

# HACKMASTER®



## HackJournal Issue #41 Winter 2012

Welcome to the newest edition of HackJournal, the HackMaster magazine for players and GameMasters around the world! Whether you profess to be the greatest fighter, thief, mage or cleric, you can't afford to pass up a single issue! Here's just a sampling of the inventory of secrets revealed herein:

- Spells For Sneaks - HackMaster Spells for Rogues and Mage/Thieves
- Come into the Light - Alternate Rules for Religious services of the Assembly of Light
- HackMaster City Encounters
- 1+re-roll: What's its mean?
- Using Newsletters in Your Game
- Small Staves

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# HACKJOURNAL 41

This quarterly PDF supplement is written specifically for (and by) the members of the HackMaster Association, a member-driven organization of Players and GameMasters who meet to discuss and play role-playing games published by Kenzer and Company. The HackJournal also previews special pre-release material, including 'alpha' and 'beta' rules pre-views for future products! HackMaster Association members are encouraged to try out these new rules and provide feedback on the Kenzer and Company discussion forums.

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## Spells for Sneaks

### Clever Casting for Rogues and Mage/Thieves

By: Benjamin Pierce

(The following is the text of a talk given by the notorious second-story man Jimmy Locke at the weekly meeting of the Black Glove Society, a loose association of larcenous spellworkers.)

*"Look, it's against my general principles, but let me be honest here. Magic can't do everything. Oh, sure, the yokels may eat up stories of wish-granting genies and wizards who wander around turning people into rutabagas, but everybody here in this room knows better. Magic has limits...and for those of us who are, shall we say, versatile in our talents, it's even more limited.*

*Sure, maybe those eggheads who spend all their time with their noses in their spellbooks will master high-powered spells fairly quickly...like, say, by the tender age of 50...but, again, those of us who have more diversified interests can't expect to pick up the knacks so quickly. After all, there are locks to pick, swindles to plan, and tavern wenches to seduce!*

*So, we can't trust magic to solve all our problems. Now, that being said, there's a reason we study magic in the first place. Yes, we rely on our wits and our skills, but there are times when it's damned handy to have a spell or three to help facilitate whatever clever scheme those wits come up with! The trick is knowing your limits. You're never going to know a lot of spells, and you're never going to know the biggest, flashiest spells...so you need to master*

*your spells. Know them inside and out, and know every trick, every ounce of efficiency you can squeeze out of them."*

*"Now, the greybeards may yammer on about the nobility of research, and the pursuit of pure knowledge, but let's face facts, ladies and gents: as far as most of us are concerned, the primary function of magic is to make a lot of money without having to work hard at it. To that end, I've put together a few notes on lower-level spells and exactly how you can turn a fast coin or three by using them in creative ways."*

**Aura of Innocence:** Sure, it seems like a natural choice for a morally-flexible soul. One aspect of this spell that often gets overlooked, though, is the fact that unless the other person actually saw you commit the crime, they have no chance of resisting the spell. Let me repeat that: they have no chance of resisting. That's amazingly powerful for an apprentice-level spell. You can walk up to the Lord High Inquisitor of the Courts of Justice, and unless he actually SAW you put the skunk in Lord Pompinfuss's carriage, he's going to think you're innocent.

**Buoyancy:** This is a handy spell if you go for an unplanned swim, but it has other uses, too. How many sneak thieves have lost their loot because they couldn't get it across the moat? With Buoyancy, that heavy gold statue becomes a flotation device! It's also nice for retrieving valuables from the bottom of a well or pool of water.

**Fire Finger:** Never overlook the utility of being able to quickly start a fire. This may not be the most impressive damage-dealing spell out there, but it has many other uses. If you're like most gentlemen of adventure, you never bothered to learn how to start a fire the hard way. Being able to light one casually

when you find yourself stranded in the wet and the cold is downright handy. Being able to light a fire casually while being pursued by the town guard can be even more handy. For some reason, they get all excited when the roof of the smithy or the stable catches on fire, and usually, they stop to put it out. Now, I'm not advocating arson as a general rule, but a fire can be a handy diversion when you need to make a fast escape.

**Illusionary Mural:** If you can't find clever uses for this spell, you're not trying. Stand at the end of a blind alley and put a "wall" in front of you. Angle it across the corner where you hid the loot and present an image of an empty corner instead. The possibilities are endless, but make sure you know something about art before you try...nobody's going to fall for illusory stick figures!

**Permanent Mark:** Don't forget the invisible-ink option of this spell. A canny spellcaster can make a good bit of coin invisibly marking objects for the owners. Of course, that also means that someone may have invisibly marked the objects you plan on stealing, so be careful. Sense Magical Aura is your friend.

**Springing:** As a second-story man, I swear by this spell. It can provide mobility in a fight, it can allow you to get away by springing from roof to roof, it can allow you to win bets with drunken sots who don't believe you can jump over the tavern. What's not to like?



**Audible Clamor:** In addition to its uses as a diversion, this is another spell that can be used to make easy money when combined with musical skills. There are always nobles willing to pay for magical fanfares and chamber music.

**Bar Portal:** Don't forget that this spell not only locks doors, it also closes them - which can be highly useful when you'd prefer to avoid running the gauntlet of arrows between you and the door in order to close it yourself.

**Sense Magical Aura:** Not glamorous, not spectacular, but very, very useful. It allows you to spot magical traps, and if you're the only one who can identify the magical loot...well, isn't that just too bad for everyone else?

