

Issue 4

February 2009

# MINOTAUR

The Official, Irregular Webzine of the **Mazes & Minotaurs** Revival



**Special Double-Sized Issue**

## SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE !

One Scenario, New Creatures & Mythic Items, Official Background Material, Rule Variants, Inspiration for Maze Masters and more !



# MINOTAUR – Issue 4

## A Word from the Editor

### 2009 : State of the Minotaur

Welcome to the fourth issue of the **Minotaur**... which is also its first issue for the year 2009, so I guess it's the right time and place to wish you all Minotaurians around the globe a happy new year.

2008 was quite a big year for M&M – in addition to the publication of issues 2 and 3 of the *Minotaur*, it saw the release of the long-anticipated **Tomb of the Bull King**, Carlos de la Cruz Morales' amazing mega-module with its myriads of monsters, tons of traps, wonderful mythopoetic backstory and 200+ pages of old school heroic adventuring fun for free ! 2008 was the year of the Bull King... 2009 will be the game of... well, we'll see but there will be plenty of free M&M goodness in store, starting with the webzine you are currently reading !

This Issue brings you the third (and final) part of Andrew Trent's *Against Atlantis!* epic series of scenarios : *Wrath of the Sea Witch*, a high-level, ultra-perilous adventure,.

Meanwhile, on the *Mythic Gazetteer* front, Kevin Scrivner takes us to the kingdom of Umbria and... well, you'll find out for yourself. We also have our usual share of variant and additional rules, including some alternate powers and extras for Lyrists, new options for magicians, an article on how to use tricks against monsters you can't defeat with spears or spells, an official addendum about staff-fighting and knife-throwing... and a *Griffin Archives* article which tells you all about "The Art of Minotaurization" – that is how to recycle, cannibalize and customize the classics of sword & sorcery literature, M&M-style.

Speaking of regular offerings, this issue's *Mythic Bestiary* and *Pandora's Box* deliver their usual share of new creatures and mythic items, while *Maze Master's Lore* concludes its popular *Mythika's Mightiest* series with the detailed biography of three of the greatest *Mazes & Minotaurs* characters ever created – including (of course) a certain Spearman whose name starts with a P.

Oh, did I forget the *Play Nymph* ?

Next issue, the *Minotaur* will go Egyptian (or rather, pseudo-Egyptian) with a jumbo-sized *Gazetteer* that will tell you how you could possibly want to know about the Desert Kingdom and more !

Until then, enjoy this "spirit of adventure" special (great theme, that, eh ?) and long live the Minotaur !

Olivier Legrand (2009)

## MINOTAUR MIRTH



- OK, smart guy, did you really think nobody ever tried this tied-to-the-mast-with-wax-in-my-ears trick on us before ?

## TOMB OF THE BULL KING

The Hugest, Deadliest Scenario Ever  
Devised for Mazes & Minotaurs

Available – for FREE ! Click [HERE](#) !



## Wanted – Dead or Alive The Minotaur Gang

**The Big Cheese** : Olivier "Frenchie" Legrand.

**Known Accomplices** : Andrew "Texas Kid" Trent, Kevin "Umbrian Jack" Scrivners, Igor A. Rivendell (aka "The Big Alias"), Mr Shadow, Tim Hartin.

**Stool Pigeon** : Luke G. Reynard.

**Mugshots** : Various Artists including Emmanuel Roudier and W.J. Walton. Visit Mr Walton's great RPG site at <http://www.theescapist.com>.

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All game material included in this webzine uses the Revised M&M rules (1987 edition).



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## *Against Atlantis ! (Part Three)*

# WRATH OF THE SEA WITCH

An epic adventure for a group of high-level heroes (level 5-6) by **Andrew Trent**

### Maze Master's Introduction

This adventure is the third and final installment in a series known as *Against Atlantis!* Within this series noble heroes will partake in several adventures culminating in a direct standoff against the advance guard of an Atlantean invasion force. This adventure is suitable for a party of heroes of at least level 5 and presumes that your players are already united in their quest for adventure. Though not strictly necessary, it will be helpful if at least some of the heroes completed AA1 & AA2, which were presented in *Minotaur* n°2 and 3.

