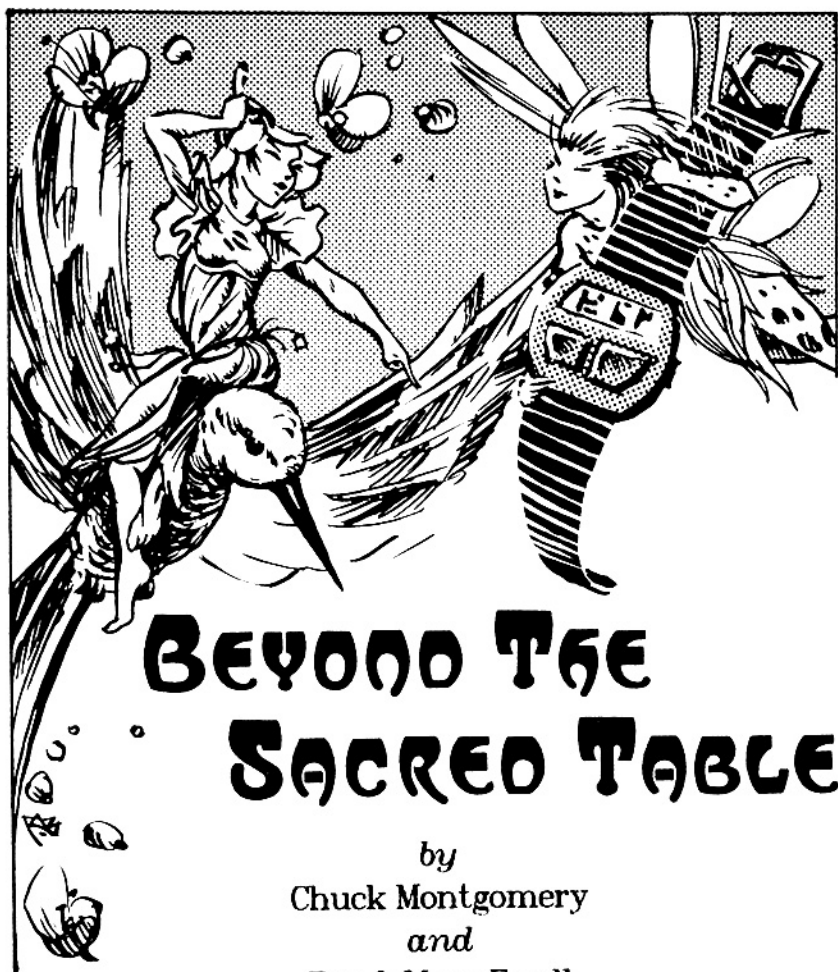


BEYOND THE SACRED TABLE



ISBN 0-940918-21-X Stock # 82-011

DRAGON TREE PRESS



BEYOND THE SACRED TABLE

by
Chuck Montgomery
and
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Beyond The Sacred Table

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. by Ben & Mary Ezell

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Beyond The Sacred Table

(c) 1986 by Dragon Tree Press

1085 14th St. — Suite 1502

Boulder, Colorado 80302

First Edition — September 1986

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0

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Introducing A New Dimension: *Beyond The Sacred Table*

In this volume of the Delian Chronicles from Dragon Tree Press, we have undertaken two objectives: first, to satisfy requests for additional information on the nature and geography of the World of Delos and, second, to offer an introduction to a new dimension in fantasy gaming, the world of Live-Action gaming.

Toward this first objective, we offer a view centered on the Symarian Gulf region including the Heavy-Metal and Inverse Islands, the Barony Keys, the Spencerian Group and a variety of other interesting lands. But mere geographical areas do not make a world and, in many respects, the commercial and social factors determine far more than mere geographical and geopolitical boundries. For this reason, we have provided a guide to some few of the many exports and other products important to this region as well as an account of contemporary Delian Cosmology — which may be particularly useful to the traveller in these regions.

Continuing this tradition, in our forthcoming compendium, **The Monsterous Civilizations Of Delos**, you will journey to meet the Wampyr of the Forests of Night, dare the dark regions known only as The Broken Lands and undertake to recover the fable Gnoptic Chalice as you visit the Ogre Nations.

But we have also mentioned the world of Live-Action gaming. In cooperation with Chuck Montgomery — an experienced Game Master active with the Colorado International Fantasy Gaming Society — we offer a new dimension in gaming which carries you and your players beyond the conventional table-top into a world designed to provide new challenges for experienced players as well as excitement and participation for the novice . . . regardless of your rule system.

And, in the forthcoming **Of Taverns and Tournaments** and **The World-Master's Guide**, we will provide a complete and tested rule system for full-scale Live-Action gaming, scenarios, safe weapons construction, character classes and advancement, scoring and all other aspects necessary for entry into a broad and wonder-filled world where Fantasy is the only Reality and . . . **you are there!**

Come with us now as we walk shadow into the world where only the Delian rules . . . and anything *might* be true . . .

Potions And Other Potables

Like most worlds, Delos is favored with a variety of potions, wines, beers and other beverages and potables both local and imported, each with its unique characteristics (*for popular imports, see Legendary Potables of Arduin, The Lost Grimoire*). On Delos, however, even the waters may have decisive and unusual effects.

The Sparkling Mineral Waters of Delos and The Flat Mineral Waters of Delos

A variety of popular mineral waters are found in various regions of Delos. When fresh, sparkling and effervescent, each water has a semi-magical effect. However, the very same water — once it has gone flat — usually has an effect almost the opposite to what it had while fresh.

Imported Sparkling Waters are bottled in bond using methods which are proprietary trade secrets of the Vintner's Guild and, as such, are well guarded and known only to a select few Master Bottlers who travel regularly to the sources to prepare these potables for transport and resale and the value set on such salubrious fluids is reflected in the prices charged (*nominally speaking, the spoiled or flat varieties are considered valueless*).

Travelers should be cautioned: while the sparkling waters may be sampled at their sources, amateurish attempts to bottle and/or transport the waters invariably result in the waters going flat.

A number of varieties of Sparkling (*and Flat*) Waters are detailed following:

Sparkling Devonian Mineral Waters

Retailing at 35 GS per magnum, this brilliant, sparkling mineral water causes the drinker's *mood* to become contagious. If the user is happy, everybody they touch *will* also be happy (*no save*) and all within 10 feet must Save VS Charm (*every ten minutes*) or also be affected.

Further, if the drinker, for any reason, becomes unhappy (*or whatever*), all those affected originally will *immediately* shift to share their new mood.

The effects last (*regardless of amount consumed*) for 3+1d8 hours and the only way to become "detached", once affected, is to be out of sight and sound of the drinker for *one hour* or to meditate for ten minutes.

Flat Devonian Mineral Waters

When Devonian Mineral Waters go flat (*one-two hours after decanting — roll 1d6 times ten minutes plus one hour*), the effect changes and it is the drinker who suffers the *delusion* that his moods are magically contagious. At this point, they "see and hear" everyone in their vicinity "helplessly laughing or crying" in accordance with their mood . . . but, in fact, others are merely reacting 'normally'.

Cyponian Sparkling Waters

Exported from the Island of Cypon, these waters render the drinker unable to speak except in rhymed couplets (*exception following*). If the imbibor is unable to speak in rhyme, they cannot say *anything*! Effects last for 1d4+1 hours *per ounce consumed*! Because of their potency, these Sparkling Waters retail for 125 GS per split (*approximately 8 ounces*).

"*Why didn't she scream for help?*" . . . "*She couldn't think of a rhyme for 'quicksand'!*"

excerpt from *Wanamaker's Guide for the Dungeon Master*.

In the world of New Parnassus, the victim must do *all* communication via written notes to the DM. Only if the note rhymes and scans will the DM read it to the other players. But, of course, that's a little too extreme . . .

There is *one* method of counteracting this effect: the deliberate inducement of a state of Panzaism (*see The Handbook Of Traps And Tricks*) — a state of insanity which causes the victim to *disbelieve* all magicks and all magickal creatures, etc (*i.e. they "see giants as windmills"*). While afflicted with Panzaism, the victims are able to speak normally . . . but only about *non-magickal* matters (*or about magickal things falsely perceived as non-magickal*).

Obviously, the first several rhymes made will be on non-magickal subjects but, after 2d8 successful rhymes (*the GM should roll secretly for the number required*), they may "return to normal" and be able to distinguish magickal and non-magickal in the normal manner.

On a related note, we should also mention the fabled Quixotian Talisman. Crafted of finest alabaster in cunning representation of a technological device known as a "windmill", this arcane device permits the wearer (*regardless of psychological state*) to speak in rhyme . . . an act which will cure any inflicted with Panzaism . . . but only at the price of inflicting Quixotism (*see The Handbook Of Traps And Tricks*).

In Mundania, of course, these sparkling waters have no effect whatsoever.

Cyponian Flat Waters

When Cyponian Sparkling Waters go flat (*1d4+4 hours after a bottle is opened*), one of the following effects will occur:

- 1) The drinker will disbelieve any statement which is expressed in poetry. "*She's got to be making it up! Why doesn't she use plain Common Tongue?*"
- 2) The drinker will disbelieve anything which *isn't* stated in poetry!
- 3) The drinker will ignore any **short** statement — only if it is repeated in several different ways and elaborated on (*preferably with poetic and colorful details*) will they take the statement seriously.
- 4) Renders the drinker curt and unable to say anything except "Yep", "Nope" or "*That's right, Ma'm*".

Pyrian Sparkling Spring Waters

Related to the Cyponian Sparkling Waters (*origins unknown*), the effects of Pyrian Sparkling Waters are outwardly similar . . . but with the additional effect (*20% chance*) of anything spoken in rhyme being **totally and completely correct** . . . regardless of what was said. These precious (*and very rare*) waters common retail for 500 GS per split (*approximately 8 ounces*) . . . when available!

In any case, Pyrian Sparkling Waters (*which never go flat*) also permit a **very limited** form of Shadow-Walking (*see The Dragon Tree Spell Book*) which only allows the drinker to 'walk' out of Mundania or any other "mana-poor" (*i.e. non-magickal*) area into some (randomly rolled) "mana-rich" (*i.e. magickal*) region. These waters also permit the drinker to **voluntarily** enter or exit from a state of Panzaism.

On a cautionary note, we will also recount the case of the Bard Alacia who traveled and sang much in the Bordertowns between Delos

and Mundania and, for Mundane audiences, found it useful to perform in a state of Panzaism and used Pyrican waters, after performing, to counteract such a state.

However, overuse (as usual with *Delian magicks*) caused the effects to "bleed" together and to "flash on" at the wrong times. At times, this was only a minor inconvenience and rhymes about Mundane matters for a Mundane audience would shift Alacia out of Panzaism in the middle of a performance and, on other occasions, she might Shadow-Walk back to Upton from the middle of a performance — which was rather annoying to the management of the Hotel Mundania . . . until they began billing her as "*the Ultimate Vanishing Singing Houdini*."

But then matters got worse . . . Alacia's songs about Mundane subjects began to turn the subjects magickal! A fanciful song about a Mundane cart-horse caused it to grow wings and fly away (*which was hushed up and the horse's owner was laughed out of court when he sued her — after all, everybody knows horses can't fly*) and a song about a barmaid made her remember her past life as Helen of Troy . . .

But the final catastrophe was the song Alacia made which proceeded to Shadow-Walk the *entire Mundane audience* into Delos with her — right into the Tower of Fenchelchen. Of course, Alacia wasn't entirely at fault! It was a totally rational and predictable result both of the song Alacia was singing (about "*poor lost sheep*") and the spell which Fenchelchen was working at the exact same moment: enchanting a ball of black sheep's wool for the purpose of "magickal summoning".

Investigation later showed that, by the magickal laws of Delos, these events were drawn together through 'Nth dimensional similarity' or 'a crack in reality' — i.e. one of the channels through which magickal causation flows between the Delian Shadows. Totally rational, totally predictable . . . but Fenchelchen's spell was never the same afterwards and Alacia was permanently barred from singing at Morey's or at the Temple Bar . . . (see *Magickal Yarns of Delos*).

Abarian Sparkling Mineral Waters

These waters, imported with great secrecy by the firm of Thomby and Daughters (in *very limited supply and retailing for 100 GS per magnum*), have the effect of producing a unusual (*but pleasant*) form of hysterical blindness causing the imbiber to see the mundane or commonplace as attractive and to view anything ugly or disgusting as

extremely beautiful.

Please note: these results are not illusion but intoxication and true-sight, etc does not render the imbibor immune to the effects. Bringing high prices in most markets, such waters are popularly served at banquets, sporting houses, weddings and other festive occasions but reports have been received of some less than scrupulous merchants providing Abarian Sparkling Waters to their customers as a refreshing draught during prolonged bargaining sessions.

The effects last (*per bottle*) for 1d3+3 hours.

Abarian Still Mineral Waters

In their flat form (*3-4 hours after decanting*), the Abarian Sparkling Mineral Waters have the unusual effects of producing a form of hysterical blindness such that the imbibor is rendered unawares of anything beautiful. This effect may occur in either a mild (*01-50%*) or strong (*51-00%*) form.

In the milder form, the victim is unable to see anything beautiful — it simply isn't there! "*Must be illusion, I don't see it!*"

In the stronger form, the victim sees beautiful objects as something dull or plain looking. A beautiful, sparkling pool is "*just a mud puddle*", a green and emerald water garden becomes "*an unhealthy swamp, ought to be drained and made productive*" and a fairy with rainbow wings is "*only a fruit-fly*".

Wines Of The Mendacian Islands

Braggadocia Inveritas (red): this fine-flavored wine, when aged less than three years, is a gentle reddish-gold in color and has the unique property of causing the drinker to speak clearly, concisely and . . . truthfully. Generally available at a mere 25 GS per bottle, the red Braggadocia is a popular mixer when used with several of the Sparkling Mineral Waters, notably the Sparkling Abarian.

Braggadocia Invictus (black): as this wine is aged longer, the color changes to a dark ruddy-black, becomes stronger in flavor and greatly intoxicating. Even a small sip of Braggadocia Invictus will cause the drinker to speak at length (*great length*) of their capabilities as a warrior (*or as a great leader, etc*). Needless to say, only well-aged Braggadocia is favored by politicians and, at a retail price of 145 GS per split (*half-bottle*) requires a moderately deep pocketbook (*or access to public funds or an expense account*).

Mixologist's Notes

excerpted from an unpublished work by Professor Jerry Thomas

Popular in most civilized (i.e. those cultures with subtle rather than overt senses of humor) regions, the several Sparkling Mineral Waters of various regions are frequently used as mixers to enliven otherwise commonplace wines and brandies. It is not unknown for two (or more) Sparkling Waters to be combined, the effects of each remaining unaltered thereby, but the mixologist should keep in mind the duration of freshness of each water and see that such potables be kept properly fresh for service.

Popular combinations include: Braggadocia Invertias mixed with Sparkling Abarian Mineral Waters and fresh Imol juice; Pyriean Spring Waters mixed with anything; and a mixture of Devonian Mineral Waters and Cyponian Sparkling Waters with most brandies and a mixture of fruit juices (*Imol juice should be omitted*).



Sea Sprites

Originally land dwellers, the Sea Sprites are descended from a race of Pixies who, in typical Pixie fashion, had irritated the High Mage Garamond and were banished from the land. Finding that they liked the aquatic regions, they adapted quickly using their inherent magical talents. Since then, Sea Sprites have settled most of the Symarian Gulf shallows including the so-called Inverse Islands.

Since the Symarian Gulf was large untrafficked, the Sea Sprites settled into an insular existence and only later were 'rediscovered' by the surface dwellers when a group of exploring Grey Dwarves, storm cast into Decloan Crater (*see The Inverse Islands*), sought to repair damages to their hull and, finding themselves surrounded by what they assumed were evil spirits, began beseeching their Gods for forgiveness and deliverance.

The Sea Sprites, equally startled, believed themselves attacked by Giants and, likewise, prayed protection of their deities.

Once the confusion on both sides was alleviated, the Sea Sprites discovered an attraction for surface goods and the Grey Dwarves found a new market and a source of many valuable deep-sea products. The Sea Sprites practice an agrarian aquaculture and now trade with many of the surface inhabitants of the Gulf Islands.

Sea Sprites

<i>Frequency:</i> Common	<i>No. Appearing:</i> 1-6
<i>Armor Class:</i> 5	<i>Hit Dice:</i> 1d10
<i>Attacks:</i> 2	<i>Damage/Attack:</i> Magic
<i>Intelligence:</i> High	<i>Size:</i> Small (1'6")
<i>Alignment:</i> Neutral (Good)	<i>Move:</i> 12"/18"
<i>Magical Resistance:</i> 50%	
<i>Special Attacks:</i> See Below	
<i>Special Defenses:</i> See Below	

Sea Sprites use only magical attacks, equivalent to a third level Mage. Like Pixies, Sea Sprites may be invisible or otherwise but, unless danger threatens, will usually be visible. Sea Sprites may attack while invisible (*all opponents unable to detect invisible objects are -4 to hit*). They can also polymorph at will, create illusions with both audible and visual effects lasting until dispelled and, by touch, they cause confusion (*Save VS Magic*).



Attacking underwater, Sea Sprites have the advantage of surprise (*always*) and use Giant Pikes and Sharks as aquatic steeds (*Move: 24"*). On land (*rare*), Sea Sprites move at 12".

Fabrics Strange & Wonderful

Anastasia's Cloak of the Shadowy Past Value: Beyond Price

Unbelievably expensive, this Cloak of shimmering, filmy haze is so fine and insubstantial that no one — not even the wearer — knows whether it is material or not. Woven with a woof of the finest Arduinian spiga silk (*see Dark Dreams — Arduin Grimoire V — from Dragon Tree Press*) and the warp of finely drawn Asterium, the fabric consists of long, separate "streamers", each about 12" wide and joined at the collar, which weave and hold together, floating independently.

In actual fact, the streamers are not 'supported' by the collar but only anchored to keep them from floating away . . . and, what these are really made from is . . . Shadow-Pasts. When the Cloak is 'charged' (and never ask how — but there is a thriving, if limited, black market . . .) with the past of some individual, then the person wearing the Cloak acquires the victim's past . . . and, yes, victim is the proper term! The wearer acquires, in all respects, the victim's appearance, memories, reputation, skills, karma . . . but also their fears and sorrows and weaknesses . . . !

This does not, however, erase the wearer's other memories. Worn by a thief, they have both the memories of the person they supplanted and their own thievish memories . . . and with no change in character or alignment . . . thought these "extra" memories can, in themselves, be more than a little disconcerting . . .

And, if this were not power enough (*naturally — when you come to think of it*), this also functions rather like a Cloak of Nine Lives because, if the wearer dies, it is the 'persona' whose past was in the cloak . . . who dies . . . leaving the wearer intact as their normal self as they were before donning the Cloak.

Historical Note:

The origins of the Cloak lie far back. In the dark and distant days when the worlds were young, an argument arose between Zeus and the three Parcae (*the Fates*) over which held the ultimate powers and thus, so far as the truth may be known, the Cloak was created by the concerted actions of Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos.

But another, older, deity took a hand and, with the aid of Hermes

and Loki, the Cloak was stolen and given into the hands of men . . . and, every time it changes wearers, the warp and woof forming the past of an entire world is changed . . . and neither all the skills of the Fates nor all the powers of Zeus can interfere . . . and thus is the balance maintained and the Delian pleased.

And yet, it was by some strange fluke of Shadow-Travel, at a place known only as the *Kakuna Nexus*, that one Anastasia did acquire, by means not known, not one but several of these singular Cloaks and had, in the same week, two or three 'separate' identities, each complete with a separate past — which she spoke of as "a silky feeling, the ultimate luxury".

But, shortly after, both Gods and Fates learned the limits of their powers while entire Shadow-Worlds collapsed in a mysterious and fatal fraying of the fibers of reality . . .

*If the gods can change the past, why do they never do so in
mercy? Lewis — Till We Have Faces*

*Many a woman has a past, but I am told that she has at
least a dozen, and that they all fit.*
Wilde — Lady Windermere's Fan

The Hero's Weave**Value: 5 SP/sq yd**

Woven by the grey elves in the Forest of Rains, this textile would appear excellent for a soldier's uniform . . . and, indeed, they often export complete outfits (*at very reasonable prices*) to any seeking to field and supply an army (*especially their neighbors*). The pattern lends itself well to camouflage and, when examined closely, suggests a fine floral pattern on a field of russet. And, indeed, a soldier wearing this may be well hidden (*65% chance to remain unseen — as long as not moving*) . . . and especially when hiding from his own officers (*90% chance*).

But, in time of war and battle's trumpets, the wearer also becomes obsessed with his appearance, vanity, foppishness and realizes how well a green carnation would enhance his appearance and frequently stops to look such and would certainly not wish to fight or do anything violent for fear of getting their uniform dirty.

And, the only way to remove the uniform is to find and wear a green carnation (*rare except along the fringes of the Forest of Rains*) but then the soldier won't wear *anything*, desiring only to be naked and decadent . . . (*When ornamentation is added, such as worn by Generals and officers, these effects become peculiarly pronounced!*)

As long as war is regarded as wicked, it will always have its fascination. When it is looked upon as vulgar, it will cease to be popular.

Wilde — The Critic as Artist

The Cloak of Nine Lives

Value: 15,000 GS

This enchanted cloak of the finest black silk (from *Nemesis Assassinini* — see *The Delian Book Of The Dead*) has been designed to enhance the wearer's night vision (*short of total and absolute darkness, the wearer is able to see as if on a cloudy day*). Softly woven and non-reflective, the cloak also muffles the wearer's footsteps (*plus one to stealth*) but the user may also acquire a fondness for mousemeat (15% chance each day — *freak and raw only*).

Of greater importance, if Wearer dies, they are instantly reincarnated (at a cost of one Constitution point — *permanently lost!* — but with no system shock roll required) as a black cat . . . and, the next eight (8) times they die, they automatically come back as a black cat . . . ! (The cloak, of course, vanishes with the first death.)

There is no way to "beat" this situation! The user expends eight (8) Constitution Points in black-cat lives — no matter how long or short each life might be.

Any magick powerful enough to transform them from a black cat to something else — produces a dead 'something else'. If that 'dead something else' is then resurrected — he becomes a live . . . black cat — at the cost of yet another Con point.

It's definitely a case for "make the best of it" . . .

