. You could use your laser watch to cut through, but that's going to take some time. Alternately, you can use a tiny amount of the powerful explosive gel you carry, to blow the hatch off its hinges.

If you use the watch, read entry 48.

If you try to blow the door, read entry 49.

36

You squint against the sunlight as you open your eyes. You're sitting in a chair on the bridge, the sun shining through the forward observation windows, and directly into your face.

"Welcome back, Orion," intones a voice like broken glass.

"Nautilus." You spit.

"The same." He steps in front of you - all six and a half feet of him - and leans against a console. "You haven't changed. Still the hero."

"Neither have you, Nautilus," you growl. "Still an a**hole."

A frown crossed Nautilus' features, but briefly. It was gone in an instant. "I was rather hoping you would show up, actually. My superiors advised me to avoid entanglements with the Foundation,

but I couldn't resist-" he slips on a pair of brass knuckles - "doing some damage."

Hunter heard the bridge access hatch open, and turned to look. It was Triton.

"How go the preparations?"

"Excellent," Triton answers calmly, with nary a look in your direction.

"Good." Nautilus nods. "I'll see that you get a commendation for delivering Orion."

Triton moves in your direction, and you can feel your bonds tighten as he steps behind your chair. "Thank you."

Roll a d20 to check Triton's loyalty.

If the result is a 10 or greater, read entry 50.

If the result is less than 10, read entry 51.

A Spycraft Moment...

In the espionage genre (especially in film), some of the most memorable characters are those whose loyalties are unknown until the last possible moment. Who can forget the bevy of femme fatales Bond has dealt with over the course of his illustrious career. In Spycraft, such characters are called foils, and are not necessarily female.

During the course of a season (a series of linked adventures, known as serials in Spycraft), foils are a source of mystery: sometimes they antagonize the agents, sometimes aid them. But there always must come a point when the foil's loyalty is determined once and for all. This is represented by the Loyalty roll.

Each foil has a Loyalty rating, determined by the Game Control when he creates the character. When it becomes appropriate to do so, the GC rolls a d20. If the roll is greater than the foil's loyalty plus 10, the foil is loyal to the agents or an allied organization. If the roll is less, the foil is loyal to the mastermind (or an organization or individual with similar interests). If the roll is equal, the foil's motives may remain a mystery at the GC's discretion.

During the course of normal Spycraft play, agents can influence the results with a variety of feats and skills. Unfortunately, Hunter is not exactly in a position to do so here.

37

The sentry passes without noticing you. You wait about fifteen seconds to ensure he won't return, then emerge from the shadows and head for the boiler room. As you approach, you can hear a deep baritone voice raised in song, soaring over the racket of the ship's boiler. It sounds like...opera?

Taking care to avoid ambush, you step into the boiler room. A short, grease covered man looks up as you enter. "You'd be Orion, then, eh?" He looks you over. "Ya ain't exactly the suave super spy type," he grins toothily, "but then, I'm one to talk."

"Who the hell are you?" you ask?

"Grease Monkey," he nods. "Pleasure ta make yer acquaintance." He wipes his hands on a rag, then scoops up a short length of pipe lying nearby. "You a fan of opera?"

"Not really," you answer curtly.

"Neither's anyone else, seems like," he sighs. "So I set me sound system up down here in the boiler room. Nobody can hear it to complain." He sighs. "Nobody appreciates art any more," he goes on. "It's all the cold hard numbers: the physics, the chemistry, the science. Me, I reckon science is art. You just gotta know how ta look at it."

If you seize the initiative and attack while Grease Monkey rambles, read entry 64.

If not, read entry 65.

38

The sentry's voice rises above the racket of the boiler room; even so, you can barely hear him. "Who's there?"

You remain silent, hoping his attention will be distracted, but no such luck. He draws his gun and advances on your position. "You there! Advance and be recognized!"

Sentry (minion)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+2	+2	1d10 (9x19mm)	11	12	10

Due to the nearly deafening noise coming from the boiler room, this sentry has no chance to raise the alarm.

If you defeat the sentry, read entry 52.

If the sentry defeats you, read entry 36.

39

Roll a d20 to make a Hide check.

If you roll a 16 or greater, read entry 53.

If you roll less than a 16, read entry 54.

40

"Easy!" Triton exclaims as you step from the shadows. "I'm here to help."

"I thought you couldn't get involved—" you respond doubtfully.

"Without risking my cover," Triton interrupted. "That's right."

"So why are you here?"

"I decided you're too important to risk."

"Important to what?"

"Gray."

"Dennis Gray?" you ask incredulously. "What am I to him?"

"An entertainment, of a sort," Triton explains. "You were a constant thorn in his side while he ran the company, and he likes to watch you twist - that incident in the keys was particularly entertaining for him." Triton shrugs. "It distracts him. Without you in the picture, he'd be a lot more focused."

"So you're here to make sure Gray's plaything doesn't get too scuffed up? Somehow that doesn't inspire my trust."

Triton shrugs again. "Take it however you want, but I'm here to help."

"Fine," you say curtly. "Here's the deal. You stay in my line of sight at all times. I don't want you behind me, and I don't want you to disappear."

"Fair enough," Triton acquiesces.

If you head for the bridge to look for Nautilus, read entry 55.

If you search for Nautilus' device, read entry 56.

If you head for the boiler room to destroy the ship, read entry 57.

41

As soon as the guard drops, you run to the stairs and climb. You reach the hatch, stop to catch your breath, then burst in, weapon drawn.

Nautilus turns calmly to face you. "Welcome aboard, Orion. I trust you didn't have too much trouble reaching me?" He smiles, and his voice grates like broken glass. He nods toward Triton, standing to his left "My associate warned me you were coming."

You greet him in return, equally calm. "It's been a long time, Nautilus."

His smile goes flat. "Too long."

"Why?"

"Why what? Why did the Shop break from the Foundation? Why did I go with them? Or why did I go to all this trouble to set you up?"

"All three actually. Let's start with the last."

Nautilus shakes his head. "I don't think so, Hunter. Do you know how long I worked for the Foundation before the break?"

You wait. You're sure he'll tell you.

"Long enough to know better than to explain myself. I intend to kill you and be done with it." In a blur of motion, he draws a pistol from a shoulder holster and opens fire.

Roll a d20 to check Triton's loyalty.

If the result is a 10 or greater, read entry 58.

If the result is less than 10, read entry 59.

A Spycraft Moment...

Triton is a foil, a type of NPC who's loyalty is often a mystery. For more on foils and loyalty checks, see A Spycraft Moment... for entry 36.

42

Silent as a ghost, you sneak past the distracted sentry. When you reach the bridge hatch, you give it a gentle push, and find it unsecured. You open it and step inside.

Nautilus turns calmly to face you. "Welcome aboard, Orion. I trust you didn't have too much trouble reaching me?" He smiles, and his voice grates like broken glass. He nods toward Triton, standing to his left "My associate warned me you were coming."

You greet him in return, equally calm. "It's been a long time, Nautilus."



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You wait. You're sure he'll tell you.

"Long enough to know better than to explain myself. I intend to kill you and be done with it." In a blur of motion, he draws a pistol from a shoulder holster and opens fire.

Roll a d20 to check Triton's loyalty.

If the result is a 10 or greater, read entry 58.

If the result is less than 10, read entry 59.

A Spycraft Moment...

Triton is a foil, a type of NPC who's loyalty is often a mystery. For more on foils and loyalty checks, see A Spycraft Moment... for entry 36.

43

The stairs creak as you place your weight on them, and the sentry spins to face you. "You!" he exclaims, and opens fire.

Sentry (minion)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+2	+2	1d10 (9x19mm)	11	12	10

If you defeat the sentry, read entry 41.

If the sentry defeats you, read entry 36.

44

The sentry passes without noticing you. You wait about fifteen seconds to ensure he won't return, then emerge from the shadows and head for the boiler room. As you approach, you can hear a deep baritone voice raised in song, soaring over the racket of the ship's boiler. It sounds like...opera?

Taking care to avoid ambush, you step into the boiler room. A short, grease covered man looks up as you enter. "You'd be Orion, then, eh?" He looks you over. "Ya ain't exactly the suave super spy type," he grins toothily, "but then, I'm one to talk."

"Who the hell are you?" you ask?

"Grease Monkey," he nods. "Pleasure ta make yer acquaintance." He wipes his hands on a rag, then scoops up a short length of pipe lying nearby. "You a fan of opera?"

"Not really," you answer curtly.

"Neither's anyone else, seems like," he sighs. "So I set me sound system up down here in the boiler room. Nobody can hear it to complain." He sighs. "Nobody appreciates art any more," he goes on. "It's all the cold hard numbers: the physics, the chemistry, the science. Me, I reckon science is art. You just gotta know how ta look at it."

If you seize the initiative and attack while Grease Monkey rambles, read entry 60.

If not, read entry 61.

45

As Triton passes, you grab him from behind and drag him into the shadows, your hand covering his mouth. "What are you doing here?" you ask in a harsh whisper. You lift your hand to allow a

response, but lower your arm so it encircles his neck. He'll know better than to shout a warning.

"Easy!" Triton pleads. "I'm here to help."

"I thought you couldn't get involved-" you respond doubtfully.

"Without risking my cover," Triton interrupted. "That's right."

"So why are you here?"

"I decided you're too important to risk."

"Important to what?"

"Gray."

"Dennis Gray?" you ask incredulously. "What am I to him?"

"An entertainment, of a sort," Triton explains. "You were a constant thorn in his side while he ran the company, and he likes to watch you twist - that incident in the keys was particularly entertaining for him." Triton shrugs. "It distracts him. Without you in the picture, he'd be a lot more focused."

"So you're here to make sure Gray's plaything doesn't get too scuffed up? Somehow that doesn't inspire my trust."

Triton shrugs again. "Take it however you want, but I'm here to help."

"Fine," you say curtly. "Here's the deal. You stay in my line of sight at all times. I don't want you behind me, and I don't want you to disappear."

"Fair enough," Triton acquiesces.

Read entry 55.

46

You pry open an exterior panel on the device. The guts of the machine are a maze of wires and microchips, which you can make neither heads nor tails of.

Roll a d20 to make an Electronics check.

If you roll a 15 or greater, read entry 62.

If you roll less than a 15, read entry 63.

If you roll a 2 or less, make a note of this and read entry 62.

47

You quickly take out the small amount of explosives you brought along, which should be enough to do what you need to do: compact, but powerful.

Read entry 63

48

The process of cutting through the hatch is painfully slow, and the alarm klaxons ringing in your ears make it seem even more so. Finally, you breach the cargo hold - but you can hear the rattle of booted feet on the deck from somewhere behind you.

You hurry inside, and behold a mammoth machine - Triton wasn't exaggerating the size one bit. You shake off your awe, and quickly set to work. "I found it, Phoenix," you radio to Gage. "I found the machine."

"The Queen's crawling with guards, Orion," Gage answers. "Whatever you're going to do, you'd better do it fast."

"Acknowledged." You consider sabotaging the machine, but that's going to take time. Instead, you could simply blow it up: quick and dirty, but it'll get the job done.

If you take the extra time to sabotage the machine, read entry 46.

If you decide to destroy it with explosives, read entry 63.

49

You quickly apply a small amount of the explosive gel you carry to each of the hinges.

Roll a d20 and add +7 to make a Demolitions check.

If you roll a 12 or better, read entry 64.

If you roll less than a 12, read entry 65.

50

Triton has loosened your bonds enough for you to slip free! You escape the ropes, and catch them as they begin to fall away from your wrists. As Triton steps in your direction, you lift up your feet and kick out at his stomach. You can hear him gasp as you knock the wind out of him. You tumble backwards in the chair and roll to your feet.

"Come on then," you growl, "do some damage."

Triton runs to the console, but Nautilus ignores him. With an angry snarl, the cleaner leaps on you!

Nautilus (mastermind)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+3	+4	1d6+1 (Brass Knuckles)	14	34	12

Restore your Vitality to 6 (for an hour of rest), and Wounds to 1. Before combat, you have the opportunity to regain additional Vitality by spending action dice. For more on this, *see entry 22*.

You are unarmed, and do only 1d6 points of damage per hit.

If you defeat Nautilus, read entry 66.

If his wounds are reduced to less than 12 at the end of a round, but more than 0, read entry 67.

If Nautilus defeats you, you are captured (and won't escape this time). Triton is killed for betraying the ship. Read Debriefing.

51

Triton tightens your bonds and steps away. Carefully and stealthily, you flip the top of your laser watch up. With a quick burst, the laser cuts through the ropes, and fall away.

Nautilus grins wolfishly. "I'm glad you're going to put up some kind of a fight. Triton," he says, without taking his eyes off you, "make sure Grease Monkey is prepared to ship out. I'm going to take care of this personally."

Triton hesitates, unwilling to leave you to Nautilus alone.

"Do it!" Nautilus growls.

Triton shakes his head, then leaves.

"Stupid, Nautilus," you taunt. "You're going to need all the help you can get."

Nautilus (mastermind)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+3	+4	1d6+1 (Brass Knuckles)	14	34	12

Restore your Vitality to 6 (for an hour of rest), and Wounds to 1. Before combat, you have the opportunity to regain additional Vitality by spending action dice. For more on this, *see entry 22*.

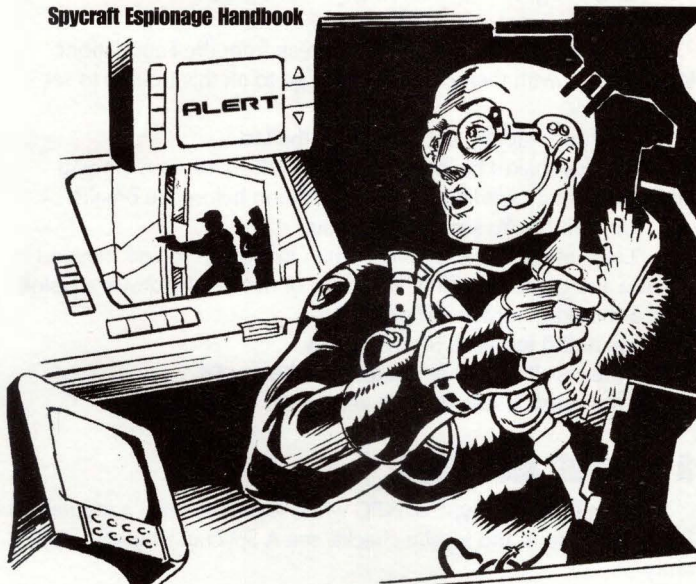
You are unarmed, and therefore do only 1d6 points of damage per hit.

If you defeat Nautilus, read entry 66.

If his wounds are reduced to less than 12 at the end of a round, but more than 0, read entry 67.

If Nautilus defeats you, you are captured (and won't escape this time). Read Debriefing.

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52

As you approach the boiler room, you can hear a deep baritone voice raised in song, soaring over the racket of the ship's boiler. It sounds like...opera?

Taking care to avoid ambush, you step into the boiler room. A short, grease covered man looks up as you enter. "You'd be Orion, then, eh?" He looks you over. "Ya ain't exactly the suave super spy type," he grins toothily, "but then, I'm one to talk."

"Who the hell are you?" you ask?

"Grease Monkey," he nods. "Pleasure ta make yer acquaintance." He wipes his hands on a rag, then scoops up a short length of pipe lying nearby. "You a fan of opera?"

"Not really," you answer curtly.

"Neither's anyone else, seems like," he sighs. "So I set me sound system up down here in the boiler room. Nobody can hear it to complain." He sighs. "Nobody appreciates art any more," he goes on. "It's all the cold hard numbers: the physics, the chemistry, the science. Me, I reckon science is art. You just gotta know how ta look at it."

If you seize the initiative and attack while Grease Monkey rambles, read entry 60.

If not, read entry 61.

53

You sink into the shadows as Triton passes you by.

If you follow him, roll a d20 to make a Hide check.

If you roll a 19 or greater, read entry 68.

If you roll less than a 19, read entry 54.

If you choose not to shadow him, you may do any of the following:

If you head for the bridge to look for Nautilus, read entry 27.

If you search for Nautilus' device, read entry 28.

If you head for the boiler room to destroy the ship, read entry 29.

If you try to intercept Triton before he reaches the bridge, read entry 30.

54

"Hunter!" Triton whispers as he spots you. "I'm here to help."

"I thought you couldn't get involved-" you respond doubtfully.

"Without risking my cover," Triton interrupted. "That's right."

"So why are you here?"

"I decided you're too important to risk."

"Important to what?"

"Gray."

"Dennis Gray?" you ask incredulously. "What am I to him?"

"An entertainment, of a sort," Triton explains. "You were a constant thorn in his side while he ran the company, and he likes to watch you twist - that incident in the keys was particularly entertaining for him." Triton shrugs. "It distracts him. Without you in the picture, he'd be a lot more focused."

"So you're here to make sure Gray's plaything doesn't get too scuffed up? Somehow that doesn't inspire my trust."

Triton shrugs again. "Take it however you want, but I'm here to help."

"Fine," you say curtly. "Here's the deal. You stay in my line of sight at all times. I don't want you behind me, and I don't want you to disappear."

"Fair enough," Triton acquiesces. "What's your plan, then?"

If you head for the bridge to look for Nautilus, read entry 55.

If you search for Nautilus' device, read entry 56.

If you head for the boiler room to destroy the ship, read entry

57.

55

"There's a guard up ahead," Triton warns. "At the stairs leading up to the bridge. What's your plan?"

"We're going to get into the bridge. You armed?"

"Yes."

"Good. Let's take out that sentry. By the stairs." Triton begins to draw his pistol, but you place your hand over his. "No. You're the distraction. You go in first, and I'll take him when you've got his attention."

Triton looks apprehensive, but nods an affirmative and steps into the hallway. You give him a few seconds to get the guard's attention, then attack.

Sentry (minion)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+2	+2	1d10 (9x19mm)	11	12	10

Since the sentry is distracted by Triton, he's flat-footed. You gain a number of advantages during the first round of combat: first, the sentry does not get to act during the first round, and thus may not attack you. Second, since the sentry has been caught flat-footed, he does not receive his Dexterity bonus to his defense for the first round of combat. This reduces his Defense to 10 until round 2.

If you defeat the sentry, Triton advances up the stairs during the fight, and steps inside. Read entry 41.

If the sentry defeats you, read entry 36.

56

"I can get us into the cargo hold," Triton says. "But I don't know how that thing works. You're on your own there."

You nod. "Let's go then."

At your cue, Triton leads you to the forward cargo hold, where two guards stand at the access hatch. "If I'm going to get you in there, you need to be with me. Come on."

The guards recognize him as you approach, but not you.

"Who's that?" one of them asks.

Roll a d20 to check Triton's loyalty.

If you the result is a 10 or greater, read entry 69.

If the result is less than 10, read entry 70.

57

You head below decks toward the boiler room. As you draw closer, the racket generated by the ship's engineering section slowly swells. Triton rounds a corner ahead of you, and motions you to hide. Quickly, you step through an adjacent hatch.

Over the cacophony, you can hear Triton conversing loudly with a sentry, though you can't make out the words. A few seconds later, you hear the guard's booted feet pass by. When he's gone, Triton appears, and waves you out of your hiding place. "You've got a clear run at the boiler room from here, but Grease Monkey's in there, working on it."

"What do you mean, 'you'?" you ask.

"I have to report in, Hunter. If I don't do it soon, they're going to ask more questions than I can answer."

"Fine," you acknowledge. "Get going. But you get yourself off this ship"

Triton nods, and disappears down the passageway.

Taking care to avoid ambush, you enter the boiler room. A short, grease covered man looks up as you enter. "You'd be Orion, then, eh?" He looks you over. "Ya ain't exactly the suave super spy type," he grins toothily, "but then, I ain't one to talk. Name's Grease Monkey," he nods. "Pleasure ta make yer acquaintance." He wipes his hands on a rag, then scoops up a short length of pipe lying nearby. "You a fan of opera?"

"Not really," you answer curtly.

"Neither's anyone else, seems like," he sighs. "So I set me sound system up down here in the boiler room. Nobody can hear it to complain." He sighs. "Nobody appreciates art any more," he goes on. "It's all the cold numbers: the physics, the chemistry, the science. Me, I reckon science is art. You just gotta know how ta look at it."

If you seize the initiative and attack while Grease Monkey rambles, read entry 60.

If not, read entry 61.

58

As you and Nautilus exchange fire, Triton rushes to the console and begins to examine the controls. From behind cover, Nautilus snarls, "I'll deal with you shortly, Traitor!"

He then turns his attention back to you.

Nautilus (mastermind)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+3	+4	2d6 (9x19mm)	14	34	12

If you defeat Nautilus, read entry 66.

If his wounds are reduced to less than 12 at the end of a round, but more than 0, read entry 67.

If Nautilus defeats you, you are captured (and won't escape this time). Triton is killed for betraying the ship. Read Debriefing.

59

As Nautilus opens fire, Triton draws his pistol and takes aim at you. You've been set up!

Nautilus (mastermind)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+3	+4	2d6 (9x19mm)	14	34	12

Triton (foil)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+3	+2	2d6 (9x19mm)	12	20	10

Triton escapes if Nautilus is reduced to 0 wounds, or he himself is reduced to less than 10, but more than 0.

If you defeat them, read entry 66.

If Nautilus' wounds are reduced to less than 12 at the end of a round, but more than 0, and Triton has already fled or been defeated, read entry 67.

If Nautilus defeats you, you are captured (and won't escape this time). Triton is killed for betraying the shop. Read Debriefing.

80

You rush to the attack.

"Everybody's a critic," Grease Monkey grumbles.

Grease Monkey (henchman)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+6	+6	1d6+3 (lead pipe)	14	34	13

Grease Monkey is surprised by your sudden attack, and is flat-footed. For the first round of combat, he may not attack, and his Defense is considered to be a 10.

If you defeat Grease Monkey, you may take 10 for an automatic success on a Demolitions check to sink the ship. Read entry 71.

If Grease Monkey defeats you, read entry 36.

81

Grease Monkey advances, lead pipe in hand. "Beatin' the pulp outta sneaky gits who try to sabotage the Queen, now that's an art, too."

Grease Monkey (henchman)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+6	+6	1d6+3 (lead pipe)	14	34	13

If you defeat Grease Monkey, you may take 10 for an automatic success on a Demolitions check to sink the ship. Read entry 71.

If Grease Monkey defeats you, read entry 36.

62

Carefully, you reach into the panel and detach an important micro-chip. You draw it out, drop it on the steel deck, and crush it beneath your boot.

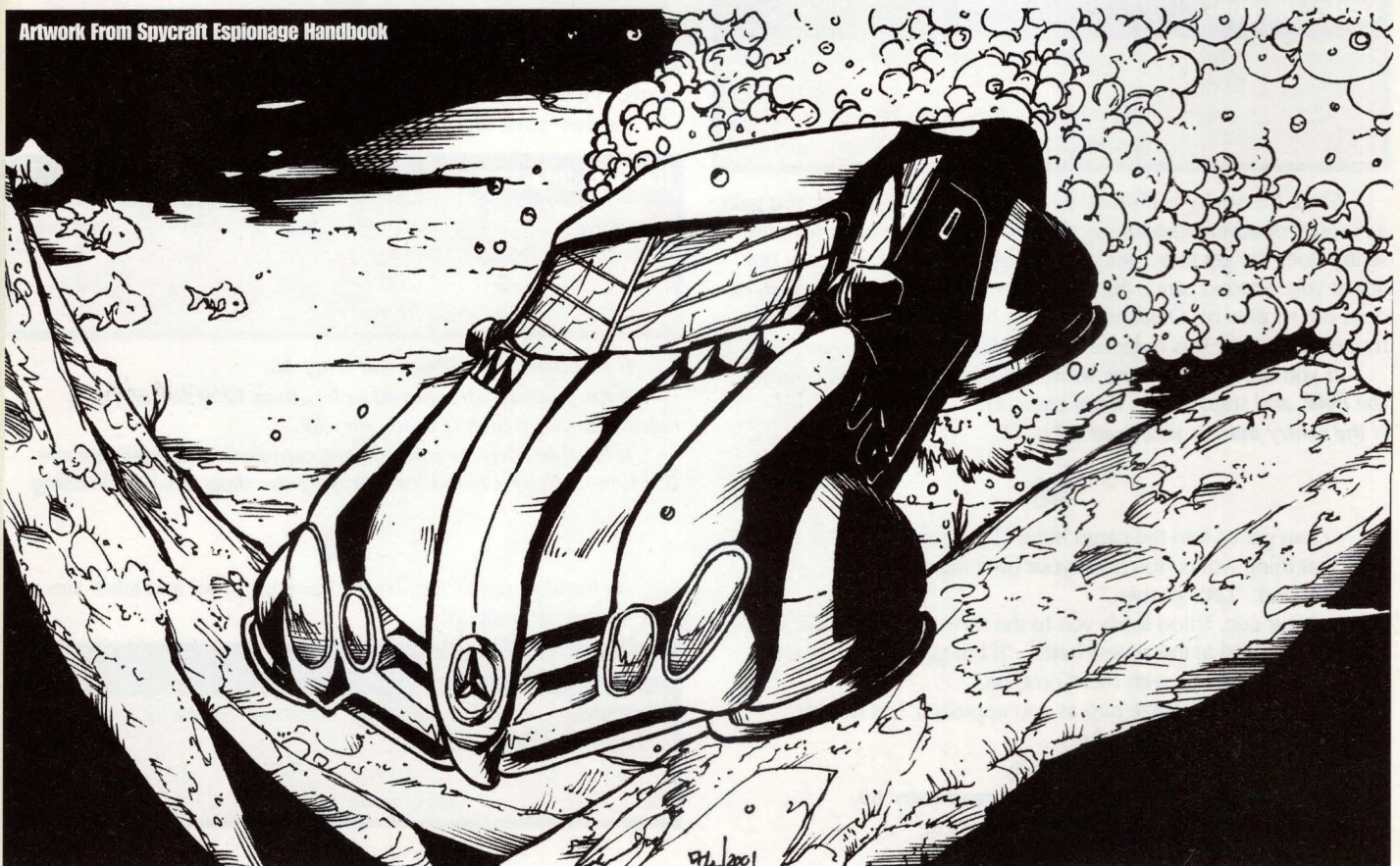
"You'll pay for that," a voice like broken glass intones.

You spin to see Nautilus covering you with his pistol. "I'm tapped out," you crack. "The Company doesn't pay as well as I'd like."

Nautilus grins wolfishly. "Too bad. One more good reason I joined up with the Shop."

As you move to attack, you can't resist one last jab: "I hope they offer a good medical plan."

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Nautilus (mastermind)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+3	+4	2d6 (9x19mm)	14	34	12

If you defeat Nautilus, read entry 66.

If you reduce Nautilus to less than 12 wounds, but greater than 0, read entry 67.

If Nautilus defeats you, you are captured (and won't escape this time). Read Debriefing.

63

The inner workings of the machine are a mystery to you, so you turn to the old standby: explosives. You set the charge quickly, and exit the cargo hold.

You climb to the surface deck of the icebreaker, but Nautilus is waiting, pistol in hand. "I was hoping you'd pay me a visit, Orion," he growls in a voice like broken glass, "but it seems the mountain must come to Mohammed after all."

He opens fire!

Nautilus (mastermind)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+3	+4	2d6 (9x19mm)	14	34	12

If you defeat Nautilus, or the combat takes longer than 5 rounds, read entry 72.

If you reduce Nautilus to less than 12 wounds, but greater than 0, read entry 67.

If Nautilus defeats you, you are captured (and won't escape this time). Triton is killed for betraying the shop. Read Debriefing.

64

The door blows off its hinges with a tremendous crash, and you step inside the cargo hold. Before you is a mammoth machine - Triton wasn't exaggerating the size one bit. You shake off your awe, and quickly set to work. "I found it, Phoenix," you radio to Gage. "I found the machine."

"The Queen's crawling with guards, Orion," Gage answers. "Whatever you're going to do, you'd better do it fast."

"Acknowledged." You consider sabotaging the machine, but that's going to take time. Instead, you could simply blow it up: quick and dirty, but it'll get the job done.

If you take the extra time to sabotage the machine, read entry 46.

If you decide to destroy it with explosives, read entry 63.

65

The explosives hiss for a moment and explode with a bang. When the smoke clears, the hatch is still in place. "I'm at the cargo hold, Gage, but I can't get inside."

"You've got to get out of there, Hunter." Gage continues worriedly, "The place is crawling with guards."

"Yeah," you respond, angry at your failure. "The Company's going to have to send in the big guns once this baby puts out to sea." You curse under your breath and make your way back top side.

Where Nautilus is waiting, two guards backing him up.

"Greetings, Orion," he chuckles with a voice like broken glass. "I was hoping you'd pay me a visit, but I suppose the mountain must come to Mohammed after all."

He opens fire!

Nautilus (mastermind)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+3	+4	2d6 (9x19mm)	14	34	12

Sentry (minion)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+2	+2	1d10 (9x19mm)	11	12	10

Sentry (minion)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+2	+2	1d10 (9x19mm)	11	12	10

If Nautilus is reduced to 0 wounds, the sentries flee. You escape the Queen of the North without further interference. Read Debriefing.

If you defeat Nautilus, read entry 66.

If you reduce Nautilus to less than 12 wounds, but greater than 0, and the sentries have already been eliminated, read entry 67.

If Nautilus defeats you, you are captured (and won't escape this time). Read Debriefing.

66

You've just defeated the Nautilus, the mastermind of the Shop's latest plot. No doubt the Shop will attempt to salvage the remains of their plan, but for today, victory is yours! You make your way to Nautilus' device and sabotage it (if you haven't already), then escape the Queen of the North.

Read Debriefing.

67

You've just defeated Nautilus, the mastermind of the Shop's latest plot - though your victory is marred by his escape. No doubt he will attempt to salvage the remains of his plan, but for today, victory is yours! You make your way to Nautilus' device and sabotage it (if you haven't already), then escape the Queen of the North.

Read Debriefing.

68

You shadow Triton as he makes his way to the bridge. He rounds a corner ahead, and you can hear him conversing briefly with a sentry. Shortly, he ascends a set of stairs and enters the bridge.

If you attack the guard, read entry 31.

If you try to sneak past, read entry 32.

69

"Kryptos," Triton answers. "If you know what's good for you, you'll stand aside. He's here to inspect the device."

The sentries look at each other apprehensively. Only for a moment, however; they quickly make way.

As the hatch closes behind you, you turn to Triton. "Who the hell is Kryptos, and why were they so damn frigh-

He holds up a hand, interrupting you. "Look, I don't have time to answer questions. I got you in, and this is as far as I go. I don't want to answer any more questions than I have to."

Without another word, he opens the hatch again, and retreats from the cargo hold.

Before you is a mammoth machine - Triton wasn't exaggerating its size one bit. You shake off your awe, and quickly set to work. "I found it, Phoenix," you radio to Gage. "I found the machine."

"Great. Tell me your just going to sabotage it."

"Haven't decided yet," you answer.

Examining it quickly, you don't see any easy access panels. This is going to take some time.

Or some explosives.

If you take the extra time to sabotage the machine, read entry 46.

If you decide to destroy it with explosives, read entry 63.

70

"A spy," Triton answers, and draws his pistol. "Take him."

The two guards, surprised, fumble for their weapons as Triton sounds the alarm.

Triton (foil)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+3	+2	2d6 (9x19mm)	12	20	10

Sentry (minion)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+2	+2	1d10 (9x19mm)	11	12	10

Sentry (minion)

Initiative Bonus	Attack Bonus	Damage	Defense	Vitality	Wounds
+2	+2	1d10 (9x19mm)	11	12	10

Triton is reduced to less than 10 Wounds, but more than 0, he flees.

If you defeat them all, read entry 35.

If Triton defeats you, you are captured (and won't escape this time). Read Debriefing.

71

You push aside Grease Monkey's inert form with your foot, and advance on the boiler. You set your explosives, positioned to cause maximum damage when they go, and hopefully cause the boiler to explode in the bargain.

Satisfied with your work, you make your way topside, and slip over the deck rail. You hit the water with a splash, and kick away from the Queen. Thirty seconds later, she erupts in a tremendous explosion.

You've just put a major crimp in the Shop's plans; you don't know if Nautilus or Triton survived, but you do know this: the Shop will have to rebuild their device from scratch. Not bad for a day's work.

Now you just need to explain it to Control.

Read Debriefing.

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72

There is a muffled whump from below, as the explosives you set detonate, followed by a thunderous crash as Nautilus' device explodes. There is a deep groaning, and you feel the deck shift beneath your feet.

With the screech of metal being rent asunder, the deck splits, throwing you into the bay. You see Nautilus hit the water limply, but you don't have time to search for him: the Queen of the North is sinking!

You've just put a major crimp in the Shop's plans; you don't know if Nautilus or Triton survived, but you do know this: the Shop will have to rebuild their device from scratch. Not bad for a day's work.

Now you just need to explain it to Control.

Debriefing

Congratulations, Agent! You've just completed your first assignment as an Archer Foundation operative. Now is your chance to report your results, and influence the development of the Shadowforce Archer world. Make a note of the following:

- If you encountered Triton, did he betray you? Did he survive?
- Did you sabotage Nautilus' device? Did you destroy it?
- Did you sink the Queen of the North?
- Did you capture or kill Nautilus? If the latter, did you lose the body?
- Was the mission scrubbed at entry 21 or 26?
- Did you toss your lucky half-dollar to distract a guard?
- Were you captured? Did you escape?

Log on to <http://www.seriesarcher.com>, click on the Solo Serial Results link, and provide the requested information. While you're there, explore the web site for more on the Spycraft game, the Shadowforce Archer world, and John Hunter's adventures.

Finally, for the full Spycraft and Shadowforce Archer experience, pick up the Spycraft Espionage Handbook and the Shadowforce Archer Worldbook, available at finer game, hobby, and bookstores everywhere.

PRESTIGE CLASS

THE CLEANER

By: B.D. Flory **Illustrated by: Mike Sellers**
Mechanics Editing and Development By: Scott Gearin



Alderac Entertainment Group gives us a super sneak peak at a new prestige class for their new Spycraft RPG. This isn't slated to hit print until 2003. Nautilus, from the previous serial adventure, is one of these and you saw how tough he was. Gaming Frontiers is proud to present - The Cleaner.

Within the Agency are elite agents who are called upon to handle the worst of scenarios – the failure or death of other agents during an operation, especially those who might reveal the Agency's existence to the public, shattering the sense of security the Agency exists to foster. The agents required in these circumstances aren't merely the best – they're the best when things have already gone horribly wrong.

While some cleaners are little more than ruthless killers who sweep the Agency's secrets into a row of graves, most are cool, calculating manipulators who misdirect and deceive, systematically eliminating evidence instead of people. A stand-up fight is the last thing a cleaner wants to get involved in, so his combat abilities, while formidable, tend to be indirect.

Abilities: Cleaners call upon many different strategies to bring their missions to a successful close, so most abilities are useful to them, but a high Intelligence is a must. Wisdom and Charisma are also useful, as both play a part in the cleaner's ability to spot problems and talk his way out of them.

REQUIREMENTS

To join the ranks of the cleaners, the agent must meet all of the following requirements:

Agent Level: 5+
Bluff: 4 ranks
Intimidate: 4 ranks
Feats: Persuasive, Traceless



Artwork From Spycraft Espionage Handbook

Class Skills

The cleaner's class skills and key abilities are listed below:

CLASS SKILLS

Skill Points at each level: 4 + Int modifier

The Cleaner's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are: Bluff (Cha), Bureaucracy (Cha), Computers (Int), Craft (Int), Demolitions (Int), Driver (Dex), First Aid (Wis), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Hobby (Wis), Innuendo (Wis), Intimidate (Str/Cha), Knowledge (Int), Listen (Wis), Mechanics (Int), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spot (Wis), Surveillance (Wis)



Alderac Entertainment Group www.alderac.com

THE CLEANER

Vitality
1d10
plus Constitution
modifier per level

Class Level	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Def Bonus	Init Bonus	Gadg Picks	Budg Picks	Special
1st	+0	+2	+0	+0	+1	+1	0	2	No matter the cost, glib explanation (advanced)
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+0	+1	+2	1	4	Priority request +3
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+1	+2	+3	2	6	I was never here +2
4th	+3	+4	+1	+1	+2	+3	3	8	Red herrings, ruthless (half round)
5th	+3	+4	+1	+1	+3	+4	3	10	Glib explanation (grand), I was never here +4
6th	+4	+5	+2	+2	+4	+5	4	12	This meeting never took place
7th	+5	+5	+2	+2	+4	+6	5	14	I was never here +6, priority request +6
8th	+6	+6	+2	+2	+5	+6	6	16	Fatal attack, ruthless (free action)
9th	+6	+6	+3	+3	+5	+7	6	18	Glib explanation (perfect), I was never here +8
10th	+7	+7	+3	+3	+6	+8	7	20	Must complete the mission

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the cleaner.

Class Feats: The cleaner gains the following feats at 1st level.

- Armor Proficiency (Light)
- Armor Proficiency (Medium)
- Weapon Group Proficiency (Handgun)
- Weapon Group Proficiency (Melee)
- Weapon Group Proficiency (Rifle)

No Matter The Cost: Cleaners become associated with only the most desperate missions. For this reason the Agency tends to equip them with the very best gear. During the Gearing Up phase of a mission the cleaner has the option to spend 1 (and only 1) non-exploding action die, choosing to add the result to the number of gadget points he is allotted for the mission or twice the result to the number of budget points he is allotted for the mission. This bonus cannot increase the cleaner's BP to more than the maximum he could have received without this ability. This is the cleaner's core ability.