**Maze Master's Note :** If your players are veterans of the adventure *Laodice's Lair* from MQ 1 you might want to use Barros "One Eye" (the ship's captain from that adventure) for the various sailing portions associated with one or more of the adventures in the *Against Atlantis!* series. Otherwise, any approach you wish to take to providing your players with a method of sea travel will work just fine.

### The Sea Witch and the Ragged King

Long centuries ago, at the dawn of the Age of Magic, a beautiful Elementalist named Psamathe travelled about Mythika in the company of Anaxis lasos, a young Minean noble third in line to be ruler of Thena. Over the course of their adventures Psamanthe fell deeply in love with Anaxis and she grew ever more jealous and possessive of the hero.

Sadly, Psamanthe's stormy affections were unrequited, and despite her charms and wiles Anaxis remained true to both his duty to Thena and to his heart, which belonged to the third daughter of the king of Heraklia, Callianessa the Fair.

Slowly, Psamanthe devised a plan by which she hoped to win the love of Anaxis forever. At first, Psamanthe sought to use her powers to drive a soft wedge between Anaxis and Callianessa.

But each plot failed and Psamanthe grew ever more wrathful and less gentle in her approach. In time she grew so aggressive that her efforts killed Callianessa outright. She was subtle even in this, though, and none - least of all Anaxis - suspected her of the crime.



*The beautiful Psamanthe*

Throughout the years various calamities befell the King of Thena and his two eldest sons, placing a still mourning Anaxis on the throne.

Psamanthe was ever at his side, seeking to comfort her love and, at the same time, hoping that he would at last return her affections. Instead, Anaxis went slowly mad, haunted by visions of dead Callianessa, convinced that her death had been orchestrated by war mongering factions within Heraklia who felt that their relationship would lead to a noble of Thenan lineage one day sitting on the Heraklian throne.

King Anaxis, who had come to be known throughout Mythika as "The Ragged King" because of his precarious mental state, eventually lost his mind completely and began a disastrous war against Heraklia. Psamanthe served her king throughout the war, doing her best to shield him from harm, all the while still endeavoring to win his love.

When Anaxis was mortally wounded in a great battle Psamanthe grew bold and openly declared her love for him. In one last moment of clarity Anaxis chided the elementalist, telling her plainly that he had never loved her, nor could he have. His duty to the noble house of lasos demanded that he never take a wielder of magic for a bride.



*The fearsome Sea Witch !*

Then, realizing the mistakes he had made and finally understanding the true cause of Callianessa's death, Anaxis died, cursing Psamanthe's name to all who could hear as he did.

Psamanthe, now revealed as the murderer of Callianessa and the cause of the brutal war between Thena and Heraklia, fled to the West. Her hatred of all things Minean festered even as her powers grew. In time, she ceased to be Psamanthe at all, her rage and hatred and dark powers turning her into something else entirely. She became simply the **Sea Witch** - a terrible force of destruction, casting a long shadow in the light of the setting sun.

Years passed, and the Sea Witch raged. Decades passed, and the Sea Witch plotted countless ways to destroy the land of the three cities for the indignities she suffered at the hands of their Ragged King.

Centuries passed and the Sea Witch sought allies to deliver her wrath.

And now, a small group of ambitious Atlantean Nobles, leading an army of The Sea Witch's making, stands ready to crush Minean civilization.

There is little that can prevent the war that is coming to Mythika. The Sea Witch's power is immense, some might say unstoppable. And yet, the Gods know of ways that even the most unstoppable juggernaut can be restrained...

## Origin Of The Sea Witch

It is left to the individual Maze Master how much, if any, his players (as well as the population of Mythika at large) know of the story of the Sea Witch and the Ragged King. The key events of the story took place long ago and may well be lost to time. But the Sea Witch is a very real and present danger, so her unnaturally long life may have kept at least some of the story alive as well.