. . . the fabrics of Magick are not easily woven but, once complete and the warp and woof well beaten, these fabrics are also not lightly unraveled. Thus may a proper cloak serve most powerfully but they who would seek to snag the threads, and, yes, even Lachesis herself, may not seek to do so lightly or without careful cause for within such webs are many snares and knots, each with single purpose and cunning chantments and the plucker of threads may well find the skein of themselves drawn thereby . . .

The Magickal Yarns Of Jenos

These yarns are spun only by the Crones of the Heights of Jenos and delivered by Astral Messengers to the Thieves' Guild (*for use in sudden escapes*) and to the Order of Paladins (*for use in escaping with princesses rescued from durance vile — paladins being great dreamers*).

Fenchelchen's Yarns

These balls of magickal yarn were originally stolen by Madchen Fenchelchen (*later founder of the Crones of the Heights of Jenos*) from the stairless, doorless tower where she was imprisoned for her early years by her Godmother, the Sorceress.

Later, while living happily with her Paladin rescuer in Upton, Delos, Madam Fenchelchen took scraps of the yarn to Fr. Samuel at the University for analysis. The following magickal artifices were thereby developed and are relatively common (*though expensive!*) in the more sophisticated regions of Delos.

Fenchelchen Green

Value: 250 GS per skein

This is made of fine, intertwined, polished cotton threads which, when cast on the ground, produce a more-than-illusion of a great, flourishing Kitchen Garden springing up. Pursuers become tangled in the vine-poles and trellises, their horses stop to munch the giant lush cabbages and strawberries, their vassals eat the fruits and fall into cider vats, etc.

But the greatest delay of all is the gardeners — 1d10+10 deaf, talkative old men who *seem* about to give the pursuers useful information on which way the escapees went (*or about local terrain, etc*) but really keep coming back to the price of cabbage and the weather . . .

The illusion lasts and *feels solid* — the fruits taste natural and the cider causes real drunkenness — until either the pursuers leave or *successfully disbelieve* . . . and, here, *successful* disbelief here is not so easy! Whenever they try to *say* disbelieve, the gardeners take it up and interrupt or take offense at being called liars, etc, so somehow prevent them from saying it loud enough to work (*you might say — "Disbelief is easier done than said!"*).

Fenchelchen White**Value: 200 GS per skein**

Spun from the softest, purest lambs-wool, when cast on the ground, this produces an illusion of a great herd of white sheep ($100+1d100$) totally blocking the road and encircling the pursuers. Like the gardeners, the shepherders ($4+1d4$) are deaf and garrulous . . . and, for the same reason, successful disbelief is rather difficult . . .

Note: if the White Yarn is in any way damaged or dirtied, there is a chance for the 'herd' to contain one or more Wolves in Sheep's clothing . . .

Fenchelchen Light and Dark Blue**Value: 150/750 GS per skein**

Cast upon the ground, the yarn unrolls to become a wide marshy area (approximately 100 feet in diameter — subject to terrain) and lasting $10+2d20$ minutes. The more expensive dark blue also provides $2d20+5$ alligators and $4d20$ snapping turtles.

Fenchelchen Red**Value: 175 GS per skein**

Cast upon the ground, this yarn unrolls to become a wide bed of hot coals (very popular with certain faquirs and other mystics) approximately 50 feet in diameter (subject to terrain). These coals will not ignite vegetation or other natural materials belonging in the area but will remain too hot to pass (each step doing $1d4$ points damage) for $20+2d20$ minutes.

Fenchelchen Black**Value: 1000 GS per skein**

Spun from a coarse, wiry black wool, this has a "faintly discreditable odour" and, when cast upon the ground, immediately produces a large crowd which surrounds both escapees and pursuers . . . and a very motley crowd it is as well! Mostly composed of drunken Heidelberg students (complete with *dueling scars*) hoisting Mugs of Endless Beer, the crowd is fascinated by the escapees and the pursuers alike: some are friendly, some are belligerent, all are asking for directions!

While escapees and pursuers alike are trying to push through the

crowd, crowd members are demanding to be shown the way "*to the tables down at Morey's*" . . . "*to the place where Louis dwells*" . . . "*to the dear old Temple bar we love so well*" . . . as well as imploring "*show me the way to go home*" . . . or asking the "route" to some strange place called "Akron" . . .

Also appearing might be a 6-foot white rabbit, a gentleman who keeps trying to find out if they (*01-50, he and the pursuers or, 51-00, he and the escapees*) have acquaintances in common as well as various remittance men, a few atheistic cobblers, Rob, Allen and Willie with a peck of Malmsey . . .

This is ~~not~~ an illusion! This is a finely-tuned Spell of Summoning which calls upon all "*poor little lambs who have gone astray*" . . . and not a few of their keepers, as well! Eventually, after several hours, they will (*guided by those Gods who look after fools and drunks*) find their various ways home again . . . but, these being generous and garrulous sorts, may well have also intoxicated either pursuers or escapees . . . and (*10% chance per individual*) may also have generously taken them, via some rolling English road, "home" to sleep it off — from whence they may return in a day . . . or two . . . or three . . .

Editor's Note: rumors of a number of skeins of Fenchelchen Black being used to swell attendance at a recent Fallwellian revival meeting . . . are quite correct and we are informed, on excellent authority, that this generous act was financed and personally supervised by the noted philanthropist and cleric of Loki, the Graf D.Z.G.N.D. Posvalski.

For those who were unable to attend this gala event, we have also received a tip from our correspondent in the Heights of Jenos that a sizable order for Fenchelchen Black has been placed for special delivery prior to the Vernal Equinox . . . we are personally looking forward to the occasion and our heartfelt thanks to the Graf for 'information received'.

*Before the Roman came to Rye or out to Severn strode,
The rolling English drunkard made the rolling English road
Chesterton — The Rolling English Road*

Pennyworth's Yarn

Woven from a secret blend of spider silks and arcanelly ensorcelled, Pennyworth's Yarn appears to be an unremarkable dusky brown such as might be used for monks' robes or other utilitarian fabrics . . . yet, if you can persuade someone to hold their hands out for the yard to be wound, this unprepossessing yard will bind them securely such that they cannot be released until the yarn is voluntarily unwound by their entrapper (*it will unwind in no other fashion*).

Any of the Crones of the Heights of Jenos could, of course, unwind Pennyworth's as might another spinner of equal talent . . . if one can be found . . . such talents are rare . . .

*Ah, what tangled webs we makes . . .
And never notice our mistakes . . .*

Anon



Places of Interest — and Otherwise

Travelers are always seeking interesting places to visit and Delos offers ample opportunity to satisfy all manner of tastes . . . but the wise tourist should also be aware of a few places not to visit. One location in this latter category is:

The House of Romar's Shame

The House of Romar's Shame is not, strictly speaking, a house though, occasionally, it may be in a house . . . or tavern . . . or temple . . . or even in an open clearing in the forest — and might be virtually anywhere. Obviously, it is also difficult to identify . . . until too late.

The nature of Romar's Shame is difficult to explain but the events befalling a visitor are easily identified. Your visit begins with an invitation (*no words are ever spoken*) to be seated and join in a game of chance casting the knuckle bones (*but always knuckle bones — never the more sophisticated forms of dice*).

The first and second casts are fine, you may win or loose according to their fall and, if you leave it at that, all is fine.

On a third roll, your misfortune begins . . . when you realize that the bones will fall exactly as you desire and you can not lose . . .

On a fourth roll, the bones are yours, you can do no wrong and, as you wish, you can take this stranger for everything. Whatever you offer to wage (*as long as it is of value*) will be matched . . .

On a fifth roll, you feel the power rising and nothing lies beyond your ability and luck . . .

But the sixth and final roll is the crucial point . . . the die are in your hands and, once cast, can not be called back . . . but you could win worlds and beyond . . .

The sixth roll produces a special form of what might even be insanity . . . or might not . . . because you are now playing for your very life and the croupier across the table hands you the dice and your wagers are "bits and pieces of your soul" and, whatever you roll, the croupier's roll is always higher . . .

At this time, the player is seated alone, by himself, and rolling dice (*whether there are any dice or no*) . . . and only a "remove curse" (*by a cleric equal or greater in level than the victim*) will bring them out of the illusion — if it is done in time — because, each hour they continue, they have lost, irrevocably, one constitution point.

The Herb Gardens Of The Moon

Fancifully named for the Plains of the Moon where they are found, these carefully cultivated culinary herbs have been specially bred for taste and shape but appear to be clothing of various sorts and styles.

In appearance, these mimic either clothing spread out to dry (*on a bush or on the grass*) or 'magical trees producing clothing' (*for similar ploys by other species, see Tent Spiders and Predatory Plants in The Delian Book Of The Dead*). The 'garments' may be of various sorts — usually 'one size fits all' and usually something rather desirable

....

The gardens are said to be a cooperative effort among various races who either: like their meat raw and fresh; like their meat well-marinated; or use their teeth for defense. In fact, these are giant herb leaves to make the 'wearer' taste better to the next creature eating them alive. Most have a 'pleasantly spicy' smell, which is imparted to the wearer after a few hours and the scent is also an aid in tracking.

Also, the scent is a way to 'brand meat' as it's considered bad form to eat someone wearing another tribe's 'wrapping'.

Please note — no magicks are involved — only selective breeding . . .

*If I were a cassowary
On the plains of Timbuctoo,
I would eat a missionary,
Cassock, band, and hymn-book too.
Bishop Wilberforce — ascribed*

The Great Maze of Ascaria

In the now-deserted Temple of Ascaria at Tenebrae exists a maze of mirrors and glass walls rather like a 'carnival fun house'. The original purpose, if any, of the maze is no longer known or remembered but this remains a popular attraction for visitors in the Tenebrae region.

Within the maze, you can see passages in all directions but cannot tell which are really usable until you try them. Some are open but one-way — you can step through easily but can't return if the choice proves wrong. In others, you may have to climb over the wall . . . or move the invisible block which you tripped over earlier in order to climb to a higher level.

A word of warning, however, despite a few itinerant peddlers who may offer "a current and complete map of the wonderful maze and the routes within", the configuration of the maze appears to change periodically and does so without recognizable pattern or purpose . . . and the maps offered are, inevitably, worthless.

The Astarian Swan-Boat

Inevitably found in the region of the Great Maze of Astaria (and *without any known connection or explanation*) is the equally notorious Swan-Boat. The Swan-Boat can be reached only from the astral plane and is controlled by the Swan/Figurehead. The boat is capable of short teleportation jumps but will only move *toward* some far, noble destination or goal!

If you desired to use the Boat to reach some adjacent chamber of the Maze, perhaps, let us say, the next room North, a request to the Swan to be taken to such a mundane location would be met with only derisive silence. Requesting, however, passage to "the Back of the North Wind" or "Ultima Thule" or some such place will start the boat jumping North and, after each jump, you have a chance to get out.

And, when you get as far North as you want to go, just don't get back in.

Of course, you can choose only *one* destination to tell the Swan . . . ever! He is quite patient but has an excellent memory and will wait *years* or *decades* for you to be ready to continue North (*if that's what you told him!*). But, if you ever want to use him to travel in a different direction, you'd better have a *very* noble and convincing story ready to explain *why* it is necessary to continue your pilgrimage to

Ultima Thule . . . by detouring through the South Sea Islands!

And, of course, there is always a danger that the Swan knows a better route North than going through the desired room . . . or that he will manage a good, long hop which will land you well on the far (Northern) side

And there have been other sad cases The Swan-Boat has a wonderfully pleasant, vertiginous motion . . . and traveling through the Realities is very beautiful and the Swan is so pleased to be taking such a noble hero as yourself on such a noble quest . . . Well, there's always the danger (*Save VS Wisdom at -5 for each time the Swan-Boat is used . . . cumulative*) that you may not want to get off . . . "Treasure? Who needs it! Why weigh down the boat? On to Ultima Thule, comrade Swan, our destiny awaits . . ."

And once, or twice, to throw the dice
Is a gentlemanly game,
But he does not win who plays with Sin
In the secret House of Shame.
Wilde — The Ballad of Reading Gaol

Artifices, Natural and Otherwise

The Far-Traveler is, quite naturally, accustomed to encountering the strange and unusual (*for why else should we travel at both peril and expense . . .*) and, often, returning encumbered with the curious or outre of far and distant lands (*and, sometimes, also infected with same*). As with other worlds, Delos is no less rich in the unusual and a visitor may well encounter, among other things, . . .

Issac's Ioun Stone

When passive, the Ioun Stone appears as a blue-white pearl floating six inches above the user's head. When active, the stone grows to the size of a balloon, glowing like blue mercury. If struck with a sword or other weapon, the stone parts like a ball of mercury; allowing the object to pass and reforming behind it.

When active, the stone establishes an invisible channel, providing fresh air through the top of the head, bypassing nose and mouth.

The Ioun Stone will not go under water. If not in use, the Stone bobs along on the surface until separated from the user by twice their height, then floats free. If in use, it acts as a life-preserver/snorkle, preventing the User from sinking more than a foot below the surface where the Stone rests. The Ioun Stone also will not enter any tunnel or enclosure less than one and one-half times the user's height.

Morey's Hair Of The Dog

These hair-like crystals have a very useful property in that, if the user gets drunk, someone else gets the hangover!

While you are drunk, you 'choose your victim', buy them a drink, slip one of the Hairs into it (*dissolve instantly*) and put your arm around them while they drink it and say things like: "*Ol' buddy, I like you so much, I just really wanna give you something, right from my own heart . . . etc, etc!*"

And, if you can keep it up till they finish their drink, then, next morning, you feel great and the 'ole buddy' *feels* "like what the cat dragged in" (-1 on all stats for 8 hours).

Please note, however, we do not suggest attempting to use this on anyone accompanied by a large white rabbit . . . or in Akron . . . ever!

The Book Of Pasta

This strangely heavy book, bound in a fine, pinkish-tan leather, feels oddly warm and soft to the touch . . . rather like living flesh . . . The volume may or may not be "easy to open" (*some pasta are more closely guarded than others*) or may be "hidebound and locked" but, in any case, it is difficult to read and the contents may be made out only sketchily.

Read Magicks do not assist in deciphering the contents. To each reader, the book will seem to be written in his own language — if very illegibly. But even the blind and illiterate will find that they can "make out the gist of it"!

The contents are definitely a story told by an adventurer: "I set out to seek my fortune . . . I heard of a treasure and went to seek it . . ." and will mention adventures set in real areas of your world.

However, only those pages which tell of things in *the Reader's immediate vicinity* can be read clearly and in full detail. The only way to read the book *fully* is to "follow in the writer's tracks" and, toward the last, the reader will find mention of "a map to a Great, Wondrous Fountain of Endless Treasure" (*or something else which will attract the current Party to "follow the writer's tracks"*).

And, if they do follow, they are led into the same situation by which the present victim entered the Book . . . and whoever is holding the Book is polymorphed into a similar Book, releasing the previous victim (*after all, they should have known that, if they "followed his tracks" exactly, they might well fall into the "same" trap!*).

*Camerado, this is not book,
Who touches this touches a man.
Whitman — So Long!*

The Fruit of the Depths

We are reliably informed that, in the depths of the Eastern ocean, live a simple and happy race of merfolk (*for Delos has been settled by many races from many regions of a large and wondrous multiverse*). While hospitable to visitors, these folk know little about "*those strange cold worlds above the aquasphere*".

From such depths, returning to the surface is difficult and, for this purpose, the merfolk have cultivated a tree whose fruit aids such "returning". This lustrous fruit, growing by the penetrating light of Mythras (*see Delian Cosmology*) for such does reach even to the greatest depths of the seas, grows suspended upward from the branches of the Tree of Returning and, when ripe, *falls upwards* to the ocean's surface where occasional lucky mariners gather these for market (*each Fruit of the Depths brings 5 to 15 GS in the better markets . . . and has an excellent shelf-life of months*).

A translucent golden color when ripe, about the size of a grapefruit but smooth skinned, when eaten, the Fruits of the Depths mystically expand the body of the eater, "filling in the gaps" with its own concentrated *fruit alcohols* (i.e. the user becomes 50 foot tall . . . very buoyant . . . and blissfully drunk!)

Used by the merfolk, they rise to the surface of the ocean where they float in recumbent bliss . . . and are often mistaken for great white whales or other sea-serpents. After an hour or so, the effects slowly diminish, returning them to their home in the depths, relaxed and pleasantly happy . . . and with never a hangover or headache.

Eaten by surface dwellers, the effects are similar but, unless eaten in a lake or large pool, the diner may find themselves uncomfortably confined with a structure or on an irregular surface . . . because few are constituted to control an intoxicated, vaporous body of such expanded dimensions. Still, the discomforts are minor compared with the wondrous euphoria imbued by these fruits.

Archdruid Garamond's Chthonic Golem

Frequency: Very Rare	Special Attack: Sight causes nausea
No. Appearing: One	Special Defenses: Nil
Armour Class: 5	Magick Resistance: 70%
Hit dice: 6d8	Intelligence: Standard (mute)
No. of attacks: 1	Alignment: Lawful Good
Damage per attack: 3-30	Size: Large (7 1/2')

This strange, misshapen Creature prowls just beyond the "Twilight Zone" of unilluminated caverns (and dungeons) and is found (90%) in those areas just beyond the reach of Daeglow where such outside Creatures as bats and cave-swallows sometimes 'commute'.

So outre is 'his' appearance that any sunlit-land creatures (i.e. any 'intelligent' creatures except underground natives such as dwarves, Kobolds, etc) must Save VS Wisdom (at -1) upon seeing 'him'. If failed, they will either become confused for 1d4 rounds or ("Oh, my God, I think I understand this!") pssssssssssss!

Well, we'll not describe 'him' in too much detail . . . (you might be reading this in a store and we wouldn't want anything embarrassing to happen . . .) so, basically, 'he' looks like a Hummock of disturbed Ground — all Rocks, Humps and whitened Tree Roots — vaguely Humanoid in shape . . . like natural Ground in all but 'his' Color which is a slimy, unnatural whitish — the Un-Color of some half-developed Larva which should never have been exposed to View, the anemic Hue of a cave-creature which has never seen the suns . . .

Furthermore, 'his' Walk ('his' stagger would be more like it!) is also the Motion of a Larva whose insides have not developed. It is the motion of Earthquake . . . of Sea-Sickness . . .!

The Chthonic Golem's habit is to prowl around deliberately stepping on ants, crickets, etc (black ones only — leaving the white cave-crickets alone) or any other small creatures but running from anything larger. But, in fact, when he 'steps on' something, he is making a tunnel through his foot for it to crawl up into his body and, if the Golem is killed, dismembered or seriously injured, out pour great numbers of these creature, live and healthy!

Inside the Golem, these strayed outside creatures live until (only on the night of that Veyan rises full) he crawls to the entrance of the cave and stretches one misshapen arm into the moonlight, grasps a tree root . . . and pulls his own hand off! Through the hollow stump of his 'wrist' all the rescued insects pour like a happy cloud into the dark

night air, after which, the golem returns to darkness and regenerates a hand.

The severed hand, outside, slowly mummifies, taking on the appearance of a carved clay dragon's paw which will bring good price (up to 100 GS) from the Alchemists in Upton, where it is sold (powdered) as **Earth Dragon's Claw** . . . at 10 GS per gram and is a sovereign remedy both for fevers and ague as well as greatly sought for restoring potency to older men and great choleric attraction to older women.

Archdruid Garamond made several of these golems to rescue strayed insects and, to protect his creations, he fitted each with a Medallion. These medallions, however, are often lost — so often that (by providence of the Delian) a party will frequently, before encountering a Golem, have first found a Medallion bearing the Sigel of the Archdruid and radiating Lawful Neutral-Good magicks and whose Chain is full of an unnaturally Whitish Clay. If the Party use their Brains and realize that the Clay matches the Golem's Color ("Hey, wait a minute, that thing may be somebody's Pet!") so much the safer for them . . . because Archdruid Garamond will not be at all happy with any party damaging his Golems

Bramacharyananda's Cure for Unrequited Love

Frequently found cast-up by the tides, these lovely Conch shells are barnacle incrustated, each barnacle holding a small, semi-precious gem. Inside the opening of the shell, in finely worm-traced script, may be read (pronouns as appropriate):

"Know, O pining Lover, that, in the True World far beyond Amber, you and your Beloved dwell together as One. In this strange and unreal Shadow-World where you wander now, you have recognized Her but She has not recognized you. Call you then, with this Horn of Wonder, to your own True companion, Herself from the True World, to come to your aid. Speak loudly what you would have Her bring you and, choose wisely, for She can bring only that which you speak in advance . . ."

And, when the conch is blown, (but can be used only once by an individual) so does their True Love come — in a lustrous chariot drawn by golden swans. Whatever the User wanted from the one who spurned them — passion, companionship or even something so

mundane as a map or a healing spell or a dish of porridge — the True Love supplies. This is not an illusion! Their True Love is real and so is whatever they bring!

If the Caller desires his Love's constant companionship, this They will give also — going invisible or astral as needed, to remain safe and unseen by those around him.

As for "catches and side-effects" . . . there really aren't many.

If the Caller was angry with the person who spurned him, after contacting his True Love, his anger will vanish and he will become very "patient and understanding" with the "ignorant shadow", still concerned for her welfare but no longer demanding anything from her.

There is also a chance (15%) that the True Love will be able to "*help my Shadow-Self recognize you also . . .*" In any case, after using the Conch, the "Shadow-Love" will feel somewhat more friendly toward the Caller (+10% on reaction roll).

Of course — the User does have to really love . . . and not just "cupboard love", either! If they are not really in love, then there is no True Love to come or, if they are but try to exploit the situation, their love gets mad and leaves.

There was also the case of Francois and Mlle. Chrysis. Chrysis spurned Francois, he used the Conch and when, finally, Chrysis "came round" to caring for him . . . but, by that time, Francois was so content with his True Love that he had lost all interest in Chrysis!

. . . Over and over	Whenever I want you,
I keep going over	All I have to do is dream . . .
The world we knew	Dream . . dream . . dream . .

Terran Folk Songs

Upas's Dice of One-Upmanship

Cunningly crafted and enchanted, these dice are neither 'loaded' nor 'weighted' but rather are ensorcelled to "distract and disconcert" the caster's opponent and, indeed, when cast, the opponent will always win the first two throws . . . after which the dice function at perfectly normal odds . . . but the caster's opponent is visited by an illusion: his "child" — whether they knew they had one or not . . . or, in truth, do or not — appears and, tugging at his clothes, whines "*Father, dear father, come home with me now*". And, on each roll, additional illusory people appear reproaching them for the "*sin of gambling*" and trying to make them feel ashamed.