Glib Explanation: The cleaner's primary function is to make events seem harmless, insignificant, even mundane. He becomes a master of explaining things away in an off-handed, unhurried manner. Similarly, he is not above being the scariest person an inconvenient witness has ever met. At 1st level the cleaner gains the Advanced Skill Mastery feat for his Persuasive feat. At 5th level his technique continues to improve, and he receives the Grand Skill Mastery feat for Persuasive at 5th level. At 9th level his mastery of these skills is complete, and he gains the Perfect Skill Mastery feat for his Persuasive feat. All level requirements for these feats are waived for the cleaner.

Priority Request: The cleaner has special authority to utilize Agency assets to complete his mission. At second level he receives a +3 to all favor checks. At 7th level this bonus increases to +6.

Red Herrings: The cleaner is well versed in investigatory and forensic techniques – and how to foil them. Beginning at 4th level, the cleaner may take a full round action to spoil a 5-ft. square so that any attempt to examine it for physical clues has an error range equal to the cleaner's class level. Further, the cleaner may spend action dice to activate critical failures on those rolls even if he is not present.

Example: A 6th level cleaner spends four rounds in a 10-ft. x 10-ft. hotel room where an assassination has taken place, tearing

open luggage and sprinkling hairs and clothing fibers over the furniture. When the police arrive, it's very easy for them to mistake the spoiled scene for a robbery gone bad – each suffers an error range of 1-6 when physically examining the scene.

Ruthless: When a cleaner is forced to kill, he does so with remarkable speed and efficiency. Beginning at 4th level the coup de grace maneuver is considered to be a half round action for the cleaner. At 8th level the cleaner is so proficient with quick kill techniques that he may perform the coup de grace action once per round as a free action.

I Was Never Here: The cleaner leaves no evidence of his passage. At 3rd level he gains a +2 competence bonus to the effects of his Traceless feat. This bonus increases to +4 at 5th level, +6 at 7th level, and +8 at 9th level.

This Meeting Never Took Place: Cleaners are experts at masking the signs of their operations. Upon achieving 6th level all members of his team are considered to have the Traceless feat. If a team member already has the Traceless feat, its effects are increased by +2.

Fatal Attack: Starting at 8th level, if the cleaner is attacking a human opponent who is flanked or denied his Dexterity bonus (such as by being flat-footed) he may spend an action die to perform a Fatal Attack. So long as the attack causes at least 1 point of normal (not subdual) damage to the target after any damage reduction has been applied, the target must also immediately make a Fortitude Save with a DC equal to the 10 + the cleaner's class level. If the save fails, the target immediately dies.

Must Complete The Mission: Sometimes the cleaner must fight on to the bitter end, struggling to complete his task even in the face of horrific wounds. At 10th level, if the cleaner would suffer a result that would normally stun him, he is only staggered, and while staggered he does not have to make saves to remain conscious. Further, the cleaner does not fall unconscious (or become helpless) upon being reduced to 0 or fewer wound points, though he still loses wounds if not stabilized, and dies if reduced to -10 wounds as normal.



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THE MONSTER LAB

NYAMBE

AFRICAN ADVENTURES

By: **Chris Dolunt** Illustrated By: **Andy Hopp** Nyambe Logo By: **Scott Reeves**

In the land of the Overpower, the jaws of the crocodile are the only reward for the unwary.

Nyambe is a vast land of exotic creatures and wide expanses, where ancestor orisha cry for brave tribal warriors to carve out the hearts of foul mchawi wizards, and where dragon-blooded sei sorcerers once joined the fierce Amazons of Nibomay in the bloody Rebellious Time to win their freedom. This campaign setting for the d20 System brings high fantasy to African myth, legend and history in a 256-page hardcover sourcebook from Atlas Games.

Nyambe: African Adventures includes twelve new human tribal cultures and six variant non-human races, like the brown-skinned, tailed Wakyambi elves who meddle in the affairs of men from the depths of the blda rainforest. New core class variants and prestige classes change druids into shamen who worship the natural orisha spirits and are as comfortable in the skin of a panther as in humanoid form. New skills, and feats like Ancestral Blessing, Drum Dancer, Elephant Warrior, Fire Blood and Ritual Cannibalism are the heritage of every Nyamban, as well as new weapons, armor and equipment designed for a tropical climate where the heat of the vast savannah is more dangerous than an enemy's spear. The spirit-worship of the mortals has called upon the orisha for new spells and domains such as Darkness, Exile, Fertility, Lightning, and Plague ever since Dark Time when the Overpower ascended into the sky on the web of a giant spider. Mad omurogo wizards contemplate the contents of mojuba bags to prepare their divination spells, and new magic items like zombi powder turn fallen warriors into true zombis that keep a hideous memory of their former lives, ritual masks let the wearer become the orisha, and vodou nkisi statues hurl powerful curses at those who dare to use them.

And in the dark interior of the continent lurk creatures never before seen by the men of the tamed north lands ... like the aigamuxa, mbilintu, ssanga, vampire moth, giant sloth and werehyena. But ravenous beasts of the jungle and desert are only the

beginning of the danger that awaits those who walk the lands of Nyambe. These outtakes, which you won't find in the final product, are just a sampling of what you can expect from Nyambe: African Adventures, coming this summer from Atlas Games!

Aigamuxa

Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid

Hit Dice: 4d8+8 (26 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 30 ft., burrow 10 ft.

AC: 15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural)

Attacks: 2 claws +7 melee, bite +2 melee

Damage: Claw 1d4+3, bite 1d6+1

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Sandstorm

Special Qualities: Tremorsense, Blind

Saves: Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +2

Abilities: Str 17, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 7, Wis 14, Cha 6

Skills: Climb +6, Hide +3, Intimidate +1, Jump +6, Listen +4, Move Silently +4

Climate/Terrain: Warm desert

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Advancement: 5-8 HD (Medium-size)

Combat

An aigamuxa usually attacks as soon as it becomes aware of a potential meal. Though intelligent, aigamuxa devote most of their energies to hunting and eating, and think about little else. Aigamuxa speak Infernal and Abyssal.

Sandstorm (Su): If within desert terrain, an aigamuxa can generate a powerful magical sandstorm around itself in a 60-foot radius, at will, as a free action. This is considered a severe wind. It automatically extinguishes unprotected flames, while protected flames have a 50% chance of extinguishing, and ranged weapon attacks and Listen checks are at a -4

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penalty. In addition, the flying sand causes all living creatures (except the aigamuxa) to suffer 1d4 points of subdual damage each round (no saving throw), and creatures with unprotected eyes must make a Fortitude save each round against DC 14 or be blinded for the duration of the round.

Tremorsense (Ex): Aigamuxa can automatically sense the location of anything within 60 feet that is in contact with the ground.

Blind (Ex): Aigamuxa cannot see unless they get down on their hands and knees and arch their feet over their back. This is a full-round action, and an aigamuxa cannot move while in this position. When it is not using its eyes, it is totally immune to attacks that depend on vision, such as gaze attacks, blindness spells, and visual illusions.

Aigamuxa (eye-gah-MOO-zhah) stalk the sand dunes of Marak'ka-land. These tall, thin creatures look like naked humans from a distance, but close up they have claws, fangs, and most disturbingly, blank patches of flesh where their eyes should be. Aigamuxa are not blind, and have eyes on the soles of their feet. In order to see, they must get down on their hands and knees, and arch their feet over their back to see what is in front of them. This would be comical if not for the fact that they are extremely dangerous flesh-eating monsters. According to legend, the aigamuxa are responsible for the deadly sandstorms that sometimes sweep the region, and the appearance of one is often accompanied by roaring winds and stinging sands.



Mbilintu

Huge Magical Beast

Hit Dice: 10d10+50 (105 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 20 ft.

AC: 21 (-2 size, +1 Dex, +12 natural)

Attacks: Tail slap +12/+7 melee

Damage: Tail slap 1d6+6

Face/Reach: 10 ft. by 20 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Death Gaze

Special Qualities: Spell Resistance 15, Darkvision

Saves: Fort +12, Ref +8, Will +4

Abilities: Str 19, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 3, Wis 8, Cha 7

Skills: Listen +2, Spot +4, Move Silently +4, Hide -5

Feats: Iron Will, Power Attack

Climate/Terrain: Warm swamp

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 11

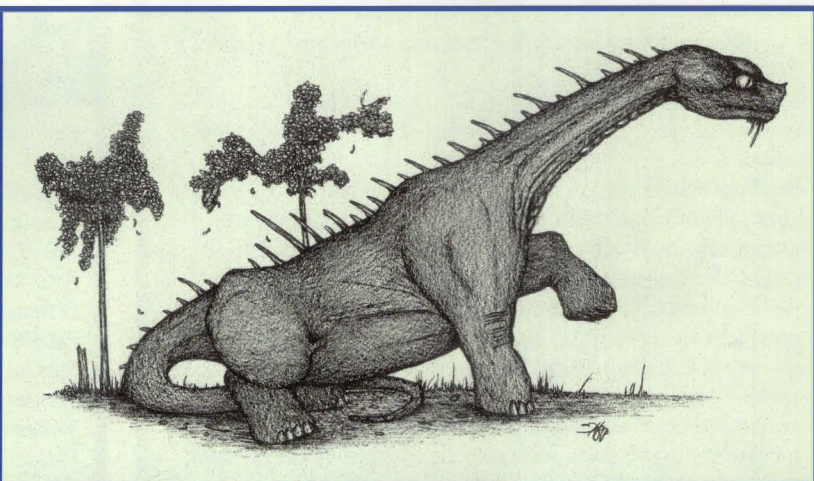
Treasure: 50% Standard

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 11-20 HD (Huge), 21-30 HD (Gargantuan)

Combat

The mbilintu is an herbivore, and it rarely has to defend itself physically, as its Death Gaze protects it from most predators. Unfortunately, the mbilintu has an insatiable sense of curiosity, and if it sees a group of adventurers slogging through a swamp, it will most certainly attempt to sneak up on them and get a better look. Any sort of attack hurts the creature's feelings, and it runs away when confronted with aggressive behavior.



Death Gaze (Su): Any creature that looks into the mbilintu's eyes must make a Fortitude save (DC 10) or die from massive cardiac arrest.

Spell Resistance (Ex): To determine if a spell or spell-like ability works against an mbilintu, the spellcaster makes a level check (1d20 + caster level). If the result equals or exceeds 15, the spell works normally, though the target still gets a saving throw if the spell allows such.

Darkvision (Ex): Mbilintu can see in the dark up to 60 feet. Darkvision is black and white, but otherwise like normal sight, and Mbilintu can function with no light at all.

This creature's name means "the frightful unknown monster" in Kordo, but it is also known under the Daka-kara name isiququmadevu (ees-ee-quoo-quoo-mah-DEHV-oo) or the Daka-alif name nzevu-loi (neh-ZEH-foo LOH-ee).

The Mbilintu (mb-LEEN-too) resembles a lizard, with a long giraffe-like neck, snake-like head, elephantine legs and a long tail.

Nsanga

Huge Beast (Reptilian)

Hit Dice: 8d10+40 (84 hp)

Initiative: +1 (Dex)

Speed: 40 ft., climb 40 ft.

AC: 16 (-2 size, +1 Dex, +7 natural)

Attacks: Bite +12/+7 melee; or tongue +5 ranged touch (maximum range 20 ft.)

Damage: Bite 2d6+8, tongue no damage

Face/Reach: 10 ft. by 20 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Improved Grab, Swallow Whole

Special Qualities: Low-light vision

Saves: Fort +11, Ref +7, Will +2

Abilities: Str 27, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 2, Wis 10, Cha 2

Skills: Hide +4 (+16 in forest and tall undergrowth), Climb +19, Listen +3, Spot +7, Move Silently +7

Feats: None

Climate/Terrain: Warm forest

Organization: Solitary or colony (2-5)

Challenge Rating: 6

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: Huge (9-16)

Combat

Nsanga are essentially fearless, and attack any creature that looks edible.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the nsanga must hit with its tongue attack. If it gets a hold, it swallows the victim whole.

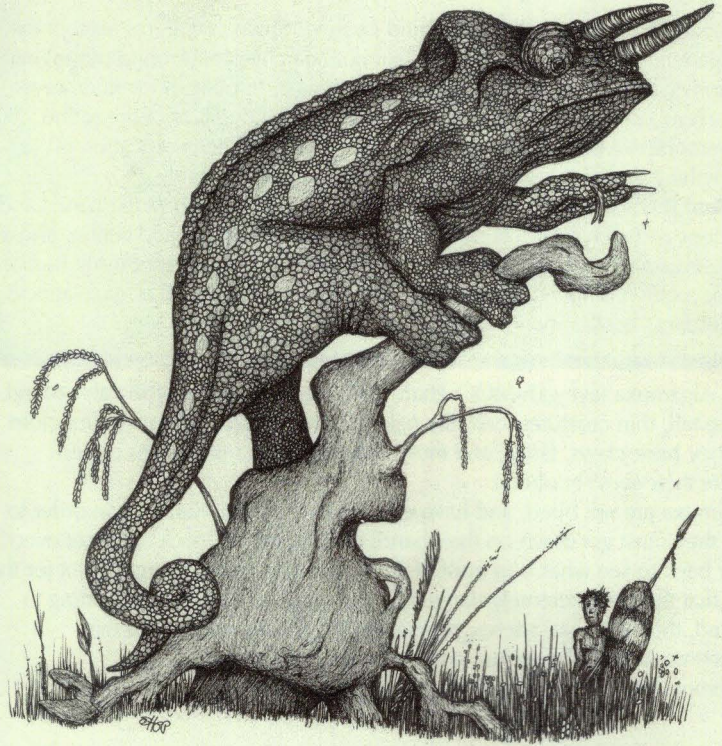
Swallow Whole (Ex): A nsanga can try to swallow a grabbed opponent of Large or smaller size by making a successful grapple check. Once swallowed, the opponent takes 2d6+8 points of crushing damage plus 1d10 points of acid damage per round from the nsanga's digestive secretions. A swallowed creature can climb out of the stomach with a successful grapple check. This returns it to the nsanga's mouth, where another successful grapple check is needed to get free. A swallowed creature can also cut its way out by using claws or a Small or Tiny slashing weapon to deal 25 points of damage to the stomach (AC 20). Once the creature exits, muscular action closes the hole; another swallowed opponent must cut its own way out. A nsanga's stomach can hold up to one Large, two Medium-size, four Small, or eight Tiny creatures.

Low-Light Vision (Ex): Nsanga can see twice as far as humans in starlight, moonlight, torchlight, etc.

Skills: Nsanga have excellent binocular vision, and receive a +4 racial bonus to spot checks. They have the ability to change color, which grants them a +8 concealment bonus to Hide checks, and are capable of slow and deliberate motions that grant them a +4 racial bonus to Move Silently checks.

The nsanga (n-SAHN-gah) is a dangerous species of giant lizard found in the Nyamban rainforest. It can climb trees, change color to match its surroundings and snare prey with its sticky tongue and swallow it whole.

An nsanga looks something like an armor-plated, 20-foot long giant chameleon. Chameleons are considered symbols of good luck amongst the people of Nyambe, and killing an nsanga, despite the danger the creature presents, is considered a bad omen.



Vampire Moth

Diminutive Undead

Hit Dice: 1/4 d12 (1 hp)

Initiative: +3 (Dex)

Speed: Fly 20 ft. (clumsy)

AC: 23 (+3 Dex, +4 size, +6 natural)

Attacks: Slam +7 melee

Damage: 1d2-2 slam and energy drain (10%)

Face/Reach: 1 ft. by 1 ft./0 ft.

Special Attacks: Energy Drain (10%), Create Spawn

Special Qualities: Undead, Fire Vulnerability, Sunlight Vulnerability, Cold and Electricity Resistance 20, Damage Reduction 15/+1, Turn Resistance +4, Darkvision

Saves: Fort +0, Ref +3, Will -1

Abilities: Str 6, Dex 17, Con —, Int —, Wis 3, Cha 5

Skills: Hide +20, Move Silently +4, Spot +1

Feats: Weapon Finesse (slam)

Climate/Terrain: Warm forest and underground

Organization: Swarm (2-20)

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral evil

Advancement: 1/2 HD (Diminutive), 1 HD (Tiny)

Combat

Vampire moths attack in swarms, hurling themselves against foes in a desperate attempt to drain life energy.

Energy Drain (Su): Living creatures struck by a vampire moth's slam attack have a 10% chance to suffer 1 negative level. This level loss is temporary and returns at the rate of 1 per day. For every negative level the vampire moth inflicts, it heals itself 5 points of damage.

Create Spawn (Su): Any living creature killed by the vampire moth's Energy Drain ability becomes a zombie in 1d4 rounds. Mundane moths killed by the Energy Drain attack become new vampire moths instead.

Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage. Immune to anything requiring a Fortitude save unless it affects objects.

Fire Vulnerability (Ex): Vampire moths are actually attracted to flames, and always fail saving throws against fire-based attacks.

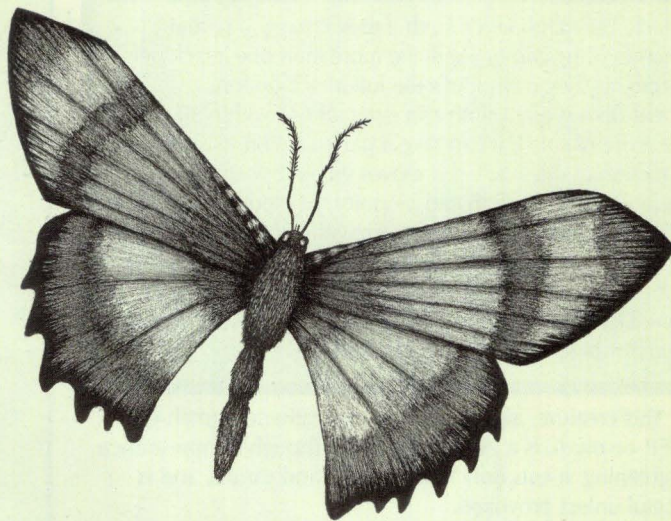
Sunlight Vulnerability (Ex): A vampire moth immediately goes dormant when exposed to direct sunlight. The moth remains helpless as long as the sun shines upon it.

Cold and Electricity (Ex): A vampire moth ignores the first 20 points of cold and electricity damage dealt to it each round.

Damage Reduction (Su): A vampire moth ignores damage from most weapons and natural attacks; the attacks simply bounce off. Damage dealt by an attack is reduced by 15 points, but a weapon with a +1 or better magical bonus deals full damage.

Turn Resistance (Ex): A vampire moth is treated as a 4 Hit Dice monster when subject to turning or rebuking attempts.

Darkvision (Ex): Vampire moths can see in the dark up to 60 feet. Darkvision is black and white, but otherwise like normal sight, and vampire moths can function with no light at all.



The name "vampire moth" is not a misnomer. The vampire moth is an undead moth that drains life energy. Scholars of the arcane are completely baffled by this monster — it is simply too small and weak to be a vampire — yet it exists.

Luckily, the moths are lacking many of the traditional vampire powers. They cannot assume gaseous form, summon animals, shapechange or dominate victims. Unfortunately, they also lack most of the classic vampire vulnerabilities. Most importantly, they are not harmed by sunlight, though it does cause them to fall dormant.

Vampire moths look like oversized moths with dull black wings.

Giant Sloth

Huge Animal

Hit Dice: 11d8+55 (104 hp)

Initiative: -2 (Dex)

Speed: 0 ft.

AC: 12 (-2 size, -2 Dex, +6 natural)

Attacks: Claw +15 melee

Damage: Claw 2d6+13

Face/Reach: 10 ft. by 10 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Partial Actions Only

Special Qualities: Partial Actions Only, Scent, Low-light Vision

Saves: Fort +12, Ref +3, Will +3

Abilities: Str 28, Dex 7, Con 21, Int 1, Wis 10, Cha 9

Skills: Listen +6, Spot +5

Feats: None

Climate/Terrain: Warm forest

Organization: Solitary, pair, or group (1-6)

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 12-22 HD (Huge)

Combat

When sufficiently irritated, a giant sloth attacks with its deadly claws.

Partial Actions Only (Ex): Giant sloths have poor reflexes and can perform only partial actions. Thus they can move or



attack, but can only do both if they charge (a partial charge). They can never make more than one attack per round, as they cannot use the full attack option.

Scent (Ex): A giant sloth can detect those within 30 feet by sense of smell. It can take a partial action to note the direction of the scent. If it moves within 5 feet of the source, the giant sloth can pinpoint that source. The giant sloth can also follow fresh tracks with a Wisdom check (DC 10). Creatures tracking by scent ignore the effects of surface conditions and poor visibility.

Low-Light Vision (Ex): Giant sloths can see twice as far as humans in starlight, moonlight, torchlight, etc.

This creature, also known as a megatherium (meh-gah-THEER-ee-uhm), is a 20-foot-tall sloth. Though its appearance is frightening, it eats only leaves, roots, and shrubs, and is peaceful unless provoked.

Werehyena

Medium-Size Shapechanger

Hit Dice: 2d8+6 (15 hp)

Initiative: +0; +1 (Dex) as hyena or hybrid

Speed: 30 ft. as humanoid or hybrid; 40 ft. as hyena

AC: 12 (+2 natural); 13 (+1 Dex, +2 natural) as hyena or hybrid

Attacks: Unarmed strike +0 melee; bite +3 melee as hyena or hybrid

Damage: Unarmed strike 1d3 subdual; bite 1d6+2 as hyena or hybrid

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.; 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft. as hyena or hybrid

Special Attacks: Sneak Attack +1d6, Curse of Lycanthropy as hyena or hybrid

Special Qualities: Alternate Form, Hyena Empathy; Plus Scent, Damage Reduction 15/bone as hyena or hybrid
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +2

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; or Str 15, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10 as hyena or hybrid

Skills: Craft or Profession (any one) +6, Knowledge (any one) +4, Listen +4, Search +4, Spot +4 (+11 as hyena or hybrid), Bluff +4, Hide +4, Listen +11, Move Silently +4, Search +8
Feats: Skill Focus (any Craft or Profession), Alertness, Blind-Fight, Power Attack as hyena or hybrid

Climate/Terrain: Warm plain

Organization: Solitary, pair, pack (6-10)

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always neutral evil

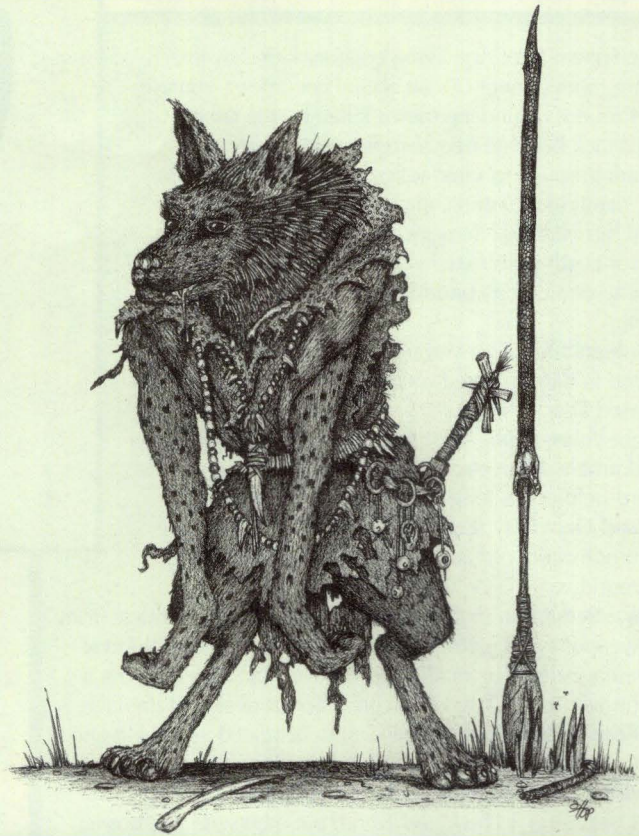
Advancement: By character class

Combat

Werehyenas enjoy feasting upon the flesh of the weak. They use Sneak Attacks whenever possible.

Sneak Attack (Ex): Werehyenas can sneak attack as 1st-level rogues, inflicting an additional 1d6 damage to foes they catch flat-footed or flanked.

Curse of Lycanthropy (Su): Any humanoid hit by a werehyena's bite attack in animal form must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 15) or contract lycanthropy.



Alternate Form (Su): A werehyena can take on humanoid, hyena, or a hybrid form indistinguishable from that of a gnoll.
Jackal Empathy (Ex): Werehyenas can communicate and empathize with normal or dire hyenas. This gives them a +4 racial bonus to checks when influencing the animal's attitude and allows the communication of simple concepts and (if the animal is friendly) commands, such as "friend," "foe," "flee," and "attack."

Scent (Ex): A werehyena can detect those within 30 feet by sense of smell. It can take a partial action to note the direction of the scent. If it moves within 5 feet of the source, the werehyena can pinpoint that source. The werehyena can also follow fresh tracks with a Wisdom check (DC 10). Creatures tracking by scent ignore the effects of surface conditions and poor visibility.

Damage Reduction (Su): A werehyena ignores damage from most weapons and natural attacks; the wounds heal instantly. Damage dealt by an attack is reduced by 15 points, but a weapon made of bone or with a +1 or better enhancement bonus deals full damage.

Low-Light Vision (Ex): Werehyenas can see twice as far as humans in starlight, moonlight, torchlight, etc.

Werehyena Characters

Most werehyenas are rogues. Werehyena characters receive the following adjustments:

Ability Score Adjustments: Str +4, Dex +2, Con +6
Bonus Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Power Attack

Most werehyenas are evil mchawi wizards who trade their souls for the ability to assume animal form. Those poor souls who become afflicted werehyenas are usually slain by the mchawi.

ZOGONIA

BY TONY MOSELEY

HEY! THERE'S A PRINCESS CHAINED-UP BEHIND THIS DOOR! SHOULD WE RESCUE HER?

IS SHE CUTE?

KEV!

TONYM © 2002

PRINCESS! YOUR ORDEAL HAS ENDED! YOU HAVE BEEN RESCUED BY..... DOMATO'S DELVERS!

HOW DARE YOU TAKE SO LONG TO RESCUE ME! MY FATHER-THE KING!- WILL HEAR OF YOUR INCOMPETENCE!!!



I HAVE BEEN IMPRISONED IN THIS FOUL CELL FOR DAYS WITHOUT A BATH! YOU WILL ESCORT ME AT ONCE TO A LOCATION WHERE I CAN BATHE! THEN YOU WILL ESCORT ME HOME. YOU WILL BE PAID 500 GOLD.

500? WE SAW A POOL ON THE THIRD LEVEL...

A LITTLE WHILE LATER...

THIS IS THE POOL. WOULD YOU LIKE TO USE OUR MAGIC SHAMPOO? WE FOUND IT THIS MORNING, AFTER-

OF COURSE! NOW GET OUT OF THIS ROOM AND GUARD ME!



Tony Moseley © 2002 www.zogonia.com

GEAR

THE UNUSUAL SUSPECTS

BY: JEFFREY S. CARTER

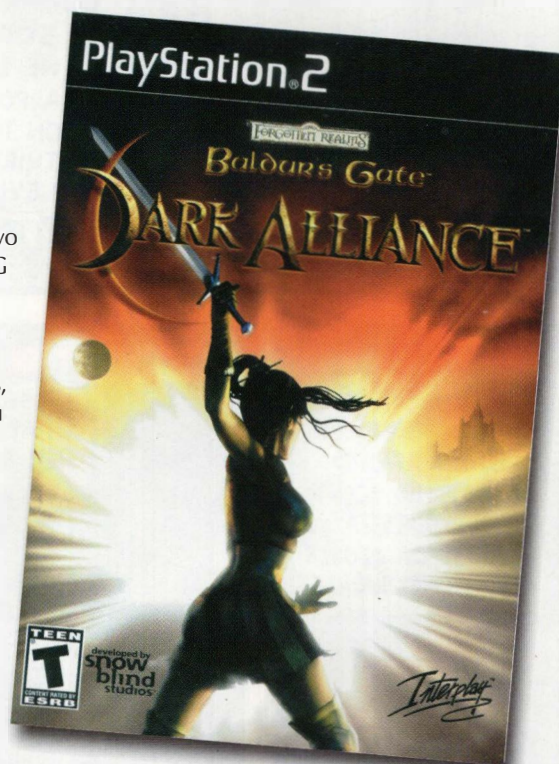
Ah, spring. That wonderful time of year when the sun comes peeking around those winter clouds and the dice begin to thaw. Our gaming table hasn't seen much in the way of new adventure tiles, miniatures or the like in the past few months, so we had to look elsewhere for inspiration. We managed to dig up some real treasures that aren't your ordinary gaming fare, so without further ado, let's delve into the Gaming Frontiers box of goodies and see what strikes our fancy (and hopefully yours!).

BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE (PLAYSTATION 2)

MSRP: around \$50 new
Developed by Snowblind Studios
Published by Interplay
www.interplay.com

Ask any of my fellow GF staff, and they'll tell you there's only one thing I like better than gaming, and that's video gaming. So when I get a chance to mix the two together, I'm in geek heaven. Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance is a hack-and-slash RPG (think Diablo or Gauntlet) where up to 2 players can wreak havoc all across the Forgotten Realms in various dungeons and landscapes. And what landscapes they are! Gorgeous graphics make this dungeon crawl stand heads and tails above the rest, and the gameplay is right there to back it up. Based loosely upon the 3E rules, the level-up system lets you customize one of the three characters available to you (A dwarven fighter, human arcane archer and elven sorceress) with various spells and Feats. Throughout your travels, you'll battle classic Dungeons & Dragons beasts like kobolds, green slimes, gnolls, winter wolves and even a beholder. For the truly hardcore, once you beat the "Extreme" mode, the game lets you unlock and play a famous character from the Forgotten Realms novels. I won't spoil anything, except to say that he wields two swords, has a funny name and isn't typical of his kind. Hours of fun can be found within this DVD-based adrenaline rush, so don't miss it.

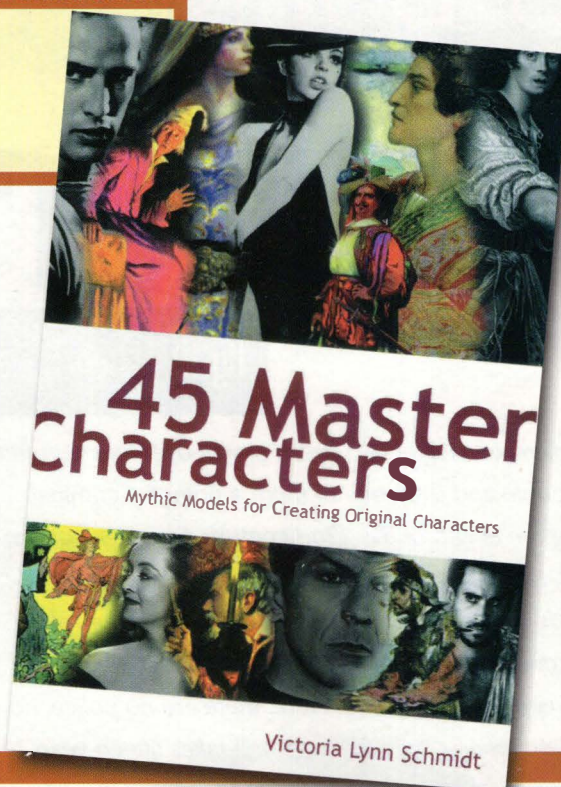
Why is this kind of thing in Gear? Easy – you can rip off (or "incorporate" as other GMs might say) ideas and throw them into your own game – characters, locations, etc. GM Tip – Try getting up to the beholder (or the white dragon) and pause the game. Then, when you get to a crucial point in your nightly RPG romp, bring everybody to the TV room and say, "And here's what you see!"



45 MASTER CHARACTERS: MYTHIC MODELS FOR CREATING ORIGINAL CHARACTERS

Writing Reference Book
MSRP: \$19.99
Author: Victoria Lynn Schmidt
Writers Digest Books, Inc.
www.writersdigest.com

Is your character a Mentor? A Businessman? A Traitor? A Recluse? Players and GMs alike who would like to add something more to their characters or NPCs would be doing themselves a huge favor by picking up this trove of inspiration. Meant as a reference book for writers to help them create three-dimensional, believable characters, it's also perfect for gamers. The author's system introduces archetypes from Greek myth, and applies them to modern day characters as seen in the movies, TV and in fiction, in order to show you how to build your own heroes and heroines. The book is a fascinating, quick read, and will do wonders for any GM who's well of NPC ideas has run dry, or for any player who wants a PC with a real personality. Inside you'll find chapters on creating female and male heroes and villains, creating supporting characters, a section on how to plot the Hero's Journey, and even Character Worksheets! This book is the perfect example of how non-gaming relating material can really affect your roleplaying.

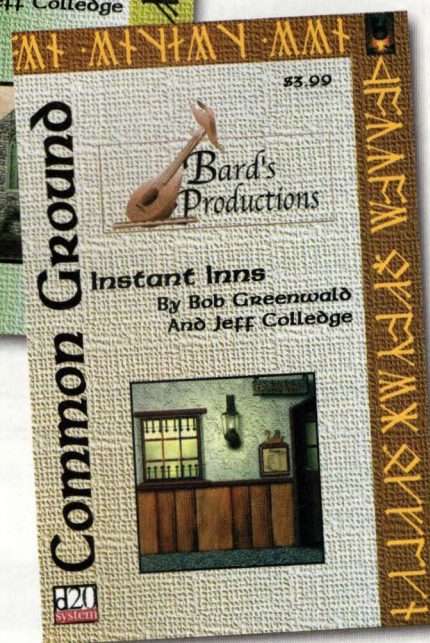
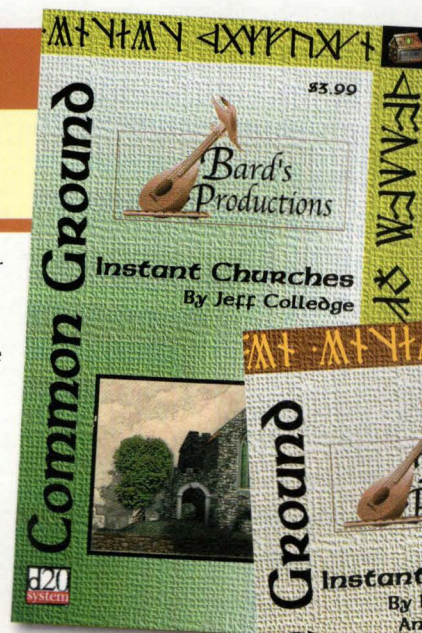


INSTANT CHURCHES & INSTANT INNS COMMON GROUND SERIES

MSRP: \$3.99 each
Bard's Productions
www.bardsproductions.com

These booklets are great for GMs who just don't have the time or the patience to flesh things out as well as they'd like. For "\$3.99 and in 5 minutes" (quoted from the website) these cool 10 page workbooks could wind up saving you a huge headache in the middle of a game. Imagine this: the PCs are supposed to visit Grom of Dandruff at the men's restroom at the Ye Ole Grub-N-Pub in Dingleberry, but instead they decide to go investigate the church due to some accursed plot point you threw in a few weeks ago on a whim. Now, instead of obviously making everything up as you go along, you can say, "Uh, I gotta use the restroom," run off to the next room for 5 minutes and come back with a fully-fleshed out place of worship for the PCs to sack. Vice versa for the Inns (or Guard Towers, if you use the article in this Volume of Gaming Frontiers). Each of these .pdf's come with full color maps and worksheets that allow you to choose the size, alignment and makeup of your location, and then populate it with NPCs complete with full stats, spells and more. It's commendable how much detail the folks at Bard's Productions managed to squeeze out in such a small space, and I can't even begin to explain how helpful these things are. If you're anything like me, it's not a question of whether or not I want them – I need stuff like this. Now, all I have to do is wait for Instant Houses of Ill Repute and I'll never have to lift a finger again. What can I say, my players are pervs.

See page 00 for the exclusive Gaming Frontiers entry into the Common Ground series, Instant Guard Towers by Bard's Productions.



NO BOUNDARIES

Judge Dredd

By: Matthew Sprange

Illustrated by: David Bishop

Welcome to Mega-City One, a city of over four hundred million people and everyone of them a potential criminal. Stretching the length of the 22nd century American eastern seaboard, Mega-City One is the most dangerous city on earth, for it is calculated that one serious crime takes place every second of every day. So dangerous, it demands a special breed of law enforcer. Here, there are no police, no trials and no juries – only the judges. It takes fifteen years to train a judge for life on the streets of Mega-City One. Fifteen years of iron discipline, rigid self-control and concentrated aggression. Toughest of all judges is Joe Dredd, a man vested with the power of instant sentence, a man whose court is the streets and whose word is the Law!

Due for release in June, the new Judge Dredd role-playing game, from Mongoose Publishing, is based on the highly popular d20 System. Players can now fully explore Mega-City One, taking the role of judges patrolling the streets in a desperate attempt to maintain law and order, or as perps, lawbreakers determined to buck the authority of the judges and set up their own criminal organisation.

We here at Mongoose Publishing are very excited at being given the chance of producing role-playing games based on the 2000AD comic strips, and with Judge Dredd in particular, for there are few science-fiction settings with the sheer scope and detail present in these stories. We are working very closely with Rebellion, the owners of 2000AD to make sure that every detail within the role-playing game will be absolutely correct and so give the ultimate Mega-City One experience.

www.mongoosepublishing.com

MONGOOSE PUBLISHING

Quis Partem Ichneumonis Cupit?

A Word from Rebellion

Rebellion bought 2000AD and its companion publication the Judge Dredd Magazine for two reasons; we wanted to, and it made financial sense. The first is because we've all been reading it for the last 24 and a bit years, the second, meant that there were many other ways in which we could explore the fantastic worlds that have been born in the pages of the Galaxy's Greatest Comic!