**Virtual Mount:** Every grifter knows that sometimes you need to get out of town in a hurry, and this spell is tailor-made for that. It's also handy for hauling large amounts of bulky loot on short notice. Sadly, the horses created are translucent, so you can't sell them and then get out of town before they vanish.

**Bird's Eye View:** Mix this spell with a little cartography, and you have a sure money-maker. In addition to the relatively legitimate use of preparing maps, it's also handy for getting a detailed layout of that rich merchant's walled villa

**Planar Servant:** Again, if you can't come up with ways to exploit this spell, you should take up another profession...say, privy-cleaning. The ability to conjure up a silent, totally obedient servant is amazingly useful. Remember all those times you've wished for a gullible, expendable companion to open that box which you're pretty sure is trapped? Conjure your own! The Planar Servant can fetch that key hanging outside your jail cell, or pull that lever on the other side of the portcullis. If you have a really twisted sense of humor, put a black cloak on him and send him to terrorize the local townsfolk as a "wraith."

**Shrink:** Was there ever a better spell for a thief? Really, was there? Shrink the loot to make it fit in your sack. Shrink yourself so you can fit through the bars into the treasure room. Shrink the hinges on the locked door until they can no longer keep it attached to the wall. Again, ingenuity is the key here.

**Translate:** In addition to opening up the possibility for some easy, labor-free silver as a translator, this spell has an overlooked function. Since it cannot translate magic or secret codes, it can serve as a reliable test for same. If you use translate on the document and it STILL makes no sense, you can be pretty sure that it's either magic or in code.

**Wall Walk:** This one's largely self-explanatory, but a few things should be pointed out. Most thieves and rogues know that fair fights are for suckers. Being able to stand thirty feet up a wall and shoot the guy chasing you with your bow ensures that it's not a fair fight...particularly if he doesn't have a bow and can't return fire.

**Charm:** Here's the thing to keep in mind concerning Charm: many a scalawag has been undone by this spell because he or she overestimated its power. Bear in mind that the spell does NOT make the target into your mindless slave - that's what Planar Servant is for. When the spell wears off, how the charmed person reacts is going to depend entirely on how you treated him while charmed. If you have treated him like a trusted friend and ally, he'll have no reason not to continue to regard you as the same. Skilled Liar, Persuasion, and perhaps the Art of Seduction all apply here. Remember, a true friend isn't someone you use once and then throw away. A true friend is someone you use over and over again!

**Frighten:** An interesting thing about the Frighten spell is that the target can be deluded into thinking you're the most frightening thing in the world and yet not flee from you. A skilled actor may be able to exploit this.

**Slippery Surface:** With Slippery Surface, as with real estate, three things matter: location, location, location. If you slap it down in the middle of a broad courtyard, the impact is likely to be negligible. If you cast it in a narrow corridor, that's better. If you cast it at a sharp corner of the corridor while the guards are in hot pursuit, better still. Cast it on a steep staircase? Now that's comedy.

**Inaudibility:** Useful when cast on yourself. More useful still when cast on the guard you need to subdue. He can't shout for help? What a pity!

**Unlock:** Do I need to explain why this is useful to a thief? Do I really?

**Wizard's Lock:** Ah! Now here's one that takes a little explaining. "It takes too long to cast," I hear you say. "My business is unlocking things, not locking them," I hear you say. Valid objections, but this spell still has tremendous utility. First off, it can be used as a reliable source of income. Merchants and nobles are always looking for ways to guard their valuables, and are generally quite willing to pay for magical protections. Not only is this a steady source of money, but also of valuable information. How else are you going to get a merchant to come to you and say, "Hey, look: this is what the box I store my money in looks like?" Of course, if (when) you rob them, it's time to get out of town fast, because you're going to be the prime suspect. Don't betray your customers' trust until it's really worth it. As for the casting time, yes, it makes the spell a bit problematic to cast during a job. The key words there are "during a job." Nothing says you have to cast it during the job. Invest in a few top-quality locks and cast Wizard's Lock on them beforehand, then carry them with you. If you need to seal a door, slap one of your magicked locks onto it. You can do the same with a set of manacles, if you foresee the need to immobilize someone.

**White Hot Metal:** Yes, yes, we've all had the daydream about using this spell on the Captain of the Guard's codpiece, but let's talk about uses that won't get you pilloried. It's a nice combat spell, but it also has uses outside of combat. Keep in mind that metal, when it's white-hot, becomes malleable. That includes the bars in a gate, iron strongboxes...you name it. If you can't get in any other way, White Hot Metal may do the trick for you. Whatever you do, just be sure nobody's in position to see the light the metal sheds when heated.

**Bottomless Pouch:** This is another one of those spells where the utility is obvious, but a little bit of foresight and preparation can make it even more useful. Having a pouch that can comfortably carry your loot and/or tools is great, but if you take the time to prepare a concealed pocket in your clothing and put the pouch in there, the odds that the incriminating items will be found if you're searched go down drastically.

**Memory Wipe, Lesser:** Very useful for those of us who prefer not to kill in the course of our excursions. We're gentlemen thieves, not thugs! Once

you've subdued the guard, you need to be able to make sure he didn't get a good look at you. This spell is tailor-made for that. It's also very handy in conjunction with a Charm spell, in that it ensures that the charmed person doesn't remember you casting a spell on him.

**Prerecorded Audio Message:** I knew a sharper once who retired to a life of luxury on this spell. What he did was to hire a few singers and lutists and start peddling "singing letters" to the nobles. They ate it up, and now, he lives in a mansion as fine as theirs.