Admittedly, a minor magick . . . but one increasing the caster's chances to win



The Cosmology of Delos

Before observing the Heavens, it is first necessary to observe the Climate of Opinion.

— Fr. Samuel to Theologian Newton, overheard —

The Cosmology of Delos is a grave problem that has divided Delian Natural Philosophers for untold centuries. (*Partially because the nature of Delian Space-Time is also in question — thus dating becomes a philosophical/theological issue and, in some of the more radical fringe areas, scholars have been burnt as heretics for careless reference to 'The Year of the Unicorn' instead of 'The Year of the Chimera' . . . for which reason, it has become fashionable, among historians, to avoid the precise dating of Delian events*).

Editors' Note to the Terran Edition: This problem is further confounded by the problems of transmission of the communiques we receive over the Aeolean Web. All seems to depend upon the fashionable philosophy of the faction currently guarding/operating the Web (*i.e. censorship!*). Whatever the true opinions of our Delian correspondents, these must oft times be disguised and cryptically expressed in order to qualify for transmission as 'heretical fantasies' are often classified 'low priority space available'. We believe that this may account for some of the greater oddities in the otherwise sober and authentic work transmitted to us by that notable Delian cosmologist who signs himself: **Eppe Simuevo**.

Elements of Cosmology

The principal "appearances which must be saved" — those which all Delians can see and agree on — are these:

The Shape And Extent Of The World

The practical world is without limit. New regions and continents are always being discovered (*or sometimes lost again — or moved!*) and travel East does **not** eventually bring one to the West nor does travel Northwards return one from the South (*as is said to be true in other, distant, worlds*).

The Greater Bodies Which Light The Firmament

The world is lit by one major sun — Dae — and one major moon — Lunae while there are four lesser bodies; two of which are considered minor suns and two of which are considered only as moons respectively associated with said suns. Of these three suns, Dae (*pronounced 'day' and hence giving 'day-light'*) is the principal and brightest in visible light and provides warmth and heat to the world below.

Dancing counterpoint to Dae is the principal moon, Lunae, shedding its soft, white luminescence through the darkened hours and providing the chief source of magicks of the Moon-Dancers of Emerald Mountains.

The remaining two suns, Mythras and Verga, appear to exist respectively on the etherial and astral planes, shedding only a dim light on the Prime Material Plane of Delos but each danced counterpoint by its own moon; Minos paying court to Mythras and Voyan to Verga.

Mythras, an etherial infra-red giant, follows an elliptical course carrying it far to the north and south as well as crossing east to west. Still, because of its size, Mythras sheds a cool, moon-glow over the Delian lands when Dae is absent from the sky and Lunae is in subjugation.

Mythras' moon, Minos, to most only dimly visible as a ghostly presence in the darkened sky, offers respite from night's depths for those whose vision extends into the infra-range but is of particular importance to the dwellers on the Planes Beyond (*see The Delian Book Of The Dead*) where it shines in full glory over many regions lacking other illumination.

The remaining 'sun', Verga, is a cool, ultra-blue dwarf (*though quite intense to those using 'ultravision'*). Following an irregular orbit and only rarely dominating the sky in its own right, Verga's moon, Voyan, is noted for its own infrequent appearances (*as recorded in the folk expression, "once in a blue moon"*) but is also the occasion for great festivals among both the fairy-folk and the dwellers in the Varian Sea.

The Minor Bodies Appearing In The Heavens

Also gracing the Delian Heavens, when not overshadowed by the suns, are the smaller fixed luminants which move in great circles about Delos but remain fixed in their relationship to each other. These are known as stars and are said by many to comprise mystic or mythic figures of varying significance.

Accompanying these are twelve other luminants which, not

remaining fixed among their companions, are known as wanderers or 'planets' and these too are considered significant according to their relationships both among themselves and against the fixed stars which form their backdrop.

These simple facts are accounted for in a variety of ways by different schools. For instance:

The Expansionist or Unlimited Schools

The Outside School: also known as "Convex Round Worlders", this group believes Delos round like a ball and that all walk on the outside this sphere but that it is so large that no one has yet got all the way around it. Among these, many hold the sphere is constantly expanding, "like a bladder being inflated", and that new continents are constantly rising from the seas to fill the new surface being created.

The Inside School: also known as "Concave Round Worlders" or "Hollow Worlders", believe much the same as the "Outside" school except for saying that we all walk around on the inside. Likewise, either the ball is so big no one has got round it yet or is expanding even as we walk.

The Flat School holds similar views except for holding the "sphere" to be a flat disk, constantly stretching and expanding . . .

Still other shapes have also been proposed — Kline bottles etc — but the same basic explanations hold true on each.

The Multi-World School

The 'technos' hold a variant concept incorporating teleport gates and portals. They say the 'World of Delos' (and even the continent of Delos itself — for which the world is named) is, in fact, spread over several small Convex spheres all circling the sun Dae — these being the "wanderers" or planets. There are just so many unknown gates and portals that we are all the time stepping from one 'planet' to another without even knowing it.

According to this Multi-World view, these 'gates' are spaced such that Dae is shining at the same angle on both sides, the climates are compatible and the transitions are smooth and without distinguishable event. Thus, though each planet itself is small and circular, one's actual path of travel, using all the surface areas of each, is — for

practical purposes — unlimited and non-returning.

Of course, this same idea of unknown portals linking separated areas may be applied to any number of 'cosmologies': that Delos is in fact spread over a number of large islands or over 'planets' circling totally different 'suns', etc. etc. This latter view is supported by the undeniable fact that many such portals do exist between different worlds, even those much divided by 'normal space' or as different as Delos and Terra . . .

Note to the Terran Edition: "We Terrans must understand that, to most Delians, questions of the 'shape' of the world are moot, academic only. This is because, on Delos, there is so much teleportation and Shadow-Walking, inter-dimensional gates, portals and the like, and hyper-space travel.

"To learn to travel around on Earth and to the Moon and Mars and so forth, we have to learn the exact shape and size and location of our planets, because we are traveling by foot or by rocket or such.

"But on Delos, long-distance travel is quite different. Of course a lot of horses and coaches and so forth are used but only for short distances so maps for those distances are flat — just like state highway maps in America. No one worries about the shape of the world for such a short trip.

"For a longer trip — for which we would use a jet plane or a rocket ship — Delians always use something magick and so they don't worry about the distances and coordinates, only about those elements which matter to Delian magicks." — Shaman Dorothy of Kan Sas

Sir Tony Pandy comments: "It is interesting to note how the supposedly intellectual preoccupations of a world are in fact determined by how much mana is in its atmosphere. Terra, a world painfully low in mana, concentrates its attention on distance, mass etc. While a mana-rich world such as Delos concentrates on poetic resemblances and kindly encyclying. Truly, Mana is destiny."

Concerning Metal Ships And Their Inhabitants

From a public statement by the Uptonian Academie Scientifique: Certainly it is a fact that crumpled or 'crashed' metal ships (shaped

somewhat like submarines) have been found in many locations. There is a uniformity¹ of opinion from those claiming to have been passengers on such ships concerning the supposed "shape of the Delian solar system". While it is our uniform opinion that the following belongs more to the literature of Psychology (as a pseudo-scientific delusion) than to that of Cosmology, we herewith summarize as requested:

As for the Delian "system" itself, these delusions promote what might be called a "Convex-Round" Theory. The Sun Dae (they claim) is a giant fiery ball, many thousands of thousands of leagues in diameter while the so-called 'planet' Delos is another sphere many thousands of leagues in circumference which circles about Dae in a path so immense that the distances claimed become, quite obviously, nonsense.

Further, the majority of the 'passengers' refer to the celestial wanderers as other bodies, similar to the world of Delos, of such strange sizes and natures ("ringed planets", "double suns", "black holes", "white dwarves", "red giants") that only a deluded imbecile could credit such nonsense which is contrary to every intelligent and rational world-view.

Some such 'passengers' who claim to have come from Terra have a more elaborate delusion. They say they 'flew away' from Terra, went through a 'probability warp' (i.e. a *Shadow-Walk Portal* — observe how even the most extravagant delusion must incorporate some elements of sober fact) and returned to the 'physical coordinate location' of Terra — only to find the Planet Delos in Terra's place! They actually claim that Terra and Delos are both (to translate their ravings into more rational language) Shadows descended from one original Shadow-world — or in some cases, that Terra was a Shadow-World descended from Delos.

- 1) A dissenting portion (approximately 2%) of these share a variant delusion, while agreeing about the 'stars and galaxies' in general, say that, immediately before 'crashing' on Delos, they had seen a giant turtle 'walking' through this empty 'space' carrying a disk-shaped world on his back.

Delos, these latter claim, is the 'true Earth' and Terra simply a mana-poor Shadow thereof and find support for their delusions in an imagined coincidence of many Delian place and personal names which are also said to occur on Terra.

Sir Tony Pandy comments: *"It is interesting that this popular modern myth recapitulates the theory of the Ancient Gnostics who also held that Terra was a 'Limbo-like Tenebrae' of Delos, created by accident but found useful as a Purgatorio for the reincarnation of souls of those whose temperament is too 'machinish' to find Delos congenial and who prefer such a 'clockwork universe'."*

However, the opinion of the Academie is that these 'ships' and their attendant metallic golems (commonly called 'robots') and certain devices of prognostication (similarly called 'computers') have a much more rational origin having, in some fashion, escaped from the well-known miniature Clockwork Worlds created by Cagliostro and on view at his villa near Usher. We are informed that this incorporates a model of an entire 'galactic universe', all tastefully suspended and revolving within a bell jar with the unprecedented size of 18' tall!

How the escaped ships have grown to "full size" remains unexplained but many rational/magickal possibilities exist to account for such phenomenon.

Whether Mage Cagliostro's exhibit represents (as is commonly supposed) an entry for The Emellion Prize for the "Most Elegant Perpetual Motion Machine Employing Levitation"² — or whether this is some elaborate Art Form based upon these popular myths themselves (in which case they may become self-fulfilling!) — the fact is that the 'galactic' exhibit bears an uncanny resemblance to the imaginings of these poor deluded 'passengers'.

Lastly, we wish it further known in this connection, that the Uptonian Academie Scientifique has voted to accept no more reports of "metal ships falling from the sky" such being *prima facie* absurd.

2) For details, contact the Academie Scientifique, Upton.

Sir Tony Pandy Comments

It is said that on one occasion all the disputing cosmological factions (*viz.* Flat-Delians, Hollow-Delians, Kline-Delians, *et al*) did manage to

agree on one Experiment: to consult the Oracle of the Delian Himself as to the Shape and Topology of the Delian Cosmos. The response, as is usual, was loud and unambiguous: "*The World is a Riddle wrapped in an Enigma, cloaked in a Mystery and obscured within*".

Editors' Comments

Of course, in the question of Delian Cosmology, as in most other important scientific questions, the final statement may be found in the frequent by-word of Zen Dungeon-Master Ezzell: "*How Are You Going to Find Out?*"



Poisons and Anodynes Of The Symarian Gulf

In keeping with the general perversity of sentient species throughout the multiverse, Delos also boasts a thriving trade (*import and export*) in drugs and other toxic substances (*many of which have been described in previous Dragon Tree titles*). The following preparations, however, originate in the Symarian Gulf regions and are only rarely (*if ever*) seen outside of Delos.

Excelsior

Classified by most nations as a dangerous drug, this fine grey powder gives rise to delusions of grandeur (*usually military*). Effects are not permanent (*lasting 1d4+3 days*) but a single dose is almost always (85%) addictive — decapitation of the victim being the preferred cure.

Extremely powerful (*one tenth gram per dose*) and priced accordingly (*at 5000 GS per gram*), excelsior is manufactured in small quantities by a covert religious sect among the Mendacian Islanders principally for use in religious ceremonies and it is estimated that a scant five to twenty-five grams leave the island annually.

Meloian Darktura Aphrodisiac

Produced by the Dark Priests of Mithron, Darktura is a shimmering black 'paste' with which the sacrificial victims are ritually anointed. Absorbed through the skin, the victim(s) is excited to such heights of sexual frenzy that they are, quite literally, "*immolated in a self-consuming pyre of their own sexual desires*".

As even a small quantity of Darktura (*as little as one gram*) may prove permanently fatal (*as the dying corpse is immolated beyond hope of resurrection*) though the time required for full effect varies inversely with the amount used. For small amounts of Darktura, the victim first becomes indiscriminately aroused (*sexually attacking any other beings — regardless of race, sex, etc — in their vicinity and often further transferring quantities of the drug and its effects*), beginning, within two minutes, to glow from their exertions and, within seven minutes (*or less*), will spontaneously burst into flames, consuming themselves totally and unextinguishably.

Attempts, two centuries past, to develop a less-lethal analog of this drug for use in the Pleasure Houses of Karrome's Flower Garden District were eventually blamed for the succession of disastrous fires

which destroyed much of this beautiful coastal city. Since that time, possession of Darktura (*outside of the Meloian Islands*) has been universally punished by placing the smuggler alone in a stone cell after (*carefully*) anointing them with their own drug.

Two lesser versions of Darktura, Darktura Spritious and Darktura Tiempo are also recorded in the Materia Arcana but possession of either carries the same penalty (*and they are identifiable only through application to a living victim*).

Darktura Tiempo, unlike Darktura Aphrodisiac, does not cause the victim to burn, but after the victim's normal strength/potency have been expended, a special metabolic action begins in which body reserves of fat, protein and muscle are successively tapped and converted into sexual energy for more activity. In the process, the victim loses weight, their skin wrinkles, muscles shrink . . . and, within an hour (*roll 1d3 times ten plus 30 minutes*), they will die of extreme old age.

Darktura Spritious, again, does not produce physical immolation but causes the victim's body to be transformed (*irrevocably*) into the form of a succubus or incubus . . . a process requiring 1d10+5 minutes during which the victim becomes successively hazy while sexually attacking anyone in their vicinity. (*This latter form of Darktura can be cured . . . by a Clerical Blessing and Remove Curse of 5th level or higher . . . with the victim subsequently becoming a Phantom — see The Delian Book Of The Dead*).

Caution: There are no known cures for any type of Darktura except Darktura Spirituous and no Saves of any kind apply.

Alvin's Emetic of Ethereal Alleviation

Also worth of inclusion here is the expensive but popular universal anodyne (ie, 'antidote'), Alvin's Emetic of Ethereal Alleviation. As a sovereign remedy for almost all forms of poison (*Darktura excepted*), this Emetic cures poisons by causing regurgitation and diarrhea of such violence that *all* poison is expelled . . . *even that poison which has already been absorbed and has produced damage!*

This Etheric Alchemical concoction is so powerful that it can even reach and reverse poison molecules which have already been digested or absorbed and reverse these processes, thus curing the damages done.

Please note that the poison is not neutralized — only "removed"! The discharged material (*vomit, diarrhea or sweat*) will be just as

deadly as the original poison . . . and the spasms caused by the Emetic are *so violent* that this "guck" gets "thrown" 1d20 feet in *all* directions around the victim! *"Everybody stand back! Careful!"*

Use of Alvin's Emetic of Ethereal Alleviation is not without hazards, however. The *amount of Emetic* and the *amount of poison* in the victim's body (*both absorbed and unabsorbed*) must balance with some precision and one gram of Emetic will counteract five damage points of poison.

If too *little* Emetic is used, a portion of the Poison will remain in the victim . . . and damage will occur accordingly.

If too *much* Emetic is given, the results are *even worse*: No matter how much or little real poison the victim has taken, the emetic will 'remove' its full potency of poison . . . whether it's there or not and, if it can't find any to remove, it *creates* some . . . by executing a "reverse digestion" on perfectly normal body proteins to turn them into poisons to be expelled . . . which does as much damage as digesting that much real poison would have done!

And, yes, this Emetic has been used to 'create poison' . . .

Diartcos Materia Symbotic Oveum — 'DMSO' (aka *Egg of the Assassin*)

This contraband substance was originally imported from the Spencerian Islands (*following the crashlanding of a Federation Spaceship*) but is now smuggled at great expense from various of the Techno Worlds.

Not in itself a poison, DMSO is the Assassin's equivalent of the Philosopher's Stone and is used to turn *any other poison* into a 'contact poison' . . . which causes full, immediate damage. For this reason, DMSO is highly valued and agents of the Thieves' and Assassin's Guilds contract for all available supplies, often paying as high as 1500 GS per ounce for this material (*and exacting the ultimate toll on any outside the guilds found in possession of this material*).

Each ounce of DMSO can act as conveyance for sufficient poison to cause 20+1d20 points of damage (*any type of poison*) but there are hazards inherent in working with DMSO. Unofficial statistics (*compiled by Amazon Mutual Life Assurance*) suggest that there is a 15% accident rate for Guild Members working with this substance, a 25% to 40% accident rate among alchemists (*a portion of which may have been due to Assassins' Guild actions*) and a 75% accident rate among

others attempting to use DMSO.

Nominal statistics for such an accident involve the preparer or user taking 50+2d20% of the total poison dosage as damage . . . not a reassuring preparation.

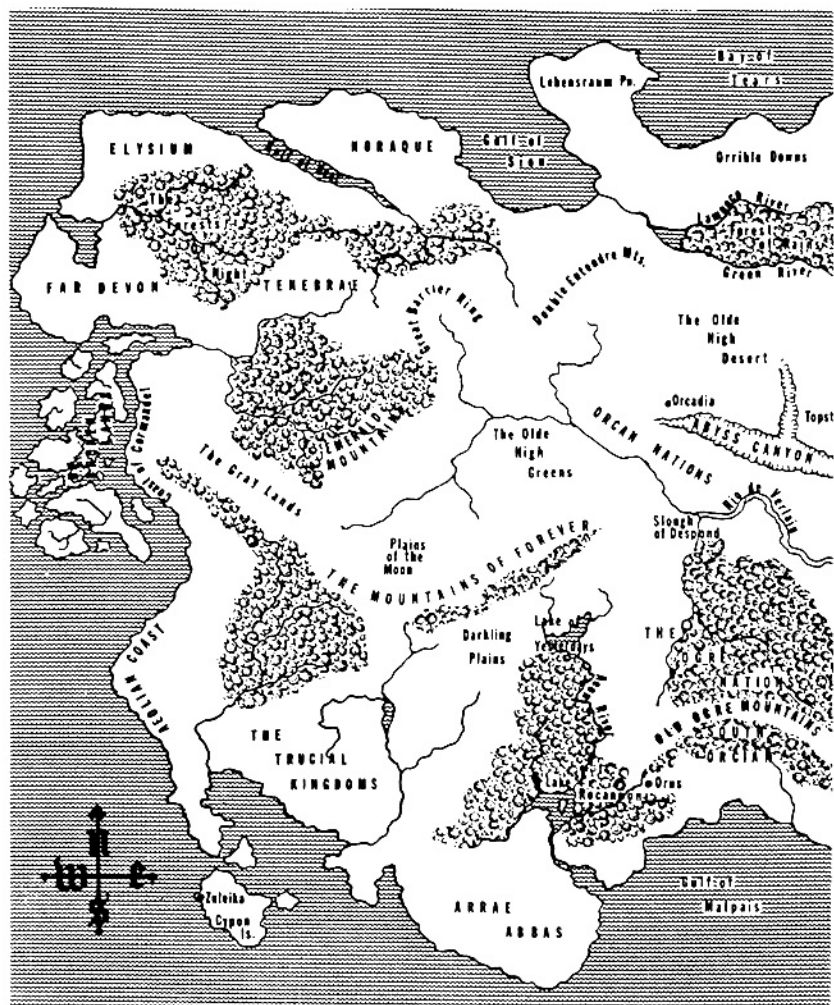
Oil of Olè

Those working with the previously mentioned DMSO usually prefer to keep on hand a suitable quantity of Oil of Olè, which can be used to *instantly* and *totally* halt all further damages produced by any DMSO-conveyed toxins. The damage done prior to application of the oil, however, is also healed (*short of death*) at the rate of five points per hour . . . until healing is complete.

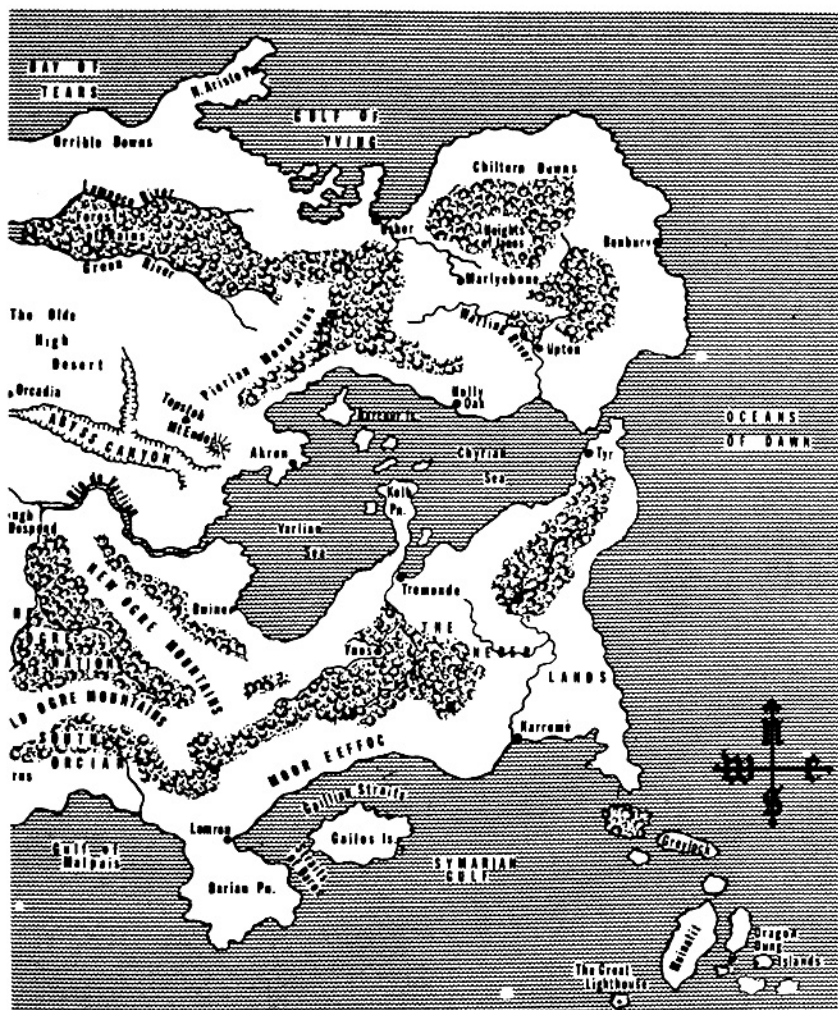
One ounce of Oil of Olè (*applied externally*) is sufficient to counteract two ounces of DMSO+toxin . . . but this rare substance has a market value of 1300 GS per ounce.