Rebellion has an expertise in computer games, and so we're making Dredd Vs Death as the first of several games for both PC and console formats. One area of 'exploring worlds' that comes from my past was the 'proper' role playing game. Only in an RPG can you get the hugely complex interaction that plays out between several human participants in a shared story-telling session. We were contacted by Mongoose and, because of their enthusiasm and professionalism, quickly decided to move ahead with creating a range of RPG products based on the many universes we control.

The Judge Dredd RPG is the first of many of these, and I'm looking forward to seeing the results. 2002 is 2000AD's 25th anniversary, and I'm sure many of the original creators of the comic didn't think it would last this long. It has done so because we create compelling worlds, and will continue to do so. Our team-up with Mongoose will make it possible for others to share in these stories, and maybe, just maybe, take them further than we dared.

Now, move along Creep.

Jason Kingsley, CEO
Rebellion

The development of the new Judge Dredd role-playing game has created a hive of activity here at Mongoose Publishing. Whilst many of the new rules being added to the d20 System for this unique setting, such as rapid firing weapons, high explosives, vehicles and, of course, the infamous Lawgiver firearm, are still under wraps, we can let you have a sneak peek at one of the character classes available in the game – the Street Judge, the true defender of law and order on the streets of Mega-City One. As you will see, the Street Judge is an incredibly powerful character class, not least because players will automatically start at 3rd level and be granted the very best equipment the Justice Department can supply. However, the streets of Mega-City One are amongst the most dangerous places on the planet and it takes all of a judge's abilities and training just to survive his daily patrols.

The Street Judge

It takes fifteen years in the toughest academy on earth to train a street judge. He learns to handle a variety of specialised equipment, all the while building his body and mind into an inflexible instrument of the law. By the time a judge hits the streets, he is no longer truly a man – he is a machine.

Characteristics: Street judges are the elite of Mega-City One. Highly trained, they are granted the very best equipment and then take to the streets to bring law and order to the citizens. They are the enforcers of peace and stability. Without the constant presence of the ever-watching judges, Mega-City One would tear itself apart in hours. Street judges have the reputation of being almost super-human. Their superb range of skills and feats is difficult to match and any one judge is easily the equal of several common perps. However, the streets of Mega-City One are dangerous places and a judge needs all his training and equipment just to survive the patrols he makes each and everyday. Often seen as dour, faceless and humourless individuals, there are in fact many different personality types within the ranks of the judges, but all share a common goal to eradicate crime from the streets of the city.

Game Rule Information

Street judges have the following game statistics.

Abilities: The physical abilities of Strength, Dexterity and Constitution are all of vital importance to a street judge, as they are expected to be able to face overwhelming odds in combat and still survive to bring their perp back to the Sector House alive. However, Intelligence is also an important ability, as a bright street judge will have access to a greater amount of skills and thus be far more valuable to his team. Finally, a high Charisma is required to force a perp to surrender without resorting to combat every time.

Hit Die: d12.

Class Skills: Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Drive (Dex), Gather Information (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (law) (Int), Listen (Wis), Medical (Wis), Pilot (Dex), Ride (Dex), Search

(Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), Streetwise (Wis), Swim (Str), and Technical (Int).

Skill Points at 1st Level: (2 + Int Modifier) x 4

Skill Points at Each Additional Level: 2 + Int Modifier

Class Features

The following are all class features of the street judge character class.

Weapon Proficiencies: The street judge is proficient with all weapons except those listed as exotic.

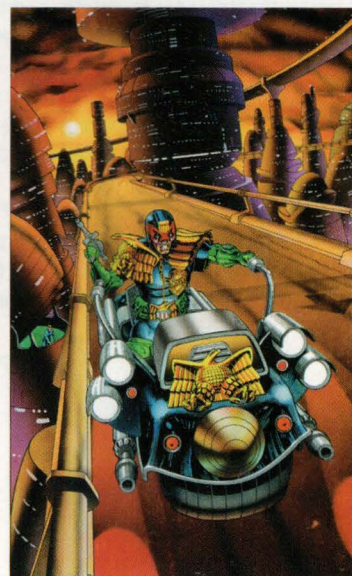
Bonus Feat: Street judges are incredibly well trained by the Academy of Law and undergo constant revision and refresher courses throughout their careers. At 1st and 2nd level, and every other level thereafter, the street judge receives a bonus General or Judge feat of his choice, in addition to feats gained every three levels.

Ex-Street Judges: A street judge who ceases to be the very epitome of law and order, or who flagrantly commits heinous crimes, runs a very real risk of discovery by the Justice Department. A few will be moved to auxiliary positions within the Justice Department, whilst some may be allowed to take the honourable Long Walk into the undercity or Cursed Earth. Most, however, will be ruthlessly pursued by fellow judges until caught and sentenced for a minimum of twenty years hard labour on the penal moon of Titan.

The Future

There are many supplements planned for release alongside the Judge Dredd role-playing game, including detailed looks at the various Mega-Cities around the world, as well as such treats like the Rookie's Guide to the Alien Creeps, all coming together to build the definitive background to the world of 2124. However, Mongoose Publishing is not stopping with the Judge Dredd role-playing game. Due for release in August is yet another game based on the 2000AD comic strips – Slaine, the Warrior King. A setting based on Celtic myth and legend, this will prove a favourite for fantasy and comic fans alike.

The fusion of Mongoose Publishing and the 2000AD comic strips promises to bring to the table some of the best looking and most detailed role-playing games ever produced. It is going to be an exciting, if rather dangerous, year. . .



The Street Judge

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Title	Special
1st	+1	+2	+2	+2	Cadet	Bonus Feat
2nd	+2	+3	+3	+3	Rookie	Bonus Feat
3rd	+3	+3	+3	+3	Street Judge	
4th	+4	+4	+4	+4		Bonus Feat
5th	+5	+4	+4	+4		
6th	+6/+1	+5	+5	+5		Bonus Feat
7th	+7/+2	+5	+5	+5		
8th	+8/+3	+6	+6	+6		Bonus Feat
9th	+9/+4	+6	+6	+6		
10th	+10/+5	+7	+7	+7		Bonus Feat
11th	+11/+6/+1	+7	+7	+7		
12th	+12/+7/+2	+8	+8	+8	Senior Judge	Bonus Feat
13th	+13/+8/+3	+8	+8	+8		
14th	+14/+9/+4	+9	+9	+9		Bonus Feat
15th	+15/+10/+5	+9	+9	+9		
16th	+16/+11/+6/+1	+10	+10	+10		Bonus Feat
17th	+17/+12/+7/+2	+10	+10	+10		
18th	+18/+13/+8/+3	+11	+11	+11		Bonus Feat
19th	+19/+14/+9/+4	+11	+11	+11		
20th	+20/+15/+10/+5	+12	+12	+12		Bonus Feat

UNCHARTED TERRITORY

EXPLORING CORVIS:

PITT'S PISTOLS

BY: J. MICHAEL KILMARTIN & BRETT HUFFMAN

ILLUSTRATED BY: MATT WILSON

Experience Privateer Press' Iron Kingdoms by visiting this gun vendor's shop in the trade nexus of Corvis, City of Ghosts!

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

by J. Michael Kilmartin

Candlelight flickered in the dimly lit shop. What might at first appear to be a small boy sat in the corner; closer inspection revealed the "boy" as a diminutive male goblin. The gray-skinned creature was garbed in a long woolen indigo-colored tunic discolored with soot and dried grease stains and cinched at the waist with a thick leather belt. Equally as dirty as the tunic was a leather coif that covered the top of the goblin's ovoid head. He sat on a high stool, stumpy legs dangling, as he finished filing a tiny metal ball and then dropped it into a tin canister filled with several dozen more of the same. The goblin sighed and flipped the file into a tray of odd tools. He removed his magnification goggles and reached for a dingy copper tankard, taking a lengthy swig of its contents, some kind of brackish sludge that barely passed for grog among his kind; humans usually referred to it as "pig swill."

Lightning flickered outside, briefly and brightly illuminating the shop known as Pitt's Pistols. The goblin in the corner looked up, past the proofing block, the sheafs of hardwood, and the stacks of greaseproof papers, and stared out the thick glassy window into the dark gray beyond. It was barely past midday but the storm outside brought with it clouds so black that it looked like a half span past dusk.

"How's that order coming along, Gort?" came a voice from the stairway, punctuated by the rumble of distant thunder.

"Just done last round, Mr. Pitt," replied the goblin. Gortlakanomok was simply called Gort for short, and this was the

case for nearly every "gobber" that dealt with men; apparently humans didn't appreciate the intricacy of goblinoid titles. Men liked to change everything it seemed; rightly called goblins, now everywhere in the lands of Immoen Gort's people were referred to as gobber-this and gobber-that.

The door swung open and in walked Halleran Alcott, a chill wind on his heels that snuffed a pair of lit candles at the front of the shop. The sandy haired alchemist, dressed in dark thigh boots, a long green leather coat and a green wool felt tricorne hat, carried a wooden keg on his shoulder. His bright green eyes immediately scanned the room, seeking the gray-skinned goblin, who was shielding his candles from the breeze. "Two more in the wagon," the man said to the creature, jerking his head toward the outside.

Gort hopped gracelessly down from his stool and swagged across the shop on bandy legs.

"Better hurry," the alchemist urged. "It's just starting to really bucket down."

The goblin grunted an unintelligible reply and brushed by the man and out the open doorway. The door swung shut behind him.

"Hall, that you?" called the voice from upstairs.

"It's me, Pitt," the sandy haired man called out as he put his keg on the counter. "I've got three drums here for ya—two black, one red—and I can have two more of each the day after tomorrow."

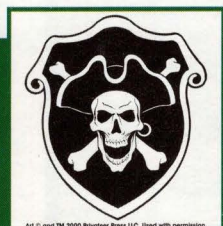
Creaking lumber heralded the arrival of the balding Angmar Pitt, who descended the stairs with a pipe clenched in his teeth and a batch of unfinished rifle barrels tucked under each armpit; his hands, arms, and leather apron were layered in black gun grease. Hall took a handful of the barrels from him and helped line them against the wall next to Pitt's ironwood boring bench with its heavy cast iron wheel and a table strewn with various-sized stocks and other odd bits.

"Alright, Hall. That's fine. Three's all I need for the Watch," Pitt said. "Now that things've settled a bit since bloody old Vinter's been driven off, I've gotten nearly caught up. I can finish boring some of these long-standing orders. Business surely was boomin' there for a spell, eh?"

"Boomin's the word for it," replied Hall. "Now that the city's munitions nearly restocked the most exciting thing to look forward to is this weather."

On cue, lightning lit the entire outside, and both men could see all the way down Cannon Street for a split second. People were milling about, looking for shelter from the coming storm, and Gort

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was wobbling up the outside steps with his unusually long arms embraced around a powder keg.

"Well, just you wait," said Pitt, as he began packing his pipe. "It's like I always say: never a dull moment in Corvis. Something's bound to happen sooner or later."

"Indeed," replied Hall, walking toward the doorway.

"You must be daft haulin' powder in this weather!" Pitt said, stepping behind the counter.

"They're waxed, my friend. No worries."

"I know that! That's not what I mean. I'm not worried about wet powder. I'm talking about the storm. One ill-timed bolt and you'd be little more than a shadow on the wall."

"You know me, Pitt," the alchemist chuckled as he opened the door for the goblin. The wind had picked up even more, billowing into the store, bringing a light sprinkling of rain with it. The candles on Gort's workstation extinguished, but Pitt had a lit lantern by the stairs and more on both ends of the counter.

"Hurry, hurry," Pitt said, motioning for the goblin to get inside and shut the door. With a slight heave, Gort shifted the keg higher on his belly, tucking the top edge under his knobby chin, and replied with one of his customary unintelligible grunts. The creature shambling past stacks of hardwood into the back storeroom with the keg.

"Anyway," Hall continued, watching the goblin disappear through an open archway behind his workstation. "Not much difference whether powder's in the street or in the backroom of my shop, now is it?"

"Hmph! Swimming with dragonfish is dangerous too," said Pitt. "But you don't see me running out to do it. You'll tempt fate one too many times someday, my friend, and she's a fickle old strumpet, that's for sure." The gunsmith dipped a thin brand in one of the lanterns and used it to light his pipe.

"Right." Hall chuckled. "Those were younger days. I count myself lucky I only lost a couple of toes.... Say, how's the gobber working out for you?"

"I can't complain about ol' Gort. He does what I ask of him, doesn't give me any lip, and he's relatively neat as far as gobbers go. In fact, I never met a harder working one." Pitt handed Hall a semi-clean towel. "Hell, Hall, he's been here six weeks now and already picked up more than my last daft fool of an apprentice did in six months."

Hall smiled, doing his best to wipe the sticky grease from the barrels off of his hands. "I told you these gobbers are smarter than people give 'em credit for. They're very industrious. No small wonder there's been such an influx of late."

"Ah, I never worried too much about gobbers anyway," said Pitt, puffing on his pipe. He lowered his voice and squinted toward the storeroom as Gort emerged. He and the alchemist remained quiet as the goblin went back outside to retrieve the remaining powder keg. "It's those rank bastards that hairy-arsed tyrant dragged in the city with him that's got me worried."

"You mean the skorne?"

Pitt exhaled smoke. "That's right," he nodded. "I got myself a bad feeling 'bout those bloodthirsty sods. We ain't seen the last of 'em, that's a fair bet."

Hall shrugged as the rain started coming down in sheets outside. Both men peered out the windows as the lightning flickered, while a dripping wet Gort knocked at the door with his knobby foot. The alchemist opened the door and the muttering goblin strove toward the back room with the keg.

"Careful, Gort," Pitt called after the goblin, noticing the keg was about to upend his assistant.

"Damn, it's pissing stones and hammers out there," Hall remarked, an ancient dwarven expression for a fierce storm.

"May as well have a seat and stay dry, my boy," Pitt said to his friend.

Gort returned to his workstation and re-lit his candles. The damp goblin wiped his face off with a greasy towel he had acquired from the floor and then draped it over a table ledge. He then reached for a clay pot containing some amber oil varnish he had been using to stain a couple of pistol stocks. He pulled one of them off the shelf, set it down, and began stirring the oil.

"Aye," the alchemist nodded, peering out the window. He pulled off his long leather coat, tossing it over the back of a chair and then set his hat on the counter. "I suppose you're right."

"Gort, grab a bottle of wine from the back, would you?" Pitt asked. "We may as well all have a drink while we stay nice and dry. And remember to keep that oil away from those candles you have there."

The goblin set the clay pot aside, well away from his candles, and hopped back down from his stool, disappearing once more into the storeroom. As he did this, the door swung open and a broad shouldered man entered. A surge of wind and water came in with him and Gort's candles relented once more.

The man had shoulder-length dark hair and a short growth of beard. Dark circles rimmed his cold eyes. He was dressed in a thick leather greatcoat, a dark brown cloak, and a short saber was sheathed at his waist. It was Silas Grimes, a rough-and-tumble fellow who was rumored to belong to the Griffons thieves' guild. Neither Pitt nor Hall had ever made an effort to ask this of the

rogue, of course. Silas had a temper as cold as his gaze, but an air of menace lurked there that put men off; even old Angmar Pitt.

"Master Grimes, how are you?" Pitt greeted the man.

"Wet," Silas replied. "You?"

Pitt grinned. "Dry as an old bone, sir. What can I do you for?"

Silas removed his thick gloves and tucked them in his belt. He ran a hand through his thick mop of wet hair and then looked at Hall, who had been watching him with interest since he came in the door. Hall nodded, and Silas returned the nod. Gort came out of the storeroom with a bottle and three glasses and set them on the counter next to Pitt.

"Bugger me, you have a gobber, Pitt?" Silas made a sour face.

"I do," the gunsmith replied. "Hardest worker I ever had, too. Some sherry, Master Grimes?"

Silas considered Gort for a moment as the goblin simply stared into space, his usual blank stare. The rogue then shrugged. "Sure, Pitt. Sounds good. What is it?" Silas reached out and picked up the bottle, reading the label, as Gort shuffled off to fetch another glass. "Ah, not bad. Highgate Vineyard, 576—the Elder's coronation vintage. Good stuff."

"He may not look like much, but the man has refined taste," Hall chuckled, but he was the only one who found amusement in the wisecrack. Silas ignored the alchemist as Pitt handed him a corkscrew and shot Hall a warning glance. Apparently he had forgotten that Silas Grimes was also notorious for having not one whimsical bone in his body. In fact, humor often got the man's dander up.

Gort returned with a fourth glass as Silas popped the cork. The rogue reached for one of them and started pouring.

"Please, Master Grimes, do the honors for all of us." The gunsmith indicated the remaining three glasses.

"I'll pour for you and Lord Chuckles here, but it nearly turns my stomach to drink with a gobber—I sure as hell won't pour for the little pug." Silas' dark eyes bored into the gray-skinned critter, but Gort seemed unaffected.

"That's fine, Master Grimes. Gort, why don't you take your drink to your table over there?" said Pitt, patting the goblin on the shoulder. Gort nodded, then waited for Silas to finish pouring three of the glasses and set the bottle on the counter top. Pitt poured the fourth glass for his assistant and the goblin retired with it to his workstation.

Pitt began to speak to Silas. "The goblin really is a good work—but stopped mid-sentence after a dark look from the rogue. "Well, everyone has their certain likes and dislikes. No matter. Now what can I help you with, Master Grimes?" The gunsmith was getting eager to have this man on his way.

"I hear you can make specialty ammo."

"I can indeed, sir."

"Precision rounds?"

"Yes—although I'll need to study the weapon."

Silas reached behind his back, then drew forth a larger than normal pistol of exquisite design made of glossy heartwood cherry with a filigreed action plate and a frame made of polished yellow brass. It featured complex carved designs and the engraved scrollwork on the metal was superb, but most distinct about the pistol, other than its largeness—a couple inches longer than a foot—was the double barrels. The rogue put the firearm on the counter top. "How long will it take?" he asked.

"Ah, this is a big piece of work," Pitt said as he took up the weapon, turning it over in his hands. "Double-barreled...don't often see that. This gun's from nowhere around here, that's certain." Squinting, he peered down the barrels, pulled back the twin strikers, and checked the breech. The gunsmith dumped two rounds from the weapon into his callused palm. Above him, a sign stated plainly: *No*

Loaded Arms in Shop. Pitt nodded his head toward the sign but said nothing, and Silas remained stone-faced, the rogue's cold eyes locked on the smith as he pocketed the rounds. "These'll help a little."

With no reaction from Silas, Pitt's brow furrowed and he returned his attentions to the pistol. He was impressed with its functional quality. It was well made, and for obvious reasons. The gunsmith hefted it a few times lightly in his palm. "Dwarven-made. Distinct trigger mechanism, weighted heavier in the front...ah, here's an escutcheon on the butt plate...a clan symbol...um, Rorgun I think—"

"That's right," Silas said, impatience creeping into his voice.

"How long?"

"I'll start taking measurements right away. It may take two days, possibly three. I'll have to test fire it a few times, of course."

"That's fine."

"How many rounds do you need?"

"Six dozen."

Hall interposed with a soft snorting sound. "I heard about the incident at the Dancing Swine," the alchemist said. "I heard the Black Hand was involved and some Griffons really took a beating—"

Silas turned completely square to Halleran. "Would you care to lose that tongue? You're bloody fond of wagging it about so loosely. I'd probably be doing us both a favor if I cut it out." The rogue's fingertips were on the pommel of a dagger sheathed at his right hip, and he pierced the alchemist with an arctic stare.

Hall's eyes were held in that glare as his face turned red. He said nothing, which was a chore. It was no secret to those who knew him that the impulsive Halleran Alkott loved the sound of his own voice. The alchemist wondered if his spells could protect him from Silas' blade, but in these close quarters it was doubtful. No matter, even if he did manage to fend off the rogue, any confrontation with the man would most likely bring down half of the Griffons guild on his head. Hall was often called eccentric but he was not as hell-bent on suicide as some believed.

The alchemist pulled his eyes away and sipped at his wine. Pitt decided to stay the course and hopefully pull Silas' attention away from his impetuous friend. "Hmmm. This is no standard caliber, that's for certain. It may take us a while."

"Us?"

"Well, yes. Gort will—"

Silas cut Pitt off. "That stinking gobber will not be touching my pistol." Apparently the rogue's attentions were no longer on the alchemist for the time being.

Across the room, Gort was re-lighting his candles, apparently not noticing—or pretending not to notice—that he was the sudden topic of conversation. The gunsmith actually furrowed his brow at the rogue and they locked eyes. He knew Silas Grimes was dangerous but, by gum, Angmar Pitt was starting to get a bit perturbed! He didn't take kindly to people striding into his shop and threatening his friends and help. The gunsmith felt his face flush and his teeth clenched down on the end of his pipe. "He's my assistant, Master Grimes. He does a lot of the handling around here."

"Not...my...pistol. Got it?" Silas leaned forward. "I can live with it if he helps with the bloody rounds, but he doesn't touch the piece."

Pitt paused. If he turned Silas Grimes away, that could be bad. If the man had pull with the Griffons, which apparently he did, that could be very bad. Thunder clamored ominously overhead. Pitt cursed inwardly. Hall was pretending to be preoccupied by fingering through a toolbox full of miscellaneous gun parts, although the gunsmith could see that his alchemist friend—who also happened to be a bit of a wizard—was watching out of the corner of his eyes, and seemed to have a spell just begging to leap from his lips.

"Do we have a deal, Pitt?" Silas' voice was even more menacing than the thunder.

The gunsmith noticed his apprentice was no longer sitting at his workstation, but then he strained to see the goblin. Gort's skin had changed to take on the hues of the wall and the deep shadows of his dark corner; if one weren't specifically looking for the goblin, he'd be virtually invisible. Gort was holding something under the tabletop, leveled at Silas Grimes, and Pitt discerned the shoddy pistol that the goblin had made for himself a couple of weeks ago out of leftover parts. The gunsmith had told Gort to get rid of it. After examining the beaming goblin's work of art, he had deduced that there was no way it would work except perhaps to backfire in the wielder's gray-skinned and unfortunate mug! *Damn silly gobber—damn bloody gobber! Never a dull moment indeed, he thought.*

Silas began to turn his attentions to whatever Pitt was looking at when the gunsmith smiled. "Of course, Master Grimes. Of course we have a deal," Pitt said and scratched the back of his right ear—the signal he had taught Gort some weeks ago that meant "stand down." He was relieved to see the goblin acquiesce and slowly slide the gun back onto a low shelf under his workstation table.

Silas nodded. He had drained his glass of wine so he took the bottle and drank from it. The rogue grabbed up the cork and re-stoppered the bottle, and then kept hold of it. "I'll be back in two days."

Pitt's face was turning from pink to red, knowing full well his five-crowns bottle of Highgate Vintage was about to walk out the door and into the rain with Silas Grimes. "Three days would be much better—Master Grimes," he somehow managed to say.

Silas put his gloves back on. "Very well. Three. And remember to keep that pug's filthy claws off my pistol."



The gunsmith nodded and Silas Grimes turned to leave. As he reached for the door it flew open and a hooded figure came rushing in out of the rain, walking briskly right into the rogue. The bottle dropped to the floor as Silas was knocked a couple of feet backwards. The hooded person quickly reached out with gloved hands to steady him, emanating a deep-toned apology, while the wind and rain billowed messily into the room, scattering papers and once more extinguishing Gort's candles. The goblin grumbled noticeably.

"Get your hands off of me!" the rogue hissed, batting the hooded man's arms away. They backed from one another and Silas' hand immediately went to the hilt of his dagger. The hooded man's head cocked slightly, as if in sudden recognition.

Meanwhile, a second hooded figure, slighter in stature than the first, had entered as well, and was bending down to retrieve the fallen wine. The bottle had remained intact and stoppered.

"Wouldn't do that if I were you, Grimes," said the larger hooded figure, reaching in the folds of his heavy cloak toward his belt. The voice was deep and authoritative, and suddenly everyone in the room recognized these two as armored Watchmen. And one was not just any Watchman; the larger figure pulled his hood back, revealing a thick black goatee, a strong jawline and eyes that burned like fire. It was Julian Helstrom, recently promoted since the skorne invasion from captain to one of five commanders of the city watch.

"Helstrom," the rogue spoke the name as if it were a curse. "I thought it wouldn't get any worse than gobbers today." Silas' grip had yet to leave the hilt of the dagger at his waist.

Helstrom, too, had a weapon within reach; his gloved hand pulled back the flap of his cloak revealing that the other hand was resting on the butt of a pistol slung at his hip. "Don't try me today, Grimes," the commander advised the man. His eyes smoldered and lightning flashed behind him to match. "Don't make me forget I'm wearing this ensign."

"Are you threatening me, Helstrom?"

"When I threaten you, you won't have to ask."

"Not in my shop, sirs," Pitt interjected. "Please—"

The two men bristled and eyes of fire clashed with eyes of ice for a long moment, until finally the remaining hooded figure broke the silence. "Commander?" It was a feminine voice.

Silas' lip curled in a half-grin. It was a disturbing thing. "A woman? This your girl, Helstrom?"

The female pulled back her cloak and hood, revealing her Watch colors and armor. She was unusually pretty as far as Watchmen went, with red hair pulled back in a tight braid, freckles on her nose, stunning green eyes and an athletic build. Her gloved hand, too, rested on the butt of a pistol. "I'm no one's girl, you twit. It's sergeant. Why don't you take the commander's advice and sod off?"

"Master Grimes," said Pitt. "Please."

Silas looked at Pitt, then the two Watchmen. He snorted. "Three days," he said to Pitt, and then shouldered between the commander and the sergeant. As he did so, he reached out and took the bottle of wine from the woman's hand. "That's mine...Sergeant."

"Hardly." Helstrom's hand shot out and snatched the bottle from Silas' grip. "Three glasses on the counter and I know for a fact this vintage is Angmar's favorite." The two men were nearly chest-to-chest. The rogue's face was contorted and he was showing teeth. "You know I can't let you walk out of here, Grimes. I've got at least a half dozen writs calling out your name."

Suddenly Silas' knife was out of its sheath and the two men were fighting. Moving quickly, Helstrom grabbed both of the rogue's wrists. Both men crashed into the counter as Hall backed swiftly out of the way. Helstrom slammed the rogue's hand gripping the knife repeatedly against the countertop until he dropped it, but as soon as

he did, Silas managed to pull his right arm free of the commander's grip and with his fist struck Helstrom in the temple. This dazed the commander enough for Silas to step away and unsheathe his saber.

"Hold!" bellowed the female sergeant, but Silas was incensed. He despised the Watch and he especially hated Julian Helstrom for infinite reasons. The rogue lashed out with his sword at the woman as she leapt back behind the corner of a table. His blade missed her by inches, sending sheafs of hardwood flying from the table.

A sibilant whisper announced Helstrom's longsword leaving its scabbard. "Give it up or you're going down, Grimes," said Helstrom. Thunder clamored to punctuate his words.

In response, Silas bounded forward, his saber hissing through the air. Helstrom blocked the blow, and a second, and a third. The two men paused, measuring each other.

Silas saw sudden movement in his periphery and barely managed to block a blow toward his side from the sergeant's longsword. The woman pushed her way forward with another sweep of her blade, locking eyes with Silas Grimes. "You're under arrest for the assault of a Watchman. Drop your weapon!"

The rogue did not answer but attacked once more. Blades whirled from all three combatants in a dazzling web as the alchemist and gunsmith backed as far from the swordplay as they could. Steel clashed repeatedly against steel. Silas was graceful in his movements and Helstrom was equal in skill to the rogue but the added advantage of the sergeant's sword made it soon apparent the rogue was outmatched. He took a gamble. Leaving himself open to the woman, Silas lunged low at Helstrom...but the commander anticipated it. Helstrom spun on his heels, his sword snaking out in a stunning riposte. Silas' saber was flying from his grip and over the female Watchman's head.

The rogue did not hesitate. He hurdled onto the counter and quickly snatched the dwarvish pistol from Angmar Pitt's hands. Standing on the countertop, Silas wheeled about and lowered the firearm, aiming it directly at Helstrom. "Drop your swords or die!" the panting rogue hissed. He knew it wasn't loaded, but did they?

Both Watchmen considered the man briefly as he stood above them. Helstrom noticed the backdrop behind the rogue—Pitt's sign stating his rule about firearms in the shop. "Commander?" came the woman's voice.

"Do as he says, Sergeant," said Helstrom.

The commander lowered his blade as the woman dropped her longsword. It clanged upon the clapboard floor, and Helstrom dropped his, as well.

"Hand me my saber," said Silas.

"Go ahead, Sergeant."

As the woman began to move, a bright flash of lightning lit the room. As quick as that lightning, Helstrom's own pistol was out of its holster and aimed at Silas. Despite knowing his pistol was not loaded, the threatening move set off the rogue's instincts. He pulled the trigger and both strikers snapped harmlessly.

Helstrom thumbed back the striker on his own pistol. "You'd have had me, Grimes, except for Master Pitt's policy...no loaded weapons in the shop," said the commander. He aimed his pistol at Silas and pulled the trigger. A resounding clack. "Now we're both dead."

The female sergeant stood between Silas and the doorway. He leaped at the woman, but in mid-leap a resounding boom filled the shop. It was not thunder. The rogue hit the floor screaming, grabbing at his right shoulder.

Standing at the end of the counter, shrouded in white smoke, stood a goblin with a raised pistol. Gort lowered his sloppily made firearm as everyone gave him due consideration. Silas broke the short silence with a moan as he writhed in pain on the floor. The bullet had hit him in the back of the shoulder and exited through his

collarbone. Still, the rogue was trying to get to his knees when the sergeant walked up behind him. "You're under arrest, you hairy-arsed gorax," she said, and in punctuation she struck Silas on the back of the head with the hilt of her sword. The rogue pitched to the floor, bleeding and unconscious.

Helstrom paused, and then grinned. "Wadock, you did well," he said to her, clapping her on the shoulder. "Let's get this fool to the donjons."

Sergeant Megan Wadock beamed at her commander.

"Thanks for your help, Commander Helstrom," said Angmar Pitt.

"I'd like to thank your assistant," replied the commander.

In the corner, Gort was gathering his candles, canisters, and toolboxes of files, awls and small brass hammers up in his arms. He grunted to himself, having decided to take his work upstairs not just to get out of the draft every time the door opened but also to escape all the other interruptions to his work. Arms full, the goblin waddled toward the stairs.

"Gort, come over here!"

The goblin sighed, set his items back down on the table, and approached the counter. "Didn't I tell you to throw that poxy old pistol out?" asked the gunsmith. "And what have I said about loaded arms in the shop?"

"Sorry, Master Pitt," the goblin apologized in earnest, lowering his gaze to the floor.

"No, no, you did a good thing today." Pitt patted his assistant on the shoulder. "But as far as we're all concerned here, you never did anything, understand? Is that well and good, Commander? Let's just say the Watch put that round in Master Grimes, eh? I don't need any trouble with the guilds."

"Very good," said Helstrom. "Got that, Sergeant?"

"I'll be more than happy to take the credit, sir."

The commander nodded. "Done."

At the same time, Hall—who had nearly been all but forgotten—obtained the bottle of wine from the floor where it had been dropped. He uncorked it and took a long swig. He then noticed all eyes in the shop on him. "Hmmm?"

"And you?" asked Helstrom.

"Me?" Hall snorted. "I didn't see a damn thing."

Pitt nodded. "By the way, was there a particular reason you stopped in, Commander? Besides just to wreck my shop and cost me a month's rates in lost business?"

"Those three powder kegs I asked for."

"Oh, aye, of course. In all the excitement I quite forgot. I'll have Gort fetch them right away."

The door swung open and another customer entered, sending papers flying. The man was garbed in dark brown and black with a thin nose, pale eyes, and a crimson scar across his forehead. He took one look at the Watchmen standing over the inert Silas Grimes, cursed, and ducked back out into the storm.

"Blast!" cursed Helstrom. "That was Lupo!"

"As in 'Lupo the Wolf' of the Griffons?" asked Hall incredulously. This was a man of no small legend in the Corvis underground.

"Can you handle Grimes, Sergeant?" asked the commander.

"I can bind him and go for back up."

Julian Helstrom nodded, patting Sergeant Wadock on the back, and then dashed out the door.

Silas Grimes moaned and raised his head. He was slowly regaining consciousness, just in time to see the goblin bend down next to him and pick up the dwarvish pistol. The creature ran its clawed fingers over the barrels and traced the filigreed metal. Gort clicked back the strikers and sniffed at the breech. The rogue growled and timidly reached out toward the goblin, but the creature

pulled the pistol away from the man, cradling it like an infant, and grinned at the rogue. Silas' indignation whirled in his brain but he could do nothing but fade back into oblivion.

Halleran Alkott shook his head and took another lengthy drink of the wine. He passed the bottle to the gunsmith, and then bent down to help the lovely Sergeant Wadock bind Silas Grimes. "You were absolutely right, Pitt old pal," said the alchemist. "Something's bound to happen sooner or later. There's never a dull moment here in Corvis..."

—fin

ABOUT PITT'S PISTOLS

In the city of Corvis, one block shy of Morrow's grand cathedral on the southern corner of Still and Cannon Streets is a quaint two-storied shop owned by a quiet man that is for those seeking quality firearms an excellent find indeed. Above the entranceway hangs a sign that reads: "Pitt's Pistols, Gunsmithy and Ammunition." It is here that old Angmar Pitt can craft for you the finest of any type firearm to be had in the city.

Unlike many of Corvis' denizens, Pitt is exactly what he appears to be; he has no hidden secrets or agendas, no dark dealings away from the watchful eye of the magistrates. He simply makes guns, and claims to be "the best there is in these parts" at doing such, and he's not very far from the mark in that respect. His patrons vary. The valiant Commander Julian Helstrom sports Pitt's firearms, as well as the ruthless assassin Kell Bailoch. His weapons have been spotted as far afield as Ohk in northern Khador to Bloodshore Island in the Protectorate of Menoth, and the warden of Bloodshore Island swears by Pitt's rifles. The results from Pitt's customizations for improved range have considerably cut down getaway efforts by many of the prison's would-be escapees.

Pitt can create custom firearms, usually within one month's time. Pitt's masterwork firearms can be customized with inscriptions or extra abilities for a price, depending on the requested work. Something as simple as an engraving or filigree on the butt of a pistol will run as low as 10-50 gold pieces, while bestowing a rifle with improved range may run as high as 300 gold pieces.

Pitt has many loyal customers that come to him—and him alone—for the necessary ammunition for their firearms, many of which were purchased from his shop in the first place. It is to these loyal customers that Pitt caters, and he makes an attempt to make a loyal customer out of every new face he sees in his shop, greeting them all with a warm smile and a firm handshake. It is the quality of his wares and expeditious service that will ultimately draw in just about any patron.

Ammunition for firearms can only be made after Pitt sees the weapon that will be doing the firing. Once he is able to study a firearm, he usually claims there's no ammunition he can't make or have made, and he'll be able to quote the rate of production per day depending on just how much ammo is required by the customer. Angmar also creates specialty ammunition made to order. The different types of ammo include incendiary ammo that bursts into flame on impact and conical shaped bullets that improve accuracy and range.

Firearm (accuracy): A firearm with the accuracy customization gives the wielder a +1 to hit. This bonus stacks with any masterwork qualities of the weapon or specialty ammunition bonuses.

Firearm (lightweight): A lightweight firearm has its weight reduced by one-third.

Ammunition (precision): Precision ammunition gives the wielder a +1 to hit (which stacks with the accuracy firearm customization) and improves the range by 125 percent.

Ammunition (incendiary):

Incendiary ammunition burns hot and bright, dealing an additional 1d6 points of damage. A major drawback of using this ammunition is that for every 12–15 incendiary rounds that are fired from a particular gun, the barrel needs re-boring, which can be done at Pitt's for a modest fee of 75 gold pieces. Heavy firing with this type of ammunition without repair may render the barrel unserviceable. At the DM's discretion there is a 1 in 10 chance that the barrel will have to be replaced rather than repaired.

MUNITIONS	COST
Small pistol	400 gp
Long rifle	1000 gp
<i>Custom</i>	
Accuracy	+300 gp
Lightweight	+120 gp
<i>Ammunition</i>	
Pistol	6–10 gp
Rifle	8–12 gp
<i>Specialty</i>	
Precision	+4–6 gp
Incendiary	+5–7 gp

TWO BARRELS BETTER THAN ONE?

Pistols are rare in the Iron Kingdoms, and Pitt's prices reflect such rarity. A double-barreled pistol (that works) is an exotic treasure indeed. Any PC lucky enough to come across one, or is able to afford such a firearm, must know a few things about their method of discharge. A double-barreled weapon may fire on two subsequent rounds without requiring a reload; some weapons will even allow firing both barrels at once, with only one to-hit roll needed, doing double the damage of a single-barreled firearm. Reload times for double-barreled weapons are doubled, although only one barrel can be charged, if desired by the user.

Any PC who requisitions Pitt to construct a double-barreled firearm will typically pay more than double the amount of a comparable single-barreled weapon, normally somewhere between 900 and 1200 crowns (gps) depending on the overall size and workmanship of the gun. Time of manufacture for a double-barreled pistol is slightly longer than for a single barrel and can range anywhere from 25-35 days depending on the manufacturer. If Pitt is not overly busy and has his goblin assistant available, he usually tends toward the lesser time of manufacture.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

ANGMAR PITT

Male human Exp10: CR 9; Size M (5 ft., 9 in. tall); HD 10d6; hp 34; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (+2 Dex); Attack +8/+3 melee, or +10/+5 ranged; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +9; AL LG; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 17, Wis 16, Cha 15.