**Reveal Secret Portal:** Having this spell can make the difference between an unprofitable trip and the score of a lifetime. Just be sure your skill with traps and locks is up to par. Well-concealed compartments are rarely unprotected.

**Transmogrify:** While Disguise is a nice spell, this one is far superior. The creature you imitate has to be within 50% of your own body mass, but not human in shape. A large dog or a small pony should be within the capabilities of the spell. It can also be handy if you're caught without a weapon, since it permits the use of any natural weapons the new form may have.

**Disembodied Floating Hand:** The principal advantage of this spell over one like Planar Servant is that it's your hand. It picks locks as you would; it picks pockets as deftly as your skill allows. Of course, there's also quite a bit of risk. Most thieves spend their careers trying to ensure that their hands don't get removed from their wrists. Should you make a mistake while using this spell, you've saved the magistrate some trouble.

*"Always remember, my friends: a spell is a tool, just like a lockpick or a dagger. How you use it determines how useful it is. Never get trapped into thinking that a spell is only good for one thing, never do what is expected, and the silver will flow into your purse like water. Speaking of which, it's last call, friends...so settle your tabs, and do be sure to tip the bartender on the way out, won't you?"*



# Kingdoms of Kalamar

*Fantasy Campaign Setting*

## Come Into the Light

### Alternate Rules for Ceremonies of the Assembly of Light

By: Jarrett Sylvestre

#### Summer Solstice

The summer solstice celebration has different names in different locations, but the most common is High Sun Day, or the Day of High Sun. The longest day of the year signifies the Eternal Lantern's triumph over the forces of darkness and the evils that lurk therein. Regional traditions can vary wildly but the day follows a certain order.

Dawn finds the priests leading prayers and hymns among the faithful, faces turned to the east to capture the first rays of the day's light. The songs are celebratory, praising the glory of the Shining One.

This is followed by a sermon, the tone of which is often light-hearted and praising the faithful for their dedication. The day is then spent among family and friends, enjoying the light of the High Sun. Some communities will organize great outdoor feasts and celebrations with music and games.

In areas where the Assembly of Light is the dominant (or sole) faith (often in rural villages) the clergy take a very active role in these activities, often shedding any pretense of solemnness and seriousness they may exhibit the rest of the year to lead children in games and sing lively songs alongside their flock.

A common theme of the noon day sermon is, "We

are all equal under the light." The high priest of the local Assembly may spend months crafting a special sermon to commemorate the occasion. It is often delivered in a picnic setting. The informality of the service belies the fact that this is the most important sermon of the year.

The afternoon is spent with family, where different families have different traditions. Most traditions hold to an early supper then gathering at the actual temple of the Assembly of Light for a final prayer service and hymnal.

The finale of the day comes as the last rays of the High Sun fall upon the congregation. Ideally, as many of the faithful as possible will stand, shoulder to shoulder, in an open and consecrated area. Those who receive the officiating cleric's final blessing and feel the caress of the fading light are blessed by the Eternal Lantern. The higher the rank of the cleric, the longer that blessing will last, with the High Lantern in Zoa said to carry the blessing to his followers for a full year.

**Benefits:** In addition to the familial celebrations and strengthening of community ties, the worshipers of the Shining One who gather for the final benediction of the High Sun receive a +1 bonus to mental saves against the powers of the undead.

This is not additive to bonuses already received for a high Wisdom, but does offset penalties due to low Wisdom. The blessing is meant to bolster the common folk in the face of supernatural evil, not strengthen the clergy in their battles.

The duration of the blessing ranges from a single week for a Spark (the lowest rank a member of the Order of Light can attain) to a full year for the High Lantern who commands the faith. Also, only those

present in the consecrated area of the temple can receive the blessing, so the numbers affected may be limited by available space. Finally, if the day is overcast and no amount of magic can clear the sky, the Order will take this as a bad omen and steel themselves for a year of hardship with many challenges from the forces of darkness.

## Service

The weekly worship is held on Godday, the sixth day of the Tellenian week. The services are usually short, opening with hymns to the Shining One and followed by a reading from the Radiant Order (remember, most peasants are illiterate and this is the only way they can become familiar with their god's teachings). The reading is then reinforced with some sort of sermon.

Typical topics include ways to identify and protect oneself from the undead; how to live in accordance with the values of the Eternal Lantern (greeting the sun in the morning, living under the light as protection against physical, spiritual and social ills, etc.) and the importance of close ties to the church and clergy. The service invariably ends with the faithful lighting candles and singing traditional hymns before leaving the worship area.

Afterwards, most temples encourage the worshippers to congregate and socialize with each other and the clergy, to share news of the past week and to enjoy each other's company. When the weather is nice and the sun is shining, these impromptu gatherings can stretch close to midday—an impressive feat considering the weekly service starts as close to sunrise as possible!

**Benefits:** There are no mechanical benefits to attending the weekly services of the Assembly of Light. However, depending on the leadership of the congregation, someone who frequently misses the services without good reason may be considered unfaithful or not devout enough to warrant the clergy's involvement in other aspects of their life. In extreme cases, they may find their space at the High Sun blessing given to a more dedicated soul.

# The Milestones

## Birth

The birth of a child to parents who are worshippers of the Eternal Lantern is a cause for celebration, as a new soul is walking in the Light. The Assembly, however, doesn't consider the child a full-fledged member of the faith until he or she can make an informed choice about joining.