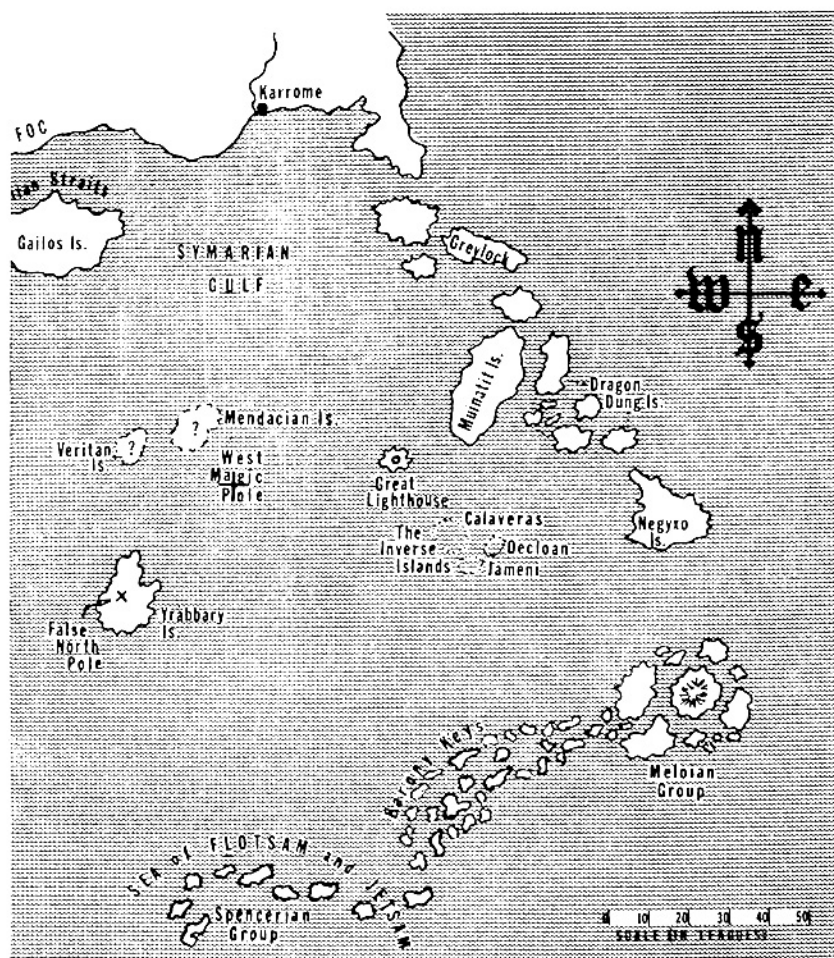
Principal Regions of Western Delos



Principal Regions of Eastern Delos



The Symmarian Gulf and Adjacent Regions including the Delian Archipelago



Introduction To The Delian Islands

The world of Delos, having long enjoyed contact with many different worlds and varying regions of the multiverse, is effectively a melting pot of peoples, cultures, religions and customs. Many of the islands of the Delian seas (as well as the larger land masses) have been settled by refugees, explorers or wayward travelers from distant areas of the multiverse and, as a result, many widely divergent and physically incompatible species have established communal relations with varying degrees of success.

As many of these immigrant species prefer varying degrees of privacy (and some are decidedly insular), the following guide is only a partial survey of the inhabitants of Delos, concentrating primarily on the Southern Oceanic regions in the vicinity of the West Magic Pole.

The Island of Gailos (aka The Dwarven Heights)

The Island of Gailos lies under a permanent tropical inversion (of unexplained origins) and the atmosphere here is low on oxygen, displaced by ammonia, sulfur dioxide and other heavy gasses such as carbon dioxide and various nitrates. The Grey Dwarves who reside here are unremarkable except for the natural pallor of their skins — an adaptation to the local pollution levels. Extremely insular, the Dwarves never leave Gailos and tend to be distrustful of strangers.

In addition to "firepowder", the Grey Dwarves also export semi-petrified timber and peat moss but do not understand why outsiders buy it. "Damn suckers buy our wood!" The Dwarves have the attitude of con artists preying on city slickers. "Some fool is willing to pay Good Gold for our old houses? Old logs? Old pieces of peat? And they're paying more than it is possibly worth?"

The islanders say, "To get fuel for our fires, we simply cut peat out of the bogs." Around Gailos, there's lots of damping material in the air, the peat burns quite safely but take it anywhere there's plenty of oxygen and light it and, very quickly, there's a nice little chemical reaction and it just goes off! BOOOOM!

Also note: a dissident group of Grey Dwarves (accused of "unnatural" religious practices) have recently established settlements on Muinatit Island in the archipelago.

The Mendacian Islands

The precise location of the Mendacian island (*or islands*) is uncertain but commonly believed to be located somewhere in the vicinity of the West Magic Pole. Traders and others believed to have visited the Mendacian Island(s) have offered mutually contradictory accounts and, due to difficulties involved in investigation, this remains an area of general obscurity as does the nature of their exports and imports (*if any*).

However, in Delos, it is commonly said of a shrewd bargainer: "*He would know a Mendacian*" — though the origins of this expression are far from common knowledge and, to the average inhabitant of Delos, the Mendacians are little more than a folk-legend.

Rumors hold that certain rare spices (*which are much favored at political banquets, guild meetings and other occasions of exaggeration*) originate in the Mendacian Islands as do certain fine handicrafts . . . but the validity of these rumors also remains open to question.

Included in the contended exports are the so-called and very popular Gorgian Puzzles, cunning carved and ornately confusing; bottles of the finest Braggadocia and several varieties of filigree lace much treasured by the better (*i.e. more expensive*) designers in Delos.

A Guide To Understanding The Mendacian

Editors' Note: The following is, in all probability, quite incorrect but, lacking any more accurate guide, we offer this explanation for such value as the reader may derive. However, one might well keep in mind the ancient proverb:

To have a lie taken for the truth is well and good . . .

But, to have the truth taken for a lie . . .

Culturally, Mendacians are accustomed to speaking in convoluted prevarication and never, under any circumstances, say what they actually mean to say. If a Mendacian, for example, were to desire to purchase a horse, they would begin, perhaps, by saying: "*Your horse stinks!*" — not as a bargaining point but simply to avoid even hinting at the matter in question.

To another Mendacian, this would be, quite automatically and unconsciously, "translated" and an equally indirect response would follow. In converse with a 'normal' person, however, a Mendacian quite

naturally assumes that, whatever is said, the other speaker is avoiding any direct reference to the subject (i.e. *is lying*) . . . and confusion becomes mutual.

Some more sophisticated Mendacians, accustomed to trading with outsiders, are aware of this dichotomy and often act as "gobetweens" with strangers. The Mendacian habits, however, still hold and, rather than rendering "*Your horse stinks*" as "*He wants to buy your horse*", the translator offers a third, if rather flowery, rendering such as: "*The voyager from behind the sky curses you mightily, complaining that your horse smells so terrible that he would not even condescend to steal it!*" . . . which skirts the subject without approaching it directly while permitting the translator to "lie" about what they are translating.

This dichotomy extends to all phases of Mendacian life: the richest may well be clad in 'rags' of silk while the poorest will be dressed in elaborate and ornate burlap. There are, however, levels of duplicity involved: a Mendacian might be dressed very richly in silks and satins designed to appear as elaborate burlap. It is a culture of many complex subtleties and status is determined by how well one lies, how elaborate a facade one can create — which, among the more sophisticated, can result in a great deal of confusion . . .

Other exports include:

Anodyne Jewels: these clear, multicolored stones are greatly favored for wine goblets and are popularly believed (*correctly*) to cause any poison or other drug to alter its properties — but *only* if the poison or drug is given in an anodyne goblet. (*The precise nature of this alteration, however, is indeterminate and may be rolled randomly.*)

Braggadocia Inveritas (red) and **Braggadocia Invictus** (black): see *Potions and Other Potables*.

Excelsior: see *Potions and Other Potables*.

Oil of Etcetera: manufactured from the finest virgin etceteras, this makes any grouping generic. If a group of birds (*wrens, starlings, sparrows, etc*) are treated with this oil, then all become birds of a feather (*but of an unknown species*).

The Veritan Islands

Lying near the Mendacian Islands (?), the Veritan Islands are inhabited by a race with highly developed telepathic abilities . . . an ability arising from a genetic defect causing the entire race to be

deaf-mutes.

The Veritans trade extensively with the Mendacians (*but are congenially unaware of the Mendacian speech habits*) and, like the Mendacians, are generally unknown to the population at large.

This is not accidental — the Veritans prefer to retain privacy and, when trading with the outside world, do so apparently by gesture and a crude sign language with the intention of keeping their “telepathic” ability concealed. On those rare occasions when they have encountered another capable of penetrating their secret, they have used their talents to cause the outsider to “forget” — permanently and irrevocably — the nature of their ability.

The Veritans are, however, known as the very soul of truth as no Veritan has ever spoken a lie! Neither do they obscure communication in any other fashion and, when bargaining, are always aware of exactly what the other would pay or exchange. For this reason, they are also known as shrewd but honest merchants.



The Meloian Group

(aka *The Islands of Darkness*)

A group of four large (and many small) islands in a circular reef surrounding a larger volcanic cone, the Meloian Islands are permanently shrouded in darkness, apparently produced by the constant flow of smoke from the semi-active volcanic source. In actual fact, the darkness is produced largely by industrial pollution from the oil burned by the inhabitants in an attempt to alleviate the constant darkness . . . a vicious circle . . . of which the Meloians remain unaware.

Because of the prevailing darkness, the Meloians regard each of the islands as an isolated world in a sea of darkness and have only dim myths of a world of light. Meloian plant life, primarily large tree and shrub forms, have adapted to these conditions by sending deep tap-roots down to the warm layers of rock below and extract nutrients from the vast oil-bearing shale formations as well as using the interior heat in lieu of sunlight. (A few also use the etherial or astral light from *Mythras* and *Verga* — see *Delian Cosmology*.)

While traders and others from 'outside' do occasionally reach the Meloian Islands, the Meloians dismiss their stories of suns, blue sky, etc as "solar myths".

Their 'holy places' are volcanoes, deep in the ground, where red lava flows. Their myths, 'depth psychology' etc are much occupied with the parallels between warm lava flowing through underground caves and warm blood in bodies. They see the earth as a body, cold on the extremities, having a reservoir of hot blood in the middle. They are fascinated with the motif of 'releasing' 'stored' energy or finding something warm or colorful inside something dull and cold. Splitting an atom is a myth of paradise and Geodes are their holy stones. (*Nuts sell well — the thicker the shell, the greater value.*)

Among the Meloian Islanders, several evil cults deal in torture-sacrifices, 'liberating' both the warm blood of the victim and their 'stored, frozen, internal energies'. Sacrificial rites are designed to produce panic activity on the part of the victim: ritual gladiatorial combats are one version and elaborate automatic traps another (see '*Automatic Temples*' in *The Delian Book of the Dead*.)

Such rituals and processes are referred to as 'burning' or 'igniting' of the spirit. The idea (as with igniting a crumpled paper) is to initiate an internal process within the victim which consumes/destroys them

while 'warming' the spectators with the mana-energy released. To encourage such activity, many rites include an actual possibility of escape for the victim, if they prove active (and *lucky*) enough.

In example: the classic and much-renowned rites at Dsk involve spurting arteries and a frenzied effort by the victim to achieve escape from a tunnel or pit of blades before becoming too weak from loss of blood.

Less representative but still within the mythos are the use of convulsive poisons; the practice (*initiated by the Dark Priests of Mithron*) of binding the victim on top of a metal grill under which the priests/spectators stand to be soaked and warmed by the fresh blood; and the use of Darktura, a powerful hallucinogen/aphrodisiac (*see Poisons*).

Good and neutral cults (*the Benigne School*) follow the same motifs in less harmful ways: honor/reverence for the fertility cycle (*including the menstrual cycle*), childbirth, release of sexual energy in various sexual activities — and even the import of giant, spring-wound cookoo clocks!

These milder forms of 'ritual energy release' are a recent heresy which is quite against the grain of basic Meloian philosophy because they focus on "renewable" forms of blood/energy. However the basic tenets of traditional Meloian cosmology emphasize that the basic energies of the universe are Non-Renewable, stored once and for all, and that complete use/release of these **necessarily** entails the complete destruction of the source.

Traditional philosophers point, logically and unanswerably, to the fact that the 'renewable' energies used are not original, self-existing sources but are generated by metabolic action from food, which comes from plants which convert fossil fuel to digestible form — and that the bodies also require, for their continued 'renewing' of their sexual energy, a warm environment produced by the 'complete' burning of the basic fuels.

Many of the islanders have, naturally, become cave dwellers, using caverns extending deep into the warmer regions and also have access to lava and geothermal energies. And, since many of the plants really do grow on nothing but fuel and minerals, they also grow underground.

On other islands, where no caves are found, the inhabitants must remain on the surface or and rely largely on plants using 'light' from Mythras and Verga which does penetrate the clouds.

The Barony Keys

Located on the outskirts of the Meloian Group, the Barony Islands (a group of small 'keys') remain clear of the smoke and darkness but also remain largely isolated. Basically, the settlers here are mixed human-elven stock with a medieval culture (each 'key' being a separate Barony) with an agrarian/fishing economy.

Visibility is short due to the constant haze and fog but crops and cattle grow normally. The principal feature of note here is the presence of high stone walls enclosing the principal arable lands on each island — fortress walls with no cultivation outside, no roads and scarcely any traffic between. The uninhabited areas have a normal distribution of plant and animal life: some barren but most are lush and healthy.

Inside, each walled area is a separate, complete Barony — a self-sufficient economy, with its own crops, cattle, all crafts, etc.

In each Barony, however, a considerable area is devoted to a large-scale, analog replica of the surrounding areas. Many of these are centered around a large, artificially-maintained Dark Lake (complete with smudge pots and canopies to produce the darkness) representing the Meloian Sea and containing small replicas of the Barony Keys with structures simulating the neighboring Baronies.

Other Baronies leave 90% of their space as barren moor with or without wilderness areas, depending on how they believe the uncultivated space of their island to be divided.

Very little space is used for crop and productive work because so much is given over to (one way or another) simulation of the 'outside world'. When neighboring Baronies are at war, an appropriate percentage of the workers must spend their time (within their own walls) marching and drilling in simulation of what the 'real' soldiers are reported doing outside (and includes, in many cases, real fighting and bloodshed . . . despite the fact that no 'real' soldiers ever leave the Freehold).

The several freeholds are connected (and communicate) by well-guarded portals, the last remnants of lost magical skills, and the Archduke, holding the largest of the keys and having only a very loose authority over the several Baronies, concerns himself mainly with attempting to persuade all of the Barons to simulate the same world-picture within their different Freeholds.

The precise nature of this image is subject to argument and the constantly fluctuating fashions of the Court and, whether it should be

mostly Dark Lake, mostly barren downs, etc, is a perennially unsettled question though all agree that it should definitely be standardized and all Barons should simulate the same picture at the same time — until the Court decrees another picture . . . at which time they should all change their simulations as fast as possible to the new one . . .

Naturally, any suggestion that the surrounding lands be examined, physically, is treated as deepest and darkest heresy . . . and heretics are expelled bodily by catapult over the walls (*but some few survive the fall and an occasional 'heretic' is found outside the baronies, justified in their assumptions and suggestions but unable to further inflict their thoughts on the body politic*).

The Gulliverian Islands

Located southeast of the Melonian Islands are the islands of Lilliput, Laputa, Brogdinnag, and numerous others which are covered in detail (in a fictional account) by the great traveler and geographer, Jonathan (Dean) Swift.

Also found in this area is the island of Erewhon (*see Samuel Butler for details*).



The Inside-Out-Islands (aka The Inverse Islands)

These ancient volcanic craters break the surface of the ocean only as 'lagoon reefs' but, for the creatures of the ocean depths who inhabit the watery interiors, these might as well be 'islands' because of the difficulties involved in traversing the "*sheer vertical leagues of solid waste-land*" which separate the interiors from the "*wide and fertile depths of the open sea*".

As a result of this isolation, a variety of marine 'island cultures' have developed similar to those of the normal (*dry land*) islands (*which the sea-creatures refer to as 'the Convex Islands' or 'the Hernias'*).

All of these 'Inverse Islands' are inhabited, as are most of the shallow coastal waters, by Sea Sprites (*see Sea Sprites*).

In Calaveras Crater, the Sea Sprites 'domesticate' numerous varieties of jellyfish and similar creatures by making small incisions in their outer membrane and partially filling them up with pebbles. The number of pebbles is carefully calculated to keep the captives 'weighted down' so they have only limited 'upward mobility' — thus their livestock can swim horizontally and rise enough to navigate but cannot rise high enough to escape from the surrounding lagoon rim.

Depending on the use to which the 'domesticated' creature is put, the weights may be adjusted even heavier so that they are confined within a low fence of kraken weed.

A similar method is used to acquire 'beasts of burden' in the form of selectively-bred squid-like creatures with tough, loose skins. 'Payloads' such as magnesium nuggets, spiceweed and other high density cargoes may thus be carried *inside* the creature in place of pebbles. And, in some expert 'breeding stations', this loose outer skin is stretched and stitched to form as many as a dozen separate 'kangaroo pouches' on a single creature.

In nearby Decloan Crater, octopi are used as beasts of burden and trained to 'lash together' all but 3 or 4 of their tendrils to make a 'basket' in which various things may be carried (*thus the mariner's expression, "entangled like an octi"*).

In Jameni Crater, the preferred beast is the Nautilus Squid but, since their hard, crustaceous shell cannot be slit (*without fatal damage*), barnacles are grown on the shell producing large cavities used to carry cargo.

All of these 'islanders' guard carefully the methods used to

train/produce these various forms of beast of burden while selling working stock to outside tribes (the barrier walls acting to help maintain secrecy).



Introduction to The Sea of Flotsam and Jetsam (aka The Castaway Islands)

In an area south of the West Magic Pole, vast ocean currents twist in a large, slow whirlpool centered around a group of many small, bizarre islands. Both ocean currents and the prevailing winds influence the collection of most off-world debris (*meteors, spaceships, etc*) in this area.

Some authorities surmise that the "whirlpool" was engineered by now-vanished inhabitants for precisely such an effect. Perhaps the first were crashlanders, who wanted the rest of their party to join them? Others suggest these hypothetical inhabitants also created the False Magnetic Pole as a lure for ships.

Among the bizarre cultures of the Castaway Islands are:

The Spencerian Islands (The Fairy Group)

Originally, these islands were home to a variety of species known collectively as "the fairy folk" — the term "fairy" is used generically for many similar races; all being airish, ethereal, carefree creatures, small and short-lived and may refer to any being from a literal ethereal fairy to a semi-sentient mayfly.

Approximately a century past, the Spencerian Islands were forcibly "settled" by a crashlanding Federation spaceship. The passengers and crew have established a beacon to send SOS signals to their home base. Rescue, however, has been many decades in coming (*partially due to difficulties in reaching Delos through technological means — see Delian Cosmology for details*).

The original humans, in the meantime, have, one by one, become incapacitated. Many are in sleep tanks, sick or hurt and frozen awaiting medical attention; others, too lonesome and homesick, have sought to 'skip' the years of being marooned; often when one is hurt and frozen, a friend goes into 'long sleep' to accompany them.

Much work is needed to keep the beacon/stations running and, as the human work-force shrinks, other helpful creatures have taken their jobs. Some are animal pets of the castaways while others are local creatures such as fairies and sprites aiding their friends.

Because of the design of the original equipment, these smaller creatures must use human-size bodies — both to operate the equipment

and to communicate by videocast with the Federation. Also, if the original castaways appeared to have vanished, the long and expensive rescue attempt might well be abandoned. Thus the small creatures "man" robot bodies — some using golems disguised as humans and some using true human bodies whose 'souls' have withdrawn in catatonia or hibernation.

A golem may have an actual "driver's chamber" inside the head where a small sprite sits and works controls. Alternately, "soul possession" may be used with a fairy body in trance and their soul astrally projected into the human brain alongside the "hibernating" human soul.

Compared to humans, these "fairy" creatures are very short-lived: most life-spans varying from 10 days to 3 months though a few species pass an entire lifetime in only hours or minutes. Thus their tasks resemble generation-ship projects, the fairy-folk learning the tasks from their grandparents and passing them on to their grandchildren as a 'duty of kindness' (or, *perhaps, they have been asked by their gods to do this . . . as part of their service*).

Different 'drivers' also come and go within the same 'human' body — almost like multiple personalities. Sometimes they take turns, on a regular "night shift/day shift" basis with the same creature returning repeatedly after rests. Other times, a "mayfly" creature is hatched, instructed, does its job and dies of old age — all within a 'human hour'.

The result is considerable contrast between the "long term goals" these creatures work for (*maintainance of the station and rescue of the humans*) and their own personal attitudes. The situation for the humans is very depressing: their culture collapsing, the possibility of their Federation abandoning them and one after another dying or entering deep sleep.

The fairy-folk deal with these problems without being personally affected. As a people, they are cheerful and have arranged their duties so that their individual lives are successful and complete. An individual "fairy" may spend only a small portion of their time "manning" a puppet or engaged in other tasks and spend the majority of their lives in normal fairy pursuits.

To be perfectly correct, this "symbiotic relationship" has affected fairy culture. Different groups of fairies have "adopted" customs from the human culture (*as romantically represented by trivideo cassettes and books*) and fads of various types run like wildfire through the fairy folk. At one period, many of the fairies became enamored of historical

romances, began taming and training a species of large beetle as mounts and engaged in very formal mock combats . . . a practice which enjoys a periodic resurgence of appeal each generation or so.