Skills and feats: Alchemy +10, Appraise +10, Bluff +5, Concentration +13, Craft (blacksmith) +13, Craft (carpentry) +13, Craft (gunsmith) +12, Craft (small arms) +15, Craft (weaponsmith) +14, Diplomacy +6, Gather information +15, Innuendo +2, Knowledge (local) +9, Listen +3, Sense Motive +9, Spot +6; Exotic weapon proficiency (small arms), Salvage

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

ammunition, Skill focus (blacksmith), Skill focus (craft: small arms), Skill focus (craft: weaponsmith).

Traits: Good-natured, honest, business savvy

Possessions: Masterwork small pistol and 10 charges (always kept close at hand, usually under the counter), a small dagger at his belt for various mundane uses (damage as normal dagger), and enough firepower about his shop to staff a platoon of Cygnaran riflemen, should he ever need it.

GORTALOKANOMOK "GORT"

Male gobbler Rog2/Exp3: CR 4; Size S (3 ft., 4 in. tall); HD 2d6 + 3d6; hp 18; Init +4 (+4 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+4 Dex, +1 Size); Attack +4 melee, or +8 ranged; SV Fort +1, Ref +8, Will +4; AL LN; Str 10, Dex 18, Con 10, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 9.

Skills and feats: Alchemy +5, Climb +4, Craft (blacksmith) +4, Craft (small arms) +7, Craft (weaponsmith) +3, Hide +13, Knowledge (local) +6, Listen +1, Move silently +8, Pick pocket +10, Ride +7, Search +6, Sense motive +6, Spot +1, Tumble +8, Use rope +9; Exotic weapon proficiency (small arms), Salvage ammunition.

Traits: Inquisitive, loyal, hard working

Possessions: Shoddy pistol that he built himself and that Pitt constantly tells him to be rid of, 7 charges, and other assorted junk.

HALLERAN "HALL" ALKOTT

Male human Wiz5: CR 5; Size M (6 ft., 0 in. tall); HD 5d4+5; hp 20; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Attack +2 melee, or +2 ranged; SV Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +4; AL NG; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 15, Wis 11, Cha 16.

Skills and feats: Alchemy +12, Craft (small arms) +7, Decipher Script +7, Gather information +4, Hide +2, Listen +5, Open lock +2, Search +5; Enlarge spell, Exotic weapon proficiency (small arms), Scribe scroll, Skill focus (alchemy), Still spell.

Traits: Jovial, friendly, unhinged

Possessions: Dagger, small pistol, 5 charges, 3500 gp in other gear.

Wizard Spells Known (4/4/3/1): 0th — Arcane Mark, Dancing Lights, Daze, Detect Magic, Detect Poison, Disrupt Undead, Flare, Ghost Sound, Light, Mage Hand, Mending, Open/Close, Prestidigitation, Ray of Frost, Read Magic, Resistance. **1st** — Burning Hands, Chill Touch, Magic Missile, Protection from Good, Sleep, Summon Monster I, Ventriloquism. **2nd** — Alter Self, Blur, Darkness, Melf's Acid Arrow, Mirror Image. **3rd** — Fly, Hold Person.



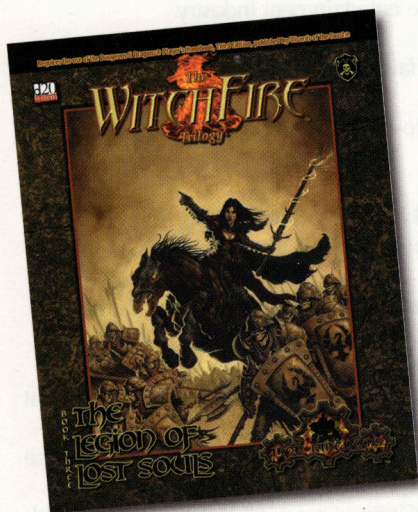
Be sure to check out the Gaming Frontiers forum on...

www.mortality.net

Pioneers NEW SCHOOL Privateer Press

Interviewed By: Robert J. Williams

Illustrated by: Matt Wilson & Brian Snoddy



Join us for a little chat with the brainchildren behind one of today's hottest companies in the gaming marketplace: Brian Snoddy, Matt Staroscik and Matt Wilson of Privateer Press.

GF: Let's start with each of your histories in the gaming business.

Brian: I started going to sci-fi cons in 1986 and met various people in the gaming business.

By '87, I was working on gaming supplements and

comics. In 1993, I started working for Wizards of the Coast on the first set of Magic: The Gathering. In '95, I met MW when he hired me for Legend of the Five Rings and fulfilled my life long dream of painting samurai chopping people in half for money. In the past ten years, I have worked on Dungeons & Dragons, Dragon Magazine, Shadowfist, Trinity, the Warhammer 40K CCG, and a plethora of other gaming products. I have also done a great deal of work in animation and comics.

Matt W: At the end of 1994, I had just closed the doors (my garage) on a self-publishing comic venture that never quite got wings. Early the following year, I fell in with AEG and was hired as their art director. Over the next two years, I art directed and helped design the Legend of the Five Rings CCG, and started painting for the first time. A couple years later, I moved to Seattle to art direct Magic: The Gathering at Wizards of the Coast for one year. The next two years were spent as a remote staff illustrator for FASA while I worked on Shadowrun, Battletech, and did conceptual work for the miniatures game, VOR. After that, it was back to Wizards to be a staff illustrator, focusing on conceptual work for Magic and the occasional D&D assignment.

Matt S: MW and I had been friends for a while when he got a job at AEG. (We spent a lot of time designing games for fun, because we're sick like that.) With him as my inside agent, I was soon on board working on L5R as well. I also did the original story and game design for AEG's Doomtown TCG while I was there. After I left AEG, I worked for West End Games on the Hercules & Xena RPG—I took over from the previous line editor/writer, who got a job as a writer for Xena, actually! Anyway, I had grand plans for the product line, but before any of my books got published, WEG went bankrupt, which is a long and sad story well covered elsewhere. So, I went legit for a while and got some dotcom jobs, but eventually I ended

up doing video game design at Pandemic Studio, and some time after that Privateer Press was hatched.

GF: Any of those previous positions strike you as instrumental in getting you to where you are now?

All: Collectively, we have nearly 30 of your Earth years in the game art, design, and publishing fields. We've learned the right way to create a product, and the wrong way to run a company. Hardened by years of front line trench warfare, we have been able to approach the Privateer venture with a combination of proven creative skills and razor edged business acumen.

GF: How did the three of you come to form a company?

All: One hot August afternoon, as BS puffed away on a freshly lit El Rey Del Mundo, he began to muse wistfully about making his own roleplaying module. With lightning quick mental reflexes, MW proposed a scheme to exploit a recent open gaming license issued by Wizards of the Coast, "and I know just the chump to write it!" he said.

A short, static filled phone call later, the redoubtable MS was suckered into a trip far more treacherous than he bargained for. This wasn't the first time MW had pulled him into this dark abyss known as the game industry.

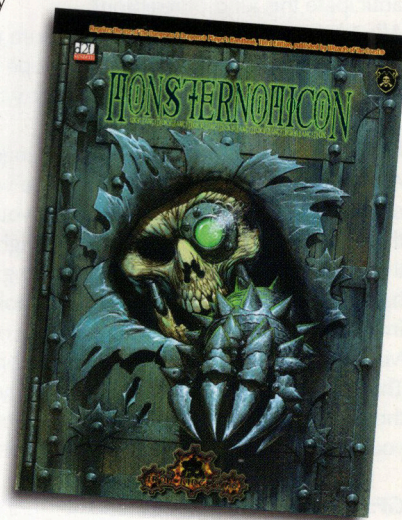
Matt S: When he called I thought he said something like, "didn't we once work in Ontario?" but by the time I found out it was, "want to write a scenario?" it was too late. My fate was sealed.

GF: Where does the name 'Privateer Press' come from?

All: We like pirates. Have you ever seen how Brian dresses? Yo ho ho.

GF: From where is the Iron Kingdoms setting derived? Was it one of your guy's settings that got expanded on or was it a group effort from the beginning? You know, a trying to take d20 in a new direction type of thing.

All: The Iron Kingdoms was intended from the beginning to advance the fantasy genre in a direction previously unexplored. It's definitely



not an old personal campaign world; it's a modern project designed to be appealing from the ground up.

GF: I've heard your setting be compared to HG Wells or having a Victorian feel to it. But that's not quite it. Would you like to take a stab at 'labeling' the setting? Did you use any particular works of fiction for reference?

All: The ideas behind the Iron Kingdoms are a montage of everything that has inspired us throughout our entire lives. We like to call it steam-mechano-mage-punk-arcano-battlebot-goggle-wars-fusion.

GF: What was the rationale behind releasing a trilogy of adventures before a world or city sourcebook?

All: The Witchfire Trilogy is designed as an entry portal to the Iron Kingdoms. Each of the books is loaded with source material and adventure, allowing players to become immediately involved in the environment, without suffering the wait for our 'slightly' delayed sourcebook. The scheme appears to have worked, as most of our audience has indicated that they easily purchased an inexpensive module, where they would have been reluctant to purchase an expensive source book for a previously unknown setting. This has also allowed us to develop the setting with the detail and attention we desired, instead of rushing a product to market only to change everything a year later in a second edition.

GF: The Witchfire Trilogy has been wildly successful. Did you anticipate this kind of reaction?

All: After watching a Back to the Future marathon, we spent a week converting MS's old 83' Cadillac Coupe de Ville into a time machine, so we knew everything that would happen.

GF: Tell us a little about future Iron Kingdoms products.

All: Next up is the Monsternomicon, a very untraditional collection of monster reference—a 'manual,' if you will. Following that will be the Guide to the Iron Kingdoms, a weighty tome containing all of the detailed information of the IK setting. Then will come a virtual barrage of products exploring every nook and cranny of the IK, including the Guide to Corvis, the City of Ghosts, and the Lexicon Mechanica, featuring our own unique brand of fantasy hardware. The Iron Kingdoms will also be transcending the d20 realm within the next year. We could tell you more, but then we'd have to kill you. Each and every one of you. In your homes. While you sleep.

GF: Are there any plans for another .pdf project from Privateer Press in 2002? How successful was the first one?

All: While Fool's Errand was a successful experiment, we have decided our resources are best spent concentrating on the print market.

GF: Tell us a little about the direction of the Iron Kingdoms storyline (if you plan to continue with an advancing storyline concept. With only the Witchfire trilogy to base this question from I wasn't sure). Will future adventures continue from the events that transpire in Witchfire?

All: The Witchfire Trilogy acts as a prologue to the larger events that will take place in the Iron Kingdoms setting. The Guide to the Iron Kingdoms sourcebook will be set in shortly after the trilogy, in a time when old tensions are beginning to explode into conflict across the realm.

GF: You have a top secret new project that is not d20 you are currently playtesting. Care to reveal a little?

All: Yes, there will be a new product set in the Iron Kingdoms. By the time this magazine is in print, you'll be able to get the full scoop at ikwarmachine.com. Bring a tissue.

GF: Are there any plans for OGC collaborations with other publishers? Are you open to this?

All: Not at this time. We've been creating all of our own content to coincide with our vision of the Iron Kingdoms property.

GF: How do you feel about the state of the d20 industry overall at this moment?

All: It has provided a hospitable foothold from which to stage our invasion of Earth's interactive entertainment industry.

GF: What are some of your favorite d20 products, besides your own?

All: Deadlands and Dragonlords of Melnibone, to name but a couple.

GF: What else would you like to see companies do with the d20 system or what direction would you like to see the product lines take?

All: We'd like to see other genres filled out among the multitude of d20 publishers and projects.

GF: Up to now all the art has been done by Brian or Matt. Will that change with future books?

All: With nearly 200 illustrations in the Monsternomicon, we chose to enlist the help of some trusted comrades. Scott Fischer, Brian Despain, Ron Spencer, and Chippy Dugan all threw in to help with some penciling duties, though Brian did all of the finish work. The Monsternomicon will have the same quality and feel of artwork that players have come to expect in Privateer Press products—better, actually—check privateerpress.com for a preview.

Future products will feature other illustrators as well, but we are eternally committed to the highest production value possible.

GF: Do you guys fight over the choice art assignments or is it fairly easily decided?

All: We don't have time to fight. We just make cool stuff.

Matt Wilson and Brian Snoddy art that originally appeared in the Gaming Frontiers Free Preview.



On the Home Front To Die For: Afterlife Archetypes

By: **Bryan Fagan**

Illustrated by: **Alan Dyson**

Death.

It's a fate most players prefer not to think about, but it could come in any number of ways: a sword through the gut, a blaster to the head, poison in the food, or even an ignominious fall into a pit. Most players will do everything in their power to avoid such a calamity. Most GMs will accommodate this by limiting their comments to the mechanics of resurrection or "OK, roll up a new character."

For the most part, there is no grandeur to a PC's end, no mystery of death considered. There is no contemplation of the character's triumphal entry into paradise as a reward for her righteousness or her descent into infernal torment as her foul misdeeds finally catch up with her. The character is gone, and at best will be remembered fondly for a few odd moments of luck or player ingeniousness.

This article attempts to introduce a new roleplaying device into that dark world of the unknown – the afterlife. Using it, GMs can give a memorable description of a glimpse of another world by the PC, or even structure an adventure around the rescue of a spirit from the netherworld. Characters and their societies can be given an added dimension. Creative players can shape their character's attitude toward death by considering what the PC believes will happen to his soul after that final sword thrust, fireball, poison trap, or bone-liquefying landing.

GMs can modify the archetypes below for their own use; players, in consultation with GMs, can adopt part or all of a motif for their character's beliefs. The common themes discussed in this article are based upon real-world beliefs, and include judgment, reflections, the Otherworld, differentiation, dismal realms and the dangerous journey. GMs can decide what kind of burial rituals accompany the myths, and players can be heartened (or frightened) by contemplating the fate of the hero, with burial rituals that aid the soul in each theme.

Judgment

Judgment is the afterworld motif most players are familiar with because of its prevalence in many contemporary religions, such as Christianity. In this type of afterlife, the dead are judged by their deeds and assigned to their eternal reward. This exhorts the faithful to do good either for their own sake or for the good of the world. Some cultures often use judgment to emphasize the need for each person to obey the law and fulfill their responsibilities. In history, it was often used to keep the peasantry at the bottom of the social order by discouraging disagreement and rebellion, especially if the ruler was seen as endorsed by the gods.

Societal characteristics: Belief in monotheistic or dualistic mythologies, societies with a strong belief in divine and / or universal justice, societies with a paternalistic / maternalistic pantheon or patron deity, societies with a belief in the divine right of monarchs.

Examples:

Zoroastrianism, a dualistic belief system from Persia, believed Good and Evil fight incessantly, and all were needed to help Good triumph. People were judged on their thoughts, deeds, and actions. If the good outweighed or was equal to the evil, a beautiful maiden who claims to be the person's conscience guided the deceased across a broad bridge into heaven. If the evil was greater, however, the conscience that accompanied the newly dead was a naked, diseased hag with a foul stench, and the bridge that was so broad for the good turned on its edge, casting the unworthy into hell. If the wicked refused to cross the bridge, they were pursued by a terrifying wild beast.

Everyone in heaven lived in joy in their own dwelling place with fine carpets and cushions, and good thoughts and hospitality reigned. In the Zoroastrian hell, the damned souls were packed tightly, but each soul believed it was alone, and time passed so slowly three days seemed like 9,000 years. All were tortured until the ultimate triumph of Good with darkness, a nauseating stench, and extreme temperatures, from blizzards to burning fire. Additionally, the souls were punished according to her misdeeds, tempered by the good each did.

Judgment in Egyptian myth began after the soul traveled safely to the Kingdom of the Dead and was conducted into Hall of Double Justice for a two-part trial. First, the deceased addressed each of the 42 judges confidently and by name and swore he was pure. Then Thoth, god of wisdom, presided over a ceremony in which the heart was weighed against a feather. If the heart were lighter (or the same weight as; sources vary) than the feather, the soul was ushered into an afterlife very much like Egypt. If the soul were found wanting, it was led off to torture and destruction, and the heart was eaten by Ammut the Devourer — a monster that was part hippo, part lion and part crocodile.

The Ivory Coast's legends about the afterlife were a variation of the judgment motif. The soul, which was separate from the body, determined whether it would travel to the afterlife. Most souls ended up in the kingdom of the dead, which was a pleasurable place. However, if the person didn't obey the dictates of his soul, the soul remained on the earth, wandering until it found another body in which it could gain another chance to do right.

Reflections

For some cultures, an afterlife that mirrored the world of the living was the most comforting. What is considered important in the living world is given a divine importance in the next; while the essential aspects of a culture might be noticed in the living society, the entire society of the dead works to preserve and strengthen those aspects. Although the spirit is assigned responsibilities in the next world, it may enjoy a peaceful, ideal existence few would have been able to enjoy in life.

Societal characteristics: Societies that accept death as a part of life, societies with superiority complexes or beliefs that they live in the best possible social structure, societies that have changed little or disapprove of change, societies with a strong sense of responsibility to the gods and authorities.

Examples:

According to the Arapaho, the dead climbed over a hill into the afterlife. The difficulty of traveling up the hill was determined by the desire of the soul to live and whether his loved ones were calling him back. But once over the hill, the slope was easy to travel, and at the bottom was an Arapaho village by a river. The grass was thick, and villagers played in the river and rode horseback. The villagers, whom the deceased already knew and loved, urged him on.

The world of spirits in Chinese mythology mirrored the ancient Empire of China. The geographical division of the empire and the afterlife each had the same number of provinces, departments, and counties. The governmental bureaucracy was likewise identical, and the Celestial Emperor of the gods maintained the same position in the netherworld as the Chinese emperor did in the world of the living. Every level of governmental official had his counterpart in the afterlife, and as in the Chinese bureaucracy, promotion was possible for meritorious service and knowledge. Rules and conditions

applied to earthly officials also governed those in the otherworldly bureaucracy.

Those found worthy by Osiris in Egyptian mythology lived a life of eternal bliss with an ideal spouse who tended to all needs. Since Osiris' lands in the afterlife were similar to Egypt, the deceased was expected to tend the lands and maintain waterways and dams to promote irrigation. However, these responsibilities could be taken care of by the people or animals sacrificed and interred with the deceased or by stone or clay figures placed in the deceased's burial mound.

Otherworld

For other mythologies, the afterlife was not a definite end, and strong borders did not always separate the worlds of the dead and living. With the Otherworld, there are many entrances to the realms of the dead and supernatural, although they are not always easy to pass through. These realms may be other planes or small pocket dimensions. The Otherworld model allows GMs to attach realms of many powerful beings to the campaign world. This model has a great deal of flexibility, giving GMs the ability to vary the tone of adventures anywhere from horror to sickeningly sweet children's fantasy. It also serves as an explanation for the disappearing castles, stone circles or other mystic portals that populate adventures.

Societal characteristics: Strong belief in the immortality of the soul and / or individual strength of will, societies based in wild areas or lands with a number or unpassable, difficult to traverse, or forbidden regions.

Examples:

Perhaps no other society had such a fluid concept of the borders of the afterlife as the Celtic did. The lands of the dead and the domain of the gods, which were collectively called the Otherworld, weren't distinguished from each other. The most



common location for the dead was the House of Donn (or Tech Duinn), a rocky islet off the southwest corner of Ireland that served as home to the god of the dead. There, the dead assumed another life with the same fighting and feasting as the Celts were accustomed to.

Entrances to the Otherworld could be traversed by the living and led to many different worlds: the Land of Youth (Tir na Nog); Falga's Island, a hellish, serpent-infested land ruled by one of the Formorii; the evil, misshapen gods; Dun Scaith, the Fortress of Shadows; and the Land of Promise (Tir Tairnigiri), to name a few. The aspects varied widely, so darker fates could await those who went looking for them.

Wild, isolated places, such as distant islands, hills, or caves, often represented the Otherworld or its entrances. The domains that made up the Otherworld could be located underground or under the sea with little regard to the spatial limitations this would create. Time in the Otherworld passed very slowly, with hundreds of years passing while the hero remains young. At Samhain (November 1), the barriers between the Otherworld and the world of the living were thin enough to allow those in the Otherworld to return, if they wished, to visit or gain revenge.

Differentiation

Many cultures divided the fate of the dead according to the circumstances of their passing or of their lives. By doing this, the myths reinforced what was important or admired within the culture — or conversely, it illustrated what were the worst lots in life. For example, some cultures assigned the aristocracy to a pleasant afterlife while commoners were consigned to a less comfortable netherworld. Others believed the method of death was the deciding factor, highlighting the noblest tasks a person could aspire to or the most ignominious deaths possible. GMs and players can use this model of the afterlife to give a character meaning; for example, a character might worry she will be consigned to a cheerless, boring afterlife unless she becomes part of the aristocracy or dies in battle.

Societal characteristics: Structured societies with class distinctions, societies with strong taboos (especially regarding a manner of death), societies with chaotic or less-than-omnipotent deities.

Examples:

In Asgard, home of the Norse gods, Valhalla holds the finest slain warriors chosen by Odin and his shield maidens, the Valkyries. The warriors, called the Einherjar, fight among themselves every morning, and in the evening, both the victors and slain rise and feast all night, served ale by the Valkyries and eating the finest foods. This privilege comes at a price; the Einherjar will fight for the gods when Ragnarok, the end of the world, comes, even though they know it is a battle they will not win.

On the other end of the spectrum is Niflheim, a land of bitter cold and eternal darkness surrounded by iron walls. Those who died of illness or old age were sent there, and so it was filled with rotting, foul bodies that hated and envied the living. The road there was filled with swirling mists and took nine days. Niflheim, sometimes called Hel, was ruled by Hel, whose face and body were that of a living woman but whose legs were dead and decaying.

A more obscure myth concerned the fate of thralls and servants, who ended up in Thor's hall, Bilskirnir or Thrudheim. There, Thor, a god of the people, treated them as well as those in Valhalla were. Additionally, happily married couples were invited to stay in Fensalir, the palace of Frigga, goddess of love.

Similarly, the Japanese may have divided the dead among both lines. Although legends of the afterworld in Japan are vague before the coming of Buddhism, the poor and those who died inglorious

deaths possibly traveled to yomi no kuni, a subterranean land of decomposition and corruption. It is so foul the passage between the two has been sealed off with a huge boulder. Those whose passings were glorious or who belonged to the aristocracy hoped to pass on to deific abodes in the skies or sacred mountaintops.

In most Polynesian myths, the soul entered the afterlife, called Po, either by descending the roots or ascending the branches of a special tree. Criminals, commoners, and those killed by sorcery were caught in a net and thrown into ovens, where the eternal fire destroyed them utterly. The nobility went to a world that replicated their own.

The Mandan and Lakota Sioux tribes believed in a variation of this theme. The tribes believed each person had four souls: two merged to journey to the next world, one lived in the dead person's lodge, and the fourth remained on earth to frighten people as a ghost.

Dismal Realm

In some cultures, death was a horrible fate. There was nothing in the world after that would reward the dead person for his good qualities, although there might possibly be punishments for his shortcomings. Although grim, the dead weren't necessarily punished, since the hopeless and lifeless surroundings coupled with the memory of what living was once like was torment enough. Plans to cheat death or escape the realm of the dead are viewed as clever, if not openly admired, rather than cheating the divine order. Souls in this kind of afterlife who manage to communicate with the world of the living tend to complain about their final reward. As the dead Agamemnon, king of the Greeks, said in *The Odyssey*, "I would rather work the soil as a serf on hire to some landless impoverished peasant than be King of all these lifeless dead."

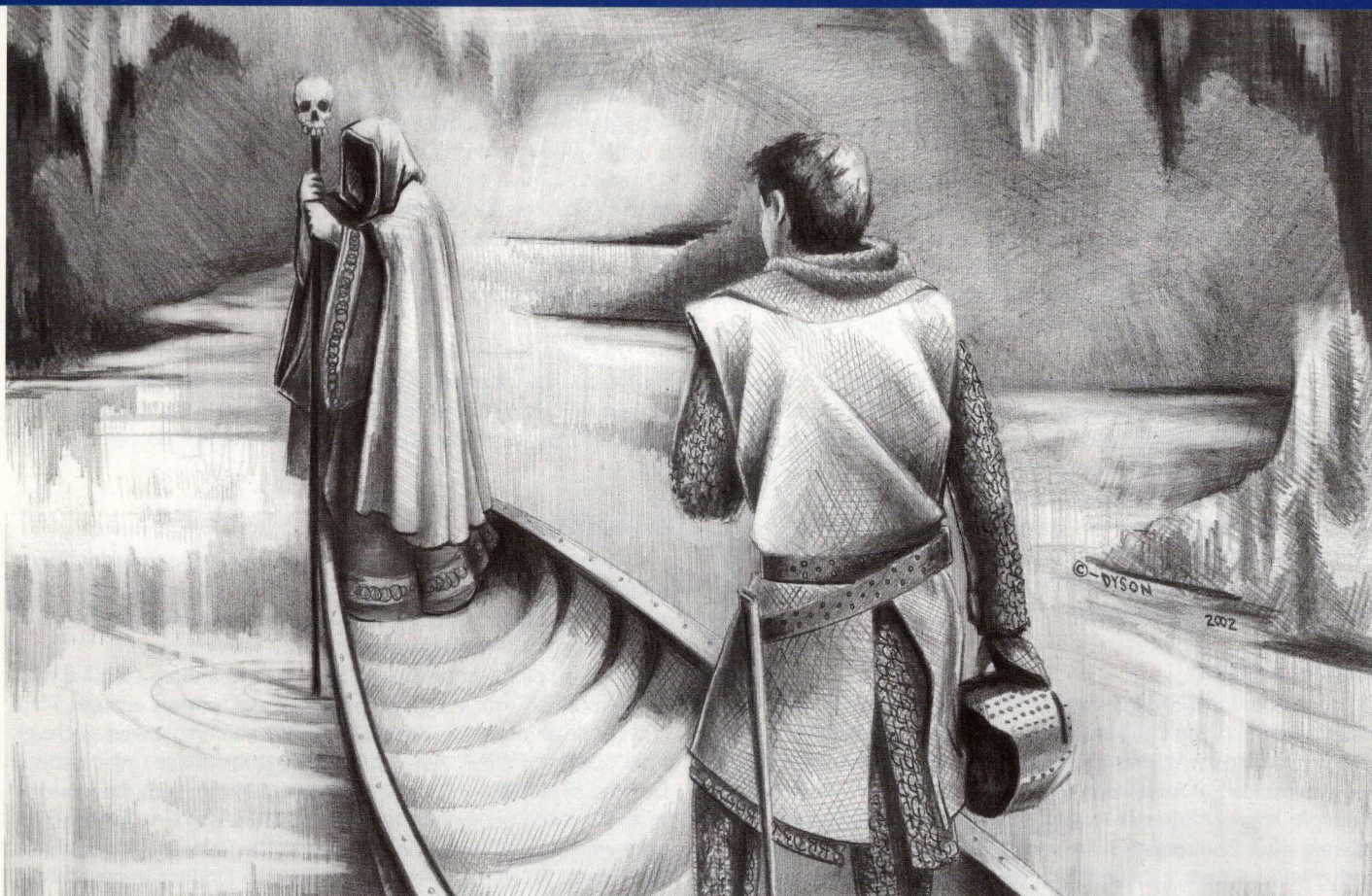
Societal characteristics: Societies with hedonistic proclivities, societies with a capricious or uncontrolled pantheon or deity, societies based in a deadly or unforgiving environment, societies without a strong belief in the persistence or strength of the soul.

Examples:

The bleakness of the Greek netherworld highlighted the need to gain as much pleasure from life as possible since there would be none after death. Souls had to pay a toll to the surly boatman Charon to cross the River Styx and enter Tartarus, the kingdom of Hades, god of the dead. The three-headed watchdog Cerberus guarded the gates with its poisonous fangs. Three brass-winged hags, the Furies, scourged those who offended the gods with their whips. The worst of sinners were sentenced to ingenious eternal punishments.

The souls imprisoned in Tartarus displayed the wounds that killed them. They wandered through their endless, boring existence and thirsted after the blood of sacrifices. Death was a fate to be avoided as long as possible; the dead claimed it was better to be a living slave than royalty among the dead. By the time the Romans had adapted the Greek gods to their own purposes, however, a happier fate was available in Elysium, a district of Hades in which the blessed dwelled.

Mesopotamian myths needed to make sense of the uncontrolled and chaotic nature of the world, exemplified by the life-giving, but treacherous, Tigris and Euphrates. Their afterworld, Kurnugi, was populated by ghosts of the dead and demons. The ghosts dwelled in darkness and ate dust for food and clay for bread. Here even deities could be killed, as when Ishtar (also known as Inanna) was slain by the queen of the underworld, Erishkigal. There was no return from Kurnugi; the door out was coated with dust, as was the bolt that closed it.



Dangerous Journeys

In some cultures, worthiness for the rewards of the afterlife wasn't determined by the deeds performed in life but through the quest to get to the afterlife. The passage to the ultimate fate might be convoluted or straightforward, but the soul would face many challenges along the way. Often, deeds performed while living will be crucial to success, although it is not impossible that innate intelligence and skills could allow the spirit passage to the final reward. GMs can use this type of final reward to represent a desire to impose an otherworldly verdict upon those who had frustrated or deceived human justice. Alternately, it might serve as a way for those who didn't have a chance to prove themselves in battle to show they are worthy of the blessed afterlife. The dangerous journey might also serve as either a real or allegorical warning of the peril posed by the supernatural.

Societal characteristics: Societies that believe in the worth of all souls equally, societies that emphasize certain rituals or rites of passage as necessary for success or to please the gods, societies with a strong belief in otherworldly justice.

Examples:

Most Aztecs, such as those who died of sickness or old age, had to undertake a dangerous trip to get to the subterranean worlds of the gods of death. The soul had to avoid colliding mountains, winds that cut like blades, and serpents. Additionally, the soul had to swim across a raging river, a task that could not be performed without a dog.

The perils for the Fijian soul were formidable, and few made it to the afterlife. The soul had to possess a whale's tooth, placed in the hand of the dead person. The tooth was hurled at a certain tree along the journey, and if the tooth missed, the soul returned to the grave. If successful, the soul waited for the souls of his wives, unable to continue until all had caught up with him; bachelors were torn

apart and eaten by demons. With his wives, the soul fought demons on all sides. If the soul made it past the demons, he proceeded to a mountaintop, where he was questioned by the gods. Depending on his answers, the soul was either sent to earth to be deified by his descendants or to the land of the dead.

In Polynesian myth, the tree that served as the gateway to the afterlife had green branches on one side and brown, dry branches on the other. Only by climbing the seemingly fragile dry branches could the soul reach the afterlife safely; otherwise, it would fall into the depths of the unending nothingness of Po. A shaman of the Caingang tribe of Brazil instructed the corpse how to avoid the dangers along the way to the afterlife, telling it how to avoid traps and which roads it needed to take.

Burial Rituals

To accentuate the importance of the afterlife in a religion, GMs might wish to populate the tombs and crypts of their adventures with burial tokens important to the journey to the netherworld. Talismans were placed upon Egyptian mummies to facilitate its journey, and copies of *The Book of the Dead* were left with the deceased because the book had the passwords needed to traverse the difficult land before the Hall of Judgment. Servants of some sort also accompanied the dead to the other world to aid with labor and so were interred with the dead. Greeks placed silver coins under corpses' tongue to pay the boatman, Charon.

The Aztecs buried a stick of dry wood along with those who were struck by lightning or drowned. This stick would become covered with flowers and leaves in the paradise they were destined for. Since the journey to the Aztec afterworld for the old or sick required a dog, an effigy or real dog was sacrificed.

Intangible tokens might also be needed to help the soul to the next world. The cooperation of family, both living and dead, was

necessary in Polynesian myth. If the proper funeral rites were not carried out over the corpse, the deceased might become a vengeful spirit or be exiled to a shadowy world far from our world or Po. Look for more detail on burial rituals in *Gaming Frontiers* Volume 3.

Heroes

The hero is often singled out for special treatment after death that is not codified in the normal structure of the mythology. As a reward for his prowess in battle, service or relationship with a god, or other outstanding attribute, the hero earns a reward few, if any, of those who follow could equal.

One of the best known examples of this is King Arthur. While dying, he was taken to a barge in which sat many beautiful women, including three queens. The women wailed over his wounds, and he was taken to Avalon to await the hour of Britain's greatest need. It was believed that then he would return to save his land from its enemies.

The twins Castor and Polydeuces, the greatest fighters in Greek mythology after Heracles, were placed in the sky as the constellation Gemini when they died. Orion met a similar fate after he was accidentally killed by his lover, the goddess Artemis; she made him the familiar constellation named after him. Less exclusive examples include Valhalla (see above) and the deification of great warriors in Chinese mythology.

The Irish hero Oisín was lured into the Land of Promise by the beautiful Niamh. He stayed with her for 300 years but eventually pined for the land of his birth. Niamh reluctantly let him go, warning him not to dismount from his horse. Unfortunately, he fell from his mount and aged an entire lifetime in a moment.

Other heroes have the audacity and strength to enter the afterlife and return to the land of the living unharmed. The most common of these legends is represented by the Greek tale of Orpheus, who so loved his dead fiancée he journeyed to Hades to win back her soul. Hades agreed to let her soul follow him to the world of the living, with the condition he not look back at her until they had both exited Tartarus. Suspicious and curious, he glanced back at her before he left the underworld and lost her. A version of this legend is common to almost every corner of the globe.

Many living heroes went to the afterlife for less noble reasons. Hercules stormed Hades by strength and stole its watchdog, Cerberus; while there, he freed Theseus, who had been captured with his friend Peirithous while trying to abduct the queen of Hades for his bride. Odysseus journeyed to Hades to gain the wisdom of the prophet Tiresias, while Aeneas passed beneath the earth to see his father. Cúchulainn, the greatest Irish warrior, journeyed to the Otherworld to receive further training in battle. The Norse god Hermod traveled to Niflheim to negotiate the release of the Balder. In a Mesopotamian myth, the fertility goddess Ishtar descended to the underworld for an unstated purpose that leads to her own death.

Incorporating this article into your d20 Game

Some general rules for GMs looking to add an afterlife myth to their game:

1. The tone of the afterworld should relate to that of the campaign setting or pantheon. This does not preclude variations in mood; a cheerless afterlife, for example, might serve as the impetus for hedonistic gods or cultures. On the other hand, a hedonistic society would be unlikely to believe in a dangerous journey to the underworld, since the skills needed to enter the afterlife most likely would not be encouraged by a "live for today" lifestyle.
2. Integrate the afterworld into your pantheon. Give reasons why the gods have given or inflicted this destiny upon their faithful. Monarchies are often enamored of the reflection afterlife, for

example, to show that rule by a king, no matter how inept, is the preferred government of the gods.

3. Mix and match motifs. The different templates of the afterlife can be combined, as in the real world case of Egyptian mythology (see *Reflections*, final example). For instance, combining a Differentiation with a Dangerous Journey afterlife may result in a society that believes that the afterworld a soul ends up in depends on which task the soul fails at on its journey.
4. Burial rituals should be consistent with the environment. If a gold ornament is required to pay the entry fee into the afterworld, the culture that believes in that afterworld should not be gold scarce – unless that culture believes few souls achieve their goal.
5. Everyone doesn't have to go to the same afterworld. Those faithful to or valued by a certain god may find themselves at a certain advantage when their end comes. Also, gods united by alignment or sphere might gather their worshippers to a common place, perhaps even for an otherworldly purpose.
6. The myths surrounding the afterlife do not have to be correct. Imagine a player's surprise when the Hot Springs of Paradise his barbarian was expecting turns out to be a dismal, dark underworld where no one is favored. This switch becomes even more important if the character returns to life with this new truth.

Death comes as an end to most characters, and even if that end isn't permanent, it should remain an important event in that character's life. Using these models can help GMs construct memorable final fates the players will either long for — or give up everything to avoid.

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ADVENTURE

Beware the Bloodstorm Hunt of the Crimson-touched Hydra

Story and Cartography by Danny O'Neill
Illustrations by Ronaldo Santana & Marcio Fiorito
Cover by Ralph Horsley

An adventure for characters level 20.

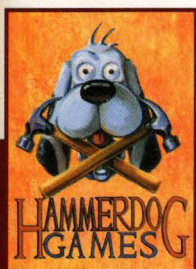
Introduction

Beware the Bloodstorm is an adventure for those characters that have reached the envious pinnacle of 20th level. Politics, mystery, tomb-raiding, and gruesomely powerful foes are the backbone of an exciting plot that will engage the most jaded players, while challenging even the most powerful characters. The adventure is a perfect end to a high-powered campaign, or it might be used to launch an Epic Level Campaign using the forthcoming rules from TSR!