Until then they are guided and counselled in accordance with the teachings of the Radiant Order. Clerics of the Order of Light are often present at births in homes of the faithful, if not as midwives or assistants, then to provide their blessing.

The time of birth is considered an important omen for the child. An infant born at dawn is considered the most blessed and are watched for signs they may join the clergy themselves. Children born at noon are thought to be forthright and honest, natural leaders in their community. Those born at sundown are looked upon as artists and creative souls. Finally, those born in the dark of the night used to be watched carefully throughout childhood as they were thought to carry the taint of darkness within them.

However, a trend in the last hundred years or so has seen a shift in that attitude. Now the clergy teach that the child of the night will use his knowledge of darkness to better resist it and battle its denizens. In truth, some of the greatest paladins the Order has produced in the past several centuries have been born at night—this fact has been instrumental in changing attitudes of even the most stalwart 'old guard'.

The birth blessing is often called the "Dawning" regardless of when the child is born, as it represents the emergence of the soul into the light. It is done as soon after birth as possible, in the hopes that the blessing of the Shining One will stave off the infant mortality rate that plagues the peasantry in many communities.

The attending cleric opens as many windows as local weather permits and sets alight every source of illumination in the house. He or she also brings blessed oil and a small lamp or lantern. If that's not available, consecrated candles are used. The infant is given a name (even if it's just a placeholder if born into a culture where official naming is done later on)

and the priest uses the holy light source to illuminate the newborn's entire body (this is done, too, to inspect for defects or deformities and is often done in conjunction with the midwife). Bathing the child in light, the cleric beseeches the Eternal Lantern's protection of the child. It is customary after the brief ceremony for the family to provide a meal for the cleric but no other payment may be offered or accepted. Children and light are blessings that go hand-in-hand.

**Benefits:** Regardless of the rank of the attending cleric, the infant receives a +1 to saves against disease for the first year of life. This is not additive to any bonuses from high Constitution, although it may offset penalties due to low Constitution. Considering the high incidence of childhood diseases claiming young souls, this is a huge blessing and serves to insure the loyalty of families in the community.

If the service is performed by a cleric holding the rank of Torch, the blessing lasts until they are five years old. If performed by a Lantern, the infant is blessed until reaching puberty. In the rare instance where the High Lantern of the faith blesses an infant (usually reserved for the babies of kings and important officials) the blessing lasts until puberty and the child receives a +1 to save against energy drain attacks used by undead (similar to the bonus received by novitiate clerics).

## **Dedication, Child**

There is no specific ritual for this. Children of the faithful are indoctrinated from birth and are welcome at all services and functions so long as they are not being disruptive. The Order of Light makes no distinction between a newborn in the faith and a child of 10 years, both are accepted and not expected to fully understand the deeper reasoning of the faith until adolescence.

## **Rite of Passage/Coming of Age**

Many tribal Deji who have been converted by missionaries of the Assembly of Light retain their traditions of the rite of passage. These are cultural constructs as the Assembly does not engage in such practices. Instead, when the child of a follower reaches thirteen years of age, they engage in a ceremony welcoming them fully into the fold, as they are now seen as old enough and wise enough to under-

stand the importance of the church's teachings.

The ceremony is called the "Second Dawning" and is considered a rebirth of sorts. The ceremony is personal and the officiating cleric will often customize it to the individual (especially in cases where the cleric was present at the young person's birth and has watched them grow). The adolescent must memorize a passage from The Radiant Order and be able to recite it as well as a prayer of confirmation flawlessly before the attending priest and at least two adult members of the congregation in good standing. Tradition holds that these two are the parents, but this is not always possible). Some Assemblies invite the entire flock to be present at this ceremony but this is often dependent upon the comfort level of the youth.

With the prayer and recitation out of the way, the clergy place the faithful adolescent in a closed room with no windows. There are several consecrated candles present and he or she must light one with the available tools (these vary regionally but this task is never particularly difficult). The tools are removed and the door is locked at sundown.

The supplicant is responsible for transferring the flame from one candle to another as they burn down over the course of the entire night. No candle will burn for more than an hour so it requires dedication to remain awake (or limit oneself to short naps) in order to keep the light burning all night. The room is opened at sunrise and if a candle is still burning the youth is said to have "beaten the night" and is welcomed into the congregation as a full adult member. There's a brief breakfast and celebration before he or she returns to the family home for some rest.

**Benefits:** First and foremost, the child is now considered an adult in the eyes of the faith. They may begin training with the clergy, the local members of the Order may petition on their behalf to be accepted as apprentices in a craft or trade, and they may marry (although local customs and taboos may prevent this until the new member is older). They are also expected to uphold the values of the Assembly and understand why they behave this way.

Mechanically, they lose any bonuses they may have received due to blessings at their first Dawning. Instead, they gain a one-time bonus of +1 on any saving throw of their choosing. This can be used



once in their lifetime and is then lost. However, unlike blessings from childhood, it does add to bonuses due to high ability scores or class features. This bonus is also lost if the new member of the flock is anointed as a follower of a different god, or otherwise breaks the fundamental edicts laid out in the Radiant Order.

### **Dedication, Adult**

Conversion is the chief weapon of the Assembly of Light in their battle against evil. Quite often, this means indoctrinating new members who are not children. In this case, the ceremony is similar to the “Second Dawning” but instead is called the “Full Dawning” as they are brought into the light as complete souls ready to understand the teachings of the church from the beginning.