As for the site of the landing, the whole place looks like a stage set! The parts which show up on video transmissions are barren, normal techno in appearance but, all around, metal walls have fallen, replaced by flower trellises and been redecorated in a south-sea beachcomber paradise. Even much of the equipment, having failed, has been replaced by magical analogs.

Of the few humans still functioning, many suffer from a racial panzaism (*i.e. where there are giants, they see windmills*) and, to them, the place is simply falling apart and going downhill. Many of them do not believe in (or recognize) fairies and some only partially realize what is happening, believing that their 'human' companions are going insane, losing their memories . . . (*"When talking to the Federation, he becomes rational for the moment but then he degenerates into giggling again . . ."*)

Naturally, in transmission between generations, some information is lost and some of the fairies have forgotten what the humans *think* is going on — *i.e.*, the 'cover story' they should be telling. Instead, their language has begun to reflect the *true* situation! Rather than saying to a visiting mariner, *"I will meet you here tomorrow"*, the fairy slips and says *"My granddaughter will meet you here tomorrow"* — because, of course, by tomorrow it *will* be the granddaughter 'manning' the human body.

Naturally, the fairies attempt to conceal the *true* situation from visiting Delians as well as from the Federation (*"Security is security, you know?"*) so visitors meet a 'normal marooned techno' situation at first and only gradually see the discrepancies (*the careless use of 'we' instead of 'I' suggesting a degree of hive mentality, etc . . .*).

Throughout this 'charade', the fairy-folk have maintained an irregular trade with the 'outside' world for parts and devices to 'replace' failing Federation equipment, trading gems, herbs and spices and, occasionally, technological curiosities.

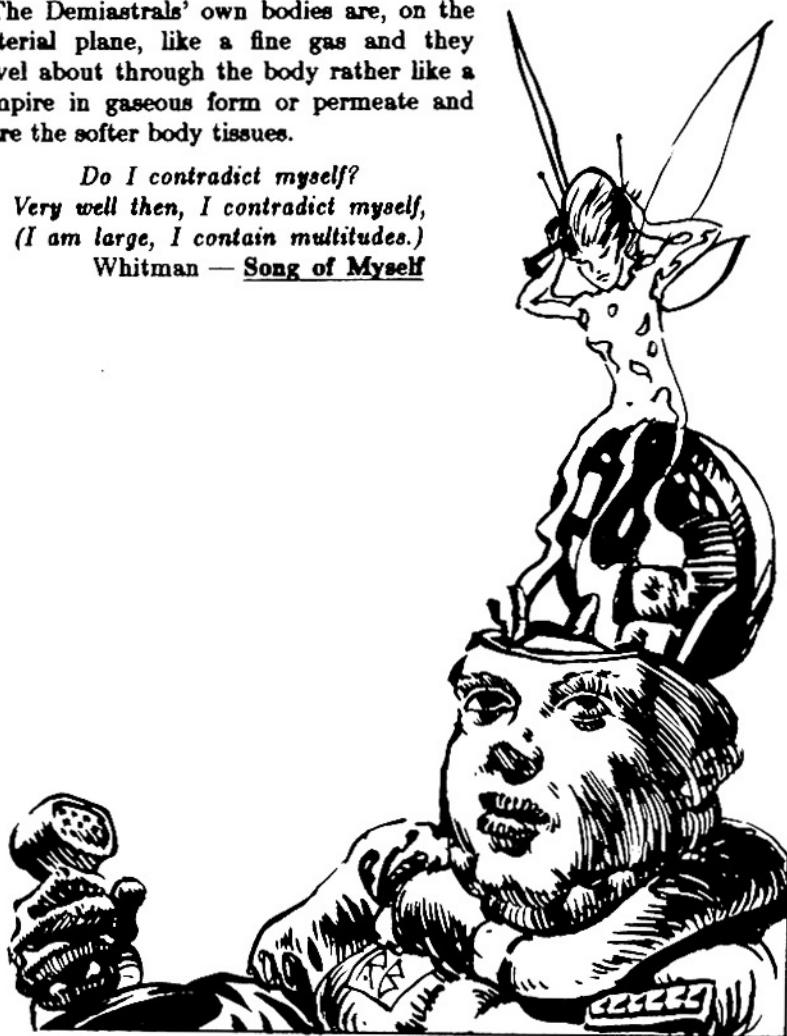
The original "crashlanders" settled many islands in the Fairy-Techno group but, over the years, the various islands have fallen out of touch with each other and, on some of these, the fairy-folk have forgotten the truth and accepted the "cover story" . . . with varying results.

On Mistrial Island, the humans have lapsed into semi-hibernation while their bodies are used by a race of fairies adept at astral and

semi-astral travel. An entire family of these *Demiastrals* will inhabit a human body operating it rather like the crew of a starship, *physically* moving from one location inside the body to another, 'reading inputs' from the different senses and 'entering instructions' for different 'motor nerves', etc.

The *Demiastrals*' own bodies are, on the material plane, like a fine gas and they travel about through the body rather like a vampire in gaseous form or permeate and share the softer body tissues.

*Do I contradict myself?
Very well then, I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)*
Whitman — Song of Myself



Navigation Practices In The Scythian Gulf

In addition to magnetic-magic compasses (*with their attendant difficulties in the regions of the West Magic Pole and the False Magnetic Pole*), most mariners plying the Scythian Gulf utilize some form of Elvard's Ear of Long Hearing.

For those unfamiliar with such a device, an Elvard's Ear resembles a brass dragon's ear (*which was the prime material component in the original spell but, due to difficulty and expense of supply, has been superseded by a variant enchantment using a cast bronze replica*).

The Ear is employed by whispering (or, sometimes, shouting) into it and then listening for a reply. When properly tweaked, the Ears may be 'tuned' to specific notes (*i.e. an Ear might be tuned to the note of A# and checked by striking the Ear with a small silver hammer*) such that only other Ears tweaked to the same note will respond.

Using an Elvard's Ear, mariners are able to converse with each other at great distances but such conversations lack privacy as any other navigator with an Ear tuned to the same note may also listen.

Using an Ear can be very confusing — people are always giving you directions without first asking where you are starting from. Or they direct you to the kind of harbor or dinner they would like. Or, like the Mendacians, they have a strange way to talk. Or their size or perceptions make them describe something you can't see or that looks different to them, etc (*i.e. a human-sized ship might intercept 'directions' from ant-sized Turtle-Dweller to another as "bear north for 3 days" which applies only on the back of the turtle which the larger ship sails past in an hour . . .*).

Of course it is possible to make something useful out of all this information if you listen long enough, piece it together right and, literally, make allowances for 'different viewpoints' . . .

Communication Results By 'Ear'*(roll on percentage dice)***Deliberate Misinformation**01-06 Malign Intent (*to lure into a trap, etc*)07-10 Mischievous (*practical joke, etc*)**No Communication**11-12 Malfunction (*temporary*)13-15 Malfunction (*permanent*)

16-19 Ear Not Properly Tweaked

20-24 No Common Language

25-29 No-one Listening

Accidental Misinformation

30-34 Inquiry Misunderstood

35-39 Differences In Viewpoints

40-49 Language Differences (*confused only*)**Correct Communication**

50-59 Information Requested Not Known

60-74 Incorrect Information Offered

75-89 Correct Information Offered

Multiple Responses

90-95 Roll For Two Responses*

96-98 Roll For Three Responses*

99-00 Too Many Responses To Understand

** ignore all inappropriate rolls*

Islands of the Delian Archipelago

The Delian Archipelago is a chain of islands extending to the South by South East (*see map*). These island are characterized by rocky shores and steep, almost unpassable, crater walls. Said variously to have been formed during an ancient battle between Gods, by stars falling from the sky and as a result of earth elementals seeking to dominate the outer world, the steep shoreline hills form "ring walls" surrounding vast valleys.

As a secondary effect, these tall "crater walls" provide sheltered interiors where the air often differs greatly from the "normal" atmosphere. Such variations in environmental conditions have produced their own special ecological niches . . . which many strange and diverse plants, animals and people have appeared to fill.

In the case of the Island of Greylock, the atmosphere has been said to resemble a strange mythic area called "Los Angeles". There are also reports of unusual *downdrafts* blowing into the rocks in many area of the Archipelago . . . which remain unexplained.

The Islands of Greylock

(aka *The Heavy Metal Islands*)

Perhaps the best introduction (*certainly the safest!*) to one of these remarkable Islands is a Cautionary Tale of the sort of Chaos caused by even one Greylockian Native wandering loose in the "normal(!)" ports of Delos . . .

The Case Of The Puerile Poisoner

Notable for their bluish-green skin and "marginally smart" appearance, a Greylockian, by nature, is a most disarming Assassin. We recall one case when a Greylockian poisoned an entire tavern and then admitted the crime before the poison could take effect!

The results produced an unusual chapter in Delian history . . . where history is, in itself, always unusual . . . but perhaps we stray from the subject . . . perhaps you would be more interested in the effects in your game . . .

If the truth be known, the Greylockian in question was, actually, a very inept assassin and used a 'poison' which affected only his own race . . . his 'poison' was nothing more than caffeine!

Somewhere else, there was a bottle . . . also from the Greylockianae . . . labeled 'Antidote' . . . (the precise nature of the 'antidote' . . . however . . . depends on precisely how mean you, the DM, wish to be . . .)

For mean, the 'antidote' might be cyanide — instant death. A more moderate 'antidote' might be histamine — which produces only violent sneezing or itching — the equivalent of a spectacular attack of hay fever (you know, 'histamine' is what you take 'anti-histamine' for)!

Or, if you wish to run this encounter as Live-Action, begin while the party (still miniatures on the table-top) is in an inn.

You initiate the action by providing refreshments: tea, coffee, cola drinks, chocolate candy — all with caffeine in them already. After everyone's eaten (and the game is ready to leave the tabletop), the Assassin causes a disturbance — such as knifing some by-stander in the hall — which leads to him being caught and questioned by the Inn-Keeper (you). He admits that he was hired . . . to eliminate them!

When the Party (naturally!) starts questioning him, the Assassin breaks down rather easily, admitting having "this tan crystal stuff" into their drinks. "You'll all be dead in a few hours. There's only one known antidote . . ."

Of course, the alien has no idea of the Common Tongue names for either his 'poison' or 'antidote'! ("It's the finest Urase Powder. The only antidote is Essence of Blue Gariave . . .") And, of course, he also has no idea the drinks already contained caffeine . . . which is all his 'poison' was!

Naturally, a 'Detect Lie' or similar spell will show he is telling the total truth!

Now, just sit back and watch the Party run around looking for the 'antidote' . . . and, when someone finds it and chug-a-lugs . . . it's "Save VS Poison!"

This is an interesting situation if 'Detect Poison' spells or artifacts are used — depending on whether their mechanism detects the actual chemical composition of the mixture (and correlating with the body chemistry of the User) — or detects the 'intentions' of the assassin.

But think about it . . . your possibilities are endless . . . and an astonishing variety of common substances are poison . . . in excessive doses . . . even sugar . . . or water . . .

But the subject was our Greylockian poisoner and his activities — depending on how realistic you want to be, the effects of a good dose of cyanide is either instant death (or, if a save at -8 is made, violent

illness for a day).

As for the milder version, realistically, histamine can also kill by "shutting the lungs down".

However, it has been ascertained through extensive and exhaustive testing that: "Dead PC's do not role-play well!"

Thus, for game purposes, we recommend a histamine reaction in the form of "hay fever" — the violence of the reaction depending on a save being made. You should, however, remember this is 'alien' histamine from dirty 'alien' hands and there is every likelihood of the Victim having some weird 'alien' reaction . . . (see *Insanity Tables, Handbook Of Traps And Tricks*).

Notes on The Greylockian Assassins

Indigenous only to the Island of Greylock in the Delian Archipelago, the Greylockian natives are outwardly human but with skins a bluish-green in appearance. Their blood is dark green but, if cut and exposed to air, they "bleed" blue.

Intensely paranoid, the Greylockians are characterized by a sly cunning (and a *limited intelligence*) but are rarely found far from their island home. Without the aid of powerful adaptive magics, few Greylockians are unable to survive long exposure outside their natural environment, namely the Dragon Dung Islands.

The Dragon Dung Islands

(aka *Terrae Ammoniae*)

This group of closely-spaced islands is a natural source of ammonia. According to historical sources, a quarter-million years past, intelligent dragons (*now believed extinct*) inhabited the southern Delian coast and used this area as a natural latrine. The resulting island is built totally dragon manure long since fermented (*you've smelled kitty litter? — this whole island rests on "dragon litter"!*).

Over the course of millennia, the Varian race has adapted to these conditions but other races become violently ill visiting the region. Further, the peculiar aroma of the region is shared by the Varians — everywhere they go, off-island, the reaction of others is to sniff and look for the cat (*or the dragon*).

Their adapted physiology also produces noticeable quantities of cyanogen, principally as an exhaled waste-gas and it can be rather

dangerous to accept artificial resuscitation (i.e. the "Kiss of Life") from them.

Game Master's Note: the high ammonia/cyanogen/acetylene (the latter from volcanic vents) content in the atmosphere causes all ferrous alloys (iron, steel, etc) to tarnish and corrode quite rapidly while titanium and titanium alloys, in this atmosphere, if exposed to fire, burn rapidly and with an intense heat.

The Varian diet is equally unusual. While Varians can consume conventional foods (but do so with little relish — complaining that most foods lack "flavor"), they require Albaia Cyclos (the southern Blow-Fish) as a regular part of their diet (these are extremely — and fatally — toxic to most other species) and, lacking this, the Varians suffer from a condition similar to goiter in humans.

Central to the island is a small, enclosed lagoon where the waters retain an incredibly high concentration of ammonia, cyanide and various organo-metallic complexes. Known as the Holy Lagoon, a variety of algae and other plants thrive in these waters and are eaten by the fish, Albaia Cyclos, which to the natives are known as Holy Food.

To the Varians, the Holy Food is required for health but, to a traveler, these are deadly poison. Also, it is rumored, on many of the neighboring islands, that the Varians partake of a special sustenance which allow them to "live forever" (the rumors are incorrect but stem from instances of ill Varians being returned to health by a diet of Albaia Cyclos).

Albaia Cyclos is served at all formal dinners . . . and it can be quite dangerous for off-islanders to accept even a sincere, friendly dinner invitation . . .

Under ordinary circumstances, of course, the Varians wouldn't invite visitors to partake of the Holy Food. As a reward or honor for special services, visitors might be offered the Holy Food . . . (but unless the guests have a good cleric on staff — they're dead!).

Also worth of note, the Varian excrete a iron-hydrogen-cyanide complex in the form of round yellow needles . . . which are extremely toxic to a variety of species. Export of these crystals is forbidden by treaty among the island-nations of the archipelago (which all lawful Varians observe) but a furtive traffic exists in this mineral — the principal markets being in the Grey Lands to the distant west.

The principal local industry is mining Dragon guano for the production and export of firepowder (*which everyone knows can be made only from the dung of an Ancient Red Dragon . . .*). Traders should be aware that the refined Essence of Red Dragon is also used by the Greylockians as a spice and by the Lampions for medicinal purposes but the principal export goes to the Grey Dwarves of Gailos who, in turn, export firepowder through the seacoast traders of the Barian Peninsula.

Negyxo Island

The Lampions of the Negyxo Island are considered by many to be the finest warriors of the archipelago. Outwardly humanoid, Lampions are easily distinguished by their green hair and ruddy tan skins (*unlike most races, the Lampion hemoglobin is based on magnesium rather than iron — the only functional difference between blood and chlorophyll*).

When cut, Lampions bleed a bright green but even major injuries do little harm as they regenerate (*major injuries take two — three days*). Normally peaceable, the Lampions become quite actively aggressive when attacked, seeming to take a positive delight in the most serious injuries.

In actual fact, the Lampions are more vegetable than animal and propagate by quite well as cuttings. This is the basis for their annual ceremony, **The Cutting Time**, when the best of each tribe gather in ceremonial combat.

The Cutting Time

The Cutting Time (*at the spring equinox*) begins with a ceremonial gathering of the Lampion tribes, each tribal group taking its proper place around the rim of a huge caldera (*an ancient volcanic crater*). Beginning the ceremonies, the younger Lampions engage in an intricate dance while spreading Gallian firepowder across the floor of the caldera.

When the dance is finished, older Lampions check the preparations while adding tribal totems (*carved from Gallian wood*) at strategic points in the caldera. While this is being done, the bravest and best of the Lampions of each tribe (*usually also the biggest but not always*) boast loudly of their abilities as warriors (*but never lie*) and cast disparaging remarks toward the other tribes (*and always lie*).

As the Golden Sun (*Dae*) reaches the pinnacle of its travels, the boasting falls silent and a hush falls over the caldera. Suddenly, before each tribal gathering, flames appear at the rim of the caldera and race down the slopes into the volcanic bowl. As the caldera fills with smoke (*and the tribal totems rise toward the sky on pillars of fire*), the chosen warriors of each tribe race silently down into the smoke to join in battle.

While combat is thus engaged, the remaining members of the tribes gather in conclave to select their new chieftains. This is also the time of trade between tribes, settlement of arguments or disagreements and much social merrymaking.

As night falls, the haze filling the caldera will begin to clear but, until dawn of the following day, no Lampion will enter the caldera.

As the suns rise, the tribes will be waiting patiently. In the rare event that a warrior remains whole within the caldera at dawn, the newly-chosen tribal chieftains meet on the floor of the bowl and engage in a ritual of selection (*the precise nature of which is understood only by the Lampions themselves but is believed to be instinctive in nature*).

When the order of precedence is determined, one of the chieftains approaches the surviving warrior and, using a jeweled blade, cuts the waiting figure swiftly in two sections, then takes one half (*always the smaller half*) and returns to the rim.

In succession, the remaining segment is divided repeatedly by each chieftain, each taking the smaller segment and returning to their place on the rim.

When the last of the chieftains has regain the rim, the waiting Lampions raise their voices in a hymn and, all except the chieftains, enter the caldera and begin collecting the pieces of the sundry warriors. When the caldera has been thus cleaned, the gathered pieces are taken back to tribal lands and ritually planted.

Within a month, each buried fragment will have sprouted and the tribesmen will tend the growing Lampions, weeding out the weaker growths. Thus the best of the Lampion stock is shared between the tribes for the general improvement of the breed.

Visitors are always welcome at Cutting Time and, on rare occasions, honored visitors have been invited to participate in the ceremony . . . however, it should be noted, of those honored to participate in the final ceremony, *no-one* has every survived — irrespective of armor, ability or any other form of protection.

When a visitor is so honored, it is a point of great pride to the participating Lampions that the visitor be thoroughly and well chopped into many small segments and well distributed *so that they will be shared equally among all of the tribes . . .* and they are thus among the first to be cut.

Unfortunately, few off-islanders are capable of returning from sprouts but the honor bestowed is, none the less, real.

In addition to asexual propagation, the Lampions engage in territorial warfare by covertly entering areas belonging to other tribes and dropping seed (*bisexual propagation*) in likely locations. Off-islanders visiting Negyxo may accidentally pick up a seed on their boot and, at some later time the seed falls and, by morning, there is a 2-foot tall little 'person' saying "*Dadda!*".

As surrogate offspring, young Lampions are very amenable to their foster parents. Having a limited "*telepathic sense*", young Lampions pick up the native language of their "foster parents" and instinctive learn ways to appeal and please them.

Also if you hack the little bugger up, you just get that many more of them. They love to have bullets shot into them also — trace minerals, they eat them up like candy . . .

Lampions take everything they can get — manure, compost, etc. Not a bad thing to have around a human encampment, maybe, but they also have a weakness for silicates — such as gems supplying trace minerals. A hundred carat emerald? A tasty snack!

Negyxo Island is gem-rich — which brings travelers. The Lampions, however, also plant seeds or Lampion sprouts on the gem traders. Producing a faint piney scent, the young Lampion imparts a pleasant aroma, attractive to have around. As the young devour gemstones, the usual result is enmity between the traders who accuse each other of theft . . . and frequently fall to fighting. The young Lampions, of course, are always pleased to see their foster parents enjoying themselves.

Lampions also produce waste in the form of white, crystalline minerals (*locally know as "shit-rock"*). These slightly-translucent, rhomboidal crystals (*potassium nitrate*) have little value on Negyxo but visiting Varians should be cautioned to avoid contact with such minerals as they react violently with Varian physiology (*rather like concentrated sulfuric acid on normal flesh*)

As a final note, many visitors to Negyxo Island become light-headed from the rich atmosphere (*hyperbaric oxygen*). This is also aids in

healing most common diseases and wounds (*but does not affect magical diseases such as lycanthropy*). Due to this and the high humidity, all ferrous metals rust rapidly unless protected by waxes or oils.

Yrabbary Island (*The False Magnetic Pole*)

Located roughly to the southwest of the Delian Archipelago (*south-southwest of the West Magic Pole*), the False Magnetic Pole is a varying and irregular irritant to all mariners depending on magneto-magic compasses (*see also The Great Lighthouse*). Characterized by the Mage Gauss as a "*strange attractor*", the precise nature of this irregular magnetic pole remains undefined.

Some say the island is simply an enormous lump or mascon of "cold iron" (well-known to be inimical to magicks) . . . but, of course, such is much too simple to be taken seriously by the best authorities . . .

Yrabbary Island appears, to conventional compasses, as Magnetic North and several archaeological scholars have suggested that Yrabbary was originally settled by lost mariners. But, regardless of origins, the present inhabitants have settled on piracy as a livelihood and "terrorize" the surrounding regions, occasionally venturing as far North as the Barian Peninsula and the Moor Eeffoc coast and as far East as Negyxo Island.

The Yrabbary Pirates

<i>Race:</i> Mixed Human/Elven/Dwarf	<i>Attacks:</i> Special
<i>Frequency:</i> Common	<i>Defenses:</i> Standard
<i>No. Appearing:</i> 5-100	<i>Magic Resistance:</i> Standard
<i>Armor Class:</i> 4	<i>Alignment:</i> Neutral (Evil)
<i>Hit Dice:</i> 2d10+8	<i>Size:</i> M

Visitors to the region should be aware of several special circumstances: first, due to the presence of the massive cold-iron mascon forming the foundation of Yrabbary Island (*and, possibly, the influence of the West Magic Pole*), all magic in this area has an automatic 75% fumble percentage (85% for regular inhabitants).