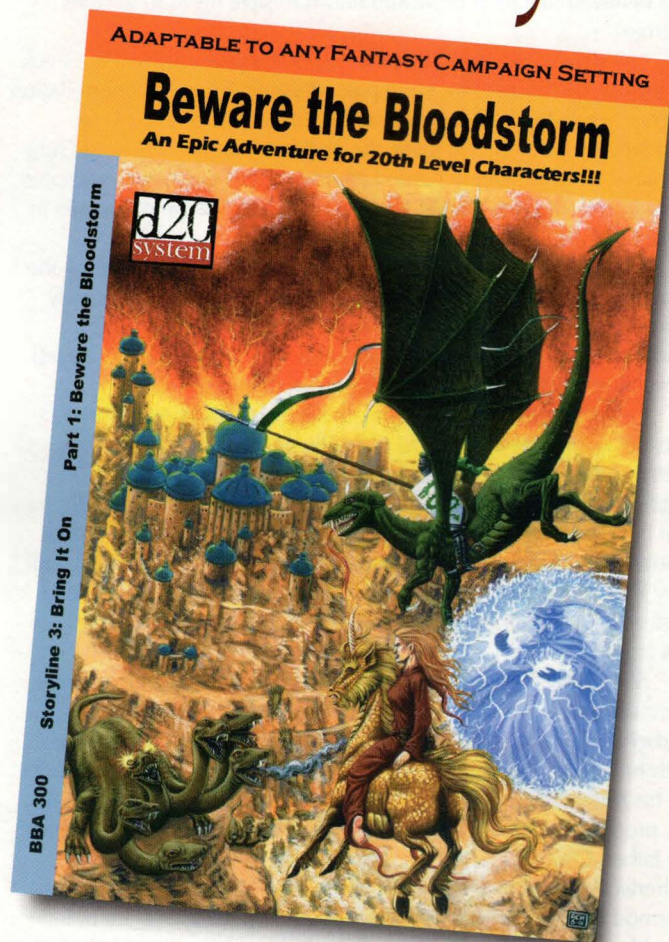
Hunt of the Crimson-touched Hydra is a short side adventure for *Beware the Bloodstorm* that can be seamlessly connected to that adventure. It takes place in the default campaign setting Dena: World of Adventure (find it online at www.hammerdog.com). It is so easily modified to fit any game world or plotline, it will make your head spin.

Hunt of the Crimson-touched Hydra

This adventure can take place at any time during the events chronicled in *Beware the Bloodstorm*. In that scenario, the group comes to the aid of a remote desert city named Aamon Khul which means "City of Blessed Rains" in the local dialect. Durable, ancient, and majestic, Aamon Khul represents the furthest west mankind has ever expanded into the Harshlands of Dena, and against all odds has stood the test of time in the harshest of conditions. Despite this fact, many who currently live in Aamon Khul wonder if the city will last another day.



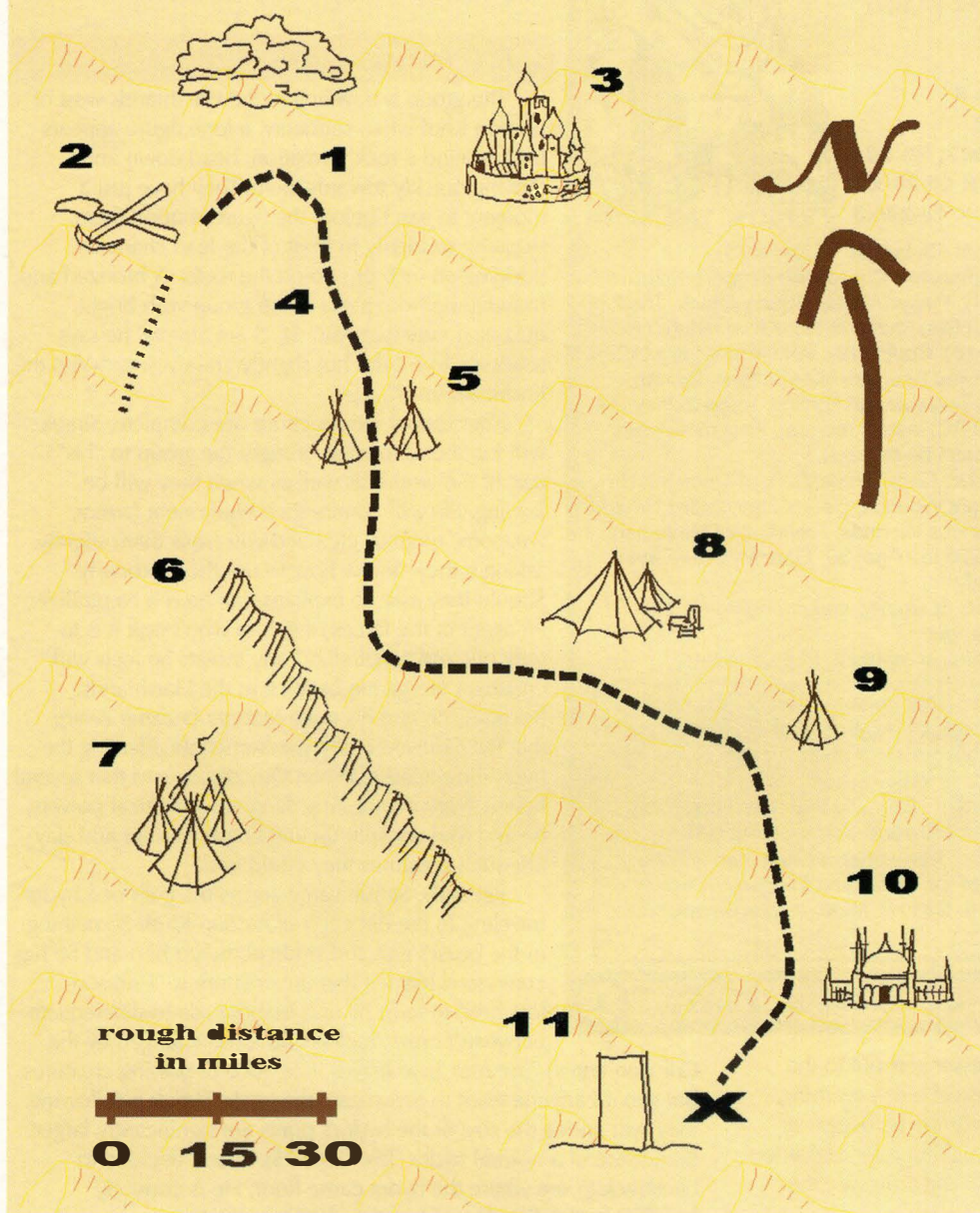
Hammerdog Games
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Everything started to go wrong last year, at the end of the drought season, when the people of Aamon Khul stood on the city walls to perform a magical ritual designed to summon the life-giving rain. Though the holy rain came as normal and filled the city's water reserves, somehow, something else did too. Soon after the rains stopped, a malevolent being began to form in the western sky, manifesting as an immense stormy red cloud hanging oppressively low on the horizon. Though it seemed harmless at first, from that day forth, every time the people of Aamon Khul summoned their holy rain, the cloud moved closer to their blessed city. As if that were not ominous enough, the storm seemed to bring with it sudden weather changes, sandstorms, and vermin.

The people of Aamon Khul were distressed, as the city's survival was dependent not only on the rain, but on the land itself. These changes made it difficult to track and hunt the wild hydras that were

Path of the Hydra



their main source of meat - and though donations to the rain gods increased - there seemed to be no clear salvation on the horizon for Aamon Khul. Then one day a small pack of hydras wandered near the city, and after some brief prayers of thanks, six hunting parties were sent forth with orders to slay them and bring the food back for Aamon Khul's markets. People cheering from the high walls of the city screamed in horror when the hydras suddenly manifested bizarre magical powers and began to slaughter the unwitting and unprepared hunters. Though the hydras were eventually put down, many good men were lost, and the people were struck with the fact that their once docile food source was suddenly dangerous and hostile.

Since that day, a few more herds of hydra came near the city with the same results. When these hydras also manifested wondrous abilities the species had never displayed before, the council of

aberrations - creatures that were known to roam the Harshlands. Though they struggled to understand how or why this had happened, they immediately sent hunting parties out to discover just how much of the precious hydra herd had been affected. The news brought the citizens of Aamon Khul to their knees. Virtually every hydra in a 100 mile radius had converged under the evil storm cloud they now called the Crimson Entity. Almost all of them seemed to manifest strange powers. Some breathed flame. Others spit acid or sprayed webs. Several flew.

While the council of Aamon Khul deliberated on what to do next, the city's food and water supplies dwindled. They quickly realized that they would have to take drastic action soon. Were a solution not found to divert or dispel the Crimson Entity within the next fortnight, they would be forced to perform the ritual of rain for perhaps the last time. The people of Aamon Khul prayed for

The Crimson Entity

This strange and horrific creature is the central focus of *Beware the Bloodstorm*. A strange elemental from another dimension, it is unknown why or how it came to Denoa, but its actions hardly seem friendly. The entity dominates the sky to the west of Aamon Khul, painting it a blood red. It has been steadily creeping towards the city for many weeks and is the cause of massive distress. In this adventure the group is not meant to encounter the Crimson Entity, only its effects on the people and hydras of the Denoan Harshlands. Should they somehow confront the entity, they should not be able to conquer it. It's strange crimson lightning bolts and army of magical hydras have a combined CR of 30+.

The entity has many incredible powers, but the most significant is the ability to "splice" traits such as special abilities, special qualities, abilities, feats, and almost anything else from one creature to another. Though this ability is not directly used in this adventure, it is the cause of it. The Crimson Entity has recently passed over a depleted copper mine where it encountered two creatures it never had before - brown mold, and shadows. Stealing the best qualities of both creatures, it immediately spliced them onto some nearby hydras and in godlike fashion, simply left them to their course.

Aamon Khul reacted with understandable panic. It was noted that the hydras seemed to display supernatural and extraordinary abilities that somehow mimicked or copied those of other magical beasts and

Challenge Rating 20	Strauk, Half Orc Neutralizer		
Armor Class 29	15th level Ranger, 5th Barbarian		
Hit Points 179	Melee +26/+21/+16/+11 Ranged +23/+18/+13/+8 0+4 Greatsword (1-H) & +2 dagger +21/+16/+11/+6 and +21 0+4 Greatsword (2-H) +30/+25/+11/+6 dmg x 1.5 0+3 Throwing Dagger x2 +26/+26 1-4+9 CR 19-20x2, Rn 20 +4 Greatsword 2d6+10 CR 15-20x2 +2 Punch Dagger 1-4+8 CR 19-20x3		
Initiative +3			
Size M	AC: 29 (Dext +3, hide +3, boots +3, bracer +5, cape +5).		
Speed 40	Feats: Blind-Fight, Dodge, Improved Crit (punch dagger), Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Track.		
Face 5'x5'	Skills: Hide (+13), Intuit Dir. (+14), Jump (+16), Know nature (+12), Listen (+19), Move Silently (+18), Spot (+19), Wilderness Lore (+27).		
Reach: 5'	Class Features: Track, Favored Enemies (Aberrations, Beasts, Magical Beasts, Elementals), Two-weapon fighting, Rage 2x/day (+4 Str, +4 Con, +2 Will saves, -2 AC, lasts 7 rounds), Fast movement, Uncanny Dodge (Dex to AC/can't be flanked).		
Saves F+15 R+11 W+12	Spells: Divine (DC15+): 4x1st Alarm, Pass Without Trace x2, Resist Elements; 2x2nd Cure Light Wounds, Detect Law; 2x3rd Neutralize Poison x2; 2x4th Cure Serious Wounds, Freedom of Movement.		
STR 22 +6	Appearance: Size M (6'2", 235 lb); Age: 39; Gen: M; Green eyes; green hair, fangs; Strong Build.		
DEX 17 +3	Equipment: see below, boots of striding and springing +3, 2x throwing dagger +3, punch dagger +2.		
CON 15 +2	Personality: Align CN. Careful, competent. Phobia: flying.		
INT 14 +2	Milia's left bracer: one of a pair of bracers that comprise a major artifact. This single bracer grants an AC bonus of +5. It can absorb up to 25 levels of spells per day as a <i>rod of absorption</i> . At the end of each day, unused spell levels fizzle away.		
WIS 18 +4	Bloodletter: a +4 greatsword of wounding that is so light, it can be wielded as a 1-H weapon by anyone with a Strength 18+.		
CHA 12 +1	Cape of the Harshland Fox: This wondrous item can only be gained by catching the king of the Harshland fox-people, which Strauk apparently has. AC +5, Dex +2, Minor displacement, +2 to Reflex and Will saves.		
Alignment CN			
ABC #0052	Created By Danny O'Neill	Illustration Ronaldo Santana	1st Appearance The Crimson-Touched Hydra ABC Library Code BTB.MON.6 1

salvation from this terrible curse and sent messengers out to the towns and cities of every nearby nation to repeat a dire warning.

To every person who receives this message be he beggar or king. From the royal mouth of prince Ashef, rightful ruler of Aamon Khul to your wisest ear. "Akanai Ishta. Akanai Ishta. Beware the Bloodstorm."

Hook: the group simply crosses paths with Strauk, and are quickly entangled in his hunt and drawn into his adventure. In *Beware the Bloodstorm*, the group is required to hunt hydras to help stock the food stores of Aamon Khul. DMs can easily insert this adventure by having them cross paths with Strauk on one of their hunts. Otherwise, the DM need simply devise a reason for the group to be traveling by foot in a remote desert wasteland. They have noticed the Crimson Entity to the west but not investigated it when they encounter Strauk on the hunt.

The Harshlands: This area is one of the cruelest and most difficult areas to live on the entire planet known as Denoa. A massive, almost completely unpopulated area, the Harshlands are almost entirely devoid of vegetation. What animals live there have learned to survive among the rocks, mesas, and sand that characterize this

bleak place. Humans have settled as far west as the city of Aamon Khul, but they could not survive without the divine assistance of the gods of rain, who send life-giving showers to the people. The Harshlands are home to several strange creatures, including a large population of hydras that have adapted to life in these terrible conditions.

1. When Paths Cross

The group is traveling in the Harshlands west of Aamon Khul when suddenly, a lone figure appears from around a rock formation, head down and moving quickly towards them. They have just a moment to react before the figure is upon them, stopping suddenly in front of the lead character, skidding an inch or two on the rocks. A bronzed and muscled half-orc peers at the group with bright, quizzical eyes (see ABC 1). "I am Strauk" he says suddenly in a calm but slightly crass voice. "Who the Koshk are you?"

After formal introductions are complete, Strauk will inquire as to what brought the group to "his" part of the world, as well as when they will be leaving. He will admire their equipment (armor, weapons, mounts, etc.) and will tease them slightly, asking if they "know how to use them properly." Should they ask, he explains that he is a Neutralizer, an agent of the forces of nature who's task it is to seek out and "neutralize" any threats he feels will endanger the gentle balance in the Harshlands. Recently, he and his mate Mahdra became aware that the Crimson Entity was somehow affecting the hydras in the area. When they discovered that several hydras were manifesting dangerous magical powers, he and Mahdra split up and began to hunt and slay any such creatures they could find.

Recently, Strauk came across the path of a hydra traveling in the direction of Aamon Khul. Something in the beast's gait and stride bothered him and he has convinced himself that the creature is "Crimson-touched" (a term he and Mahdra use to differentiate between normal hydras and those changed by the

Crimson Entity). The rock here leaves little trace of passing creatures, but should anyone want to investigate the tracks Strauk is following, they will notice the size of the hydra's prints are significantly larger than those of a normal hydra (Track DC 25). Strauk decided to backtrack to see where the hydra came from. He is currently heading in the direction of location 2 to investigate.

Regardless of whether or not the group is hunting hydras, Strauk will ask if they want to join him on the hunt, just to "get some exercise." It is intended that the group take the invitation and begin the adventure. If they do Strauk will lead, scouting ahead with his magical boots, and returning to the group to report every hour or so.

2. Abandoned Copper Mine

This mine was shut down over 50 years ago, when it's meager store of copper was drained. A single shaft some 100 feet across drops at least 300 feet into the stone and sand of the desert here. Hundreds of small tunnels radiate from this central shaft, and must once have served several hundred miners at a time. After the mineshaft was abandoned it fell into disrepair, and became the home of some strange creatures. When the Crimson Entity passed overhead, it detected these creatures and their magical powers.

Hydra, Crimson-touched

[d20]	Type	[d20]	# Heads	[d20]	Max #
1-10	normal	1-6	6	1-10	1
11-12	superior	7-8	7	11-14	2*
13-14	Pyro-	9-12	8	15-16	2
15-16	Cryo-	13-14	9	17-19	3*
17-18	Lernaean	15-16	10	20	3
19	Lernaean pyro	17-18	11	* all abilities must be from the same creature	
20	Lernaean cryo	19-20	12		



The abilities and creatures on this card represent those that the creature known as Crimson Entity has encountered since arriving in the Denoan Harshlands. Finding the hydras of the area excellent recipients for these collected abilities, the entity has been experimenting diligently to create a "perfect" version of the creature.

To generate a crimson-touched hydra, roll 3 times on Table 1 to generate it's basic type, number of heads, and number of abilities (as found on Table 2). Refer to the appropriate creature listing in the Monster Manual ®. All hydra within 50 miles of the Crimson Entity are directly under it's control and do it's bidding.

Superior Hydra: 60-100% of maximum hit points. +2 bonus to Spot and Listen.

[d20]	Ability—eye rays as Sorc L13; range 150'; DC 18
1-2	Charm Monster
3-4	Dismissal
5-6	5d8 Searing Light
7-8	Flesh to Stone
9-10	Disintegrate
11-12	Rary's Telepathic Bond
13-14	Blindness
15-16	Ray of Enfeeble—1d6+5 Str
17-18	13d6 Fireball
19-20	Telekinesis 225 lbs.

[d20]	Stolen From	Pg	Ability Stolen
1	Aicherai	15	Black Cloud
2	Ankheg	18	Acid, Spit Acid
3	Arrowhawk	19	Electricity Ray
4	Barghest	22	Feed
5	Basilisk	23	Petrifying Gaze
6	Beholder, Redrock	24	See table 3
7	Carrion Crawler	29	Paralysis
8	Darkmantle	39	Blindsight, Darkness
9	Detrachan	47	Destructive Harmonics
10	Digester	54	Acid Spray
11	Dragonne	77	Roar
12	Ettercap	88	Web, poison
13	Ghast	97	Paralysis, Stench
14	Harpy	117	Captivating Song
15	Howler	121	Quills
16	Phantom Fungus	149	Improved Invisibility
17	Rust Monster	157	Rust
18	Shadow	175	Incorporeal, Undead
19	Umber Hulk	180	Confusing gaze
20	DM's Choice	*	Any

ABC #0047

Created By
Danny O'Neill

Illustration
Marcio Florito

1st Appearance
The Crimson-touched Hydra

ABC Library Code
BTB.MOT.1

2

Shadowhydra (1): 12-headed; hp 126. As a standard hydra with the following bonus traits. Refer to the monster manual page 122.

Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Incorporeal: Can be harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, +1 or better magic weapons, or magic, with a 50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source. Can pass through solid objects at will, and own attacks pass through armor. Always moves silently.

Tracking the Hydra: The hunt for the hydra will take several days and cover several hundred miles. Even if the group has a means to move quicker, Strauk will insist on taking the lead and moving the group at his own pace. He has lived in this area his entire life, and nobody but his mate is a better tracker. With the various changes in terrain (rock to sand, sandstorms), he will likely be the only one able to follow the hydras trail at all. The hydra has become uncomfortable with its ability to absorb heat. The heat of the sun alone causes it to grow, so the hydra has taken to traveling at night and resting under the desert sand in the day. When the hydra rests in this way, it slowly shrinks down to it's normal size.

3. Aamon Khul

The city of Aamon Khul is a jewel in the desert Harshlands. Majestic towers rise up from a high butte, offering natural protection for the citizens within. With hardly any militia and nobody seeking to conquer their land, the people of Aamon Khul have no natural enemies. They have survived in these harsh lands for millennia, and only now fear for their future survival. The group is not intended to visit the city during this adventure.

4. Redrock Beholders

While following the path of the hydra, Strauk suddenly stops and tells the group to stop making any noise. Listening intently (Listen +19) he smiles broadly and looks at the group with a twinkle in his eye and a satisfied grunt. "Beholders" he exclaims. "What a treat!" With that he ducks behind a stone and motions the group to hide.

Beholders, Redrock (14): CR 13, Medium-size aberration; HD 13d8+11; hp 60; Init +4; Mv 5; Fly (good); AC 20 (-1 size, +11 natural); Atk +7 ranged touch rays, bite +2 melee (2d4); SA: Eye rays; SQ: All-around vision, antimagic cone, fly (permanent feather fall); SV For +4, Ref +3, Will +11; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 15. Skills: Hide +7, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Listen +15, Search +20, Spot +22; Feats: Alertness, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Shot on the Run; Eye Rays (Su) (as Sorcerer L13, ray effect, range 150', DC 18): Charm Monster, Dismissal, Searing Light (5d8), Flesh to Stone, Disintegrate, Rary's Telepathic Bond, Blindness, Ray of

Intrigued, it "spliced" the ability to Absorb Heat from a patch of brown mold, and the traits Undead, and Incorporeal from the shadows it found. Splicing them onto some nearby hydras, it created a shadow hydra and a brownmold cryohydra. The shadow hydra remains at the bottom of the mine where it lies in darkness waiting for prey to come by. The brownmold cryohydra is the huge hydra that Strauk is tracking.

Should the group enter the mine they will find it completely abandoned. Without it's ability to absorb heat, the brown mold has withered up and died. A Druid might be able to determine what the fungus was before it perished (Wilderness Lore DC 30). Without their major traits, the shadows that were once here have dissolved into nothing. Should the group come near the mine's central shaft, the shadow hydra within will rise to attack, it's long shadowy necks stretching up out of the darkness.

There is a second hydra trail leading south from this mine, possibly heading towards areas 6 or 7. DMs are encouraged to generate a hydra from ABC 2 to represent this beast. An entire side-adventure could quickly be created for the group to hunt and slay this hydra as well. However, Strauk will be eager to get on the trail of the larger hydra as quickly as possible, and will urge them in that direction.

Enfeeblement (-1d6+5 Strength), Fireball (13d6), Telekinesis (225 lbs);

All-Around Vision (Ex): +4 to Spot & Search.

Can't be flanked;

Antimagic Cone (Su): as antimagic field by Sorcerer L13. Cone 150 ft straight ahead.

Appearance: Size L (6' wide orb; 300 lb); a hideous floating orb covered in eyestalks, with a huge purple central eye, blistered and shriveled red skin, and an enormous mouth.

Climate/Terrain: Any desert; Org: Solitary, pair, or cluster (3-6); Treasure: Double standard; AL: usually LE; Adv: 12-16 HD (L); 17-33 HD (H). Lore: the Redrock Beholders came to the Denoan Harshlands from another dimension ages ago and do not know how to get back home. Blistered and bitter they have formed a society around their seers, powerful oracles and storehouses of knowledge they hope will one day discover the way home. The Redrock Beholders have encountered the Crimson Entity on Denoa, as well as on other worlds and historically have not fared well in any encounter. They hate the creature with all their might and will do anything to destroy it.

Strauk has been hunting beholders since he was a teenager. He hates these creatures whom he considers outsiders encroaching upon his land. His favorite tactic is to ambush them, using his Spring Attack to wound as many as he can before jumping or running away to hide again. These guerilla tactics have served him for years, and he will not give them up for any reason. Should the group help him dispose of these beholders, they will earn his immediate trust and respect.

5. Nomad Camp 1

This small camp consists of around 40 armed men, women, and children who live upon the land in tents made from hydra skin. The tracks of the large hydra lead directly through camp. The group should immediately know that there is something wrong when they spot no campfires or activity coming from the camp. When they arrive they find everybody dead. Most have seemingly died in their sleep. Any skilled healer or outdoorsman examining the body will conclude that they died from exposure.

In reality, the brownmold cryohydra they are following passed through here in the night. Passing close to each tent, the hydra quickly absorbed the heat of the nomad's bodies, killing them quickly and peacefully. Strauk appears unmoved by these events until he discovers that the hydra tracks change significantly after they pass through the camp. From almost the moment the hydra leaves camp, the tracks begin to grow until they are almost twice that of a normal hydra. Greatly concerned, Strauk will mention to the group that he has never seen a hydra with such a power, and he will immediately want to continue the hunt. Considering the power and wealth of a 20th level group, there should be nothing in the camp they would consider "valuable." Should they ask, Strauk will say it is Harshland tradition to leave the dead where they lie, and he will spend no time on last rites for this camp.

Challenge Rating
20

Armor Class
15

Hit Points
560

Initiative
+1

Size
C

Speed
60

Face
40' x 40'

Reach: 15'

Saves
F+22
R+22
W+13

STR 42 +16

DEX 12 +2

CON 28 +9

INT 6 -2

WIS 12 +1

CHA 10 +0

Alignment
N

ABC #0053

Hydra, Brownmold Cryohydra

Colossal 8 Headed Crimson-touched Cryohydra

40d10+360 Hit Dice Magical Beast

8 Bites +30 4d6 dmg

+3d6 cold Fort DC 23 for 1/2

Breath Weapon every 1d4 r

5d6 cold Ref DC 23 for 1/2

AC 15 (-8 size, +1 Dex, +12 natural).

SA: Absorb Heat, Breath Weapon.

SQ: Cold Subtype, Scent.

Skills: Listen +17, Spot +17.

Feats: Combat Reflexes.

Absorb Heat: Each round that this hydra is exposed to any heat over 100 degrees it must make a Fort save DC 25 or grow in size and Hit Dice by 1d4%. If touched by or exposed to fire the hydra automatically grows in this manner with no saving throw. Excess size is lost at a rate of 5% for each hour that the hydra remains in temperatures under 100 degrees. Anything that the hydra touches suffers 3d6 cold damage (Fort DC 23 for 1/2).

Breath Weapon (Ex): Each head every 1d4 rounds for 5d6 cold damage (Ref DC 23 for 1/2). Jet is 20 feet high, 20 feet wide, and 60 feet long and is filled with inert brown mold spores that cover the area but do no harm.

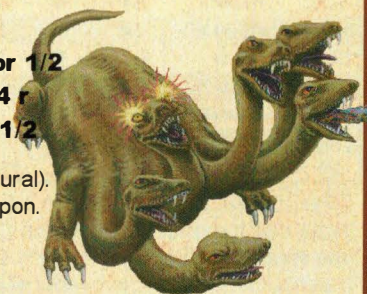
Cold Subtype (Ex): Cold immunity; double damage from fire except on a successful save.

Appearance: Size C (60' tall, 120' long; 75K lb); an impossibly huge hydra with mottled, moldy brownish-green skin. One pair of eyes glow red, revealing that the creature is crimsontouched, and thus created by the strange machinations of the Crimson Entity.

Climate/Terrain: Any desert or underground; **Org:** Unique;

Treasure: None; **AL:** always neutral; **Adv:** -.

Lore: This immensely dangerous creature was created by the magical tinkering of an extradimensional creature known as the Crimson Entity. Through unknown magic or science, the entity somehow took the ability of a brown mold to absorb heat and spliced it onto an eight-headed hydra, creating a creature that is easily one of the most dangerous on the entire planet.



Created By
Danny O'Neill

Illustration
Ralph Horsley

1st Appearance
The Crimson-touched Hydra

ABC Library Code
BTB.MON.7

3

6. Cliffs of Boz

Following the hydra trail leads to the group near the edge of these cliffs. Strauk will conclude that the hydra could find no path through them, and so changed it's course East. With a grim look, Strauk will explain that there is a semi-permanent nomad camp a day's journey straight east. Here the terrain turns to sand, and though at times he loses the hydra's trail, Strauk manages to keep the group on track and leads them directly towards location 8. As the group nears the camp, he will tell them two things he has discovered. First, the creature seems to be growing and shrinking. Second, it seems only to travel at night.

7. Nomad Camp

This camp contains 200 souls that are wonderfully oblivious to the Crimson Entity, the hydras it has affected, or the damage it has caused. The DM can use this location to create a side-adventure with the mysterious hydra from encounter 2.

8. Nomad Camp 2

This large camp once contained over 300 living souls. It now contains 300 dead bodies, slain as were the nomads of Camp 1. The tracks leading from the camp are twice the size of those of a normal hydra.

9. Nomad Camp 3

This small camp was mercifully spared the fates of camps 1 and 2. Two hunters on patrol saw the hydra passing in the dark. They were terrified and kept their distance, although they tracked it five miles south of the camp to ensure it was not a threat. They will tell the group that the hydra was almost twice the size of a normal hydra, and seemed "fuzzy" as though covered in small hairs (actually brown fungus).

10. Temple of the Golden Sun

This small temple houses 150 priests and monks that seek enlightenment by contemplating the sun. They have found the sunrise and sunset in the Harshlands perfect for their belief system, and the church has existed here for almost 1000 years.

Though the temple residents are safe, they once tended a private herd of hydras which they raised for their food stores. That ended the night before, when they were awoken to screams coming from the hydra pens. They emerged to find a gargantuan hydra feeding on their herd. The hydra seemed to move swiftly despite its bulk, quickly slaying and consuming several of their precious hydras in moments. Should the group ask, the creature manifested a strange breath weapon that felt of cold, but smelled of moss. They will point to frozen hunks of hydra and show the group that everywhere the giant hydra breathed is covered in a thin layer of brown spores that are (quite thankfully) inert. Strauk can easily pick up the trail of the colossal hydra as it heads southwest from the temple. With or without the group, he will immediately head in that direction, ready to put the dangerous hydra to the death.

11. The Monolith of Suma

This small mesa stands alone in the sand and serves as a marker and guidepost for travelers in this area. It was named after Suma, one of the earliest settlers in the area though little more is known about the person it was named for. The hydra the group seeks apparently spotted it and, thinking it was a competitor, tried to attack it. When the monolith would not fall, the hydra gave up. Weary from the struggle and with the sun rising soon, the hydra buried itself in the sand where it waits unknowingly for the group's arrival. As Strauk approaches the area, he loses the trail in the sand. Confident, he moves forward anyways, knowing his prey is about somewhere. Assuming it is hiding behind the monolith, he leads the characters to the point marked 'X' where the hydra is buried.

In a moment the ground begins to shake and tremble. Suddenly, a massive hydra head explodes from the sand and casts about, sniffing the air. When it spots the group, one head after another rises from the sand until the group is surrounded. Finally, the creature's enormous body rises from the sand and

attacks. Strauk will immediately go berserk, flying into a rage and attacking back.

For combat, refer to ABC 3. When the hydra is defeated, Strauk will thank the group for their assistance and return to his normal duties. The group can continue to hunt crimson-touched hydras with Strauk or go back to whatever they were doing. The DM can generate any amount of hydras as needed from ABC 2 to continue the adventure. If Strauk is slain, the group will hopefully not resurrect him, but heed his wishes and leave his body where it lays, next to the carcass of the largest hydra the world has ever seen.



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By James Lowder Illustrated By a'lis

the Unquiet Dreams of Cingris the Stout

Cingris huddled atop a spire of polished black rock. Overhead, swollen thunderclouds moved in bleak procession across a sky the color of freshly spilled pig's blood. He knew—and loathed—that particular shade of crimson from the hours he'd spent as a boy in his father's butcher shop. It didn't seem odd that the sky had taken on that precise hue, any more than it struck Cingris as unusual that the sea pounding the spire's base quite clearly boomed and hissed the word *death* with each pulse of the tide.

This was, after all, a nightmare, and a familiar one at that.

Two creeping steps brought Cingris to the edge of the small, level spot that was his sanctuary. He looked down the face of the spray-slicked spike, and his stomach heaved in protest. Groaning, he forced himself to stare down the rock face in hope of spotting some half-hidden escape route. As on each of the three previous nights, Cingris found only a featureless spike of stone that fell away to roaring darkness.

A screech filled the air. The noise drowned out even the rumble of the unseen ocean. There was no need to look up; Cingris knew the face and form of his adversary. Memories of the thing haunted his days as well as his nights. Yet curiosity had always been one of Cingris' faults, and now it goaded him until he stared skyward with wide, fear-filled eyes.

The beast tore through the air like a feathered and furred thunderbolt, a terrifying mixture of eagle and lion, yet four times the size of even the largest hunting cat. Round eyes, as yellow and lifeless as lumps of sulfur, fixed on Cingris. The griffin spread the talons on its forelimbs, flexed the clawed pads of its leonine rears. Folding massive eagle's wings to gain speed, the beast became a blur against the blood-red sky.

"Appear," Cingris whimpered. Frantically, his gaze darted along the edges of his cold, stony perch. "Please . . ."

As if in reply to the trembling plea, a picket of rowan stakes burst from the ground to form a defensive square around the dreamer. The griffin slammed into the palisade, and the sharpened spikes gouged its shoulders and wings. A cry went up again from the hunter. This time pain overwhelmed the chords of anger in its screech.

Cingris cowered at the center of the tiny rowan fort. Feathers and steaming blood showered down on him, and the musky stench from the beast filled his nostrils. Choking, Cingris shrank back. But the griffin pressed closer. As it did, it impaled itself inch by awful inch upon the picket.

Here, on the previous nights, the dream had ended, with Cingris and the griffin locked in a violent tableau, their conflict left unresolved. Tonight, though, the beast forced itself down the stakes much farther than it had managed before. For the first time Cingris could see the tatters of old flesh clinging to its beak. He could feel the griffin's pyre-hot breath. Each puff seared his face as the hunter closed for the kill. . . .

Cingris woke screaming. Sweat beaded his pudgy face. Quivers of fear rippled his jowls. The guts of his shredded pillow floated around him, feathers lofting lazily in the moonlight.

The bed frame creaked as Cingris rolled his not inconsiderable bulk onto the floor. He rushed to the window. A hiss of pain escaped his lips as a cool night breeze slid in through the tall, narrow opening and slipped across his face. He tentatively raised blunt fingers to his cheek and tested the skin. Burned.

Cingris clenched his teeth to hold back the scream scrabbling up from his chest. He tried to cobble together a rational explanation for the burn, but the truth would not be denied: The griffin's breath had scorched him. The hunter in his dreams had the power to inflict real harm.

For a time Cingris stood at the window, staring with unseeing eyes into the night. He half-expected the griffin to appear over the town square and dive toward his second-story window. But the attack never came, and the captured scream bled from the innkeep's locked jaw as a pinched groan. Dread had dulled the edge of his terror, replacing it with clarity of thought.

The griffin was a magical assassin, a dream-stalker. And if Cingris remembered the old stories correctly, the dream-stalker's form revealed its master.

He looked across the small, dusty square that lay between his inn, the Silver Plow, and the ramshackle hulk of his only competitor—the Sleeping Griffin.

A lowlife gambler named Deema had opened the Griffin less than a month ago. Cingris had dismissed the venture as a certain failure; the crossroads town of Kiran played host to the Giant's Feast twice a year, but it could scarcely support one taproom in the off-season. Besides, Cingris' own inn had been the uncontested center of Kiran's meager social life for more than six generations. The Griffin wouldn't change that.

Time had seemed to prove Cingris correct. Few in Kiran trusted Deema and fewer still would frequent his seedy bar. The regulars at the Plow only mentioned the brutish gambler as a punch line. Eisirt the Tailor had even started a pool based upon the hour and date of the upstart taproom's expected demise. Now, apparently, Deema had found a way to beat the odds and rid himself of his conquering rival.

Cingris considered the possibilities. The gambler could have offered a bloodbond to the Strangerfolk; loosing a dream-stalker lay well within the power of the Twilight Court. Or he could have forged a bargain with the wild things that lurked just beyond the town limits, the goblins and redcaps and imps that made the nighttime forest so perilous. The right wage could persuade even the most horrific of those creatures to work its magic for a particular end.

Cingris' mind raced. Deema must have offered something of great value to gain the use of a dream-stalker. A sweet young girl tended the Griffin's customers, when there were any. Her unstained soul might be valuable enough to pay for the nightmare assassin. Cingris had no prize to equal that. He was a widower, with no children. There was Belle, the inn's serving wench, or Janus, the orphan boy who worked the kitchen, but their souls were far from spotless. . . .

Cursing himself, the innkeep dismissed the idea. He knew that it was wrong to drag others down with him. Besides, to forge such a pact was madness. There were more terrible fates than death on the Isle of Thran, and bargaining with the Strangerfolk was a certain way to discover just what those fates entailed.

Sudden sounds drew Cingris' attention back to the town square. The door to the Sleeping Griffin was opening to admit someone. Cloaked in black, the shape crept haltingly past the oak platform at the square's center, toward the inn. In his left hand the stranger clutched a yew staff topped with three large metal rings. The rings chimed brightly each time he planted the staff, a sharp contrast to the grinding hiss of his crippled footfalls.

As the black-clad man reached out to the doorframe to help himself across the threshold, Cingris glimpsed an elaborate silver gauntlet that glowed with reflected moonlight. This time the cry of fear could not be held back; the shriek burst from Cingris' throat. The cloaked figure paused, then turned toward the open window. Slowly, he held out his silver-gauntleted right hand in an arcane sign of malediction.

Cingris gaped, horrorstruck, as the figure disappeared into the Sleeping Griffin. That gauntlet was the centerpiece of a hundred Thranian tales of horror, its owner someone who made all the

innkeep's earlier dark imaginings seem foolishly hopeful. Deema hadn't bargained with the Strangerfolk or the goblins to loose the dream-stalker. Deema had forged a pact with Lord Ebonacht.

"That's quite a welt you got there." Eisirt used his brimming mug to gesture toward Cingris' red cheek. "You been chasing Belle around after closing again?"

A burst of ale-strengthened laughter rang through the common room at the Silver Plow. Cingris forced a smile, an expression everyone misinterpreted as a conspiratorial leer. As for Belle, she shook her head and let the comment pass unchallenged. The tailor was wrong about Cingris chasing her, but a reputation as someone who could defend herself might keep the rowdy farmhands and lecherous merchants at a distance.

"I'd like to be here the next time she slaps you," Eisirt pressed happily. "You deserve it. You're old enough to be her father—" he gulped down a mouthful of ale and winked at the shepherd slouched at his side "—and heavy enough to be the rest of her family!"