It is similar to the ceremony that an adolescent would undergo, but is more often performed in front of the entire congregation. It is not uncommon for entire families to be dedicated to the Shining One simultaneously. In these cases, any family member

over the age of 13 is expected to take part in the ceremony of prayer and recitation. Newcomers who are literate and read the Radiant Order on their own are accorded special respect (although they are expected to memorize longer passages).

The biggest difference comes in the final ceremony to “beat the night”. If the family contains children under the age of 13, one of the parents or other adults must keep a candle burning for each child. This is symbolic of them taking responsibility for raising that child “in the light” until they are old enough to take part in their own “Second Dawning”. Otherwise, the ritual is the same.

**Benefits:** Adults who convert to the Assembly of Light receive the same one-time +1 saving throw bonus as those raised in the faith. However, taking part in this ritual nullifies any anointment they may have received earlier in life as they leave that god for the Eternal Lantern. Likewise, they lose this bonus if they convert to a different faith or violate the tenets of the Assembly.

### **Marriage**

Weddings are not big affairs among the Assembly of Light for religious reasons. They are, however, culturally important in whatever locale the temple is found. The actual marriage ceremony performed by the clergy is brief and includes shared prayers and vows of devotion to one another as well as dedication to the Shining One.

The whole ceremony takes between ten and fifteen minutes, depending on what the couple wants and how much effort the officiating priest wants to devote. If the cleric has known the couple (or one of them) for a long time, he or she may “punch it up” a bit by including hymns and a longer prayer service but for the most part the ceremony is not a formal affair.

The celebration that follows the ceremony, though, is almost always large and involves the entire congregation. Since weddings are invariably held at noon, custom among the Assembly and its followers is to hold a lunch afterwards. Ideally the celebration is held outside under a shining sun.

Many brides will postpone their weddings to avoid the ominous portent of being married under overcast skies. The meal includes speeches (and it is custom-

ary for the officiating priest of the wedding to deliver a blessing over the meal), music and dancing. Without fail, though, the ceremony must end before sundown as the bride and groom retire before dark. Many couples consider it bad luck to be outside when night falls on their wedding day. Besides, for the couple, certain aspects of the wedding celebration are best performed behind closed doors...

**Benefits:** None. The wedding is purely a social construct among this faith although it is considered special as it encourages the birth of new members.

### Dedication, Place

The only places sacred to the Assembly of Light are the physical churches. These are consecrated with Ceremony spells although members of the congregation are often welcome to attend. Otherwise, they do not consider it important to “bless” homes or businesses or any other physical construct.

There is one exception, however: Lighthouses.

These are essential to shipping and travel and are very symbolic to the faith. Local temples serving coastal communities will often consecrate a small altar in a lighthouse as a secondary place of worship. Lighthouse keepers are accorded special respect among the congregation in these areas (unsurprisingly).

### Death

The funeral rites of the Assembly of Light vary regionally and are heavily influenced by racial traditions. In all cases, though, candles are lit to mark the beginning of a prayer service, led by the highest ranking priest. Tales of the deceased’s life are shared, with special attention given to their good deeds, their “light”. Mourners are encouraged to speak of the departed as well. Each person in attendance is expected to light a candle or other source of illumination; the more radiant the glow, the greater the soul (as he or she touched more people with their good acts). It’s believed that this light will help guide the soul to the embrace of the Shining One and eternal peace and joy.

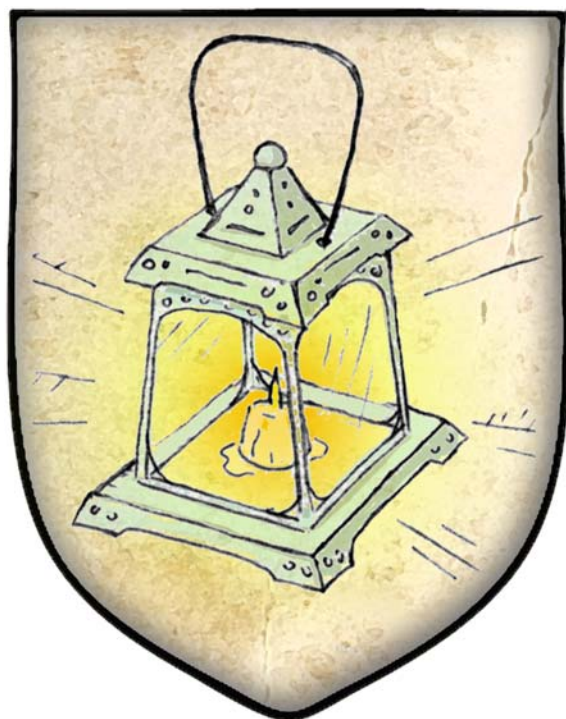
Given the Assembly of Light’s hatred of the undead, funeral rites also serve as a way to protect the congregation from the predations of these monstrous beings. The final blessing performed by the attend-

ing cleric calls upon the Eternal Lantern to protect the soul and the corpse from defilement. Note that in cultures where cremation is common (Fhokki and certain Deji tribes) this is less vital but the prayers are still included.

**Benefits:** For the living, none. However, the body of the deceased is protected against being raised as an undead. Any attempt to animate the corpse requires a Turn Undead check as though it were made by the cleric who presided over the funeral.

Use the Will Factor of the undead type being created. If the check succeeds, the power of the Shining One keeps the corpse in its grave. Another important feature of this ceremony is that a hero who has fallen to an undead monster that has the power to create more of its kind receives the same check. The presiding cleric makes a Turn Undead check against the Will Factor of the creature the hero will become. If successful the fallen one remains dead and his or her corpse receives the same protection against future animation. If it fails, the cleric can attempt to turn again, without the attending penalties for repeated turn checks.