As a direct result of this abnormality, the Yrabbary mages have become adept in casting 'curses' (*with only a 10% fumble factor*) and the Pirates are well equipped with 'cursed' weapons which, in their

hands, will do double damage (80% chance to be so equipped) or may possess other 'cursed' magic items (10% chance) having 'doubled effects' against normal people. In similar fashion, Yrabbarian Magic Users (5% encounter) cast spells (other than curses) doing double effect (and subject to 85% fumble factors).

Cursed weapons or other items used against Yrabbarian Pirates, however, do only normal damage.

Despite their high egos (*origins unexplicable*), the Yrabbarian Pirates rarely attack unless possessing two- or three-to-one numerical superiority (an exception being *Negyzo Island*) and suffer defeat more often than victory. Also, the Pirates will never knowingly attack anyone equipped with a blessed weapon (being repelled by such weapons but not by Clerical 'Bless' spells).

The Yrabbarian Pirates raid *Negyzo Island* regularly, their visits being occasions of great popularity with the Lampions who gather in droves to be 'slaughtered' (and doing much to boost Pirate egos). The major part of the 'treasures' gained during these raids (primarily gemstones — together with Lampion 'seeds') are traded for food-stuffs and other necessities but an exceptionally successful raid will result in a treasure trove being buried on one of the thousand of small, nameless islands dotting the region (most of which are now have Lampion populations as does *Yrabbarian Island*).

The Great Lighthouse

Constructed under the direction of the twelfth Earl of Erewhon, the Great Lighthouse is a monumental edifice built on top an ancient volcanic vent providing a natural source of illuminating gas (*acetylene*). Shaped, for reasons known only to the twelfth Earl, in the form of a giant cormorant, this lighthouse was first tended by a deposed Prime Minister of Erewhon and later maintained by various political figures who had incurred the disfavor of the ruling Earls.

Because of the difficulties of navigation in the Eastern Symarian Gulf (see also *The False Magnetic Pole*), the Great Lighthouse has long been a benison to traders and seafarers in the Archipelago region. As there are many such vents supplying illuminating gas (not all of which burn regularly), proposals have been made to establish additional lighthouses but, to date, the Great Lighthouse remains the sole beacon in the region.

A caution is suggested, however: we have encountered characters

equipped with "titanium" plate-mail armour which we are given to understand was salvaged from a crashed spaceship (*what so ever such might be*) and we have no doubt that their "find" has been shaped by that most famous of all smiths, Mon de Hawle . . .

If the valiant adventurer in titanium armour approaches any of these acetylene flames (*especially one in a high-nitrogen atmosphere*), they are very likely to find their armour on fire! (*Iron might burn also, if you want to be really mean!*)

And, speaking of such, we come to:

Muinatit Island

Recently settled by a dissident sect of Grey Dwarves from Gailos, the Muinatit Islanders have rapidly gained a considerable reputation for their production of shields. While not particularly attractive, these shields are formed from a dull grey metal but are noted for their strength and light weight (*a large shield weight about one pound*).

Typical of their parent culture, the Muinatit Islanders remain reticent concerning the methods used to shape and manufacture these remarkable shields but enjoy a brisk trade, offering their work at very reasonable prices. In addition to their light weight, the shields are quite strong and durable under most all conditions. (*Game Masters please note: these shields are manufactured from almost pure titanium and the cautions previously stated should be observed.*)

As described, the Muinatit Island settlers are dissidents expelled from Gailos but an explanation of their religious practices might, perhaps, be in order. In brief, the Grey Dwarves have historically been followers of Vulcan but, following the stranding of a Dionysian priestess on the island of Gailos, a group of converts departed seeking a sanctuary where their revels would not be condemned by the Vulcan elders. (*By most standards, the Dionysian followers are remain rather tight-lipped and uncommunicative.*)

Overall, the Muinatit Island has proved hospitable (*by Gaillian standards*) and the settlers follow a rather polynesian life-style concentrating on planting and fishing and fighting only rarely. Since the islanders use their own shields, little damage is done in even the fiercest battles. (*The titanium-rich alloy used for the shields does not hold an edge and thus is not used for weapons.*)

In keeping with their Dionysian practices, the islanders have adopted the customs of free love (*probably the major reason for their*

expulsion) and expect visitors and traders to behave according . . . and refusal is tantamount to a deadly insult. Also worthy of note, the dwarven fondness for beer has given way to stronger wines without lessening their rate of consumption.

The West Magic Pole

Located roughly east and south of the Barian Peninsula, the West Magic Pole has long been the standard navigation reference used by Smyrian Gulf mariners. Inexperienced travelers are cautioned, however, that arcane effects increase sharply in immediate proximity to the West Magic Pole and even the most innocuous arcana may yield surprising results in this region (*see also the Yrabbary Islands*).

Game Master's Note

In general, the special effects described for the various islands (*and islanders*) do not depend on magic or special technology . . . in any form. Almost all of these are "*natural*" effects . . .

An exception is the West Magic Pole but, for game purposes, the cautioned effects may be treated as an increase in the "fumble" effects. In the immediate vicinity of the West Magic Pole, the fumble factor is 100%, decreasing to normal (*i.e. minimum 5%*) at a range of a few hundred leagues.



RULE MODIFICATIONS For LIVE-ACTION ENCOUNTERS

In the current game, there may arise a situation where modifications to the normal rules may be required.

To "pre-roll" dice for that situation, you will be given an index card. At the top, write your name. Then roll the type of dice indicated in each column 10 times, recording the result. Return this card to the DM when you are finished.

When that situation is announced, the following changes will go into effect:

- 1) Artificial character attributes such as Strength, Piety, Dexterity, Wisdom, Luck or Intelligence will NOT be used. For game purposes, your character will have the SAME attributes as you do as a person.
- 2) You may ATTEMPT any existing magic spell or item your character is capable of using, but ONLY those spells whose effects can be reasonably simulated in a real life situation will be ruled to WORK.
- 3) Informational spells, spells which alter the mind of another NPC, and similar effects SHOULD WORK as expected. However, Polymorph spells, Flying/Levitation, Telekinesis and similar spells which cannot be simulated easily in real life will simply NOT WORK on this occasion. (There will be no PERMANENT alteration of the properties of any magic item).
- 4) Spell casters MUST use a SPOKEN Incantation AND a Gesture while casting their spells. The last word(s) of the spell should be its name and the Gesture must end pointing to the object/person onto which the spell is cast. Prior notification of the game referee as to what spell will be cast is NOT required.
- 5) The exact nature of the Incantation and Gesture is left to the discretion of the player but, without BOTH, a spell will be ruled to have failed.
- 6) At all times players are expected to deal WITH EACH OTHER and with the SITUATION presented. Interact with the game referee as LITTLE as possible.

Take your time during the encounter. This is not a test of how fast you can complete the encounter; it is an opportunity for ROLE-PLAY.

There is a difference between "attributes" and role-play. As an example, consider how you would "act out" (or role-play) picking a lock or determining if a trap is present. You could ask the game referee about these details (technically correct) but your role-play scores will suffer miserably. Actually DOING all these is the objective of a Live-Action encounter.

Live COMBAT (or related situations) IS PROHIBITED. As a player, you may NOT physically contact any other person nor may you break or modify any object found in the encounter.

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Live-Action On The Table-Top

Why incorporate Live-Action encounters in a table-top game?

Well, one reason is to introduce you and your players to Live-Action fantasy gaming (*yeah, we're being real subtle about this*) but, of more immediate interest to you, as Game Master, is that Live-Action encounters add a new dimension to your game and simplify many aspects of table-top gaming.

One element which becomes easier is that you (as GM) no longer have to ask each and every PC **exactly** what their character is doing, nor do you have to constantly refresh their memories by re-explaining everything associated with an encounter. *They are there, doing it.* In a Live-Action encounter, keeping track of several PCs is not complicated because you are watching the PCs put on what amounts to a scene from a stage play and, as GM, you have the advantage of being Reviewer, Critic, Audience and Referee.

Most table-top rule systems state that Magic Spells are cast by speaking an incantation, making a gesture and/or using some object **but**, when Spell Casters are sitting around the table, how do they actually perform? Do they just say, "*I'm casting such and such spell . . . ?*" Or does the Spell Caster cut loose with: "*By the unlimited powers of the universe and the Secret Arts both known and forgotten, I summon and bind these forces to my will and cast . . . !*"

Which is good Role Playing? And which do you prefer in your game?

While keeping track of everyone on a table-top map, it's easy to overlook details. Using a few props (and much deviosity), your advance preparations can free your mind during play to concentrate on the plot as well as adding interest for the players.

Where We Are Going

We are offering you a collection of ideas which can be applied, at the GM's discretion, to fit individual circumstances but, like all "*new ideas*", it will take some experimentation to determine what "*works*" best for you and your group.

Backing Up

Most GMs would like to see their encounters (or games) run as a continuous flow of action — much like a stage play or a movie. This doesn't happen nearly as often as it should because most rules sets are created to determine what happens to a purely hypothetical character (*represented by a metal figurine*) in a fictional world (*the table-top map*). Within this setting, most fantasy gaming systems work okay . . . up to a point.

It never seems to fail, when the action starts to get interesting, everything grinds to an unceremonious crawl so that some procedure can be run according to a set of rules.

A combat melee situation is a good example: each character takes an "action" within a single game segment . . . which may require 10 minutes or longer to go around the table . . . Is it any wonder that many people have a hard time remembering that most segments are (in *game-time*) less than 10 seconds and it is hard for players to keep a good sense of what is happening in a "fantasy" game when "real life" is constantly being reasserted.

The definition of "fantasy" is also the reason some encounters never quite work the way they are planned. Each individual person playing the game has a different experience and a different imagination and, when a GM says "You are in a long corridor", one PC might see that corridor as a raw tunnel *blasted from solid rock* while another sees it as being *well constructed with carefully crafted Dwarven precision*. Which is correct?

Frequently it doesn't matter but, sometimes, differences in how things are viewed can make a big difference results.

Using "just imagination" fails every once in a while during the conduct of a table-top game. Some players find that words are not enough and no PC wants their actions misinterpreted in a "critical" or complicated situation. At such times, players almost always resort to "acting out" what their character is doing so that there is "no question" about the action being taken.

Actually, this works both ways. How many times have you, as a GM, "acted out" (or written) something for the players so they would not misunderstand what was happening?

The opportunity to use imagination, is one reason why fantasy games are successful but, more importantly, players have the most fun when they believe they control the situations the GM presents: an encounter

is only an excuse to "invent their own game" and, the more they are able to do so, the more "fun" the game becomes. PCs have a better idea of what is "fun" (for them) than a GM can ever devise.

Think for a moment about those times you have participated in a game when the players began to spontaneously act out what their characters were doing. While you are contemplating those times, ask yourself this question: how many "rules" were actually being used?

Rule Systems

Rules systems for fantasy games range from highly complex to very simple. For purposes of "role-play", however, the fewer rules, the smoother a Live-Action event will run. The information presented in this manual does not address any particular system — rather, it has been designed so a Live-Action encounter may be created for virtually any gaming system . . . (which statement may convince some readers that the author is completely out of his mind because no two systems are alike).

What is suggested for Live-Action encounters is a modification to your current rules set which follows the strategy used in most Fantasy Gaming Tournaments. A summary of these changes will be found in the *Rule Modifications* — opposite, however, even without the Rule Modifications, all other questions relating to rules should be judged by:

If it can be reasonably simulated in the "real world", it should be allowed to work in the encounter setting.

A character could smear an Oil of Etherialness all over something with a paint brush if they wish but, unless they can really stick their hand through a concrete wall (not recommended), you may legitimately rule that "For some reason, it didn't seem to work". You don't have to modify your entire rule set just to have a live encounter — the Rule Modifications should be more than sufficient.

Dispensing with the rules altogether might seem a better strategy but some rules are necessary to represent "social conventions" for dealing with topics that cannot be adequately handled in "real life" and to provide a common basis from which everyone can work. We deal with real life "rules" all the time (whether we realize it or not) and, most of the time, we would think referring to a "Book of Real Life Rules" ridiculous but, when asked to attend a formal social function, we do just that: look up the proper form of conduct in a Book of Etiquette.

Using the Rule Modifications

The main reason for the Rule Modifications is **not** to prevent any specific single player from using a certain item or attribute but to allow the opportunity for more people to participate in the encounter (in some way) while minimizing the number of disruptions to the "flow" of a game imposed by a set of rules.

In the Rule Modifications, the first two items eliminate the need to stopping the game to roll dice (*if required by your system*) for determining the effects of a PC action but another method of eliminating dice for a Live-Action encounter is:

Mark a blank index card with as many columns as there are different multisided dice used in your system. Indicate, on each column, the type of dice to be rolled by the players and distribute these before the encounter is run. After the players have rolled their own dice and recorded the results, retrieve the cards for later reference as necessary.

Further, if the members of the group have no objection to the GM making any die rolls required, the preceeding could be eliminated altogether. (There is a favorite T-shirt, popular with many GMs, displaying a wrinkled, twisted, grinning figure rubbing his hands . . . and captioned "*Trust me!*")

In practice, very few actual "*rules*" are used in a Live-Action encounter (including die rolls) but, be warned, some individuals will howl indignantly when they "*suddenly*" discover that one of their prize possessions longer gives them an "*edge*" over everyone else. Informing players, well in advance of a Live-Action encounter, of what they can expect will often mean more co-operation while they play.

Fantasy Combat and Safety

Fantasy combat with simulated weapons (*and how it can be conducted safely*) is beyond the scope of this volume (see *Of Taverns and Tournaments* from Dragon Tree Press). When combat arises within a live encounter, the action should be returned to the table-top for completion, using the game's current combat system. "*Combat*" must include weapons, magic spells and countless other details as related to a specific gaming system and describing such a combat system in a "*generic*" way suitable for use with **any** gaming system is simply not possible.

Even a situation where a PC might attempt to pull a necklace from

an NPC or a Thief — *grab a purse and run* — may seem innocent enough on the surface, but these (and similar ploys) are questionable practices from a safety standpoint. The Rule Modifications include a non-contact provision and is repeated here for further clarification:

Any action involving close personal contact among participants in a Live-Action encounter (PCs or NPCs) is **always disallowed** — even if it means stopping the encounter or the game.

This includes (but is not — by any means — limited to) tying up an NPC or PC, gagging someone so that they cannot scream, wrestling, using any Martial Arts maneuver or actual brawling. Should PCs or NPCs feel that an action such as these are appropriate, they should Role Play the act; not actually do it. Every participant in a live encounter is **equally** responsible for the safety of others.

In every encounter situation, considerations of safety must include insuring a "*sure-footing*" for all participants at all times. Locations such as stairways may be "*realistic*" in the sense that such occur in a fantasy setting but the realism of the injuries has no place in a Live-Action game or encounter.

These are a few of the "*common sense*" exclusions in Live-Action gaming. In **any** cases where there is **any** question concerning safety:

If a situation or tactic could result in an unnecessary chance of injury to **any** participant or anyone's property, it should never be allowed in a Live-Action fantasy encounter or Live-Action Game.

Let me repeat: The first criteria for a Live-Action game or even a single Live-Action encounter is always: **Safety**.

Live-Action Traps

One of the best introductions to Live-Action Fantasy is to offer your players, instead of a table-top situation, a **real live trap!** This does not necessarily mean digging up the rose garden to construct an elephant pit nor setting the house on fire (after locking all the doors) and saying "*Okay, let's see how you get out of this!*"

Of course, as many Game Masters (*usually those with a decided paucity of imagination*) complain, there is no feasible way to "*simulate*" a fantasy trap in real-time and the real-world . . . or not (if they've read *Dream Park*) without computer-generated holograms and a hefty special-effects budget.

But all fantasy role-play involves *Suspension of Disbelief* and a liberal exercise of the imagination (*how else do you see that 20 ft dragon you're fighting*) and Live-Action situations merely substitute one part *Suspension of Disbelief* for one part *Imagination* while increasing the player's actual involvement from the verbal to the physical level.

As a introductory example of a fantasy situation converted into a workable, Live-Action encounter, the *Clank, Clank, I'm a Tank* trap described in **The Handbook Of Traps and Tricks** (Dragon Tree Press — page 44) has been selected as a working example. For your convenience, here is an excerpted description:

In the ceiling and floor of the room is an enormous Electromagnetic Magic Magnet which is not in operation. Triggering the device (numerous triggers apply) causes everyone wearing plate, splint or chain mail to be jerked to the ceiling. Those who are not wearing metal armor will not be jerked to the ceiling but will lose any iron or steel objects they are carrying. After a period of time, the magnets reverse, slamming the affected victims into the floor.

The obvious intent of this trap is to create a Plate Mail Yo-Yo — an interesting concept but one which is "*impossible*" (or *impractical*) to duplicate in real life.

But, this type of situation also matches the guidelines for selecting a scenario that can potentially make a good live encounter:

- * The party is directly involved due to the entrapment of several of their members (or, maybe, a favorite sword).
- * Opportunity is provided for a number of characters (players) to participate in some way.
- * The "*object of the encounter*" is clear: rescue everyone (and everything) trapped.
- * This is a complete segment that can be moved smoothly from the table-top setting to Live-Action and back on its completion.
- * It is implied that there is some way for the team to rescue the victims.

The next step is to review the fantasy situation and substitute, where necessary, reasonable elements for those which are impossible and, at the same time, maintain the intent of the encounter. For our example, there are three key elements:

- * A PC is immovably stuck by a magnet (*to the ceiling*).
- * Access to the victim is limited (*by the height of the ceiling*).
- * There is a risk involved for the trapped victims and for the rescuers.

First, we will eliminate the elements in parentheses on the basis of practicality and safety. So, if you can't easily stick someone to a ceiling, why not stick them (semi)permanently to a floor or wall? Either of these locations is simpler to deal with than the ceiling . . . but — hold on a minute — where is this floor or wall located?

Location

The "*Clank, Clank...*" trap, our example, could occur in a Wilderness setting but its nature is more reasonably associated with an indoor setting such as a building or dungeon. Obviously, however, a building or a room is still not the simplest location that can be defined — and such a trap will occur in only one part of a room or corridor wherever it is located.

Describing a few very specific game-related "*landmarks*" outlining the simplest location for an encounter setting will indicate to the PCs that "*the encounter occurs here and does not include the next two planes of existence*". As an example, a hallway would be a good (game and physical) location for the "*Clank, Clank...*" trap — and, let's face it, there isn't a lot of room for wandering around in a hallway.

Once the game-related location has been defined, then the encounter may be played out in any convenient *physical* location — provided this can be done so safely. When the game's action is moved to the live encounter setting, the GM should repeat as much of the description as is necessary and indicate the boundaries of the *physical location* corresponding to the *game location*.

Designing for "Believability"

Events which are clearly "*impossible*" can be portrayed in such a way that they appear to be happening anyway. Author and stage magician, Dariel Fitzke, refers to this as the "*Willing Suspension of Disbelief*". The challenge of the stage magician's art is to convince an audience that what they are seeing (*magic*) is actually happening even though the spectators know the events they are witnessing are impossible. The same principle is also used in novels, radio dramas . . . and Live-Action encounters. In all of these cases, people have to use their imaginations but, the less strain required for such mental efforts, the more "*believable*" the situation becomes.

Attempting to run the "*Clank, Clank...*" trap as written in a Live-Action encounter and using the normal gaming convention of imagining *everything* is a good example of straining "*believability*".

In the arena of a "*live*" encounter, a verbal description would place the PCs in the position of having to constantly imagine that one of their number was "*stuck to the ceiling*" even though the person playing the victim was (in fact) standing on the floor or sitting in a chair in the plain view of the other players . . . thus, the situation loses creditibility quickly.

One of the goals of the "*Clank, Clank...*" trap is to limit the access to the trapped player. As noted, there is no simple way of "*sticking*" a real person to the ceiling of a room. Limiting access could be done by stating that an "*Invisible Wall*" exists between the victim and the rest of the party but, again, such a strategy can strain "*believability*".

When the encounter is presented as a "*real event*", it should seem reasonable for the PCs to believe that the situation actually exists with only a *little* imagination . . . and a PC blundering though the Invisible Wall by accident will demolish any concept the wall actually being present.

Alternately, a "*pit*" could be used to limit access and add certain amount of "*danger*" to the rescue — especially if a section of the floor

fell away from underneath their feet leaving them stuck to the wall over a gaping pit . . . which situation also fits very well with almost any Physical Location. Unfortunately, most people would hesitate to allow a real pit to be dug in their living room but, since these ideas are "impossible", the real secret of running a live simulation of a fantasy event comes out:

You don't need to have a real pit or anything else that might be called for in such an encounter — most such items can be simulated.

Simulations

A simulation is a *stage prop* intended to represent something other than what it really is. Such props do not have to be accurate or highly detailed; just present. The Chinese sum it up very simply: "*One picture is worth a thousand words*".

A simulation must be viewed in two perspectives. First, does the object approximate what it is really supposed to represent and, second, are all the elements the PCs should expect (or the GM describes) actually there?

A verbal description of an object will be remembered by PCs far longer with the object in plain view . . . and, if everyone can see what has been described, everyone has a common point of reference which further states: "*This is what you are dealing with*".

The simulations used should be kept as simple as the encounter in which they are included. How would you "*stick the PC to a wall?*"

When you really think about it, it's easy . . . you don't have to do **anything**! Merely instruct the PC/victim to stand against the wall and tell them that they cannot move. It may not be exciting but, then again, their klutzy character tripping a trap *would be in exactly the same position* and, if the trapped PC is a good role player, his immobility can be quite convincing . . . if he's really good, he'll be shouting at the party to get him out of there.

The "pit" requires only slightly more effort to simulate and can be easily handled in either of two ways.

First, the pit consists of an old bedsheet or other piece of cloth (a dark color is the best) placed on the floor so that one edge is against the wall. The edges might have to be folded so that it

will fit but the shape is the key point.

Second, twine (or chalk lines on a bare floor) could be used to outline a rectangular area and represent the edges of the pit.

Taking a piece of cloth and placing it on the floor against the wall, in real life looks like; well, a piece of cloth on the floor. Even if described as a "pit", it —still— looks like a piece of cloth laying on the floor.