Cingris had made an art of dealing with friendly barbs about his weight, so the whole taproom fell silent in anticipation of the host's witty retort. But the near-sleepless night had jumbled his thoughts,

The griffin was a magical assassin, a dream-stalker. And if Cingris remembered the old stories correctly, the dream-stalker's form revealed its master.

and a churning dread was working him to distraction. He heard the griffin's hunting call in the patrons' laughter. Their pipe smoke became the beast's breath, the amber ale in their glasses myriad reflections of its sulphurous eyes. And every silver coin slapped onto a tabletop strengthened the image of Ebonacht's gauntlet gleaming in Cingris' mind.

At the thought of the gauntlet's infamous owner, Cingris silently repeated a prayer against evil for the hundredth time that morning. Lord Ebonacht spun necromancies so hideous they supposedly terrified even the Strangerfolk's mightiest princes and sent goblin lords scurrying to their barrows, their teeth chattering all the way. Nightmares were Ebonacht's most valued coin. He trafficked in them the way inns trafficked in ale.

"Nightmares," said a voice in the taproom, as if it had pulled the word from Cingris' troubled thoughts.

The innkeep looked up to find Janus standing in the kitchen door. The young man's eyes were fixed on Eisirt the Tailor. "Nightmares," Janus repeated. "That's what caused the welt. Cingris hurt himself falling out of bed after a bad dream."

In most places, such a revelation would have prompted mocking laughter, but not on the Isle of Thran, where superstitions about bad dreams and evil omens ran deep. And not when it came from the lips of young Janus, who alone of his countrymen held those superstitions in open contempt. From him, the statement was a challenge, one that both infuriated and frightened the locals. To let it pass in silence might be construed by the minions of the Twilight Court—perhaps even now hidden amongst them at the Silver

Plow—as a sign of rebellion. But to confront the outrage might require the names of those same minions of the Strangerfolk to be spoken aloud, the rituals for which were so complicated that it was better not to utter the names at all.

Janus understood their quandary, counted on it just as he did the locals' reluctance to raise a hand against him for fear of foiling the terrible supernatural revenge that surely awaited him. "You all tremble at shadows," he said now, reveling in the men's self-enforced impotence. "You quake for fear of things you've never seen."

"Because we can't see something don't mean it's not there," one of the shepherds ventured. "Like air. Can't see that, can you?"

"But you can feel it fill your chest each time you breathe," Janus shot back. "What evidence of that sort do you have of the Strangerfolk? Who among you can prove you've seen a creature of the Twilight Court, or that Lord Ebonacht is some undying sorcerer and not just the latest in a long line of very mortal recluses?"

The answer the young man expected, and received, was silence. No one had any evidence to support these beliefs—at least evidence of the sort that Janus had not easily, and rightly, dismissed before. Yet still they clung to the centuries-old stories of Thran's dark heritage, and let them color every aspect of their daily lives.

Janus crossed his thin arms over his chest. "Fools," he spat.

"The only fool here is you," Eisirt said, though it was unclear if the bitterness dripping from those few words was born of Janus' comments or his own inability to muster a better reply.

"And perhaps Cingris," one of the shepherds added. "For letting a bad bit of work like you stay under his roof. My sleep would be the poorer for you in the next room, too."

A toxic sneer curled Janus' lip. "He's a better, braver soul than any of you lot."

"That's enough, boy," Cingris warned at last.

Janus readied a sharp-tongued reply. Though Cingris had raised him for almost all of his fifteen years, Janus was more than willing to argue with anyone. Yet the haggard look on the innkeep's face, the withering terror in his eyes, was so extreme that it left the retort stillborn. In its place, Janus murmured a surprisingly meek, "Yes, sir," and retreated to the kitchen.

A disheartening silence smothered the taproom, until Belle thumped an empty glass onto the counter next to Cingris.

"Nightmares and such are off the menu. Time for you all to chase a new topic," she said with a brightness she did not feel. "You've run that one to death."

"Besides, there's better conversations to be had about what goes on in bed, eh?" someone called.

A flush colored Belle's face as crimson as her employer's scalded cheek, and she cast her gaze to the floor. The timing and execution of both displays of feigned embarrassment would have awed the most veteran thespian. With an equally practiced sway of her hips, she exited to the kitchen, intent on giving Janus a piece of her mind. Her departure would also allow the patrons to chase away the gloom by pursuing the topic at hand with bluntness they would never use in her presence.

Yet the conversation floundered in Belle's absence, with Cingris' grim mood overpowering even the few futile attempts to wallow in jovial obscenity.

"Split seams and tangled thread," Eisirt muttered after a few uncomfortable moments. The tailor rolled to his feet and made his way rather unsteadily toward Cingris.

Oblivious to all but the fearful thoughts fogging his mind, Cingris stared sightlessly at the rag gliding over the glass clutched in his fat fingers. "Eh? You dry again?" the innkeep asked when finally the tailor shook his arm. "Belle, get Eisirt another—" He looked around. "Where's she gotten to?"

*It looked as if someone had taken an
axe and a paintbrush to the carved
griffin; its wooden shoulder was splintered
and its breast was spattered with crimson.*

"Back to scold that monstrous ward of yours," Eisirt said. He rapped the ale-stained bar in a pattern meant to hasten a wish's fulfillment. "May she employ the sharpest knife in the kitchen to make her point."

"Concede, at least, that the boy has reason to be bitter," Cingris noted with a sigh. "An unknown father, a mad mother—and the whole town's malice simply because those unfortunate events might betoken some awful fate in store for the lad. If it weren't for your son, he'd have nary a friend in the world, besides me and Belle."

"If I had my say of it, he'd have you two alone," Eisirt grumbled. "But I've no more mastery of my boy Dob than you do of your fair foundling." The tailor repeated the patterned tapping on the bar, though this time he did not speak his wish aloud. Cingris knew the man well enough to guess it had something to do with Janus vanishing from Thran forever.

"See here," the tailor said after a moment. "I hope you're not letting the boy's ignorance stop you from taking care of your problem."

"I—I don't know what you mean," Cingris replied.

"The nightmares." Eisirt leaned closer and lowered his voice to a conspiratorial whisper. "There are ways of dealing with such things. People who can help you."

Cingris glanced around. The look on his face revealed the worried guilt he felt at merely hearing the tailor's suggestion. "That's illegal."

"I worry about my soul first, the laws second—even if it puts my life in danger."

To dabble in magic was a dangerous business on Thran. The Ebonacht family had outlawed sorcery of any kind decades past, though the superstitious farmers and craftsmen rarely let a suspected wizard or witch reach the lord's justice. Each village had its own method of dealing with such renegades—a deep and swift stretch of river, a specially built rowan scaffold, or merely an old and trustworthy axe kept ever sharp. The laws against consorting with a sorcerer were only slightly less severe than the ones against being one.

The innkeep turned away from his old friend. "I don't think we want to be discussing this."

"I trust you, Cingris, and I know you aren't afraid to deal with outcasts. You shelter one under your own roof." Eisirt looked over both shoulders to be certain no one had ambled up to the bar. "I've heard that the tinkers have set up shop an hour or so down the Forest Road. The old woman, Fea, helped me when that ache crippled my fingers. Turns out it was a curse, and—well, it wasn't luck that lifted it."

Had he not seen the silver gauntlet, Cingris never would have dared to defy the edict against sorcery. But Lord Ebonacht was already acting against him, already helping Deema achieve his destruction. He was surely doomed if he did not find his own help. "All right," Cingris said. "How do I find them, and how much money should I bring?"

Before another hour had passed, Cingris closed up the taproom and sent his patrons on their way with a final drink on the house. Belle and Janus looked on in confusion as he hurriedly filled a small sack with coins. His distraction had metamorphosed to resolve somehow, but that left him equally unresponsive to questions. He then departed without any leave-taking or explanation, though the rowan staff he carried suggested a destination outside of Kiran. Such staves had long been believed to be proof against the bloody-minded goblins, thieving bogels, and shape-shifting waffs that supposedly lurked in the surrounding woods.

As he emerged from the Silver Plow, Cingris gripped that staff tightly and paused to glower in defiance at the Sleeping Griffin. Deema had just emerged from the inn with a rickety ladder and a bucket of tools. Even as Cingris watched, the rival innkeep leaned the ladder against the building's weatherworn facade and went to work on his sign. It looked as if someone had taken an axe and a paintbrush to the carved griffin; its wooden shoulder was splintered and its breast was spattered with crimson.

Cingris gaped at the sign. Its wounds matched those the picket in his dream had inflicted upon his would-be assassin.

"Hurry up, Gerthec!" Deema barked. "I need to get this done before nightfall."

One of Deema's dim-witted assistants staggered out of the inn hauling another, larger sign. This griffin was nearly twice the size of its predecessor, with talons of hammered brass and a beak of black iron. Glassy yellow eyes stared from beneath heavy lids. Those eyes were sightless, unblinking, but Cingris could feel a palpable wave of malevolence strike his back as he turned from them and hurried north toward the Forest Road.

The tinkers' camp was easy enough to find; it was the one built from human bones.

Tables and torch-posts and tent pegs were all constructed of them, as were the four small wagons in which the tinkers wandered the island. Cingris stood at the road's edge, stunned. The stories he'd heard, told in whispered voices late at night, described the tinkers' camp as terrifying. He had steeled himself accordingly, ready to confront a sight to chill the blood in your veins. Now, as he looked around him, the innkeep struggled for a word to label the camp. Whatever that word was, it wasn't *terrifying*.

Perhaps the bright, late afternoon sunshine robbed the place of its menace. Perhaps it was the way in which the tinkers seemed so comfortable with their surroundings. Not far from Cingris, an old man dozed in a camp chair made up of some unidentifiable leather stretched between human femurs. Near the wagon, a girl whistled cheerfully as she attended a half-dozen wild forest fowl crammed into a coop with ribs for bars. A little boy sat upon the ground at the very center of the clearing. A ragged cloth bear snuggled beside him, he played jacks with a red ball and a scattering of finger bones. Their utter disinterest in the ossuary thrown up around them made it seem to Cingris more squalid and unfortunate than frightening.

"You bring us work?"

Cingris started at the sudden, shouted question. The woman who had asked it stood next to the rear-most wagon, hands on her hips, foot tapping with impatience. Cingris realized that this must be Fea, matriarch of the tinkers. Like the camp itself, she had little in common with her counterpart from the night tales; she more resembled the sturdy farm wives that came into Kiran's monthly markets than the spite-hardened old crone he'd heard described.

"Uh, right," Cingris stammered. "Work." He took a step forward, then backed up, waiting to be formally invited into the camp. As he did, he stumbled over an exposed tree root and nearly fell.

"In with you, then," Fea said with an enigmatic smile. "Before you hurt yourself."

That odd half-smile lingered about her lips as she waited for the innkeep to cross the camp, a trek he made with painful care and slowness for fear of bumping against some skeletal table or washtub. The other tinkers spared him only the briefest of looks as he passed them.

"What do you have for us?" Fea said without preamble, when Cingris finally reached her side. She nodded at the small sack he carried. "Metal mending, is it?"

"No, no," Cingris blurted. He patted the sack of coins with fat fingers. "That's what I can pay—if you get me what I need."

Fea studied him for a moment, her appraising eye only making him fidget and fumble all the more. "I want some, uh, *special* help," he stammered.

"You want some company?" Fea asked. "You'll have to wait for my daughter. She's—"

Cingris raised his empty hand, shook the staff in his other. "Not that," he said. "You misunderstand."

Fea's eyes narrowed. "Out with it, then."

"A dream-stalker," Cingris whispered. "I need you to free me from a dream-stalker."

The innkeep barely noticed the skulls grinning at him from where they'd been worked into the wagon's design...

Her smile suddenly fled, the tinker rumbled, "You'll find no help of that kind here."

"Please," Cingris cried. "There's no one else."

"Do you know magic's price?" Fea hissed. She swept an arm wide. "All this. Our dead surround us because of magic. One of my ancestors so lusted for the power that she paid the goblins whatever they wanted in exchange for its secrets, gifts so foul that the earth itself refused to accept her corpse when she finally died, or any of her blood after her. It's either carry them with us forever, or face them when their graves shove them out and send them in search of us."

Cingris could find nothing to say, so he opened the sack and emptied it. Coins cascaded into the dirt, all the profit he'd ever made from the Silver Plow. Finally he took a simple gold band from his finger and dropped it onto the pile. "I'll not ask you to harm anyone," he said softly. He'd meant to say more, but the words wouldn't come.

Fea retrieved only a single silver coin from the heap, then motioned for Cingris to follow her around to the other side of the wagon. The innkeep barely noticed the skulls grinning at him from where they'd been worked into the wagon's design, or the oddly beautiful arrangement of vertebrae that made up the small table to which the tinker led him. Before she sat down, Fea tossed the coin into the shadow of a nearby oak, where it was lost in the gloom. Cingris guessed that this must have been a gift to the Strangerfolk, who were said to travel through shadows to the Twilight Court, but he couldn't understand the invocation Fea spoke next. The language

was unknown to him. The sounds of the words were almost inhuman.

The tinker continued to mutter in that same strange tongue as she poured a red liquid into a wide silver bowl, then sloshed the contents onto the ground in a line between the table and the shadowed oak. "A silver coin to loosen the tongue of the shadow walkers," she announced. "The juice of the rowan berry to keep them at bay."

Fea fixed her dark eyes on the dregs remaining in the silver bowl. She studied them for a moment, then leaned slightly to one side, as if she were listening to some voice from the oak shadow that Cingris could not hear. "Yes," she said, "a dream-stalker. Sent by a rival."

"A man named Deema, I think. He opened an inn across the town square from mine."

She nodded and cocked her head, listening intently again. This time Cingris thought he heard a whisper from the wood, but it might have been nothing more than the wind. "It is the one you suspect," Fea said in a dreamy, distant voice. "But you have foiled his plans. The assassin cannot reach you. Why is that?"

"A rowan picket springs up around me in my dream."

"Your bed frame is rowan, then. An heirloom carved long ago," Fea said. "Yes, that would be the reason the sending cannot reach you. Rowan is indeed proof against such things, and will keep you safe from evil sent against you as you sleep. Do not sleep elsewhere."

"And to stop the dream-stalker?" Cingris asked eagerly. He leaned forward to peer into the silver bowl, at the rowan dregs. The shapes were as mysterious to him as Fea's incantations. "Does that tell me what I can do to stop it?"

"I can make a talisman to defend you, but there is no certain way to stop a dream-stalker, short of evil of a greater kind directed against the sender—and that I will not help you do."

Cingris' shoulders sagged, and he scrambled in his thoughts for some solution they'd missed. "The sign outside his inn was damaged, in the same places as the monster in my dream was wounded by the spikes. Maybe if I chopped up the sign, burned the thing—"

"The sign is merely a guide for the sorcery, a shape it can borrow," the tinker interrupted. "This Deema could simply get a new sign, or assign the stalker another form. So long as you sleep only in your bed, the thing cannot reach you. Take comfort in that."

The innkeep buried his fat face in his hands. "Is killing Deema the only way to stop this?"

"No! Death will not stop the sending," Fea said angrily. "And I will not help you in the things that would end it. Besides, this Deema has allied himself with someone quite powerful, someone whose power is beyond mine to counter."

"Lord Ebonacht."

"What?"

"Lord Ebonacht," Cingris repeated, his voice as dead as his hopes. "I think I saw him at Deema's inn last night."

"Get away from here!" Fea shouted. She grabbed the staff from Cingris and hit him with it. "Get away before you destroy us all!"

The first blow struck Cingris on the shoulder, but he ducked the next two clumsy swipes, then pulled the staff from Fea's hands. With a gasping sob, the tinker collapsed to her knees. "Not him," she pleaded. "Not again."

Cingris heard a sound at his back, one he'd heard in his taproom more often than he cared to admit—the hiss of a long-bladed knife leaving its sheath. He turned to find the old man holding a saw-toothed blade in a fighting stance, expertly flicking the knife so that its edge flared in the sunlight and flashed in the innkeep's eyes. Cingris raised one hand to shield his face and bulled

ahead. He felt the old man fall away before him. As he rounded the corner of the wagon, he tensed for the bite of the blade, but the blow never came.

"Here," said a small, high voice. "Take him."

Cingris looked down at the boy standing before him. The grubby child, no more than five or six years old, held a patchwork bear in his hands. He shook it slightly and said, "I heard you tell Nana about your nightmares. I had them, too."

"Go away," Cingris said, glancing over his shoulder. He could hear Fea and the old man, but they were still on the wagon's opposite side. He'd be able to get away. But when he took a step forward, a surprisingly strong hand on his leg stopped him.

"Nana made him for me," the boy said, round face pale with remembered fear. He thrust the bear up again. "To protect me from the nightmares Lord Ebonacht sent to get me after I stole some fruit from his orchards. It worked. I don't need him any more."

Fea finally rounded the wagon, the old man limping at her side. "No, Tomari," she cried. "Don't help him! You'll bring his curse down on all of us!"

Cingris snatched up the bear and ran. Had he been allowed even a moment at the camp to consider Fea's warning, to ponder what grief he might cause the child by accepting his aid, he would not have taken the poor little tyke's toy. At least, that was what Cingris told himself as he wheezed and puffed at the side of the Forest Road, unable to waddle one step farther. By the time the stabbing pain in his chest had subsided enough for him to walk again, he'd convinced himself that there was no point in taking the thing back. The vagabonds hadn't come after him, so whatever damage he'd caused couldn't be undone simply by the bear's return.

"I'll make it right tomorrow," he said, one eye on the darkening sky. "At least now I have a fighting chance to see tomorrow."

With the motley, moth-eaten bear clutched to his breast, Cingris set off through the growing twilight for the Silver Plow and the safety of his bed.

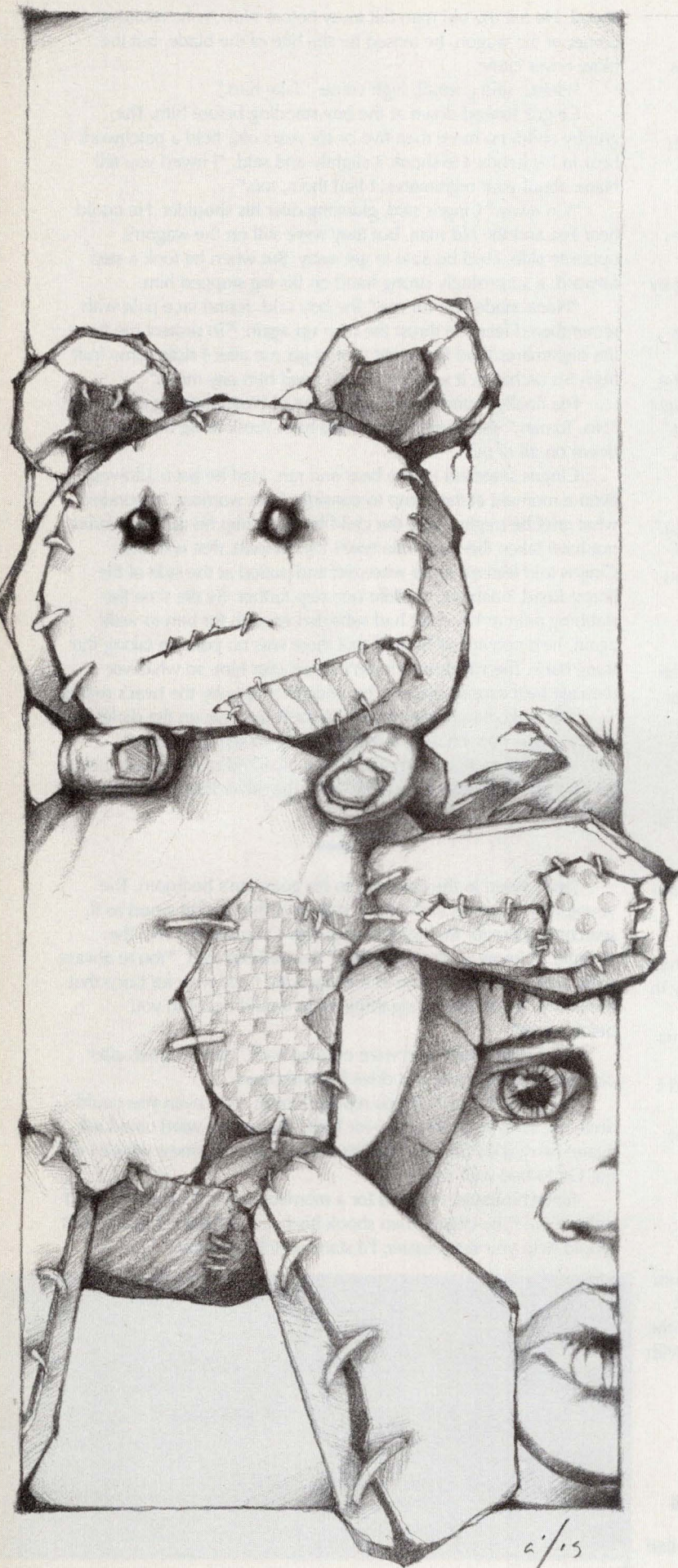
Janus stood in the doorway to his guardian's bedroom. The young man frowned at the floor, staring at the scuffed wood as if searching there for the right thing to say. Cingris saved him the struggle. "I know you're sorry, boy," the innkeep said. "You're always sorry after you start trouble in the taproom. I just wish for once that the notion it was the wrong thing to do would occur to you beforehand."

"I—I didn't think you were coming back," Janus noted, after clearing his throat twice to drive back his tears.

"No fear of that," Cingris replied kindly. "Not even you could drive me away from the Plow for long." Before his ward could ask again, he quickly added, "And it's none of your business where I did go. Off to bed with you."

Janus hesitated, lingered for a moment in the doorway. "I don't believe in—" he began, then shook his head and started again. "If it would help you sleep easier, I'd stand watch over you."

He rolled onto the bed, unafraid of sleep, hopeful that this night would see the dream-stalker's demise.



Fiercely Cingris hugged the boy, then turned him around and pushed him toward the stairs. The innkeep usually avoided such open displays of affection, but his ward's offer was so unusual that it called for nothing less. "Thank you," Cingris said. "But I can deal with any more bad dreams by myself. After all—" he patted his gut and forced a laugh "—I'm a big boy now, eh?"

After listening to be certain Janus had made his way down the creaky stairs to his bed near the taproom hearth, Cingris quickly locked the door, undressed, and struggled into his nightshirt. He recovered the bear from its hiding place in his clothes chest. The innkeep felt distinctly foolish kneeling beside his bed to pray for a safe night's sleep with a child's stuffed animal in his arms, but he did so anyway.

With an exhausted sigh, Cingris pushed himself up from his knees. He rolled onto the bed, unafraid of sleep, hopeful that this night would see the dream-stalker's demise. But as he settled in, he found that the bear had snagged on the wooden frame. A jagged splinter had pierced the talisman through one leg. The crude stitching there threatened to come undone, so Cingris had to work carefully to free it. He managed to do so with such dexterity that the bear was left with only a small hole to mark its misfortune.

The innkeep drifted off to sleep wondering if that wound might prevent the talisman from doing its duty. The answer came quickly enough. As on the four previous nights, Cingris soon found himself huddled atop a spire of black stone, beneath a ghastly red sky. Only now a bear towered beside him. The beast was twice Cingris' own considerable bulk, with paws as large as the man's entire head. Its hide was still the motley of its smaller counterpart, and a fist-sized hole gaped high on the bear's hip.

Cingris scarcely had room to move. For some reason, the rowan picket stood ready, even before the arrival of the dream-stalker. There was little enough space for him within the defensive spikes, and the bear was so large the innkeep found himself pressed against the barricade's interior.

When at last the griffin appeared, Cingris saw that it now resembled the larger, more ferocious creature on Deema's new sign. The beast flexed its talons and gnashed its black beak, then swooped lower. At the sight of the bear, though, it slowed its descent. It hovered, great wings flapping, and glared down at the defenders in anger and confusion. The griffin dove again, but pulled up at the last moment and retreated to the crimson sky.

Cingris patted the bear's motley hide. "Safe. I can hardly believe—"

The rest was lost as the beast roared once, a bellow that shook the spire to its roots, then buried its bright silver teeth in Cingris' throat. The griffin caught the headless body that the bear tossed out of the defensive square; it toyed with the corpse for a time, but soon grew bored and let the remains of Cingris the Stout plummet into the dark sea far below. At the tiny, sullen splash, the pulsing tide ceased its call of "death" and hissed a sigh of satisfaction.

A small, high voice called out in the town square. It spoke a single word in a language not meant for human tongues, and in reply, something appeared at a second-story window in the Silver Plow. The motley bear braced itself in the narrow frame, cheerfully waved its paw, then

leaped into the night. With a soft thud, it struck the hard-packed earth before the inn. As it rose and waddled toward the little boy waiting for it with outstretched arms, the thing limped only a little. Not from the fall, but from the wound inflicted by Cingris' rowan bed frame.

Tomari took up the bear in his arms and squeezed it so tightly he hurt his own ribs. Then, pouting, he prodded the little hole in its leg with one finger. "Nana will fix that," he said. "Don't you worry."

The boy padded across the square to the Sleeping Griffin and slipped unnoticed through the open door to the taproom. He found the inn's owner counting out money for his grandmother. The man grimaced as he slid each coin across a greasy table, as if he were slicing off bits of his flesh and giving them away.

"And the coins from this should settle it," Deema said, dropping a glove onto the table. The leather was studded with silver pieces and fake gems so that it resembled, at least from a distance, the gauntlet worn by Thran's mysterious ruler.

"Not enough," Fea replied. "We don't expect the rest now, of course. So you'll pay us this much—" she indicated half the heap of coins before her "—on each full moon."

Deema cursed and spat on the filthy floor. "If anything, I should be getting something back to pay for my new sign. Those things aren't cheap, you know."

"Had you done as I asked and found out about the man's bed, we all would have been spared some expense," Fea said as she gathered up the money. She tapped each coin lightly against her bracelet before dropping it into a velvet-lined chest, listening for the sour note that would reveal a counterfeit. All the while, she continued to explain how the ancient blessing on the wood had kept out the dream-stalker and had almost been strong enough to spoil their second sending, even though the talisman had been carried into the bed by Cingris himself. "I want you to get that bed frame," she said at last. "You can make it part of your next payment to me."

"Fine. I'll wait until the town lynches that ward of his for the murder and take it then."

A coin slipped from Fea's fingers and clattered to the floor. "Do not rely upon that," she said. "That young man has another, more terrible fate in store for him." She tried to shake off her discomfort, but the topic clearly bothered her. "A few silver will be enough to gain the bed. He'll need money now that his guardian is gone. Beyond that, I do not want him involved in our business."

"Fair enough," Deema said. "I'll buy the bed. Will that settle things?"

"The fee is not negotiable," Fea growled. She swiped her hand across the tabletop, sliding the rest of the coins into the chest. Only the false gauntlet remained on the oak plank between them.

"Perhaps we can bring this dispute before Lord Ebonacht. Ask him to settle it, then. I'm certain he would be interested in hearing how you impersonated him in order to frighten Cingris into visiting our camp."

"At your direction!" Deema shot to his feet. A nasty-looking knife appeared in his hand and thudded into the table, pinning the glove, before Fea even had a chance to react. "I've run this same game on rubes myself, so spare me the demonstration. You want to play power against power? The mayor will happily call Ebonacht's men to escort us all to the manor for an audience. I don't know what the laws say about play-acting, but I do know what they say about sorcery."

"Scuse me," Tomari said softly. When Deema turned to the little boy, he saw only a vague form in the darkness. "You have a little girl," the shadowy figure continued. "You don't keep her with you, but you send her and her mum money."

"How did—?" The gambler flashed a look at the tinker matriarch, searching for some sign that this was just another move in the game, but Fea was staring at the child. She obviously hadn't heard him come in either. And her face was pale, her hands clasped together so tightly that the knuckles had gone white.

Deema turned back to Tomari, but the child was gone. He peered around the large room, but could see no sign of him. He listened for the telltale creak of a floorboard, the sound of a footfall, but heard only the sputtering of the lone candle on a nearby table and a strange whispering, as of many soft voices speaking at once, coming from the darkest, most shadow-draped corner. The whispering stopped abruptly, and Tomari spoke from that same corner. "It's a secret. Nobody else knows the money comes from you—not even them. That's nice of you."

Tomari emerged from the darkness, passing in front of the open front door just as the clouds parted above the square and a shaft of moonlight burst into the room. "Maybe she'd like this," the boy said. Before him he held the tattered bear, every one of its blood-flecked silver teeth flashing in the ghostly light.

Deema didn't manage a reply, merely shook his head and retreated up the stairs. Fea smiled her gratitude to her grandson, but when he came close, she couldn't quite bring herself to pat him on the head. Instead, she busied her hands with the leather straps she

A nasty-looking knife appeared in his hand and thudded into the table, pinning the glove, before Fea even had a chance to react.

needed to secure the chest of coins to her back for the long walk home.

For his part, Tomari waited patiently for his nana to be ready, passing the time by hugging his bear and reassuring it that its hurt would be mended soon. He missed the ragged thing when they were apart, and slept better when it was by his side at night. For the little boy knew that terrors really did lurk under your bed, and they always had bloodier claws than the ones you imagined. He knew that there were things in the darkness, creatures far more monstrous than the winter-starved wolves or even the goblins and walking dead that stalked the unwary.

It never occurred to Tomari that there was a reason these terrors did not threaten him, a reason they confessed their foul deeds and shared their secrets, whispering endlessly to him in lightless corners and lost woods. He never realized that they discerned the one thing he did not—that he, of all the dark things on the Isle of Thran, was among the very worst.



Role of History

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William de Sonnac

and the knights templar

by **andrew hind**

illustrated by **BART SELBIG**

The Crusades represent one of the most intriguing and exciting eras in the history of the world. One of the most appealing of the nine Crusades launched to free the Holy Land from Muslim control was the 7th, from 1248-54. This has something to do with our continued fascination with the ancient land of Egypt, where most of the campaigning took place, but also because of the colorful characters involved in this drama...Louis IX, king of France and future saint; historian and knight Jean de Joinville; Pope Innocent IV, who was at the time also fighting a war against Frederick II of the Holy Roman Empire; and William de Sonnac, Grand Master of the Knights Templar. This last man is of particular importance, for no study of the 7th Crusade, or any other for that matter, would be complete without a look the Templars themselves.

This article takes a look at the Knights Templar, more properly known as The Poor Knights of the Temple of Solomon, and William de Sonnac, the Grand Master in the all important years building up to the Crusade and the first few campaigning seasons. For this we travel back to Paris in the year 1248, the city that is quite literally the heart of the Templar Order and the upcoming Crusade.

William de Sonnac,
grand master of the knights templar 1247-50

Background

Born a nobleman's son somewhere around the dawn of the 13th century, little is known of William de Sonnac's early life, though he may have served in the Anglo-French War of 1213-14 as a squire. If so, he would undoubtedly have been born no later than 1195, since a lad was typically around 20 before he was made a squire. Assuming William did indeed fight in the war, he would have earned much early experience and may well have been present at the crushing French victory over the English allies at Bouvines (July 27, 1214).

The fact that he was accepted into the Poor Knights of the Temple of Solomon suggests that his family was well connected and fairly prominent. But merely having title and influence was not enough to ensure acceptance; after all, the future King Phillip of France was turned down in his youth. Instead, many knights were related to one another - if only tenuously - by a complex web of family connections. And of course, one had to exhibit the greatest degree of piety.

William was duly accepted into the august order, and rose fairly rapidly through the ranks. He was, by all accounts, an able administrator, which was valued by the Templars almost as much as battlefield prowess. This was demonstrated by his election at the

hands of brother knights to the position of Grand Master in 1247. It was a turbulent time for the order and indeed for all of France.

Muslims from Turkey and Egypt had captured Jerusalem in 1244, prompting French King Louis IX to call for a new Crusade against Egypt. The venture was supported by Pope Innocent IV, and hence the Templars themselves. De Sonnac was prominent in the planning of the new Crusade, using the Order's wealth and organizational assets to procure supplies, arrange transport, hire mercenaries, and convince knights from across France to answer the "Call from God". It was a monumental undertaking, but by 1249 all were ready. While the expedition was ultimately a failure, it was a result of poor battlefield performance and not due in any way due to supply difficulties.

The Grand Master died in 1250. Some suggest he had accompanied the crusader army and died, along with many other Templars, fighting among the narrow streets of Mansourah. It certainly is possible. Yet, there is no mention of de Sonnac's presence in one of our principle primary sources for the campaign, Jean de Joinville's *Histoire de St Louis*. About all we know is that William passed away while still in the position of Grand Master and that he had not been "retired" due to infirmity as were some elderly brothers.

Appearance

William is a tall and erect man, appearing younger and more vigorous than his 50+ years. He keeps his silver-white hair cropped short, and unlike most Franks, eschews facial hair. The Grand Master maintains a noble bearing at all times, yet wears nothing more pretentious than a woolen tunic covered by his white heraldic coat.

Role-playing Notes

The Grand Master is almost a living embodiment of the order and its values. He is strict yet just, and is noted for his slavish adherence to the Templar Code and the Bible. Obedience is a fundamental pavestone of the order, and William believes strongly in maintaining the strict hierarchy under which it has operated for the last century. He demands absolute obedience to his will, and humors no dissention. Likewise, he willingly serves the Pope and God's Will.

De Sonnac is slightly arrogant due to the immense power he wields, and while never rude, comes across as aloof and superior. The Grand Master maintains an occasionally cool relationship with King Louis IX. True, they are united in feverish devotion to God and to the upcoming crusade against the infidels, yet William makes it clear he views himself as an equal partner in the undertaking.

Further, he ruthlessly and tirelessly follows his own agenda, while doing so often leaving Louis in the dark as to his objectives. While William respects Louis' piety, it is telling that despite the king's noted devotion to God and his determination to restore the Holy Land, he has never been invited to join the Templars nor made privy to its knowledge. In some crucial way, Louis is lacking.

william de sonnac

Male Human, 8th level Paladin, 10th level Templar

Strength 12 (+1)	Fort. Save +17
Dexterity 10	Ref. Save +7
Constitution 14 (+2)	Will Save +14
Intelligence 10	Alignment LN
Wisdom 16 (+3)	Speed 30ft
Charisma 14 (+2)	Size M (5'9")

Hit Points 138	Armor Class 17
Melee Attacks +19/+14/+9/+4	Ranged Attacks +18

Special Attacks: Smite Chaos, Smite Evil

Special Qualities: Arcana, Aura of Courage, Detect Evil, Direct Others, Divine Grace, Divine Health, Greater Lore, Immunity, Lay on Hands, Remove Disease 2/week, Resource Access, Secret Combination, Special Mount, Strength of Will, True Lore, Turn Undead.

Skills: Concentration +4, Decipher Script +3, Diplomacy +6, Intimidate +2, Knowledge (Religion) +9, Knowledge (Arcana) +6, Ride +7, Sense Motive +3, Use Magic Device +2.

Feats: Alertness, Extend Spell, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Mounted Combat, Spirited Charge, Still Spell, Trample.

Spells: 2 first level Divine spells, typically Protection from Chaos and Shield of Faith

Possessions: Large Shield, Chainmail, Lance, Battleaxe, Templar Coat, Heart of Saint Aaron, other trappings at the discretion of the GM. *[Note that in a high fantasy campaign, William de Sonnac would likely have numerous magic items]*



templar coat

The white Templar tunic has more than just symbolic significance. Indeed, they are holy items in their own right. Once per day, wearers can cast the 0-level divine spell guidance. These tunics are never sold, and any lost will be doggedly pursued.

heart of saint aaron

Aaron and Julius were a pair of Roman Legionnaires reputedly executed in 304 AD at Caerlion-on-Usk in Monmouthshire, Britain for practicing Christianity. While their burial site has never been located, William de Sonnac carries what is believed to be the heart of Aaron. It is kept in a polished

wooden case, carved in the shape of a heart and only marginally larger than the organ it contains. Any one opening the case will find Aaron's heart perfectly preserved, as if it were only extracted from its body a few days before. It acts as a permanent Protection from Chaos, and once per week it may be used to cast a Magic Circle against Chaos as if invoked by a 5th level Cleric. There is reputed to be a similar relic of St. Julius somewhere in existence, with identical powers. As befitting two companions of such remarkable solidarity, their relics become even more powerful if brought together. The effects of the Protection from Chaos are cumulative, and the Magic Circle against Chaos is cast as if by a 10th level priest, usable twice per week. Finally, once per week a Shield of Law spell may be cast, as if by a 15th level cleric.

Adventure Ideas for William de Sonnac and the Knights Templar

1. A band of pilgrims get lost en route to Jerusalem. This particular group includes a wealthy and influential Italian noblewoman from Siena. William de Sonnac sends out a search party; if the noblewoman is brought to safety, the Order can expect a monetary donation or influential contact in return. Perhaps as important, de Sonnac has been having visions that greatly disturb him. He believes the woman is pregnant, and that her child is destined to do great things in the name of Christ. Naturally, therefore, he wants to ensure the safety of the noble and her unborn child.

The woman is actually being held at a secret Venetian base on an island in the Aegean, while most of the other pilgrims have been sold to the Saracens as slaves. Venice wants dominance of all trade to Constantinople and the Crusader States, and is holding the woman in an attempt to force her husband to renounce his trading agreements in the east and to sell his assets in Constantinople to them at a cut-rate price. Naturally, both sides are keeping this affair quiet.

For those interested, the unborn child will later be Saint Alda, a woman who devoted her life to alms deeds and tended the poor and diseased in a hospital in Siena.