This is one of the most vital and fundamental roles the Order of Light performs and they are expected to preserve the sanctity of their followers beyond the grave. Also, a cleric who performs this service (stopping someone from rising as an undead) receives +1 Honor.





## Twenty-Four Short City Encounters

By: Jerimy Grafenstein

1. Arriving at the city gates the party discovers a massive line. While they wait a woman, Felia Hallma, lingering in the shadows with a band of armed mercenaries hails them. Felia explains that she needs the group to carry a satchel of rough cut gemstones through the gates for her because she fears, based on her reputation, the corrupt guards will search her and keep the stones for themselves. Once through, she will meet the party at a nearby inn and retrieve the stones. In exchange the group can keep three of the fifty gemstones.

2. Soldiers at the city gates attempt to shake down the PCs - but they don't want money. Using intimidation, coercion, and even simple guilt, the group will steal any bread and food the party has on hand. The food is to supplement their daily rations which have been cut back by city officials. Further investigation reveals that all is not well within the city hierarchy.

3. A funeral procession passes by. Should the party follow, the procession ends at the graveyard where tales of great valor are told about the newly deceased - including a harrowing story in which the recently departed discovered a great vault of wealth in a long lost tomb he was forced to leave behind...

4. The PCs hear of a hostel within the city. Locals claim anyone in need of a respite may stay there free of charge. It's widely believed that one of the local priest-hoods runs the hostel...but dedicated to which god?

5. A gang of smugglers and thieves have broken into the PCs favorite tavern by tunneling into the cellar from the adjacent sewer system in order to hide their ill-gotten gains. More and more unusual patrons have begun frequenting the place, much to the chagrin of the tavern owner and his customers who can't explain why.

6. A band of mercenaries are dragging a screaming man down the street. They claim he's a member of their group and just overindulged in wine. Are they telling the truth?

7. Two lovers are caught in the bedchamber/inn room of one a randomly selected PC. They claim to have discovered the room unlooked and were merely seeking a place of solitude for their liaison. The lovers are actually homeless thieves who break into random rooms in search of a warm bed. In the morning they make off with whatever valuables they can steal.

8. Three mischievous young boys are spotting throwing hunks of rock from a bridge at a passing boat while openly taunting the affluent passengers. If confronted they will run.

9. A badly beaten, and obviously derelict, teenage girl stumbles into the PCs path. She claims to have been assaulted and robbed by a band of street toughs. Worse, upon hearing the news her brother ran off to extract revenge!

10. A horde of beggars descends on the party as they pass through the poorer sections of the city. They grab and clutch at the PCs while begging for food or coins - but don't steal anything. Once they are driven off one character discovers a note in his pocket...

**11.** Armed tax-collectors physically assault an elderly shop keeper in the street. If the PCs approach they will claim to be on city business. Intervening on the shop keeper's behalf could have serious repercussions.



**12.** Armed watchmen burst into the tavern and attempt to arrest the party mage. They claim he's responsible for burning down three city blocks two nights past, and they have the witnesses to prove it.

**13.** While walking down the street a melee spills out of a nearby building. What starts as a fistfight quickly escalates into a duel as the combatants grab weapons. The resulting fight becomes chaotic when a few innocents are accidentally wounded.

**14.** One local business seems to attract an unhealthy amount of beggars and transients. They cling to the sides of the building in search of shelter or food. Oddly, they don't pester passing people. As night approaches the beggars seem to mysteriously disappear one by one. The next morning a new group of beggars arrives. Where are they going at night and what's happening to them?

**15.** In the town market the PCs spy an elderly man stealing a short sword and concealing it under his tunic. He doesn't look poor or particularly able with a weapon.

**16.** A man rushes out of an alley and crashes into the group, spilling an armload of scrolls upon the ground. He's well-dressed and speaks with a foreign accent while begging forgiveness. He gathers his lost

scrolls and hurries away. Moments later three armed men emerge from the same alleyway and give chase. After they leave the PCs notice that the foreigner missed one of his scroll cases.

**17.** As the night of a full moon approaches a mysterious man offers to hire the PCs to lock him up and keep watch on him overnight. He claims he was bitten last month by a wild man-beast (actually a rabid dog) and he believes he's become a werewolf. The man does not have lycanthropy but he spent the past month in a drunken, woeful state and most of the locals now know about the attack. As the full moon rises the locals form a mob hoping to deal with the man...

**18.** A massive sinkhole opens in the town square after a particularly terrible rainstorm, revealing a series of unexplainable tunnels underneath town.

**19.** A runaway, driver-less carriage pulled by four spooked horses careens down the street smashing into buildings. From the back a terrified woman speaks for help.

**20.** Guards leading a string of prisoners down the street in chains are suddenly attacked. During the skirmish two prisoners somehow escape amidst the chaos. The guards, in a panic, ask for aid in finding the missing men.

**21.** The PCs stumble upon a small city square containing an interesting scene. A group of eight street performers (jugglers, mimes, and acrobats) lie wounded and beaten amidst their scattered props. They are groaning for assistance and claiming a feral beast rampaged through the square attacked them as they were preparing to perform.

**22.** Rats have increased in frequency as of late, leading to the city offering a bounty of 1 trade coin per rat captured. What's causing the increase of rodent activity and why is the city willing to put a bounty on the vermin?