Before a piece of cloth can be called a pit, it needs help. A rectangle of cloth is neither believable as a pit, nor does it lend itself to "*suspension of disbelief*". Thinking about what makes up a pit, however, does offer clues as to how the basic simulation can be enhanced.

- * A pits has walls, cloth is one dimensional . . .

- * A pit has a bottom, cloth is one dimensional . . .

- * A pit may have something in the bottom, cloth is one dimensional . . .

The "*problem*" gets to be a little obvious after a while . . . so, how do you give a piece of cloth the same attributes as a pit?

You draw on it — the same way an artist creates a three-dimensional object on a canvas.

The simulation could be enhanced by drawing a rectangle (with chalk) on the cloth (parallel to the edges), and then drawing straight lines from the corners of the chalk rectangle to the corners of the cloth. The larger you make the drawn rectangle, the shallower the pit is; the smaller, the deeper.

For those with an artistic bent, a sketch of a skeleton drawn to scale inside the smaller chalk rectangle lends even more credibility to the situation: the trap was dangerous for **somebody**!

Finishing Touches

Encounters become confusing to PCs when something should logically be found in an encounter but is not present. This is certainly true for "Item Encounters" but it is also true for information or dealings with NPCs. Most players "*assume*" that certain items have certain other things associated with them . . . *whether they do or not* . . . Thus chests and other containers are assumed to be locked/trapped/whatever before they are even opened and, after they are opened, something is expected to be inside.

An empty chest could be a ruse (it happens) but players, finding a situation which contradicts their assumptions, will continue making

further assumptions until the situation makes sense.

"*Second guessing*" what the players expect in a specific encounter allows for a more complete scenario. When faced with the "*Clank, Clank...*" trap, PCs "*assume*" that, if the magnet can be turned on, something will turn the dumb thing off.

An accurate "*second guess*" is not required — but the GM must give some consideration to what items *should* be present. The players then rummage through their assumptions until they "*discover*" what's relevant to a particular encounter. More importantly, second guessing can often turn up opportunities for participation which were absent in the original idea.

In our example, a single Spell Caster might select any of a number of spells for freeing the trapped PC(s). It sounds awfully futile to create a live encounter only to have a Spell Caster call out "*Reverse Magic*" and then "*Halt Falling Object*" to solve the encounter in seconds . . . not only would the encounter's puzzle be solved but the action of one individual would have prevented the others from participation.

However, if the Live-Action Rule Modifications are used, the simple solution also won't work!

The Rule Modifications states (rather clearly) that unless an Incantation and a Gesture is used in the casting of spell, the spell fails. Even if the Rule Modifications were not used, it might be a little illogical to assume that the spell would work in close proximity to such an overwhelmingly powerful magical device and, if this option is not available to the PCs, then what is?

Self-Contained Encounters

The encounter should be self-contained; all the elements required to "*solve*" the situation should either be available within the encounter itself, have been provided in a previous encounter(s) or a combination of the two.

The players should be allowed to use their characters' attributes whenever possible to solve an encounter but what if they don't? There is an old adage in table-top play that carries over into live encounters very well.

Plan on accounting for at least two solutions to every encounter: the one the PCs will come up with that you never considered . . . and the one you provide in case they don't.

With this in mind (including the players' assumptions), the finishing



touches required to complete the "*Clank, Clank...*" trap must include a method for the PCs to 1) turn the magnet off and 2) rescue the trapped victim(s). Also, the GM's solution should involve as many players as possible.

A difficult task? No, these can be provided with nothing more than an "*On/Off*" switch and a rope. Obviously, the rope could be used by tying it around the victim(s) to prevent them from falling and pushing the button could be done by anyone . . . unless, that is, the button were in a locked cabinet.

Add a simple lock attached to a cigar box and the situation now requires the talents of a Thief — and more involvement (simulations for locks, etc in Live-Action gaming will be found in *Of Taverns And Tournaments* — Dragon Tree Press).

Taking involvement still further, why not provide a means for confirming that they are "*supposed to*" push the button? A message written in a totally unknown language would establish a requirement for a Spell Caster or Sage to read the text. If there is no Spell Caster in the party (or the mage is the victim — an interesting possibility) you might make the language one that only a thief or some other character could read.

When running this type of trap, be generous: give the players a *real* rope (*always give them enough rope to hang themselves*) and, if you wish, describe it as "*a fine length of elven (or spider silk) rope*" or "*a rather gnarled length of hemp, badly stained and mouldy*" . . . suggesting that the rope may or may not be strong and reliable.

You might also have describe, in an earlier room or encounter, some convenient boards or planks . . . which might be useful now. In this case, it is also useful to have physical representations in another room where the players can *actually* use them. (*These do not have to actually be boards or planks — several strips of cardboard, actual size, would serve as well.*)

All encounters in a fantasy game are puzzles of some sort. Even if the encounter consists merely of a party of adventurers questioning an NPC for information, it's still a puzzle: *what questions do you have to ask to get all the information available?* Providing many "*pieces*" to the puzzle will often provide more opportunities for the PCs to actively participate.

Remember however, PCs will always come up a solution to a puzzle . . . and, sometimes, even what you might consider to be the "*right*" one. Thus, you should be certain that you provide an alternate

solution so, if they miss something and the encounter makes no sense to them, you will be able to "steer" the players into the alternate solution.

Equipping an encounter with reasonable finishing touches has an additional benefit: It reduces the need to answer such common Table-top questions such as "*Do I find anything?*" In Live-Action Gaming, if they don't find it, it ~~isn't~~ *isn't* there!

Novice Live-Action gamers also have a hard time breaking the table-top habit of asking the GM for information when it is right in front of them. Be prepared for the inevitable one or two who will find some special detail (such as a false bottom in a chest) and then ask: "*Do I see that?*" anyway. (*The Game Master's response, despite the undeniable temptations, should be tempered by a mote . . . , a jot . . . , a dot of charity.*)

As players gain experience (and GMs provide those items that "are really there"), the number of inane questions should taper off as players realize that asking the GM for information may be technically correct Game Playing but is *lousy Role Playing*.

There are times, however, when asking about the presence of an item is appropriate as when there is an object close to the encounter's Physical Location which looks like a simulation but appears *outside* the boundaries of you have described. In this case, the players are doing their best to co-operate with the design of the encounter and are trying to keep from wasting their time (and yours) by avoiding irrelevant items.

Staging The Trap

The actual location of this trap, in your "dungeon" is immaterial as long as the chances of the players encountering it, in the game, are high. When they do, in the course of the play, someone is bound to spring your trap and, when an unfortunate PC does, the GM explains the following:

"You hear a sudden high-pitched whine from the wall which fades quickly. Your character (indicating the victim) is suddenly slammed into the wall and held fast by some unseen force. At the same time, a section of the floor falls away from under his feet leaving him stuck to the wall and suspended over a gaping pit. Now, if you will all come with me, I'll show you the situation."

Now lead everyone to your preset area or set up the encounter and describe the limits of the area.

"All of you are standing in this narrow corridor (or wherever). None of these doors on the sides of the hallway exist; all walls appear solid. You see this person pinned against the wall."

Place the affected PC(s) in the appropriate location.

"The cloth on the floor represents the pit revealed when the section of floor dropped away. I now want each of you to role-play exactly what your characters are doing. I will make rulings on spells and the like as usual but you are expected to deal with the situation and not with me."

Now, sit back and enjoy the show.

The first time you run a live encounter, the players are going to be beside themselves with curiosity to find out what you mean by "I'll show you the situation" and don't be too surprised if there is a short period before the bewilderment of "what do we do next?" wears off but, once they get started, believe me, it will be a "show".

As you may have noted, there is also considerable wisdom in the ancient homily: "One picture is worth a thousand words". With the props in plain view, a lot of "routine" PC questions suddenly become irrelevant, reducing the amount of "GM explanation" required.

The solution . . . and the players' involvement, however, acquires a totally new aspect. Now the players must **really** think about what they are doing, how will they rescue the victim and precisely what are they attempting . . . not just say "I'm casting a teleport spell to get poor Harry out of the trap."

(One) Solution:

The PCs use the boards to bridge pit, then the Thief (with lock pick) walks the plank to the other side. Thief picks the lock (no other traps) opens cigar box and turns switch off which releases the trapped PC(s).

Hopefully, their teammates have tied a rope to them or it's a (theoretically) llllooonnnnggg way down. Also, anyone crossing the plank (and entering the area of influence of the magnet) with armour or much metal on their person, is also trapped . . . and the plot thickens!

After freeing the PC(s), everyone is free to cross the plank and continue the journey. Once this is done, the action returns to the Table-Top setting.

Contingency Plans

"This is so simple, what could possibly go wrong?"

What can go "*wrong*"? The mind boggles. With the real work of creating the encounter finished, the time to figure out what "*might happen*" is *before* you actually run the encounter.

At the very least, the GM should be prepared to rule on:

What happens if some one falls off the board and falls into the pit?

Well . . . we don't know about you . . . but it is a long way down . . .

How will you respond to the PC who asks: "I'm searching -something-, do I find anything"?

Tell them to really search — if there's something to find, they will.

Will magic work in the presence of such an overwhelmingly powerful magic device.

This author says "no". There are no "easy ways out" of my games but, if you allow magic to work, what spells in your system could be used (and still be workable in a Live-Action setting?)

What if the team does not have a Thief?

One way might be to smash the box open (any convenient barbarian will be happy to oblige) then turn off the magnet. It may also turn out that the GM has to instruct the Thief on how to use the lockpick the first time a Coil Lock and Pick (see Simulations in Of Taverns And Tournaments) is encountered. If the Thief cannot figure out what is to be done, show them. There should be no penalty for not knowing how to do something they have never seen before.

Suppose a PC or two wants to go into the pit to "check it out".

If they do this before rescuing the trapped victim, you may want to plan a nasty little surprise (like the magnet failing and company dropping in!) If this is after the rescue, you might just pick up the cloth and explain that the trap door on the pit just shut.

Other possibilities should also be considered based on the options allowed by the rules and the nature of the players (characters) participating.

Encounter "Shutoff"

An encounter shutoff is a tool for returning the action to the table-top or proceeding to the next encounter in a game. It is a (*sometimes contrived*) situation that informs the PCs that the encounter is completed, and it is time to "move on".

There are many why PCs might attempt to prolong a live encounter:

- * They may be enjoying it so much they *don't want to quit* (good job!)
- * They may be confused to the point of stagnation (oops . . .)
- * They may think there is something else to be gained by hanging around,
- * Or they just "*don't know when to quit*".

The first deserves congratulations; this is the best you can hope for in a Live-Action encounter.

The last three are the most common to occur in one form or another and are the reason for including an Encounter Shutoff with *every* live encounter. These deal with the PCs and how they have reacted to the encounter and do not necessarily reflect on the quality of the encounter. An encounter such as the "*Clank, Clank...*" trap *should* end when the victims are rescued but some players don't always see it that way. Bet on a few PCs "*hanging around*" to see if there is "*anything else hidden*".

It also happens at times that an encounter which is "*simple*" to a GM becomes a "*nightmare*" to the players but, regardless of the cause, the result is the same: the players are in a position where they cannot return to the table-top for the next encounter.

For teams who are "*stumped*" because of an encounter's puzzle, Devine Hints are one way out.

A good GM can turn a stranded team's frustration to their advantage if one of the PCs role-plays praying to their character's deity. The deity (*voice of the GM, of course*) could inform the group that: "*You have done well to consult me, for the nature of this may have been beyond you.*" and give them the hints needed.

This method removes some of the players' frustration by implying that their tactic was the "*right*" one all along (known, technically, as the *Deus et machina* play).

Another method is, using your system, to determine which player might have the best chance of "*recognising*" some key element of the puzzle. Approach that PC and tell them: "*Your character just realized*

that <HINT>".

A word of caution, however. These ploys work best only with Item Encounters (as opposed to an NPC Encounter) where the GM (or other game referee) is the **only** controlling factor. Using this tactic to Shutoff an NPC Encounter is of questionable value.

Getting teams that have completed the Item Encounter to move on is a bit easier. Inform them that they "*hear some sound*" coming from somewhere far in the distance ahead (never behind) of them. It could turn out later to be only dripping water but, if it gets them back to the table-top for the rest of the game, who cares?

For the "*Clank, Clank...*" trap, the GM would provide a Shutoff specifying: "*The floor just returned to its normal place (picking up the sheet) and you hear muffled 'clicking' noises which sound like the trap is somehow resetting itself*". They will leave. Few PCs like to repeat any encounter — *especially* traps.



The Great Silver Chameleon McGarretting Rope Snake
(which, incidentally, never says "*Book'em Danno*")

There are ways of "*encouraging*" PCs to participate in a live encounter despite their conservative nature. The following encounter not only makes the encounter **very personal** to at least one PC but it allows the rest of the group to constructively "*invent their own game*" while attempting to control the situation.

The *McGarretting Rope Snake* is much simpler to stage than *Clank*, *Clank...*: the only items required are:

- * The Live-Action Rule Modifications (see Appendix A).
- * A 6' piece of rope spray-painted silver or silver cord.
- * A cutout of a small snake's head, decorated appropriately and kept secret.
- * A bit of cellophane tape.
- * One index card (inscription follows).

The team finds the rope in some convenient place receiving the hint that the rope appears to be created of finely wrought pure silver wire and could bring up to 15,000 Gold Sovereigns (GS).

The rope radiates magic like a beacon. If any Spell Caster detects life, they are in for a shock: the rope is **alive**. This is about the only way to determine that the rope is other than it appears (*it is a variety of mimic*). After you give the PC the rope, say nothing else — just wait long enough for the rope to have been "*forgotten*" by the PC carrying it.

When you feel the time is right, instruct the entire group to "*close your eyes*". Approach the PC carrying the rope and wrap it **very loosely** around the top of his shoulders, attaching the cutout of the snake's head to one end with a loop of cellophane tape. Give the afflicted PC the index card you prepared earlier, which reads:

Hi! You just realized that the silver "*rope*" you were carrying is now wound about your neck. From the slowly contracting coils, you also suspect (rather strongly) that this "*rope*" is actually some sort of constrictor who considers you a prime candidate for lunch. You might call loudly to your group for help but you suspect that doing so might startle the snake into contracting suddenly and (unfortunately) breaking your neck.

Don't be too upset at not having noticed what it was doing. This snake **always** succeeds at stealth and this particular little beauty has had over 200 years to practice. Have a Nice Day!

After the PC has read the card, take it back, resume your normal place and inform the rest of the group that they can open their eyes. How long will it be before they notice? Oh, deep heavy sigh . . .

The Object of the Encounter is (obviously) to remove the snake with the PC intact. Exerting too much control over PCs in live encounters is one sure-fire way of killing enthusiasm and this encounter allows them to "*do their own thing*" in a constructive way . . .

. . . we can always hope.

Try not to give the snake to a PC wearing ungodly amounts of armor or one that is from a race of beings that can never be "*surprised*". If you indicate that the PC is in **immediate** danger, the other party members will hurry the encounter (*reducing the opportunity for role playing*). **Take your time!** The snake is never **that** hungry!

So . . . how do they get out of it?

This is really "*PC Option*" (with advice and consent from the GM) but consider what they do during the encounter. If they do something really dumb (*like apply enough electrical energy to light a small city to the snake*) include damages done to the PC . . .

If you are not using the Live-Action Rule Modifications suggested earlier, then be extremely careful — you could inadvertently kill the PC. For example, A Wand of Polymorph applied to the snake **will affect** the PC (close proximity effect).

This is the type of "*trap*" which offers marvelous opportunities for the Game Master to instill fantastic degrees of "*paranoia*" in the players . . . and we suggest that the GM utilize his opportunities to the fullest.

As further aggravation, the author also rules that nothing "*simple*" works. They cannot unwind the snake (*stronger than Dwarves and attempts tend to make neck bones creak ominously*), tempt it with "*dead meat*" or the like. To "*win*" here, the party has to convince me they are really working at it.

If killed, the snake reverts to its normal snake form (with "*head*" attached) and is worth the price indicated above.

This also happens if it is "*charmed*" by any PC. The McGarretting Snake will **never** attack a PC who charms it but neither will it hesitate in trying to "*chow down*" on another party member at a later time ("*Here we go again!*").

If turned loose, it **may** simply go away . . . maybe . . .

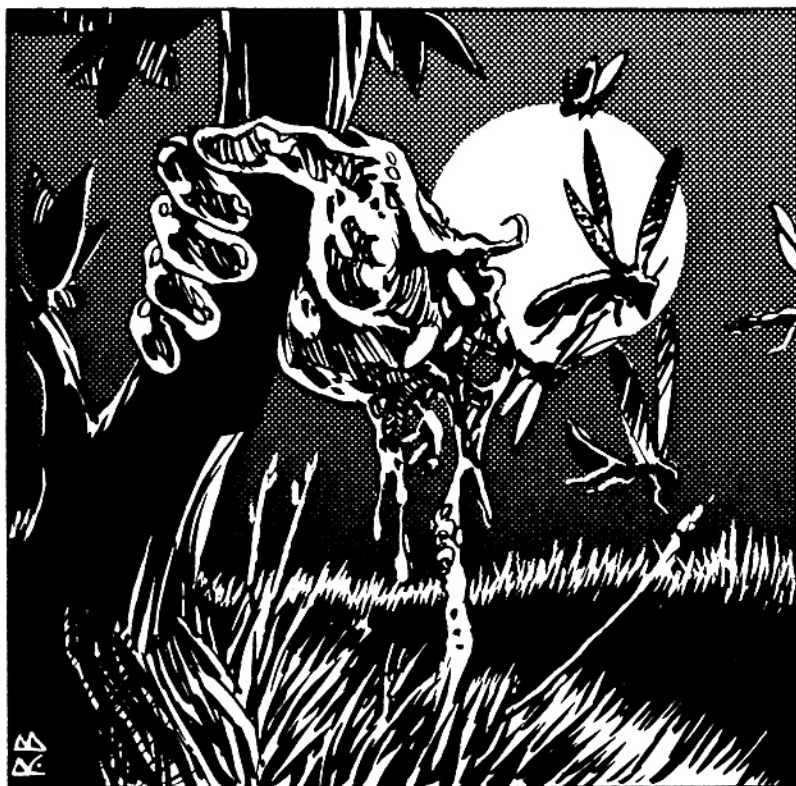
If sold in its "*silver rope*" form (for 15,000 GS) the PC selling it got

robbed. Alive, it's worth 25,000 GS.

Best option: Get rid of the dumb thing . . . *if you can* . . .

This encounter, of course, does not require any special "Shutoff" — this is automatic when the McGarretting Snake has finished dinner.

These two detailed examples show how Live-Action encounters can be combined with table-top games . . . but these are — by no means — the only possibilities . . . there are many, *many*, more . . . and the game has just begun.



Live-Action NPC Encounters

Traps are far from the only method of incorporating Live-Action scenes in table-top games. NPC-roles offer another opportunity for expanding the dimensions of your game and introducing new aspects to your players.

Players can become complacent in any group where the GM handles *all* the NPC roles. In a game sense, yes, the NPC represents a Non-Player Character whom the team has to deal with but, in reality, all of the players realize that the NPC is actually "*their friend*" the GM. The two viewpoints tend to get muddled to the extent that the GM is actually handicapped by playing their own NPC roles. Also, when a GM has to "*break NPC role*" to make a ruling or supply some other form of information, players often get **more** information than might be appropriate.

There are other opportunities inherent in using "*external*" NPCs. One, an outside-NPC can establish and maintain a character's part, personality and behavior where the GM would be continually "*breaking character*" to handle other aspects of the game. Two, it is possible for an outside-NPC, in character, to react **much more fully** to the Players' characters and to the situation than the Game Master would have time for — or, would dare to . . .

A good example occurred when a party was hired by Amazon Mutual to "*rescue*" a hobbit named Eiken from an unspecified danger (see Mission To Danger, Amazon Mutual Wants You! from **Dragon Tree Press**). Seeking Eiken in the vicinity of Green Mountain, the party found that Eiken had accepted an assignment to destroy a fortress held by Black Elves.

When the party found Eiken, instead of the GM playing the part, a stranger joined the table, introduced himself as Eiken but refused to permit himself to be rescued . . . *until he had finished planting explosive charges throughout the fortress*. Further, as a last ditch resource, Eiken was fitted with a "*dead-man*" belt . . . which would begin "*counting-down*" anytime Eiken lost consciousness.

The game progressed — hot and heavy — with the party forced to accompany Eiken and protect him. So far, this was all according to the NPC's instructions in the module.

Finally the charges were planted. All that remained was for the party and Eiken to escape to a safe distance from the Mountain where Eiken could use the remote control switch on his belt to set off the explosion.

They found a safe secret passage leading out, ignored by the wicked inhabitants of the Mountain, who were all busy making a mob panic run to escape out the front door themselves! There was no more danger to the Party. The only question was: *would the chief villain (a giant Red Dragon who was an old enemy of Eiken's) manage to break out the front door and escape before they could set off the explosion?*

As the NPC 'Eiken' tells it: "We couldn't see what was happening at the front door, there were just confused cries. For a minute I thought the Red Dragon had flown away free. I've never felt so sick in my life! He'd terrorized the whole mountain range, he flew around each week burning off the forest . . . ! So, when we got another initiative and I found out he was still inside, I blew the charges! Right then! With us still inside the dungeon too! *Of course* we all died but it was *worth it!* I got that damn dragon . . ."

Obviously, no GM playing Eiken could or would have done such a thing. Even if he had had time to think of it, it would have seemed unfair and arbitrary but, for outside-NPC Eiken, who had gotten totally caught up and carried away in the role and the suspense of the game, it was a perfectly reasonable thing to do.

And produced a grandly-legendary dungeon game . . .

. . . a definite factor of "*No-Holds-Barred!*"

In this case, the "outrageous" action happened because the 'visiting NPC' had different motivations and priorities than the DM would have had. The DM was focussed on fairness and giving the Party a 'reasonable challenge'. The NPC only cared about 'getting that damn dragon'!

However, there are other cases where an NPC's actions may pose a similar *no-holds-barred* challenge to the party *without* his knowledge. He is acting in a logical way, but something he (the NPC) *really* doesn't know can threaten them.

In this case, the Party had better know about the danger in advance! If the GM simply announces "*He opens the door, it blows up, and you're all dead*", the onus comes right back to the GM.