2. The Order agrees to transport a significant sum of gold from Bohemia to Portugal. This gold represents the repayment of a loan extended by the king of Portugal to the states of Eastern Europe to defend against the Mongol Invasions of 1237-42, which threatened to overwhelm the continent. The PCs must guard the caravan, which is especially tricky as it must travel through the Holy Roman Empire, currently at war with the Pope and greatly destabilized by papal inspired rebellion and a pretender king nominated by Pope Innocent IV to replace the excommunicated Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II. The forces of the false king, who has very little support in the Empire and desperately needs the gold to hire mercenaries to continue the fight, may attack the caravan. The PCs may also have to negotiate passage through the region with Frederick himself. This will not be easy, as the Templars are servants of the Pope and are therefore essentially his enemy.

3. A Parisian merchant has not repaid a loan to the Templars, and the PCs are asked to collect the fee. This task might involve a slow escalation of rational discussion, to terrorizing the debtor's assets, to forcibly capturing the merchant and bringing him to the local Justicar of the Order. While the task may be a bit unsavory, the heroes have no choice but to comply, because obedience is one of the most important underlying tenets of the order. Those who refuse will be harshly punished.

The idea of this adventure is to give a hint of the Templar's occasionally less than exemplary reputation.

4. William de Sonnac has his agents scouring all over France, and indeed Europe, to locate holy artifacts that might be of service in the coming Crusade. He sends the heroes to Britain in search of the Heart of St. Julius. Investigation leads them to the tiny village of Renwick in Cumbria, a lonely and isolated settlement on a desolate stretch of wild moor known as "Fiends Fell". The relic can be found in a secret chamber beneath the church, along with a Satanic guardian - a cockatrice - designed to ward off those who would attempt to recover the relic. The adventure should tempt the players into the dark world of the occult, either while investigating various leads or perhaps they acquire some forgotten lore alongside the relic that promises great power. At the end a question remains: was this

lore left behind by the Devil to seduce the servants of God who may come looking for the Heart of St. Julius?

As a side note, the cockatrice is not permanently slain by the PCs, for it is encountered again in 1733 when workers were rebuilding the then decrepit church. It was killed permanently by John Tallantire, a brave soul who slew the beast by stabbing it through the heart with a rowan tree, which according to the English Folklore is the only known way to kill a cockatrice.

the poor knights of the temple of solomon

Rise to Power

One of the premier fighting forces in medieval Europe, the Knights Templar were founded by Hugh de Payens and 8 companions, all linked by a complex web of family relationships in 1118. Their stated goal was to protect pilgrims on the roads to the Holy Land. To that end, King Baldwin of Jerusalem gave them part of the Royal Palace on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem as their HQ.

Yet close scrutiny of their early activities cast some doubt as the validity of the orders' goals. One must surely ask how a mere nine knights would make the pilgrim routes any safer. Indeed, they initially made no effort even try. For a full nine years immediately following their founding the knights did not venture forth from their fortress, nor did they let anyone in. One can only quest as to why, but popular legend, supported by 19th century archaeological studies, suggests they were looking for Ark of the Covenant. They may also have been looking for other divine artifacts (Holy Grail, Staff of Aaron, etc.) or sacred scrolls containing knowledge of obscure sciences and arts.

Many believe they must have found something of incredible value, as in 1128 the order suddenly began to expand in size and wealth. The transformation was so dramatic that by the middle of century, the Knights Templar were the most powerful and wealthiest institution in Christendom, besides the Papacy.

The Templars caught the imagination of Bernard of Clairvaux, one of the most influential priests of the time. It was he who was responsible for drawing up a monastic set of rules for the order, and for securing papal recognition. The knights hated frivolities and vanities, taking vows of poverty, celibacy, and obedience. Underlying their existence was the oath to defend the Holy Land from all infidels. Knights could never display wealth, must sleep as monks in communal dormitories, and meals had to be taken in silence so as to not miss a word of the sacred readings. They also vowed to fight non-Christians regardless of the odds, refused to be ransomed if captured (this was largely a moot point, as captured Templars were invariably beheaded by the Saracens), never retreated unless so ordered, and were prepared to die for the Christian cause if necessary.

The Templars became vital to the defense of the Crusader states, with their heavily fortified castles commanding the most important roads and frontier areas. Amazingly, there were never more than 400-600 of them in the Holy Land at any one time, and putting this entire force into the field would have left the castles dangerously undefended. While the knights were obviously the core of the Templar army, there were other forces at their disposal. These included sergeants, mounted soldiers similarly armed as knights but without noble heritage; some 1,000 Turcopoles, locally recruited troops, often armed with bows; and often-sizeable mercenary contingents. In addition, the Templars had hundreds of retainers,

who could in emergencies be used to augment the garrisons as a kind of levee en masse.

Despite the vows of individual poverty, the Knights Templar as an organization was extremely wealthy. They maintained an international network of chapter houses that stretched their influence far beyond the orders traditional power bases in France, Provence, and Languedoc. These chapter houses brought in vast sums of money in the form of donations, which was used to finance numerous acquisitions—farms, vineyards, quarries, mines, and other economic enterprises. Major landholders, the order owned vast parcels of land across France, England, Spain, and Portugal from which revenue was collected in the form of taxes.

They also invested their wealth in shipping, forming one of the largest fleets in Europe. While their vessels were originally constructed to ship men and supplies to their garrisons in the Holy Land, they were soon put to commercial use as well, cashed in on continuous pilgrim trade and carried exports back to the West. The Templars maintained naval bases in Italy, France, Spain, and Holy Land. Their main anchorage in the Mediterranean was on the island of Majorca, while the primary establishment on the Atlantic was the French city of La Rochelle. Some suggest that ships operating from the latter port traded with Greenland, Mexico and North America.

Expanding beyond simple industry and commerce, the Knights Templar began trading in information: astronomy, herbalism, medicine, the arts and so forth. Finally, as an international organization experienced in handling vast sums of currency, the Templars moved into banking and became treasurers of the French kings. Soon, England, Spain, and others owed vast sums, and the knights charged exorbitant interest rates of up to 60% per year. The knights developed sophisticated banking techniques that revolutionized commerce, as well as coded and sophisticated means of communication that were reputed to be unbreakable.

In a very real sense, they were a medieval multinational corporation, and a very successful one at that. By the middle of the 13th century, the "Poor Knights of the Temple of Solomon" were wealthier than most kings, and were certainly more financially astute.

Downfall

The truth of the matter as, this incredible wealth and influence did not come without a price. The knights became fiercely competitive, especially with other knightly orders, and sometimes pursued selfish aims that brought them into conflict with the King and their vassals. William of Tyre noted: "they have taken away tithes and first fruits from the church, have disturbed its possessions and have made themselves exceedingly troublesome". As their wealth grew, so too did resentment toward them.

Answerable only to the Pope, they became a law unto themselves. Their presence in a country often brought instability as they clashed with secular leaders. This was especially so in France, where the Templars were most solidly entrenched. Indeed, a Grand Master once threatened a French King with excommunication and suggested he may be removed from his throne. Such behavior was not likely to endear them to many people, nor would their suspected battlefield reputation. One episode stands out as a symbol of the destructive influence the Templars wielded. At the crusader and Saracen armies converged before the Battle of Hattin in 1187, the Europeans found themselves vastly outnumbered and in an untenable tactical position. Raymond of Tripoli thought to withdraw to a more suitable battlefield, but the Master of the Temple instead goaded him to advance, cursing him for a coward and a Saracen

sympathizer, and threatened to have the Pope remove him from power if he did not. Unfortunately for Raymond, he found himself swayed into advancing. The result was a crippling defeat.

It is no surprise then that the secular heads of Europe began to resent the "Poor Knights", and began to cast covetous eyes on their substantial wealth and holdings. Foremost among these malcontents was King Philip of France. His coffers empty from wars against England and Aragon, Philip owed a substantial fortune to the Templars and struggled to pay off the interest in a climate of economic depression. The burden of the loan was literally driving the nation to its knees, yet the knights continued to prosper. Philip had further reason for hating the Templars, as his application to join the order was rejected while he was a youth. Finally, there was talk that they plotted to create a nation of their own, carved from French territory. In short, Philip both feared and hated the Knights Templar.

In 1306, a crazed Parisian mob forced King Philip to take refuge with the Templars. During this time, he saw the incredible fortune the knights had acquired, and a greedy plan formed in his mind. With the Crusades over, the greatest fighting force in the West was redundant, and he recognized the threat they posed to his authority and to the nations well being. Furthermore, the wealth of the Templars would solve his financial woes over night.

In 1307, in a rash of surprising arrests that flaunted Papal authority, the order of the Poor Knights of the Temple of Solomon was smashed. The knights were accused of homosexuality, spitting on the cross, worshipping devils, and denying Christ. One piece of evidence used against them was the reverence to the iconography of a Black Madonna and Child. This unorthodox take on Catholic doctrine was linked to ancient Egyptian mythology where the color black symbolized wisdom, and it was surmised that the Templars may have actually been worshipping a disguised form of Isis and the Horus child. Others claimed they held initiations and rituals before a statue of Baphomet. In other words, they were decried as heretics at best, Satanic worshippers at worst.

Hundreds were subsequently tortured and put to death, though 100 or so escaped, either to Spain or perhaps Norway or Scotland. With them reputedly went vast amounts of the Templar treasure, including their holy relics. The order did not die, but rather went underground, evolving into an illuminati organization that exists to this day.

Punishment

The punishment for typical transgressions provides a remarkable insight into the ideals of the order itself. As the benefits of membership are so advantageous, PC Templars should be treated harshly should they break these tenets.

Crime: fight with brother knight, lose or murder a slave, kill a pack animal or lose a horse due to neglect, tell untruths about themselves, have sexual relations with a woman, threaten to join Saracens, leave commandery at night in anger, throw the templar coat to the ground in anger, loaning assets of the order without permission.

Punishment: A knight loses his coat, essentially meaning he is dishonored and disavowed. His weapon, white templar coat, and horse are taken away. The knight must eat off of floor, perform menial tasks, and is isolated from his brethren lest his presence insult them.

Crime: murder a Christian, divulge secrets, perform an act of sodomy, heresy, make false charges against a brother, flee the enemy while the banner flies or without permission

Punishment: Expulsion, often being sent to Cistercian order to save his soul through penitence.

Trappings of the Knight Templar

Perhaps the most important possession that a Templar had was his heraldic coat, a simple white tunic emblazoned with a large black cross. It symbolized his commitment to God and to his brothers, and was treated with the utmost of respect and care - like one would a flag or unit standard.

His horse was similarly vital to his sense of being. A knight was nothing but a heavily armored infantryman without his horse, and their mounts were key to battlefield success. This is reflected in the draconian penalties for abusing or losing horses. The horse itself was rarely the cumbersome destrier of chivalry, but a much lighter stock of horse, possibly Andalusian. As well, they were not heavily armored. This is a reflection of the influence Middle-Eastern experiences had on the order as a whole, where mobility was vital.

Knights Templar wore three quarter length chain mail shirts that hung down to their knees, as well as perhaps chain mail leggings. This armor was usually worn over leather jerkins, and under the white cloth surcoat. Helmets were of Norman style, pot or conical shaped with nasal guards extending down the bridge of the nose, worn over a mail coif. They carried a lance, as well as a sword, axe or mace.

The Grand Master

The supreme commander of the Knights Templar, the Grand Master was a military, economic and theological leader for his brother knights. In truth, he was one of the most powerful men in Europe, answerable only to Pope and dealt with kings on an equal footing. It bears noting that this all took place in an age where religion was of paramount importance, and most rulers at least nominally recognized the suzerainty of the Pope. In this light, it becomes easy to see why it was so difficult for a secular leader to oppose the will of the Templars.

While ostensibly the knights took a vow of poverty and humility, the Grand Master enjoyed several perks as a result of his station. He had three horses, and always got first choice in selecting a mount any time new horses became available. His entourage included a chaplain, two knights to serve as bodyguards, a clerk, a servant to carry his shield and lance, a personal farrier, advisors, a Saracen scribe to act as interpreter, cooks, servants to harness and care for his horse, other servants to provision the household and guards for his personal chambers. In addition, while on campaign, he may have selected a further ten knights to act as his personal escort.

Grand Masters were elected from amongst the ranks by a council consisting of 12 knights and a chaplain, representing the 12 apostles and Christ. To prevent campaigning or intrigue for the position, the vote was kept secret and the council members selected in a unique fashion---two knights picked two more knights, who in turn picked two more, and so on until there were the necessary twelve members. The result was the most respected and capable man was elevated to the all-important post, which was his for life or until infirmity prevented his sound functioning.

heavily of rangers and rogues. Also, the Grand Master has an extensive spy network that would welcome capable rogues. Keep in mind as well that there are many clerics in the order fulfilling their traditional roles as priests. Finally, mercenaries (ie "adventurers") may be hired by Templar officials to perform a variety of tasks. Truth be told, only a small fraction of order members, perhaps no more than a fifth, were knights. This elite, however, have all the wealth and power, and are the only ones privy to the orders secrets.

Requirements

To become a member of the Poor Knights of the Temple of Solomon, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria:

Alignment: Any Lawful

Race: Human only

Base Attack Bonus: 6 Ranks

Diplomacy: 3 Ranks

Knowledge (Religion): 6 Ranks

Ride: 6 Ranks

Feats: Armor Proficiency (Medium), Mounted Combat

Spellcasting: Ability to cast 1st level Divine Spells

Special: Characters who might fulfill all the above requirements might yet find their application rejected, as did King Philip. It is a mystery as to the exact nature by which individuals were selected to join the Templars, though certainly relationships played a vital part in the process. As a result, it is best left up to the individual GM to decide whether a player is accepted into the ranks.

Class Features

Smite Chaos: Once a day, a Templar may attempt to smite chaos with one normal melee attack. He adds his Intelligence modifier (if positive) to his attack roll and deals one extra point of damage per class level. Smite Evil is a supernatural ability.

Strength of Will: Immunity to magic daze and confusion spells or effects and a +2 saving throw bonus against Enchantment spells or effects.

Resource Access: At 2nd level, the knight may request access to the Templars resources for individual missions. The maximum value of the supplies assigned to the character at any given time is equal to his class level + Charisma modifier x 100 gp. Thus, a 5th level knight with a Charisma of 12 could have up to 600 gp worth of supplies assigned to him at any given time.

Direct Others: By directing the actions of others, a knight can increase their chances of success. This requires a Diplomacy check (DC 10 + the number of allies to be assisted) and a full-round action. A success grants a competence bonus on all his allies' skill checks or attack roles for one task. The bonus is equal to the

prestige class knights templar

Most individuals who are blessed enough to become Knights Templar are paladins or clerics, though with effort and exemplary ability some fighters have been accepted. This is not to say, however, that there is only room for these select classes in the order. Most sergeants are fighters, and the local turcopole troops are composed

class skills

Skill Points at each level: 2 + Int modifier

The Knights Templar's class skills (and key ability for each skill) are: Alchemy, Appraise, Concentration, Decipher Script, Diplomacy, Handle Animal, Heal, Intimidate, Knowledge (Any), Ride, Sense Motive, Speak, Spot, Use Magic Device.

knights templar

hit die
1d10

Class Level	Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Rank	Special
1st	+1	+2	+0	+2	Brother Knight	Smite Chaos, Strength of Will
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+3		Resource Access
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+3	Commander of Knights	Direct Others, Influence
4th	+4	+4	+1	+4		Secret Combination
5th	+5	+4	+1	+4	House Commander	Arcana
6th	+6	+5	+2	+5		
7th	+7	+5	+2	+5	Provincial Commander	Arcana
8th	+8	+6	+2	+6	Commander of Kingdom of Jerusalem	Greater Lore
9th	+9	+6	+3	+6	Seneschal	Arcana
10th	+10	+7	+3	+7	GrandMaster	True Lore, Immunity

characters' Charisma bonus. All allies must be within sight and voice range, and must be able to understand him.

Influence: At 3rd level, and other level thereafter, the Knight gets a +1 bonus to Diplomacy rolls in relation to those who recognize the supremacy of the Pope. This encompasses all Roman Catholics, and therefore most of Western Europe.

Secret Combination: Protected by secret signs and ritual, a Templar of 4th level or higher applies his Intelligence modifier (if positive) to all saves. Note that Secret Combination is a biblical term for magical power.

Arcana: The Knights Templar have accumulated all sorts of knowledge and secrets. At 5th level, and every two levels thereafter, the knight chooses one secret from table 2-15 from Core Book II. His intelligence modifier helps determine which secrets he can choose from.

Greater Lore: At 8th level, a knight gets the ability to identify magic items, as per the spell, as an extraordinary ability. He may do this once per item examined.

True Lore: At 10th level, once per day a Grand Master can use his knowledge to gain the effects of a legend lore spell or analyze dweomer spell. True Lore is an extraordinary ability.

Immunity: A Grand Master fears persecution from no earthly master, save the Pope. Few kings will even cross the Grand Master overtly. The GM should role-play these exchanges out carefully, but unless the Grand Master truly abuses his position, at which time the Pope may play his hand, he should be treated as the powerful individual he is. While these exchanges should not come down to dice rolling, the character does get a +4 synergy bonus to all Diplomacy checks involving those

who accept the theological supremacy of the Pope (i.e., all Roman Catholics). This bonus is in addition to the cumulative Influence bonus the character will have received.



FAMOUS LAST WORDS

IN THE MIDST OF BATTLE, THE GREAT WIZARD PUSNERT SUMMONED TWO AIR ELEMENTALS, THEN SHOUTED A PUN AT HIS ENEMIES. THE ELEMENTALS, ANNOYED BY THE PUN, PROMPTLY COMMITTED SUMMONER-CIDE.

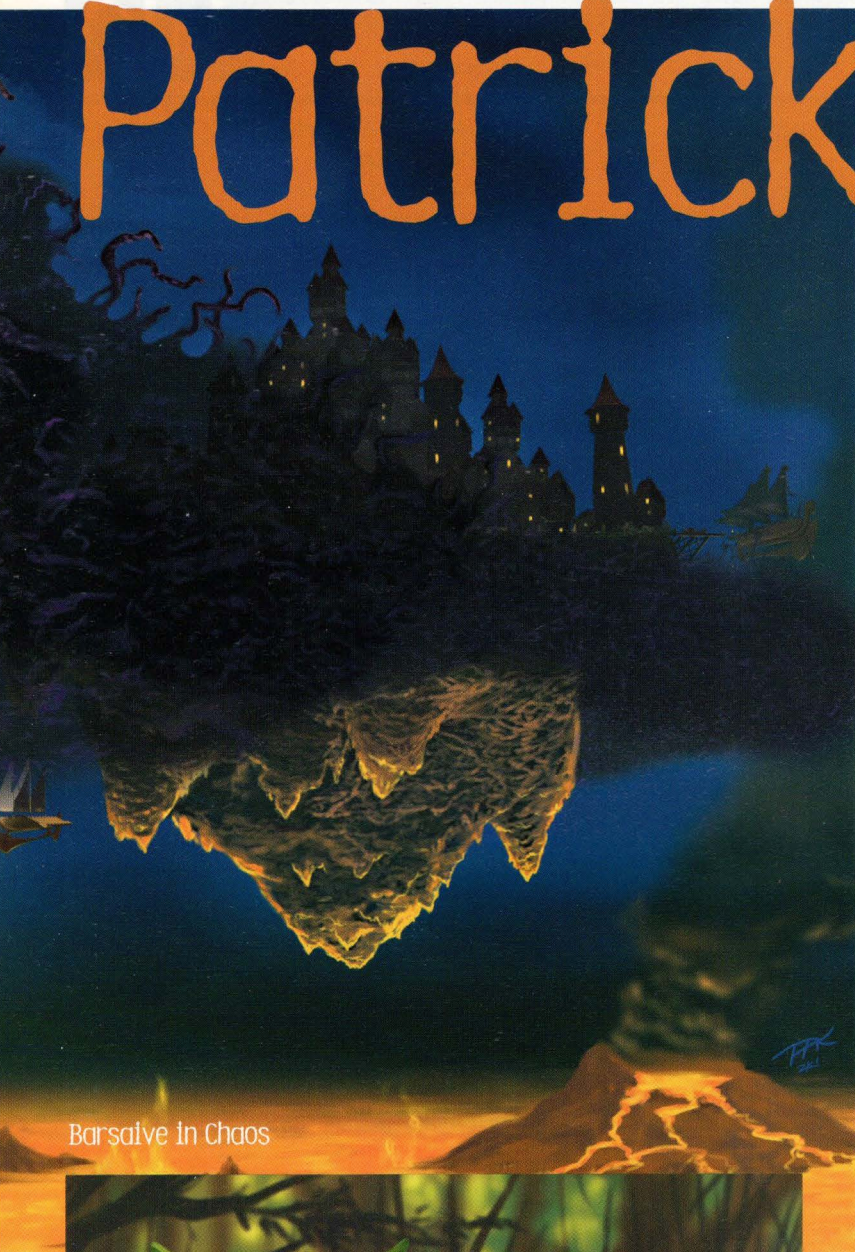


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Frameworks

Patrick

Keith



Barsalve In Chaos



Goblins

This volume's Frameworks subject is Patrick Keith. Patrick has been involved with Gaming Frontiers since its inception. Morning Perch, originally slated to grace our Free Preview, landed on the cover of Volume 1. Here we have a beautiful art gallery showing Patrick's many styles and abilities. And beginning in Volume 3 we will offer the first installment of a continuing serial of his comic book *Ernor* (www.ernor.com) available through Mprints Publishing. Enjoy the following Q&A which proves to be enlightening for both the beginning and veteran artist.

Frameworks



GF: What inspires you to do a particular piece? Do you just let an image come out as the piece progresses or do you start work with a finished image in mind?

PK: Mostly I have a pretty defined idea of what I want before I begin on a piece. Work that I've done for book covers goes through a process and has to be approved along the way. Most of the time art directors have a specific idea of what they want and the goal is to produce not only an image you will personally be happy with but something that will make them happy and fit their product. It's actually pretty good when they have at least a general guideline because it gives me an immediate frame of reference and jumping off point. Generally I'll start with a few small sketches, maybe black and white, maybe color and submit those to the art director. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. Once I do a few thumbnail images, I usually email those off to the art director so that they also have a clear idea of what I'll be doing and can make any suggestions or additions before the actual work begins.

For personal pieces, I rarely begin something if I only have a general idea for it, but it really depends on the individual piece. When I don't have a clear idea for something I will surf around on the internet or look in books or magazines to see what's been done already, not really to copy anything but to avoid duplicating something else or to try and fill a niche that hadn't been covered yet by someone else. Mostly my personal works are exercises in techniques so sometimes an idea will come from that, can I paint a castle or horse, or whatever? Then it will develop from there. The problem is, I usually procrastinate on something until I have a really, really clear idea for it. Otherwise, I will get to a certain point and then not really know where to go after that, then the piece will ultimately fall into the vast black vortex of uncompleted projects.

Also, I hate distractions! I have a short enough attention span as it is, so usually I'll assemble all my references and sketches and figure out what I want to do ahead of time. I also work for long hours at a stretch on things too because a lot of time if I have to come back to a project after too long I feel I lose impetus and spontaneity. That's probably the main reason I don't work in oils.

Inspiration comes from the strangest places, though. Sometimes I'll get an idea from a TV commercial, from reading a piece of fiction or even seeing something on the Discovery channel! Generally I start cooking on ideas when inspired by other people's work. I like seeing a lot of stuff and kind of like to put my own spin on it. Flipping through any volume of Spectrum will either make you feel really, really inspired or really, really depressed!

GF: Do you work with models of any kind? (Live or static)

PK: I've worked some from photos but have not worked with any live models yet. A couple of things came from rendering a figure as a sketch from 3D modeling software and then painting directly over that in Photoshop. It just depends on the image. Since I do a lot of dragons there's not a lot of "real life" reference for that aside from photos of crocs, snakes and lizards. My dragons wind up being a type of amalgamation of things that give them a bit of a presence.

I wouldn't mind taking some life drawing classes to hone my figure drawing skills. If I was commissioned to do a piece where the figure reference was important and the budget allowed for it I definitely would work from models.

GF: What type of medium do you prefer to work in? (Canvas type, paints, brushes, airbrush, digital; be as detailed as you want to be.)

PK: Well I've got a little bit of experience with a lot of different media. I started in middle school experimenting with colored pencil and airbrush, eventually doing a lot of freelance stuff in high school painting t-shirts, guitars, pretty much anything I could get. Most of the stuff I know how to do I've researched from books and experimented with on my own. If I find something I like, I will usually try it on my own to see if I can accomplish something I've never done before.

I like sculpting quite a bit and used to do a lot of that when I was younger. Unfortunately none of the pieces survived. I've tried my hand at doing a couple of gaming figures but never stuck with it enough to develop any real skill. I also enjoy modeling and making scenery for games like Warhammer and have scratchbuilt things from castles to spaceships.

I have a great deal of admiration for watercolor. That is a medium I have never been able to get a grasp on and may break it out again just to challenge myself. Anyone who can create great watercolor I have a great deal of respect for because it's such an unforgiving medium. If you put a color down, you'd better be sure of what it is and where you want it to go, there's no repainting unless you want to wind up with a colossal mess.

I've never been really happy with any of the traditional media work I've done in the past, being my own worst critic, and it wasn't until I started coloring the covers for our comic series in '99 that I really got into digital art. After doing a lot of looking online for different techniques I finally started doing all digital pieces and found it to be my favorite medium. There's no waiting for it to dry



and I don't have to wash up a bunch of materials afterwards. It is extremely useful when doing work for print output. I can work up my sketches and comps digitally and email them for approval right away. Working in multiple layers in Photoshop I can easily make changes and adjustments to make the piece print friendly. Plus, now that I have my new iBook, I have a completely portable art studio and can work almost anywhere.

GF: What are some of the specific tools you use (brush/pen/paint manufacturers, brush/pen sizes, software programs and versions)?

PK: When I paint with acrylic it has to be Liquitex, the colors are lightfast and will not fade for centuries, they are incredibly engineered paints. I've experimented a bit with the new Winsor & Newton water-based oils which are fantastic, but I still have a hard time waiting for oils to dry. I did a few things with gouache, which was fun, but again, it's a watercolor thing and requires some skill. I've also painted on canvas, illustration board, watercolor paper and masonite panels primed with gesso. I just haven't settled on anything I like as much as digital.

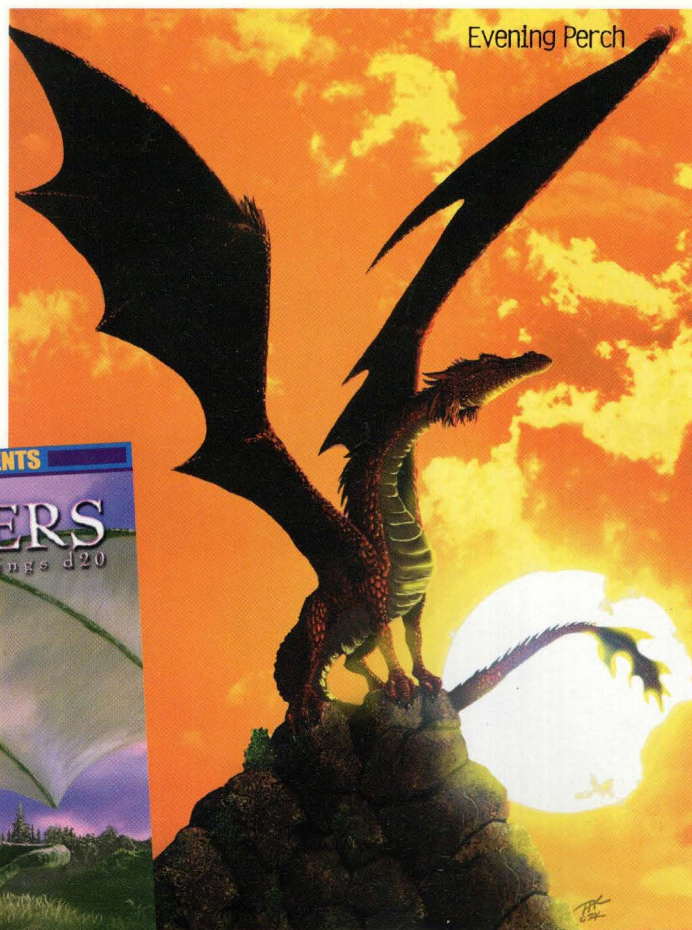
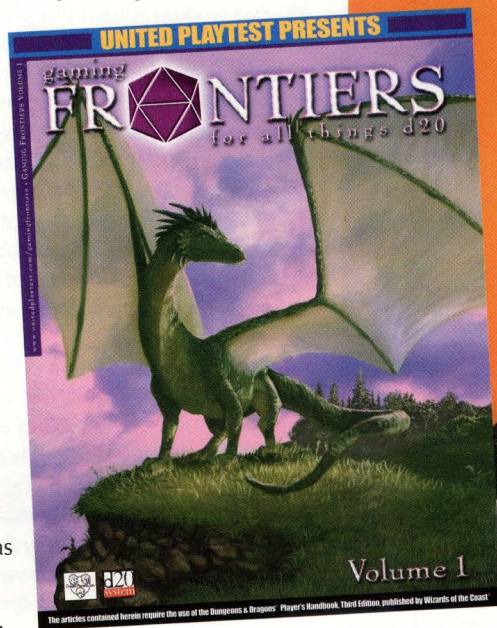
I learned early on from self-publishing that a majority of graphics and print work is done with Macintosh, so I'm sort of a Mac-fanatic. I've got a blue and white series G3 300MHz with 256 meg RAM and both 6 and 20 gig drives. I got that right when it came out and got my first tablet, the Wacom Pen Partner, shortly thereafter. That helped loads with the comic layouts. That was when I first started using Photoshop, right around the time version 5 came out, I still haven't upgraded yet either! Last October, using income mostly from commissions, I bought a 500MHz iBook and a new Wacom Graphire tablet. I also have Painter 7 but have been so busy working on other projects I haven't gotten to start learning it yet. The specs on the new iMac rock! That will be my next toy. My recommendation is, if you have to play the latest game when it comes out, you can probably put up with a PC, but if you want to do anything creative with few hardware hassles, get a Mac.

For 3D stuff, I started out using Bryce around the time that version 3 came out and have been dabbling with modeling, texturing and animation since then. I've also used PiXELS a bit. About a year ago I got a copy of Animation:Master (www.hash.com) which is an incredible 3D animation program for the price and has some fantastic features.

GF: Do you ever listen to music while you work? If so, what?

PK: Yes, when working at home I generally have the headphones on to keep out distractions. Soundtracks usually get the most spin, Conan, Aliens, The Matrix, Gladiator, but more recently Band of Brothers and Lord of the Rings. For variety I listen to classic rock, Boston, Def Leppard, Van Halen, as well as Celtic stuff from Enya, Clandestine, Gaelic Storm and Loreena McKinnett. It just depends on the mood.

GF: Do you use any other methods to "prepare" or put yourself in the right frame of mind to create?



PK: I don't have any elaborate rituals or processes other than sometimes a sudden burst of inspiration. I'm also a movie fiend and carry tons of useless trivia around in my head. Mainly films that are visually strong, lots of effects and eyecandy usually do the trick. I've stayed away from doing any Lord of the Rings stuff because a lot of artists are already doing, and have done, so much on that already. Besides, who can top Alan Lee, Bob Nasmith and Angus McBride?

GF: Morning Perch graced the cover of Gaming Frontiers Volume 1, Evening Perch appeared on the cover of a Citizen Games product. You had intended to do two other 'Perches' to complete the set. Describe them.

PK: The original Evening Perch was painted in '91 with acrylic on illustration board. The background was hideous since I had no reference and just airbrushed some colors to simulate sunset. The design was sound, but the execution was not. Almost ten years later I scanned that picture and digitally added a stock photo of the clouds as a background and repainted areas of the image. It went on my business cards and labels and was the splash page on my website. It's essentially been my self-promotional piece for the last couple of years. The first limited print run sold out and it's been really popular. A while back I took some oil paint and repainted the background to sort-of match the feel of the digital image. I will likely be taking that to the Dragon*Con art show later this year.

Morning Perch continued with the theme, and was an experiment not only in technique but also with complimentary colors. Noon Perch was to be contrast in black and white with a black dragon perched on and icy outcropping, lots of harsh shadow. Night Perch was to be possibly a blue dragon against a midnight sky, with lots of key lighting from the back. Those images are still

cooking so when I finally do them they may turn out very different from that. I may at some point like to do a calendar of dragon images with three sets of four themed dragon pieces like seasons and such. Sort of like Boris' Astrology calendars but with all dragon images.

GF: Tell us about Ennor. It's history from inception to current day. Be as brief or explicit as you like.

PK: Ennor began as two different D&D games I was running back around '94 or so. The first game was set in sort of a Renaissance period with dragons and what not and was set against a great sweeping epic like the Dragonlance stuff. Just for a little variety I kicked around the idea of doing a totally different type of game and dug into the Creative Campaigning book. That's where I developed the ockton race as a sentient pre-historic dragon character. They were very much fashioned after velociraptors and had a great primitive and stone age sense of superstition as well as a strong mythos. The campaign was centered on overcoming differences and developing racial tolerance, a favorite theme of mine.

After running several games we put that on the back burner and continued our regular campaign. Over the course of that time Vicky and I worked on a fantasy novel for the period we dubbed the Dragon Age based on characters and plotlines established in my long running campaign. I mean if Greenwood could do it, so could we, right? We got about twenty-two chapters worth done, but Vicky and I got married, jobs changed, we bought a new house and moved and other forms of life generally got in the way until we got settled again around '99.

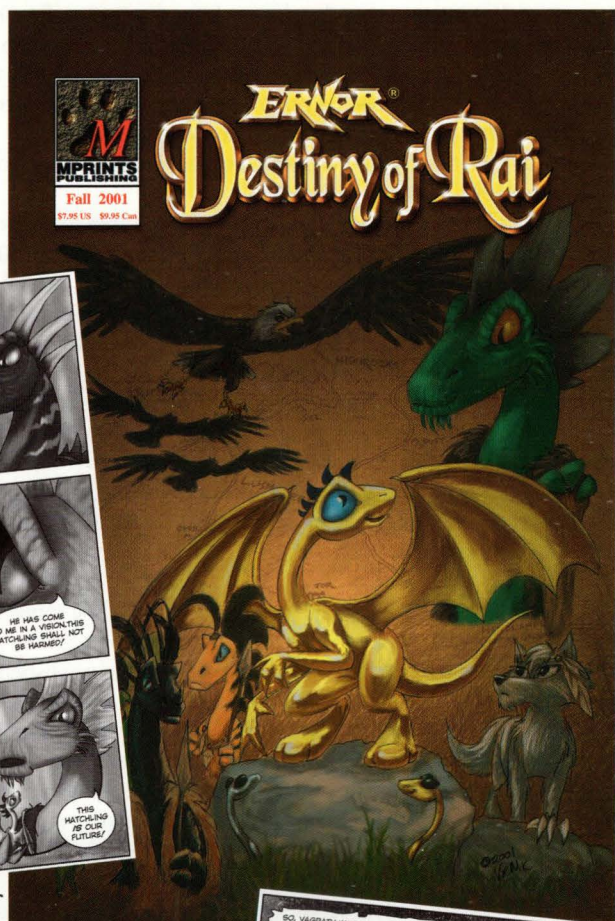
Vicky left her day job and rather than resuming work on the novel, she went to work full time at producing our first comic series. She wanted to do something with talking critters in a primitive setting. I wrote a two page short where the wolf character she developed, Whitepaw, met Hask, the ockton character she played during our early games. The wheels began to turn and over the next year we put out the six issue story bimonthly and on time. We developed an interesting workflow for the two of us and divided up the chores with both of us writing and drawing the books. I handled all the technical production of putting the books together and getting them to the printer but the creative processes were completely collaborative.

We both wrote the scripts and traded off laying out the pages. It was decided from the very beginning that Vicky do all of the characters because of the look she achieves. We wanted something that was very grounded in an animation style and would translate well to that medium. Vicky had a previous background doing some animation so it worked well.

I still wanted to tie the stories together more with the material we had already developed for the novel so we kept bouncing ideas



Ennor

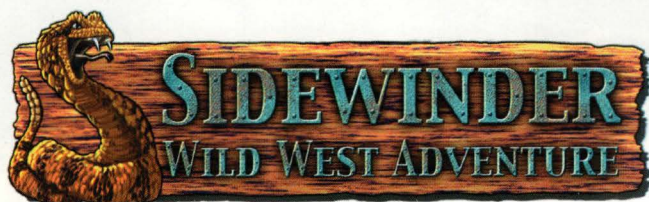
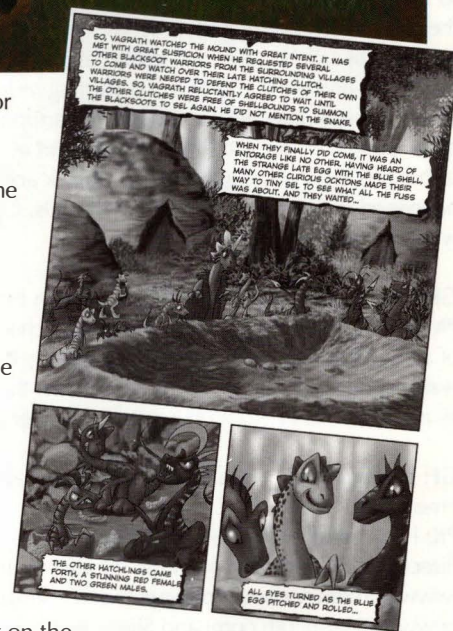


around. All of the Ennor comics take place in what we call the First Age, the time before the coming of Rai and the real dragons. So, *Destiny of Rai* is the story of a little ockton hatchling with wings and his rejection by the regular wingless ocktons. It is meant to bridge the gap between the two ages of Ennor.