**23.** The price of salt has doubled in the month, and merchants are suddenly paying big money to anyone who can tell them why.

**24.** Numerous complaints over a foul-tasting keg of ale at the local tavern end when the innkeeper opening the keg up only to find a dead Halfling inside.



# GameMaster's Workshop

## The Newsletter and Your Campaign

Getting your PCs involved at the cost  
of printer ink and a few pieces of  
paper

By: Kurtis Evans

For the first time in a month there was no news of the Vikings who'd been assaulting the villages along the great lake – and that was how we knew we were in for a world of trouble. None of us were surprised, then, when, during the following week's game night, dozens of large men with braided blonde hair were spotted within the city during that evening's game. Several were poorly disguised as a stable-hands. Another as a courier. More were working in the taverns. It seemed as though they were everywhere, and we knew now that we were racing against the clock if we wanted to save our town from the Viking Hordes.

The scene I just described was the precursor to the culminating event of the longest-lasting, most thoroughly enjoyable campaign I ever experienced as a gamer. It was also the inspiration for a gaming device that should be in every GM's arsenal: a weekly newsletter. And all it will cost you is a print cartridge and a couple of blank sheets of paper.

A newsletter can be done very simply – or, as complicated as you like. Most word processing computer programs have the option for you to type in multiple columns – two are enough, three are ideal – and many allow for you to overlay your stories with images.

Imagine the possibilities. Whether you are running a HackMaster campaign at Frandor's Keep, or your Aces & Eights players are settling in the Cauldron,

a newsletter serves in two essential roles – it inspires PCs and it hooks them. For example: did one of your PCs die heroically in the previous session? Perhaps he's deserving of a brief mention on the front page under the article heading, "A Man Dies Heroically, and A New Legend is Born."

Or maybe somebody did something exceptionally stupid. What better to commemorate the event than with a brief blurb, titled something like, "Local Buf-foon Finally Exhausts Luck; Dies." Or, best yet, maybe your PCs will do something that fails to receive mention. You'll know you have them hooked when they get mad that their brazen robbery attempt of the viscount's dilapidated summer cottage failed to receive any notice.

Maybe you are planning a Hobgoblin invasion. An article titled, "Village of V'Rizon Attacked By Hobgoblins," which details the news of a small town 30 miles away being overrun may give your PCs enough forewarning to prepare. Especially if, the following week, they see an article titled, "Neighboring Village Ransacked – Are We Next?" Maybe they'll put together the pieces, maybe not, but at least you'll have warned them!

Similarly, you can outline a number of important – or mundane, for that matter – campaign events for Aces & Eights through a simple newsletter. If you want your PCs to go panning for gold (or if you want them to go a' thievin'), just spin a few stories of locals striking it rich in the hills, and that might do the job. Perhaps your PCs are getting too lucky and are getting away with too much crime – an article in the paper, warning of the imminent arrival of the bounty hunter Canada Joe, may inspire them to go on the straight and narrow, or to stock up guns and bullets for what would surely be an epic gunfight!

Best of all – a one page newsletter doesn't take very long to make. Just take your campaign notes, and a recap of last week's events, and spin a few sto-

ries out of them. Your campaign's many threads will be weaved a little tighter and, best of all, your PCs will almost certainly get a kick out of it. A GM's world is always a little better when his PCs can actually see parts of it.

Don't take my word for it, though – check out the Kenzer & Company created Lazarus Spectator, or the two Muskeegie Heralds available for download on the Aces & Eights website. They look pretty impressive; more impressive, in fact, than what you need as a GM.

However, if you simply don't have the time to craft a full page of news stories, or if you don't think a newsletter makes sense in the village you are basing your HackMaster or Aces & Eights campaign out of, then you can always try the postings board. Examples of these can be found in both the original Hack-

Master's Little Keep on the Borderlands and HackMaster Basic's Frandor's Keep. All you need is a little bit of empty space on a wall near your gaming table, some blank sheets of paper, and a marker. Just write whatever message you want, like, "Ya never showed up fer the job, Jarren. I'll be waitin' for ye at the tavern fer one more day!" This simple note is an instant adventure hook for your PCs, and is simply another option you can use in order to make your game even more vibrant and exciting.

Oh – and as for the campaign where the newsletter concept was introduced to my group of gamers? Our city was ransacked and good portions of it were burned to the ground. We failed to stop the Vikings – although, I did make the front page of the paper for having killed a Viking with a carrot while I was blind-folded. So, I guess it was a wash.

# MUSKEEGIE HERALD

Aaron Critcher • Publisher



November 3rd, 1870

## BANK ROBBERY FOILED! THREE BANDITS SLAIN!

**TWO SCOUNDRELS FROM THE  
RODRIGUEZ GANG GUNNED DOWN!**

**NO MONEY TAKEN!**

**TWO BANDITS SEVERLY  
WOUNDED AND TAKEN CAPTIVE**

**WHERE WAS THE MARSHALL?**

**ROBBERY AVERTED BY  
BRAVE TOWNSMEN  
WHO'S SUSPICIONS  
HAD BEEN AROUSED**

**ONE HERO SERIOUSLY  
WOUNDED WAS  
STRANGER TO TOWN!**

Those pushing for the prohibition of guns within town limits again have reason to pause and rethink their position. For the second time in as many months a bank robbery at the MUSKEEGIE BANK was narrowly averted. Deputy Abraham Smith credits four men as Muskeegie's heroes of the day. Heroes who had swift access to their weapons when danger called.