When the audience (the Player-Characters) know something which the actors (the NPCs) don't, this constitutes the basic rule of suspense. It's like watching someone sitting on a bomb — that's suspense . . . but, if nobody knows there's a bomb and it goes off, that's only surprise.

And, even if the PCs tell the NPC (who *hopefully* may not believe them) — the suspense will still exist . . . and become more and more

immediate.

To create this type of situation with a live-NPC, the easiest method is to give the just the info which their character would actually know . . . what they don't know, they can't let slip . . .

. . . but you also have to give the NPC enough information — if you give them too little and they have to create their own answers . . . the answers may conflict . . . sometimes fatally . . . with your scenario . . .

It's a delicate balance . . . but, like a high-wire act, it will keep the audience (the PCs) spell-bound . . .

Beginning an NPC Role

A GM, taking a moment to write down a note or two about an NPC role, has the major portion of creating a live NPC Role completed. The trick is to present the information to the person playing the role in such a way that your idea for the part is translated into what is required for the game. There are three common ways that this can be done . . . one which works and two which don't.

The first, **which doesn't work**, is to attempt to explain verbally what an NPC is to do. This inevitably fails because the GM forgets some critical item (but firmly believes that he has told the NPC everything) and the NPC is left with incomplete information.

The second, **which doesn't work**, occurs when a GM starts thinking about all the little nuances in an NPC's persona and starts writing everything down so that nothing is "*missed*" or left out. Some go so far as to write up a complete character description including such things as personality "*quirks*", voice styling, and a script to follow. When finished, the document looks more like a story treatment for a novel rather than an NPC's encounter part.

This is also a lot of **work** and, oddly enough, though the intention is to make things as clear as possible, the exact opposite occurs in practice. The "*description*" is so long and detailed that only the author could understand it and, in practice, such a "*full treatment*" is worthless for use in a live encounter.

The method which **does work** involves the GM creating a character, specifying the minimum and maximums that the NPC can do to/for a group (information, damage, etc) and then explain *briefly* to the NPC how they envision the role being played. The NPC is then free to "*fill in the blanks*".

Using this last strategy for creating an NPC role works the same as

using a published module. If you have ever bought such a scenario or an idea book or had an idea for an encounter based on something you heard, then you were in the same position of "*filling in the blanks*". Published modules are really nothing more than outlines of ideas. After reading through once or twice to see what was involved, it's almost certain that you found more than one way of enhancing it.

Most people playing NPC parts like the idea of being able to "*show off*" their own talents and, more often than not, NPCs will do a far better job of pure role-playing than a majority of PCs. The *why* is simple — they *know* what is going on in their encounter, the PCs *don't*. Also they have no survival problem . . .

Defining the NPC Role

The key to creating a successful NPC role lies in defining the minimums and maximums for the NPC part(s). One basis is a few simple notes which might (as appropriate) include:

The character's Name, Race and Class(es) . . .

Their *Level* (or other relative indication of experience) . . .

Weapons carried and damage done in combat situations . . .

Any special effects of specific spells (cast on them) . . .

Game-Related (mis)information to be given out (and under what circumstances) . . .

Any treasure or other items carried . . .

As an example, consider:

Your name is Gregor Marshbanks. You are a Shylock-type Merchant of some considerable experience (6th Rank) whose philosophy is "*Profit at any cost*". You carry a +3/+5 jeweled dagger in your boot-top and usually have several thousand GP in gems concealed on your person as well as various coinage. You also have an intense fear of all reptilian beings (though you will trade, when necessary, with sentient reptilians).

Take a moment to consider how you would portray such an NPC character.

The implication is, of course, that all of the information provided is relevant to the part and situation which you will be playing . . . from which you also deduce the probable presence of "*intelligent reptiles*".

Basic NPC-part Information

But there are a few other items which you, as NPC, will need to know: 1) does Merchant Marshbanks **know** there will be reptilian beings in the area, 2) if so, why and what is he trading with them and 3) where are you any way?

The basic table-top attributes for an NPC role must be supplemented with other information fitting within the context of the game. This should always include:

An **outline** of "*why*" this character exists in this location and the **briefest** of sketches as to their background. *Either should be elaborated only if it has a direct bearing on the encounter (or game) itself.*

The **extent of knowledge** this character has concerning other game related events or NPCs. A single character has only a *limited view* of those things that directly concern them and this applies even to very powerful characters such as High Priests or Kings — petty details are delegated to underlings. With others dealing with minor matters, it is not unusual for even a king to be unaware of events in his own capital city.

Exactly what **game-related talents** the character might use against the PCs. If a magic spell is to be cast or combat to occur, what is the nature of the spell or the maximum amount of damage that the character can inflict on a PC or a party of adventurers. If there are no such talents involved, say so.

The **reverse** is equally important. This descriptions should also include the maximum amount of damage a PC can inflict on the NPC. If there is a certain spell (*or type of spell*) which does not work on the NPC, these must be indicated.

PCs always tend to deal with NPCs on the assumption that "*if you find a hole in what a NPC says, you may have found something of importance*" and will try to pump an NPC for as much information as they think they can get away with.

So, what else is new? This tactic of merciless questioning an NPC has been around as long as table-top games (*and much longer in "reality"*) but an NPC must have sufficient information on each of these three major points to successfully answer a PC's relevant questions. An NPC who doesn't know everything that's going on in the game's world (*or everything which their character should know*) puts the players at a disadvantage — there is no way they can make an



accidental slip and reveal something critical about a game unless their persona knows about it. (*The person playing the role may know the entire game but, if told that the character they represent doesn't, the outcome is the same.*)

Forcing an NPC to "guess" at what to say is taking a chance on the encounter being re-written as you watch!

Another major concern is the possibility that the NPC will insert something into the game that may be misleading . . . which always seems to occur when the person playing an NPC part has not received sufficient information on one of these three topics. In effect, what happens is the NPC has to grope for something to say and ends up indicating something which may, coincidentally, relate to the game in progress but can easily be misconstrued by the PCs.

This is prevented by informing the NPCs that the information you have provided is the **maximum** they know as a *Non-Player Character*. If a question is asked beyond the scope of the NPC's information, the standby answer that always works is "*I don't know*". A farmer could be asked a question about nefarious activities of the King's Chamberlain — unless provided with a "*rumor*" or *somesuch*, a response such as:

"Beans and onions, man! How would the like o' me be knowin' about the doin's in high places. Talk to me about the price of carrots. At least, I knows something about that!"

. . . still says "*I don't know*".

A GM can be tempted to make little changes while an encounter is running to "*make it better*" . . . **however** . . . GMs doing this regularly end up finding themselves candidates for a lynch mob.

For encounters that are going badly and are far outside what was intended, a GM or other Game Judge should never attempt to make adjustments. Even in extreme cases, it is often better to let the encounter run without intervention. "*Adjustments*" can always be made **after** the encounter.

Only if a safety hazard occurs (or develops) should an encounter ever be stopped!

If an encounter turns out to be too simple by accident, be consoled in the fact that you can try do better next time. "*Stepping in to save the day*" or making changes during a live event is simply going to confuse everyone involved. Once NPCs have learned their role, changing their parts "*on the fly*" makes them wonder "*what else the GM didn't tell them*". The PCs also start wondering what parts were "*right*" that

they should remember and the result is more confusion than it's worth.

Reducing Complications

The game-related location can simplify matters in terms of required props — for example, consider a party of adventurers meeting a Queen. After thinking about what would be required to simulate her royal highness' palacial throne room (not to mention palace, surroundings, servants and flunkies), an impoverished World Master might consider it time to change the location of the encounter, the Queen or both.

Perhaps, Her Highness might be traveling — which would simplify matters. It could even be provided within her "*information for the team*" that her royal carriage broke down some miles back, forcing her and her retinue to walk . . . which would reduce prop requirements to costumes only and we have removed palace, throne room, servants and flunkies (*most of them anyway*).

A minimum number of props should be used to support the NPC in any encounter and these should be fitted to the nature and location of the scenario. The presence of too many items suggests something of game-related importance is hidden or present. If there is something for them to find, no problem. If not, the players may end up ignoring the NPC while ransacking the encounter.

Encounter Shutoff

Once an encounter starts, you may have more problem *stopping* than keeping things going. PCs like dealing with (more or less) friendly NPCs or, at least, NPCs which give the players an opportunity for interactive role-play.

The Encounter Shutoff should always be performed by the NPC(s) when required. This may be something as simple as a "*hireling*" NPC saying "*Go now, I will await your return. In the meantime, I have other duties.*" The NPC then turns, leaving the PCs. If they indicate that they are following the NPC, return to the table-top or simply inform them that the NPC becomes "*lost in a crowd*" and proceed with the next encounter.

The type of Shutoff used, however, should be consistent with the nature of the encounter. PCs, told a mundane farmer "*vanishes*", are likely to misconstrue the event as an inconsistency implying something not really intended. The only real purpose of an Encounter Shutoff for either Item or NPC encounters is to inform the players the encounter is

over and it is time to "move on".

Recruiting NPCs

Consider using novice gamers for NPCs, "novice" meaning either someone who is not a fantasy gamer or someone who has had very little experience. If the GM takes a little time to "coach" them through the part, they can perform a role exceptionally well. Utilizing a "novice" introduces a new person to fantasy gaming and is one way of doing the novice (and yourself) the biggest favor possible.

Playing an NPC in a Live-Action encounter often creates a better future PC than only playing the games. NPCs not only have the advantage of being able to practice role-playing without the pressure of playing in a game but they also get to watch other PCs make mistakes . . . and learn to avoid these at their leisure.

Also, a Novice will often have a fresh, unprejudiced view of the Game World and come up with ideas or approaches better than you had planned.

GM: *Your character is a powerful Djinn protecting a chest where the Scroll of Torall is hidden. Threaten them, make slights on their abilities and any other tactic to prevent them from opening the chest.*

NPC: *You know, playing a Djinn that way makes me a little uncomfortable. Why not one that is soft-spoken and treacherous. I'll bet I could even catch one or two PCs in a word trap . . .*

After reading all that has been said about NPC encounters, which do you think will run better?

What If?

What if the NPC "slips up" and does something out of context despite everything? It's bound to happen occasionally so, how do you deal with this problem?

First, relax . . .

There are only two people who know, for certain, that a "mistake" has been made: you (as GM) and (maybe) the NPC — the PCs will only know if either of you tell them or if they had prior knowledge of what the encounter was supposed to contain and this is not how fantasy games work.

Now consider how major the "slip up" really was. In a majority of

cases, it can simply be ignored.

So what if your evil Magic User put Fairy wings on a Barbarian Fighter?

If there is an additional role-play benefit to be derived, a "slip up" may turn out to be a valuable addition. If the NPC made some comment that could be misconstrued by the PCs, who's to say that that tidbit of misinformation wasn't a "red herring" (ever use those in a game?) or if it was intended as misdirection all along?

The worst "slip up" that can occur in a non-combat encounter is an NPC forgetting to reveal some game-critical piece of information. If that information is available in only one encounter and the PCs "miss it" due to omission, the GM is in for real trouble later on . . .

. . . unless some way is provided to correct this situation . . .

. . . such as supplying the exact same critical information in two separate encounters . . .

Not only will this confirm to the PCs that they are on the "right track" but it is cheap insurance (the kind not provided by A.M.L.A.) that the team will hear the critical information at least once during a game. As long as a reasonable effort has been made to keep the information in the encounters consistent with what is intended (as in using *Dry Runs* for practice), a PC (or party) who insists on pursuing a "wild goose" chase should be allowed to do so.



Advanced Game Design 101

Game Authors are encouraged to review this section for each original game they create — topics in this section may be added to a game's design as needed.

Widening PC Involvement

There is one inherent problem with Single Topic Games: they fail to account for other than players of "average" abilities. More adept players become bored and the less experience ones can quite often feel "left out" in competition with more outspoken players. Subplots and Inclusions are tools used (respectively) to minimize either (or both) of these gaming situations.

Subplots

A Subplot is a supporting element of a main story line which is presented in and requires at least three encounters (any three) for completion. In some respects, this is a "micro-game within a game" but separate from the main Object of the Game. When using a Subplot (or Subplots), the Game Master should avoid any requirement that a Subplot be solved before the game can be completed — otherwise, the game can become a "can't win" situation.

When used, a **maximum** of one Subplot should be provided for each session the game is expected to run — more can be used but only if there is a valid reason for their presence. Too much plot, presented in a limited time, will confuse players by deluging them with seemingly contradictory or unrelated information.

Subplots (obviously) are not required for a game but, quite often, experienced players expect such (not-so-obvious). When role-playing (and especially with live-NPCs), the players make assumptions and ask questions. When either their assumptions or question remain unresolved, the players start suspecting something else is involved when the real problem is that no question can ever be answered to the satisfaction of all players.

Not finding what is expected (correctly or incorrectly) is frustrating and is the most common reason why a game will be perceived, by more experienced players, as lacking a challenge.

Ideas for Subplots are often found by "*second guessing*" the questions which PCs might ask. As an example, using the *Rescue* type of

scenario, consider the possible questions players would ask in this situation.

From even a partial list, a number of ideas for Subplots can be readily identified and, if an *advisor* NPC were included with the *hiring* NPC in your Setup encounter, any number of Subplots could be developed, such as:

Straight Forward: As the game progresses, it develops that the advisor is not as *faithful* as he might appear. The Subplot would involve obtaining information that would reveal his complicity.

Plot Twist: The NPC hiring the party has ill intentions towards the person they is being sent to rescue and, despite initial hostile appearances, the advisor is, actually, the *good guy*.

Whether the team should (or should not) return the person to the hiring NPC would be developed as a part of the single topic aspect of the game while the "*Advisor Subplot*" is included for the more adept players but failure to discover the Subplot does not compromise the integrity of the game itself.

It is quite immaterial how well the subplot matches the players' expectations: the value of even a simple Subplot is enormous simply because the players have found something they suspected. That what they found was not exactly the same as they initially expected is never even noticed — instead they assume that it simply took them longer to find what the Game Author had planned.

Aside from increasing the challenge of a game, subplots can be used to correct such game design problems as:

Too Short A Game: Subplots and special encounters can be added to extend or vary game length as well as offering the players items and information essential to their solution to the main plot.

Correct Game Unbalance: Subplots can be used to raise (or lower) the relative difficulty of the game.

Strengthen An Encounter: Subplots can be used to strengthen any situation which is already present but of marginal value by itself.

Inclusions

An Inclusion is any situation devised to encourage participation by players who appear to be "*left out*" of a game. Most often, such

players are inexperienced (*actually do not know what to do*), are being overshadowed by more outgoing players and/or are timid by nature. An inclusion can be thought of as a "micro-encounter" played out while the rest of the players are involved in something else happening at the same time. NPCs are recommended for Inclusions since people deal better with other people than they do with an Inanimate Item Encounter.

In a Live-Action game especially, an Inclusion NPC should always a lower level than the PC even if this means that the NPC has to be a "zero level character". It's simply a matter of intimidation — if the NPC is of a lower level (*i.e. weaker*), they're less likely to frighten a PC off.

Also, the NPC's persona can be tailored to reflect their level and a non-adventuring NPC is not going to approach someone on a team who intimidates them. Level and persona combined informs the "left out" player that the situation is "safe" for their character to handle.

As a practical example, consider an encounter in which four of a six PCs on the team are actively talking with an NPC, and the other two are "left out". An Inclusion involving either of the others could consist of nothing more than an NPC serving-boy approaching the least active PC and slipping them a note. This is easier for the NPC to do than it might seem and PCs who are being "left out" of an encounter are that obvious!

Once they have the note, what they do is their choice. It may be read during or after the encounter, ignored or turned over to more outspoken team members. What they do is unimportant; getting them involved is. Often an Inclusion can be the "ice breaker" which motivates a hesitant PC into more active participation.

Inclusions also have advantages other than the obvious. NPCs "left out" of a larger encounter can become involved in a micro-encounter. Such a "personal" encounter — without having to face a horde of ravening N/PCs — is easy for just about anyone.

While Subplots are usually chosen to increase the challenge of a game, an Inclusion should be kept as simple as possible but, despite this, they are hardly irrelevant game elements. Duplicate pieces of game critical information (*rumsors/legends/etc*) can be spread by Inclusion NPCs to support the main premise or any Subplots(s).

The most direct type of Inclusion an encounter in which the NPC(s) will only deal with the most "left out" players on a team. This may require a certain amount of invention but the key is to define an NPC

personna who is intimidated by more "powerful" PCs but not by those being "left out". Examples might include:

- * A squirrel who hides everytime an "intimidating" PC approaches. In a Live-Action game, this is an NPC with a hand puppet.

- * A humanoid creature who is almost afraid of his/her/its own shadow and cringes and cowers (or pretends to) when higher level PCs try to interact with it.

What will the more adept players be doing during such an encounter?

Obviously, they'll be coaching the others on how to proceed . . . and should be able to "invent their own game" by Role Playing the "voice of wisdom" to their teammates.



Timeout! Please????!!!

Setting a time limit to accomplish some task in a campaign is one method of *motivating* characters (and players) into action. While not appropriate for **every** game, time pressure is often useful for keeping the action moving and adding an element of suspense to the game.

The original choice, for keeping track of time, was a wristwatch but, fielding PC's questions, informing them of changes in the situation (etc, etc, etc), made time keeping difficult and it became apparent that the obvious way was poor . . . when (and if) it worked at all.

The solution was a common, portable taperecorder and the "timer" consisted of recording messages — at appropriate intervals — and replaying the tape during the game. Like all experiments, taking the time to create the recording wasn't one of the more thrilling preparations for the game. If your recorder has a counter, this will aid greatly in "spacing" the messages without *waiting* out the intervals.

The results, however, more than make up for your trouble. In virtually every case: 1) the tape will be totally unexpected, 2) the PCs can not question the time limit (time is running out and you don't have to keep track of it) and 3) the situation is beyond their control (they can *try* to talk the recording into stopping . . . but . . .).

The time limit doesn't have to be long to be effective: a brief recording beginning "*I am a 30 second bomb . . . 29 . . . 28 . . .*" could be played when a character bungles a trap or a pleasant-voiced "*The world will end in 10 minutes . . . Have a nice day . . .*" will produce an immediate reaction. Recordings of this type are even more effective if the voice on the tape is not yours . . . and is not familiar to the players.

In the second instance, the voice might "*count-down*" at one minute intervals . . . always repeating "*Have a nice day . . .*". Hearing the same phrase repeatedly adds to the tension much like a nerve-wracking drip from a leaky faucet.

Adding "atmosphere" is also easy with a tape recorder. In the world of Asrain, the popular Far Moors Tavern is rumored to be (*and is*) haunted. Ghosts might be projected (*as with the Illusory Map*) but a "*disembodied*" ghostly voice (*not* coming from the Game Master or another party member) is precisely the type of unexpected distraction which makes PCs stop dead in their tracks . . .

Creating a tape of this type is easier (*and faster*) than the timed

version: starting with a blank (or completely erased) tape, use Fast Forward to position the tape, record a message, Fast Forward again to another random position and add another message. Repeat until the tape (or tapes) are filled.

Many of the "haunting" messages are nothing more than the usual moans and groans but randomly throwing in a clue or two keeps the tape from being dismissed by the players as "*merely a distraction*".

Frequently, in Far Moors, the PCs begin by ignoring the "*voices*" and, being "*kind-hearted*", the Game Master usually makes the first clue on the tape a simple one and fairly meaningless but, once the PCs realize that they have "*missed something*" by not paying attention, the further messages are given closer scrutiny than a bogus 20 Sovereign piece. Even those players who have encountered such a ploy before, never know when a message might mean something.

Whether a message is repeated is totally optional but, remember, either the voices or a timer represent a situation which *wouldn't* stop if this were reality. If the players miss something, it is perfectly justifiable to rule that *they have missed something*.

To balance this difficulty, repeat the same information in separate messages (worded differently). It's unlikely that a single PC will miss both for any reason and, if the party is working together (*oh pleasant surprise*), others should be able to repeat messages if necessary.

The Illusory Map

The Basic Encounter: an NPC (*possibly a mage or, maybe, an illusionist*) offering to assist the players, creates an "illusion" of a map on the ceiling. The map appears for a brief time, then utterly vanishes.

The Object of the Encounter is for the players to make their own copy of the image displayed. Traditionally, the PCs would ask the Game Master about specific details instead of taking the trouble of making a copy — as a secondary motivation: all PCs should Save VS Spell (*as appropriate for their level and the level of the "caster"*) or be unable to even remember that an illusion occurred . . . unless a real copy is made.

A message or set of instruction might be used equally well — dependent on the needs of the Game Master and the scenario.

Other possibilities include:

A pair of eyes — projected at random intervals, the PCs will get the feeling of "being watched". Again, proper presentation will make the

effects really spooky.

A nebulous ghost — floating around the room, this can be used for a variety of purposes.

A will-o-the-wisp — skillfully directed, the wisp might offer a clue to where something of importance is hidden.

Combine effects with a recorded message (as per a "Talking Mouth" or a deific or demonic appearance.

From where you are seated as Game Master, hold the flashlight or projector out of sight of the players (*as under the table*) and cast the image at a point where nobody is looking directly (*but will be seen out of the corner of their eyes*).

For the more ambitious, a length of wire with a simple ON/OFF switch could be added (or any of a variety of "remote" controls). Hide the device aimed at the desired location and run the control to a convenient location. Flick the image on briefly, then off. Even if no one sees the image directly, after a few repetitions, they will become aware that "something weird's going on here . . ."

In any case, be prepared for a question like "*Did I see that?*"

The only proper response, of course, is "*See what?*"

Construction

This illusion can be produced in a variety of fashions but the following is both inexpensive and easy to alter. Required materials are: a flashlight or "toy" projector (*with rudimentary imaging lens*), a sheet of acetate (*available from hobby or art supply stores*) and fine-tip felt markers (*assorted colors optional*).

Cut a circle from acetate sheet to fit the flashlight or projector and draw the image desired with the felt-tip pen(s). Test the image in a dim room. The quality of the image cast by a flashlight is poor, the toy projectors slightly better — neither will reproduce a highly detailed drawing but this is not necessarily a flaw as long as the image can be interpreted. Experiment for best results.

Alternately, the "illusion" can be drawn on plain paper and photocopied as a transparency, either original size or reduced, or use a color or B&W slice (with a mask to make the slide fit or using a slide projector).

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