I actually came up with the idea for the *Rai* story well before we began work on the first comic series. As a part of the novel, I had written these little headers that were supposed to be excerpts from lost tomes and things to add a sense of history and bits of relative background information for each chapter. That's where I started tying a lot of the First Age stuff to the Dragon Age stuff.

GF: What's in the future for Ennor?

PK: Of course we'd love to see our characters on as much stuff as *Shrek* but that remains to be seen! Vicky is currently working on an animated short, like a theatrical movie trailer with scenes from the comic series, that we can shop around to some studios and see if



anyone would be interested in developing it for theaters or TV. Our fan base has been very diverse and all of the feedback from both the series and the new graphic novel has been extremely supportive and positive. The problem has been – no one knows about it. All of our finances went into production and left little to no room for advertising and that really hurt our initial orders on the series and the graphic novel.

By expanding to a different media, we may be able to generate a wider fan base for our characters and stories. Now that the d20 rules are available as open source, we kicked around the idea of publishing the setting and characters for d20 and even have a little preview character in the *Destiny of Rai* book which would bring Ernor full circle to its initial gaming roots.

At some point work will resume on the *Dragon Age* novel and will reveal the descendants of Whitepaw, Hask, and Rai. A large chunk of that is already written as a first draft and needs some restructuring but is still pretty sound. There are lots of cool things that develop over the course of Ernor's history that I'd like to put out in one form or another.

GF: How does the comic industry compare to the gaming industry?

PK: Well first off, there are tons more distributors in the gaming realm than in comics. That tends to hurt smaller comic publishers and makes it real tough to stand out when the one main distributor stocks lots of independent comic titles. The two are very similar in terms of the self-publisher because the hurdles to overcome are almost the same. Each has its own niche market and the difficulty is getting the product in front of the largest chunk of them, even though there is a good deal of crossover fans between the two. Plus as a small publisher of comics, or games, you have to compete for the same dollar amount that the 'big' publishers are competing for and they usually have better resources for advertising.

From an art standpoint, the gaming industry is getting to be easier to break into since a lot of d20 startup companies and card game publishers are looking for quality art at a good price. My fear is that this crest will cause another "black and white crash" like happened to the comic industry in the 80s. Only time will reveal what will happen there.

GF: Have you had any formal schooling in the art field?

PK: Nah, I took a few art classes in high school but they were kind of artsy-craftsy and wasn't what I wanted to learn about so I never really continued with it. I wish I had taken the time and pursued art as a career, I feel I would be so much further along now.

GF: Have you trained under an established artist for any period of time?

PK: I don't really know any established artists, but I've gotten tons of direct and indirect help from the internet art forums like Squonky (www.gorblimey.com), Epilogue (www.epilogue.net), InDepth Arts (www.critical-depth.com) and Sijun (www.sijun.com). There are tons of professional artists that work in the comics, games, and movie industries that post on these art forums and are willing to share critique and helpful advice to other artists. Many allow you to post web sized art in the forums and get feedback and comments. A lot of that has been really useful in getting an objective opinion on some things I needed help with.

GF: What made you want to become an artist?

PK: That's an interesting question because of the way I look at it. Actually in the beginning, I sort of ran from it and now I'm trying to catch back up again. You always hear from other artists "Oh, I've drawn stuff ever since I could hold a crayon!" The same is true with

me. I essentially am an artist and always have been, only now I'm actively working towards it being a fulltime career.

After high school I decided I wanted to pursue a different path and really should have stuck with art. I took a couple of years at community college and completed a program in sound engineering. My life since that time has been a string of unsatisfying mundane jobs that really have nothing to do with creativity whatsoever. But I still keep doing art and art related things on my own. Now I am pursuing a career in art, which I should have done all along. So I feel like I've missed out on a lot of time that could've been used in formal training for an art career, but hindsight is always 20/20, right? I hear people say all the time "Oh, I wish I could paint/draw/sculpt/whatever." My reply to that is "Well, why don't you?" The only reason I can is because I do. It really comes down to what you have a passion for. For so long I ignored it and put it off to do other things and let other things get in the way, but it always came back around. You want to do the things that make you happy. If doing art makes you happy, do it. If having a roof over your head and a steady paycheck makes you happy, do what it takes to get that. People are responsible for their own destinies, and it's not always the destination that is important but the journey. I guess being older now gives me that kind perspective.

GF: Who were some of the people that you feel were inspirational to you?

PK: I guess I my greatest inspiration is the average Joe that says, "Hey, I've got a cool idea, look at this." People like George Lucas that took a risk early on and pursued his creative endeavor. Kevin Smith, who made *Clerks* by charging the budget on his credit cards! Richard and Wendy Pini for doing *Elfquest*, something really cool and original that was simply not being done at the time. This is also the place where I would mention other artists whose style I admire. Of course there's a whole list of those and they



include all the founding TSR artists as well as a couple of classics like John William Waterhouse and Michaelangelo. To me Michaelangelo is the premier commercial artist! All of his stuff was commissioned by the church, yet he found a way to impose his own vision over their ideas. Someone should make a really grand sweeping epic film about him.

GF: Do you enjoy the convention atmosphere?

PK: It is both a source of great joy and great stress for me! I love interacting with fans and talking about fan stuff. That was really the only thing I ever enjoyed about working retail. The flip side of that is dealing with people who are rude and trying to get something from you. The best part is getting to talk with all kinds of people who do all kinds of different things yet still have this commonalty, be it games or comics or whatever.

It's really fun to get out and meet people but it's still a business, too. You have to be a salesperson and hawk your wares at the same time. The balance is to have fun and not make it too much like a job. Shelpping heavy comic boxes around though, is work!

I got to meet Linnea Quigley at a con once and asked her what it was like being famous. She said it was the best of both worlds, when she went to the grocery store no one mobbed her and she still had anonymity, but when she was at a con, all the fans knew her and she felt like a celebrity. I thought that must be pretty cool. Years later after we put out our Ernor comics I understood what she meant. It was super cool to have people come by the table and talk to us about Hask and Whitepaw and things that happened in the comic that we created, and were intimate with, but these strangers knew about it too and thought it was great. It's lots of fun to meet other people who are interested in the same things you are, but at the same time have the freedom to not be mobbed at a restaurant.

GF: Is there anyone in the industry to whom you feel you owe a debt of gratitude to for helping you enter the field (or who helped steer you in the right direction at an early stage)?

PK: Well it's been pretty much trial and error for us in putting the comics out. But the folks we've met from Radio Comix, Elin Winkler and Pat Duke, and Mike and Carole Curtis from Shanda Fantasy Arts have been incredibly supportive of our stuff and have published some of our art and stories in their titles. Plus Shirley Soto from Living Room Games took a chance on me and gave me my first game book cover commission.

GF: What are some of the current or near future projects where we can expect to see your work? (Besides Gaming Frontiers of course)

PK: Well, I did a couple of covers for the Earthdawn stuff from Living Room Games (www.lrgames.com) Barsiave at War and Barsaive in Chaos. I'm also working on their GM screen to be



released later this summer. I did the cover design and logo for Citizen Games' (www.citizengames.com) Hero's Journey d20 module series which also features the Evening Perch image and designed the Sidewinder logo for their upcoming wild west d20 game.

GF: What fields are you trying break into with your illustrations? (Fantasy roleplaying games, computer gaming, movie concept art, animation, etc.)

PK: I'm really looking to get into some kind of effects work for film. Most of my personal projects through the first half of '02 are to prepare my portfolio and demo reel for SIGGRAPH this summer. I have a small animation project and a few other things in mind for the demo reel.

The real goal is to do something high profile, I've always wanted to do covers for fantasy or sci-fi novels and for game books. More recently, thanks to digital technology, I've developed an interest in doing matte paintings for film or TV. To do work for something like that would make me more marketable as an artist and would propel my career along in the direction I'd like it to go.

GF: Do you have any words of advice for aspiring artists?

PK: Lean to draw. That sounds pretty harsh but it's true. I'm still learning to draw stuff all the time. And design skills show up everywhere! Learning to paint, or watercolor or whatever can come later. If you can take a pencil to a blank page and make a piece of art out of it, the rest is gravy. But if there aren't any basic foundation skills to your art, like proportion, perspective, composition, no matter how clever a painter you are, bad design skills will show through every time.

REVIEWS

Welcome to the biggest, baddest review section this side of the frontier.

In the following pages you'll find objective, in-depth analysis of various d20 products on the shelves at your local game store so that you, the gamer, can make informed decisions when it comes time to purchase that next adventure or supplement.

While it is beneficial for us to remain on the "good side" of d20 publishers, since it is they who provide a great deal of content, keep in mind that we pay these guys to be in our publication, not the other way around. Gaming Frontiers is a 100% independant publication of United Playtest, Inc., which means that we don't bend to some corporate giant, and we don't sell out our scruples for ad space, either.

We belabor the point because we want you to feel confident that what you are reading is reflective of our true feelings. It's our attitude that if a product isn't worth the paper it's printed on, then it's our duty, and our right, to let you know.

Let the reviews begin, and let the dice fall where they may.

- The Gaming Frontiers Team

Gaming Frontiers Review Scale

Excellent

Material in this category either breaks new ground or does an exemplary job of making old ground seem new again. Content, presentation and art meld seamlessly to make a product that raises the bar. A must-have.

Good

A fine example of an established form. Examples include a module that you'll be proud to run or a sourcebook that is full of inspiration. Content, presentation and art maintain above-average quality throughout. Deserving of shelf space in anyone's library.

Average

A product in this category follows everything that has gone before it, and neither strives for, nor achieves excellence. It does nothing to push the industry forward, but doesn't drag it down, either. An average product usually suffers from an imbalance of some sort. Whether it is good content brought down by so-so presentation, or vice versa. Recommended for fans of the product line.

Fair

A moderately flawed product, marred by sub-par content, presentation, bad d20 System use, etc. Material in this category has something of merit to offer that keeps it from being a complete failure, but is recommended only to die-hard fans of the product line.

Poor

A seriously flawed effort. Presentation, content, d20 system use and art are all below industry standards, and the material contains nothing of redeeming value. Avoid these titles like a rust monster.

Song and Silence : A Guidebook to Bards and Rogues

Format: Color cover, B&W interior, 96 pgs, soft cover

Genre: Sourcebook

Campaign Setting: None (minimal generic Greyhawk content)

Developer: None

Publisher: Wizards of the Coast

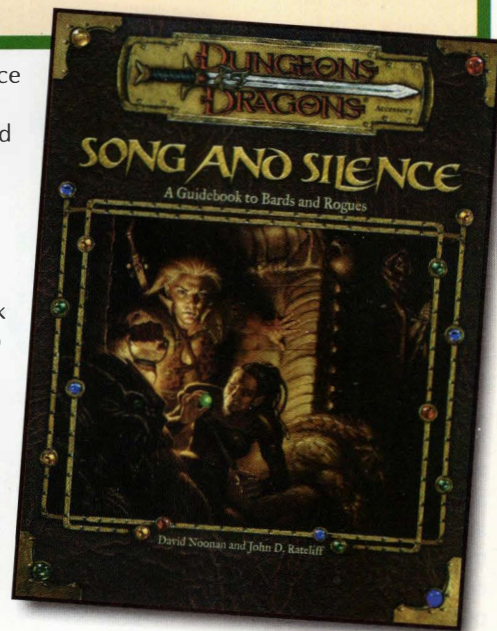
Author: David Noonan and John D. Rateliff (with additional design and development by Skip Williams)

MSRP: \$19.95

Song and Silence is the fourth guidebook published by Wizards of the Coast, designed to expand upon the rules and roles for Bard and Rogue characters. The book is broken down into six chapters, which detail new Prestige Classes, Skill and Feats (including variant systems for poisons and traps), equipment, organizations, roleplaying perspectives and combat options, and spells.

Chapter One's Prestige Classes lean heavily toward rogues, since of the ten classes only the Virtuoso is bardic in nature. This isn't to say that a bard couldn't also be a Thief-Acrobat (updated from its origins in Dragon 69 and Unearthed Arcana), Royal Explorer (Indiana Jones as a cartographer), Dread Pirate (think The Princess Bride), or Spymaster (James Bond meets the monk)---bards could certainly excel in these roles. Although Noonan and Rateliff address the possibility that PCs of non-rogue and non-bard classes may take up these Prestige Classes, they are primarily designed with rogues rather than bards in mind.

Of the ten classes presented, each fills a useful niche except for the Fang of Lolth, which is more of a cursed state caused by employing Use Magic Device on a new drowic magic item. Similarly, while the Virtuoso is detailed as a class open to non-vocal performing artists (like dancers, actors, etc.), it only offers magical powers which enhance singing, which limits the breadth of the class' roleplaying options. I also don't believe that all of the Prestige Classes in Song and Silence would make viable PCs. In addition to the Fang of Lolth, the Dread Pirate, the Outlaw of the Crimson Road, the Vigilante, and the Virtuoso exploit very narrow character niches---niches which I don't foresee many PCs feeling the desire to fill. Your mileage may vary, of course.



REVIEWS

Chapter Two, Skills and Feats, details alternate systems for poisons, traps, hiding, tailing, concealing weapons, tumbling, and concludes with feats. We'll tackle this chapter in reverse. The twenty-six feats run the gamut from bland (Green Ear, Obscure Lore) to interesting (Multicultural, Requiem) to slightly over-powered (Arterial Strike, Lingering Song). For the most part, the feats focus on bardic singing, quickness in combat, or social interaction. They are, overall, well-balanced and useful, and are a nice improvement in quality over the more uneven feats previously introduced in *Sword and Fist* and *Defenders of the Faith*.

The alternate takes on skill usage offer insight into creative applications for existing skills. It would be wonderful if *Wizards of the Coast* or another d20 publisher compiled a skills encyclopedia which consistently applied the same level of thought to all of the open-content d20 skills that Noonan and Rateliff have shown for *Hide* (now applied to following a target unseen, blending into crowds, and making sniper attacks) and *Pick Pockets* (now also used to conceal weapons). Variant Tumble rules detail more difficult circumstance penalties and Opposed Tumble Checks (the latter differing from rules presented in *Sword and Fist*). While probably added with the Thief-Acrobat in mind, these rules help to balance out the many Tumble-based benefits, and come recommended.

The rules for designing traps form the bulk of Chapter Two's content, and the authors detail a system elegant in its simplicity. They detail how to create traps in a step-by-step process that breaks traps down into manageable design choices and assigns costs to each stage. Incorporating poisons, magical triggers, spell effects, higher DCs to detect or avoid a trap, and secondary traps are all touched upon. The system compliments the traps presented in the DMG well, and the section concludes with 90 sample traps to handle encounters through CR 10. While not as extensive as the information presented in *Fantasy Flight's Traps & Treachery*, the Song and Silence traps system is definitely up to the task of building better traps.

The one-page poison system supplements the Alchemy and Poison rules from the PHB and DMG, substituting Craft (poisonmaking) for Alchemy's use. I'm not sure that the distinction between the two is worth making, truthfully, since I find it hard to imagine that many people would make a living finding, brewing, distilling, and selling toxins (other than Assassins, of course). In any event, the systemic changes to the base Craft skill work well; they make poison manufacture more costly and time-consuming (and can be applied to Alchemy to brew poisons just as easily as the Craft skill).

Chapter Three, Bard and Rogue Equipment, details thirty-eight new musical instruments for bards, seven new weapons, ten new thieves' tools, and eighteen new magical items. The introductory matter for bardic instruments suggests that a bard can know and play only one type of musical instrument, so the PC had better choose wisely (with respect to commonness if it is destroyed, its portability, etc.). However, PCs learn one form in Perform for each rank in the skill, so this advice seems a bit misplaced—a bard with Perform 4 could recite epic poetry, and play the crumhorn, pan pipes, and harpsichord, as examples of his skill. Each of the musical instruments is described in a few paragraphs; some of the instruments are fictional, while others are real, but with their history embellished to include racial preferences for kobolds, dragons, and such. (Identifying the real instruments from the imaginary would be nice, since I'm not a musical historian, and most of Song and

Silence's readers probably aren't either). Each instrument also has a specific effect on bardic music, although not all of the effects are unique (the psaltery and zither share effects, for example). Nonetheless, this variety allows a bard to choose the appropriate tool for the job, which adds a richness and style to the class that it has previously lacked.

The new weapons and rogue gear offer PCs the opportunity to employ bayonets (on musical instruments), a variety of garrotes, expandable poles, and grapple-firing crossbows, and longreach tongs, among others, during their adventures. Most of these weapons and tools are designed for specific uses, and are of limited usefulness during day-to-day encounters. However, in just the right situation, having the right implement available in a bag of holding could be the difference between survival and death. The magic items (most of which are wondrous items) are of a similar ilk.

The ten Thieves' Guilds and seven Bardic Colleges offered in Chapter Four can be added easily into any campaign. A few of the Thieves' Guilds seem like more generic versions of those introduced in *Lords of Darkness*, which is disappointing, and none of them stand out as terribly original or worthwhile. The Bardic Colleges are definitely more interesting. Unlike organizations introduced earlier in the guidebook series, the groups in Song and Silence are more generic, and less explicitly set within the World of Greyhawk (only one of the seventeen is specific to Greyhawk).

The fifth chapter, You and the World Around You, discusses good developmental and character-building roleplaying ideas for rogues and bards. It encourages players to break the standard roleplaying mold for their characters, and to reach out into generally unexplored aspects of the classes: rogues as strategic leaders and trustworthy advisors, bards as ambassadors and the most capable solo adventurer. Clarifications for flanking attacks, and new rules for

Rogues and bards
enjoy some time in the spotlight as
the focus of this fantastic book.

using garrotes are tacked onto the end of this chapter, a jarring departure from the excellent role-playing suggestions. The rules additions are worthwhile, but belong elsewhere in the book.

Chapter Six, Spells, introduces four new incantations for assassins and thirty for bards. The assassin spells are forgettable, and the fourth level Sniper's Eye is over-powered (it should have its duration halved, at least). The bardic spells are more interesting; some provide enhancements to the various effects of bardic music, but too many focus on combat-related effects. Adding more non-combat spells like would help to emphasize the bard's social and musical nature, rather than the class' combat skills.

The book's layout and design are excellent, and the artwork suits the subject matter in general, with only one of illustration being notably out-of-place (the image on page 15 appears far too modern, and looks like it would be more at home in Mage than 3E).

Song and Silence is a worthwhile addition to any GMs toolkit, although I don't believe that players will gain as much use from it as the authors may have intended.



- Allan T. Grohe, Jr.

REVIEWS

REVIEWS

Dinosaur Planet: Broncosaurus Rex

Format: Cover color, B&W interior, 96 pages, soft cover

Genre: Campaign Setting Sourcebook

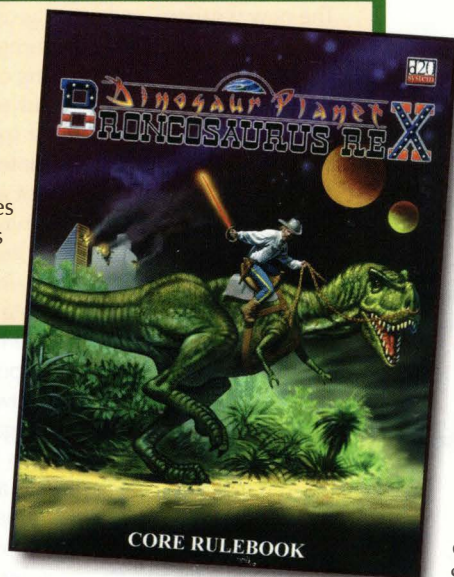
Campaign Setting: Broncosaurus Rex

Developer: Goodman Games

Publisher: Goodman Games

Author: Joseph Goodman

MSRP: \$20.00



Goodman Games has broken through the d20 gates with Dinosaur Planet: Broncosaurus Rex, a campaign setting that mixes dinosaurs, the Wild West, aliens, space travel, laser technology, and, of all things, the Civil War. While this may make you raise an eyebrow, rest assured that this somewhat eclectic blend of gaming genres come together in the most satisfying of ways. This is one of those rare products where everything – from setting to mechanics – just seems to click. Writing, art and presentation all meld seamlessly to draw the reader into the alternate future reality of the planet Cretasus and its various denizens.

The book begins by giving us the rundown on the background of the setting, which certainly isn't your typical fantasy milieu, as it relies upon a number of historic, scientific and supernatural archetypes to make it work. The year is 2202, and the North and South never did reconcile their differences during that messy little conflict known as the American Civil War. Now, split up into two powerful political factions, The Federal Union of Planets (the North) and The Confederacy (the South), these two foes are engaged in an intergalactic race to establish military dominance wherever they can, including the dino-infested planet of Cretasus. And, they're not the only ones. Members of the Free Fleet (a group of humans cast out from Earth in the 21st Century) and the Offworlders (human pioneers from the edges of the universe) are also staking their claims on Cretasus territory, adding even more tension to already strained social relations. All these groups have different agendas, but they've all got one huge problem – or rather, a wide variety of huge problems – in the form of dinosaurs, some of which are just as intelligent as humans, to the point of forming tribes, using alchemy, and even arming themselves with explosives.

Technology is something of a potpourri in this setting, but the mix isn't jarring, though it is admittedly bizarre. Since the Civil War on Earth raged for so long, it left little time for advances in certain areas, where others flourished. Space travel is rather common, but reaching speeds of faster-than-light is almost unheard of (the appearance of interplanetary "warp gates" helps explain how the humans got so far, so fast), most firearms still use gunpowder, and the Union of Planets has managed to create towering mechanized vehicles, while the Confederacy has done an admirable job creating objects which help them control the prehistoric residents of Cretasus.

The second part of book deals with Character Creation, where we learn that the world of Broncosaurus Rex is human-centric, so much so that you're limited to playing only humans, as only NPCs can be aliens. Seeing how the setting is supposed to hinge upon a "what-if?" hypothesis concerning past events on Earth, it makes sense in terms of the game. It also makes sense in terms of play mechanics, since the presented classes are all balanced, and, in terms of roleplaying, since it focuses your imagination and concentration, making for a more realized fantasy world, in my opinion. The only differences between humans in Broncosaurus Rex are their places of origin (Confederacy, Federal, Free Fleet or Offworlders). Place of origin determines a number of things, and act just like 3E races in terms of game mechanics. Speaking of classes, the six new classes presented in this chapter are incredibly imaginative and well-balanced. The Bronco Rider is trained in the handling of dinos, the Machinist is a tinkering scientist with the ability to create custom weapons, the Soldier is a trained warrior whose knowledge can be invaluable during combat, the Spy is a roguish master of deception with the uncanny ability to dodge bullets, the Two-Fister is a rough-and-tumble warrior, and the Wild One are folks who have had it with the ways of civilization.

The new feats, equipment and weapons are all worthwhile, and of special note is the way the authors chose to handle skills. Since many of the original 3E skills would initially seem not to jive with the world of Broncosaurus Rex, we're presented with a complete listing of the applicable original 3E skills with new uses as they pertain to the world, along with a handful of useful new ones. Also included in this chapter is a new addition to the Open Gaming License, an innovation called Tech Level, which allows the GM to determine the level of technology – from the wheel to teleportation – at any given location (city, colony, planet, etc.). This new d20 system add-on is absolutely necessary for the world of Broncosaurus Rex, and could prove useful in other products as well.

The third chapter of the book is Dinosaur Statistics, and it gives us the low down on all the creatures PCs are sure to have run-ins with over the course of their adventures. Though the monsters presented here seem to be a wee-bit tougher than their Core Rulebook III companions (and are listed as animals, not beasts, and for a well-presented reason), d20 system use here is just fine.

The book wraps up with a section entitled "One Hundred Adventure Ideas" which is pretty much the sum of its title. These adventure ideas are all worthwhile and can all be incorporated into a larger campaign, which means you can start playing with just the Core Rulebook alone (though supplements are on their way later this year, and look promising.)

In the end Broncosaurus Rex is well worth every penny. But more than that, when someone manages to meld the past, present and future together this well, they also deserve our praise

- Jeffrey S. Carter



Jurassic Who?
Out of the way, Spielberg,
there's a new game in town.

REVIEWS

REVIEWS

Prisoners of the Maze

Format: Color cover, B&W interior illustrations, 48 pgs, soft cover

Genre: Adventure, Character levels 9-12

Campaign Setting: None

Developer: Robert J. Kuntz

Publisher: Necromancer Games, Inc.

Author: Robert J. Kuntz

MSRP: \$10.95

Reviewer's Note: Due to the complex challenges that await players within this module, I've kept the review spoiler-free. Players who are compelled to use every single advantage they can to overcome their GMs should feel free to read on. Wankers.

A roll-player's dream come true, Necromancer Games brings us the first part in the long-awaited reworking of Rob Kuntz's original Maze of Zayene series, all tweaked up for 3E but still retaining, in the company's tradition, that "First Edition Feel". Agreeably, you can't get much more First Edition than Rob Kuntz, one of the originators of Dungeons & Dragons, and from beginning to end this module absolutely screams "old-school", which in this case is a very, very good thing.

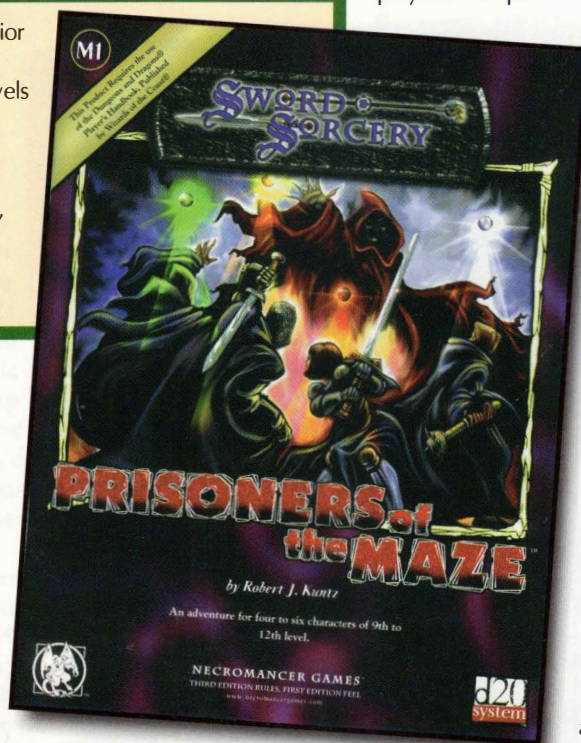
The attractive full-color cover, like all of Necromancer Games' products, is invocative of those old modules we wore to pieces back in the day (and is fortunately of higher-quality paper stock, so this thing won't fall apart after two sessions). It depicts the four heroes facing off against the evil wizard Zayene as he transports them to his mind-twisting labyrinth in the beginning of the adventure. The module is even numbered like TSR's old efforts, Prisoners of the Maze is M1, with the following installments as M2, M3, etc., bringing the First Edition feeling home before the book has even been cracked. The Maze of Zayene series will ultimately fill an astounding five modules before reaching the finale, but it's not necessary to wait for the other parts before beginning play with Prisoners of the Maze.

And what play it is. If your group is up for some high-powered, extremely challenging, thought-provoking gaming sessions that they'll truly be able to brag about later, then Prisoners of the Maze is for you. It's chock-full of the kind of difficult encounters, dice-rolling frenzies, and zany mind-bending traps and riddles that were a hallmark of 1E, and it's sure to try the skills of even the hardest of souls. Personally, I feel this module is best run tournament-style, using the four pre-generated characters in the back of the book. These pre-generated characters were carefully created to preserve game balance within the module, but besides that, your players are presumably attached to their regular characters, and they may cry like babies when you mercilessly cut them down. TPWs (Total Party

Wipeouts) were still pretty common back when Rob Kuntz was rolling 'dem bones, and he shows no mercy here, piling monster upon monster and trap upon trap until the difference between being alive and dead is but one bad roll away.

Running the module with the pre-gen characters also allows the players to step into the shoes of characters they may never create themselves, including a Lawful Good Paladin and a terrified Cleric who always presumes the worst about every situation. It also allows players to take risks and try creative solutions using what's given to them instead of always relying on their favorite weapon or magic item. However, if tourney-style play isn't your thing, or if you're looking to integrate Prisoners of the Maze into your existing campaign (an easy thing to do, by the way), your group is still bound to have a blast.

Layout follows the same style as the other Necromancer Games products, with nice font size, use of white space, and helpful information concerning the encounters right where it should be. There is no flavor-text to speak of (save for the introduction), but enough description is given to create your own. The black and white art pieces throughout are decent, so is the cartography, though I did find a few very minor missing things here and there in the maps, but nothing caused me great frustration. The great thing about this module (and it stems directly from the old-school philosophy of game design, aided by Rob Kuntz's fertile imagination) is that



Old-school meets new school and strikes a critical hit.

it empowers GMs to think, to create, and to tweak the given material 'til their heart's content.

If you like rolling dice and having fun at the gaming table, do yourself a favor and procure yourself a copy of Prisoners of the Maze right away. It makes for a great break from your regular game, or, if you're keen on integrating the whole series into your ongoing game, it would make for one hell of a last act. Sure, you may come down with a bad case of dice-elbow after the first few sessions, but it's worth it.

Note: An account of our group's experience playtesting this module can be found at Necromancer Games' own message boards, housed at www.necromancergames.com. Check it out for a few laughs.

- Jeffrey S. Carter



REVIEWS

REVIEWS

Minions: Fearsome Foes

Format: Cover color, full color interior, 96 pages, soft cover

Genre: Monster compendium

Campaign Setting: Generic

Developer: Bastion Press

Publisher: Bastion Press

Author: Various

MSRP: \$24.95

Remember the old Fiend Folio? That product from TSR's UK division presented gamers with a host of very cool, original off-the-wall creatures, and contained a wealth of great ideas that helped bolster the regular stable from the original First Edition Monster Manual.

3E has already seen its share of third-party monster books to compliment the new Core Rulebook III, (including both Creature Collections from Sword & Sorcery, Mystic Eye Games' Nightmares & Dreams I & II, and others) but Bastion Press has managed to one-up all of them with its entry – Minions: Fearsome Foes. This book, like those aforementioned, is chock full of new baddies for GMs to spring upon their unsuspecting players, but is the most useful of any monster book released thus far, and best of all, it's in color. I don't think I can overemphasize the aesthetic value of seeing creatures as their artists originally intended them, and what an impact it makes upon the product as a whole. It's one thing to read that a monster has "green scaly skin" and quite another to actually see it. Though the pictures are a little small for my tastes, and though the majority of the art really isn't my cup of coffee, I still have to give props where props are due, and I'm now thoroughly convinced that all future monster books should be in color.

Whenever a new monster book is released, I always approach it with trepidation. Not just because there is precedent for a lot of repetition, but also because multiple authors are often involved in writing them, meaning the quality can be a little hit or miss. I'm glad to say these fears weren't realized with Minions: Fearsome Foes. The creatures presented therein are all quite original, and plenty of thought seems to have been put into their design. Each one of them is presented with consistently colorful written descriptions detailing their appearance, society (if warranted), and combat tactics. In another stroke of brilliance, the authors also included paragraph or two with each entry under the heading "Campaign", where you can find advice about how best to fit these monsters into your game. All the monsters are world-neutral (i.e., not written for any specific setting), so none of them are difficult to find a place for, though some of them definitely require more work than others. Some of the creatures (especially those with developed societies, such as the Asherakes, a race of evil flying feline humanoids who travel in huge airships) can make for an entire campaign, especially when combined with the other

intelligent societies presented (there are quite a number of these, leading this reviewer to believe they are the creation of someone's existing campaign, but they're so damn good I don't care.) These intelligent races also pull double-duty as possible PC races, making them even more worthwhile.

Besides the monster listings, the book also lists 4 new templates that can be added to existing creatures, and 6 new creatures from the Inner Planes that are meant specifically to act as new Familiars for the magic-slingers in your group.

Minions: Fearsome Foes also deserves praise for being well laid-out, and well presented. Following the design philosophy from WoTC's Core Rulebook III, each entry follows directly after the other, allowing for a minimum of wasted space. The margins are tight and text is easily readable but not too big. The paper is a nice glossy stock and the book just feels good in your hands and is easily portable.

Besides everything I've already said, I think there's an even more important point to be made. While some companies can't seem to get a grasp on new d20 monster stats, Bastion Press has a good handle on what makes a good monster tick. Double-checking their work led me to many of the same conclusions, and no silly errors (like Con scores for Undead) slipped through, meaning you

can use this book as-is without having to worry about unbalancing your game. The only complaint I can lodge is that some of the creatures in particular seem a little tougher than their CR indicates (many of them can make multiple attacks, which can lead to big damage), but maybe in Bastion Press' world, PCs are simply of a tougher stock than mine.

This collection of colorful monsters Claws its way to the top.

For a first effort, Minions: Fearsome Foes is very impressive. But would you expect any less from a company headed up by WoTC veteran Jim Butler? We highly recommend you pick up this fantastic book if you're looking for a solid companion to the core monsters, and we look forward to their other products lined up for 2002.

- Jeffrey S. Carter



REVIEWS

REVIEWS

The Giants Skull

Format: Full-Colour Cover, B+W Interior Illustrations, Soft Cover, 48 Pages
Genre: Adventure
Campaign Setting: Generic
Developer: Fiery Dragon Productions
Publisher: Sword and Sorcery
Author: James Bell
MSRP: \$9.95

Fiery Dragon Productions have become one of my favorite RPG companies due to their high-quality adventures, outstanding production value (counters, handouts, hex maps, and so on), and their consistent attention to the needs and interests of the gaming market. Perhaps it helps too that they are fellow Canucks. After all, is that much more of a challenge to create a strong adventure when preoccupied with keeping warm, as I'm sure you can well imagine.

The Giants Skull has two adventures within its covers, something Fiery Dragon has done a few times in the past (To Stand On Hallowed Ground comes to mind). This is different in two key ways. First, unlike the previous releases in this format that featured adventures linked only by theme, The Giants Skull has two adventures linked by story. Second, and most intriguing, is the fact that the first adventure allows players to take the role monsters (Ogres, to be exact) who must do battle with interloping adventurers. It's something that has been done a few times in the past, but never quite as well. Why is this attempt so much more fulfilling than previous attempts, you ask? Simply because the format allows PCs to intimately understand the motivations behind the actions of their enemies, having actually played them earlier. It's an interesting touch that I think will appeal to roleplayers.

What is all the fuss about, anyway? What is so damned important that ogres and heroes are willing to kill each other over it? The Giant Skull is an ancient artifact of immense power. It is the golden skull of a long dead storm giant who was trying to become a lich (that's a scary thought!), granting control over the elements. Anyone wearing this skull-helmet would be an awesome foe, indeed.

The Ogres Tale is designed for 5th level Ogre PCs. To facilitate quick-play for what is obviously intended to be a one-off adventure, pregenerated characters are provided, complete with backgrounds, goals, mannerisms, and quotes. The adventure begins when the heroes return from an expedition to find their lair has been pillaged by human adventurers and the Giants Skull stolen. Enraged, they vow to seek retribution and to return the artifact.

The Giants Skull is now in the hands of the fanatical paladin Sir Galen, who hopes to unlock its mysteries to wipe out the infestation of "unhuman" beings in the area, which seems to include the local Dwarven community. In effect, by retrieving the Skull and killing Sir Galen, the ogres will play the part of heroes by saving the dwarves, as well as their own people, from annihilation.

While the temptation is there for the PCs to let loose and smash a few things, the adventure really emphasises stealth and guile. They must be mindful of tactics as the defenders are played intelligently

and demonstrate tactics that could overwhelm a cocky party of ogres. This is facilitated by the Alert Factor, a rating system that allows a GM to keep track of the state of vigilance in the fortress, which dictates the response of the garrison to the PCs. Alert

Factor is one of the most innovative and refreshing things I have seen in any d20 release, and it has been used to good effect in several Fiery Dragon products so far.

The Heroes Tale is designed for 10th level PCs. Here they must retrieve the Skull, stolen by an Ogre raiding party a week before. The repercussions of their actions while portraying the Ogres will be felt here: they retain any magic items taken; those slain will be absent, and so on. The transition from one adventure to another is seamless and effective. Players will really love this gimmick.

While a face on assault on an Ogre lair would be tantamount to suicide, the heroes have an ace up their sleeve. Caves have been located that lead into the lair, a back door so to speak, granting the heroes an element of surprise. However, as we well know, nothing is as simple as it first appears, and the heroes must face several harrowing encounters before they can exploit this advantage.

The adventure is a straight-forward dungeon romp, which in this case isn't a bad thing at all. The locations are interesting and the scenes well staged. The dire results of failure lend an air of urgency to the proceedings, for if the heroes fail to retrieve the Giants Skull, the ogres will undoubtedly unlock its secrets and use its power to destroy human settlements to the south. Success, however, entails its own difficulties as well, for if Sir Galen is allowed to learn its mysteries, he will unleash a reign of terror against all nonhumans, indiscriminate of race or alignment. They may actually find themselves doing battle with him at some point in the future. Do the trials and tribulations of heroism ever end?!

I'm an ogre! No wait,
I'm a paladin!
Multiple personality disorder
has never been this much fun.

As a product, The Giants Skull demonstrates all the hallmarks of a typically excellent Fiery Dragon product. The artwork is very good, and there is a lot of it, and the layout crisp and clear. Similarly, the cartography is thoroughly professional. Important points (damage, hit points, skill checks, etc) are in bold face to make them recognizable at a glance, and the read-aloud text is shaded grey. Best of all are what my players refer to as "the goodies"---handouts, a useful combat tracking chart to help the GM keep track during fights, and an entire sheet of full-colour counters on cardstock.

An experiment that succeeds beautifully, The Giants Skull is a can't miss adventure for high-level campaigns.

- Andrew Hind



REVIEWS

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