Bart Smith, Hank Straam, Jedidiah Smith and an unnamed Indian companion apparently had their suspicions aroused after learning Jason Gogburn's dogs had been shot and killed early last night.

Strangely enough Bart Smith and Hank Straam are strangers to town who hadn't even taken the time to acquire tonight's lodging. They were taking drinks at the DIAMOND SPUR when they learned the animals had been slain.

"I got to wondering why anyone would kill good hunting dogs," said Bart Smith from his cot at Doc Mason's loft where his gunshot wounds were being tended.

"So I grabbed some other fellas and we went to poke about a bit and see what we could learn."

The group quickly surmised the animals had been killed to silence their barking. The close proximity of the animals to the bank led to them reporting their suspicions to Deputy 'Stick' Abraham who had been left in charge while the our



*Gasparro and Julio Rodriguez.  
No longer a menace  
to peace loving folk.*

brave Marshall was away apparently playing wetnurse for his sister.

"To be honest, I figured I knew who had killed them dogs and why," Deputy Stick later said, "But being short handed and all I thought it might not hurt to be safe. So I deputized those men and had them hold watch on the bank."

Deputy Smith's cautious nature served him well for his new recruits soon found their suspicions confirmed. Shortly after 10 p.m. four shadow figures silently walked their horses in behind the bank and set about entering through an unlatched window.

Little did they know they had walked into an ambush in waiting. A hail of gunfire quickly erupted. When the smoke cleared two bandits lay dead and two others critically wounded -- the last of the infamous Rodriguez Gang as it was later discovered.

Bart Smith took a shot to the jaw while chasing down one of the men who chose to flee empty handed like a coward.

Killed in the gunfight was Gasparro Rodriguez and his brother, Julio. Wounded were Hernando Valdez and "Diablo Juan." The gang was carrying six sticks of dynamite and planned on blowing the vault.

The HERALD'S question is this. Where was the Marshall? The Rodriguez brothers held up the bank in La Boca two weeks ago and it was believed they were in the

area. Why are we paying him? First he allows Mexican Bob to escape while under his watch. Now this.

We need men of iron to dampen the flames of violence that have engulfed our good town. Which is why we continue to urge the council to step aside and free the way for free elections.

Muskeegie needs a Mayor armed with the power to appoint tough men who aren't afraid to sweep the criminally inclined from all corners of our town.

The Town Council has no backbone when it comes to doing the tough work that needs doing. But they do come up for air when called out for it. The HERALD has received letters of threat. "Be silent or else," they read. Yet strangely enough they are unsigned. One does not have to scratch his head for more than a moment to realize who the cowardly authors are.

### LOCAL MAN ARRESTED. HELD AT JAIL AS OUTSIDE ACCOMPLICE TO BANK ROBBERY

Ezra Titus a stable hand at the Ames and Celby Prieight Company was arrested after a gunfight at the A&C Stables this morning. The Marshall's Office isn't talking but witnesses say he's being held as an accomplice to last night's attempted bank robbery. Mr. Titus has had several run ins with the law since his arrival to town last year. He was recently arrested and held for 30 days for beating Jeffrey

Beggs, a reporter at the Muskeegie Herald and for threatening to burn down the Herald's offices. It is our hope the law deals with Mr. Titus firmly than they hand held as accomplice have in the past.



## 1+re-roll: What's its mean?

We introduced the concept of allowing a hit point re-roll at even levels to solve the problem of the unfortunate PC that rolls a "1" or "2" for hit points for several levels. Yes, in high school a player at our table had a First Edition High Priest that had something like 17 hp... maybe less. It's both very discouraging for the player and ultimately ruinous for his character.

In HackMaster, characters are permitted two bites at the apple with an ultimate fallback of getting half their die type should they roll abysmally. This ensures that higher-level PCs are at least in the ballpark with their peers and can handle the rigors of combat expected from a character their level.

What isn't intuitive is how many hit points should a leveled NPC possess. In the old days, you could easily take the mean value of a d8 (i.e. 4.5) and quickly figure out how many HP to give a Xth level cleric (or other classes depending on their die type). 1+re-roll makes this more difficult.

The chart to the right lists both the minimum and average number of hit points a character should gain every two levels given his class' die type using 1+re-roll (with half minimum). This should prove useful in generating realistic NPCs.

Die Type	Minimum HP per two levels	Average HP per two levels
d4	2	3.19
d6	3	4.58
d8	4	6.03
d10	5	7.45
d12	6	8.87

## Small Staves

I'll be the first to admit that I did not anticipate the level of desire of individuals to play gnome and halfling clerics. Such individuals belonging to the Church of Everlasting Hope, the Temple of the Stars, the Order of Thought or the Conventicle of the Great Tree are disadvantaged in that their deity's preferred weapon is unavailable to them due to their miniscule size.

To remedy this, the following new weapon is available to these formerly disenfranchised clerics.

### New Melee Weapon

Melee Weapons	STR required	Skill level	Damage	Shield Damage	Speed	Size	Reach	Type
Small Staff <sup>T</sup>	5	low	2d3p+2	d3p	13	M	4½ feet	Crushing
<sup>T</sup> indicates two-handed weapon								

New Weaponry					
Item	Cost	Weight	Base Availability		
			Hi	Med	Low
Small Staff	2 cp	2½ lbs.	100	80	70



<http://eric22222.wordpress.com/2009/03/22/a-mathematical-analysis-of-exploding-dice/>

For those interested in the definitive mathematical proof, check out this blog post.