More likely, the story has turned and twisted over the centuries and countless conflicting legends surround her "birth." Some brief possibilities include:

- a) The Sea Witch came to Mythika from Atlantis, where she was a widowed queen.
- b) The Sea Witch, who is the daughter of Poseidon and a human woman, was driven mad by Nereids who grew jealous of the god's love for her and her mother.
- c) The Sea Witch is the spurned lover of a great Umbrian ruler.

And so on. Maze Masters should feel free to give as much or as little detail regarding her origin as they feel will help their players get the most enjoyment from the adventure. And yes, if one truly wished to engineer a *Redemption of Psamathe* variation on the adventure that follows one could easily do so.

## Maze Mastering AA3

Maze Masters should feel free to have as much or as little time as desired pass between the events of AA2 (*Black Chains of the Earth*) and the beginning of this new adventure.

If your players did not take part in AA2 then treat this scenario as if someone else had successfully returned with the Promethean Chains, the Fire of Prometheus and the Atlantean War Galley that served as rewards in that adventure. If, on the other hand, your players took part in that adventure but somehow failed to return with the chains and the fire, be aware that there will be some additional challenges that they must overcome in this adventure.

In all cases Maze Masters should complicate or handwave situations as fits their group's needs and play times. Wherever you see an opportunity to extend or compress the action, take advantage of the flexibility of the adventure's design to maximize the fun for you and your players.





A Priestess of Athena using the fabled Sextant of Eryximachos (See ? We did use the illo in the end !)

## Background Information

**Warning :** The information in this section is for the Maze Master's eyes only. Players do not necessarily know the following, though they may be aware of some of it if they completed AA1: *The Wisdom of Stones* (Minotaur n°2) and AA2: *Black Chains of the Earth* (Minotaur n°3).

The priestesses of Athena in Argos once again seek brave souls to help defend the whole of Mythika from a burgeoning cloud of disaster.

The call has gone out for heroes who are stout of heart and sturdy of spirit to sail to the west to confront an overly ambitious band of Atlantean Nobles who, together with various nefarious allies, seek to subjugate the free peoples of Mythika to the will of that distant, malevolent kingdom.

After the various surviving heroes returned from Arcadia, bearing the Promethean Chains and the Fire of Prometheus aboard a captured Atlantean War Galley, the soothsayers in the House of Athena set about using the fabled Sextant of Eryximachos to determine where best to strike against the Atlantean forces.

After a number of days the visions became clear and it was determined that the heroes should set sail for the island of Xandare, three weeks west of Argos, deep in the Umbrian Sea.

Via a different course, the amassed armies of Argos, Heraklia and Thena will sail for Xandare as well, where they will engage the Atlantean forces in a desperate battle for the fate of Mythika.

The heroes are entrusted once again with the Promethean Chains and the Fire of Prometheus that were rescued from Arcadia.

To ensure that the Atlantean forces do not succeed in their plot to conquer Mythika, the heroes will need to visit the island of Xandare and re-light the Great

Lighthouse in the ruined city of Nes with the Fire of Prometheus. Once so lit, the power of the lighthouse will ward off the dark forces that are in league with the Atlanteans and the Sea Witch, greatly reducing the antagonists' strength.

The heroes are also informed that the Chains of Prometheus are to be used to bind the Sea Witch herself. So bound her magic will be imprisoned as well, leaving her unable to enhance and support the Atlantean forces, making it much more likely that the armies of Mythika will be able to triumph.

## No Galley, No Fire, No Chains ?

### No Galley

If somehow the heroes who took part in AA2 did not recover (or have subsequently lost) the Atlantean War Galley, simply replace it with the **Titan's Grace**, a small but sturdy Argosean ship with a skeleton crew lead by Captain Syagros of Thena, for the galley.

The crew of the Titan's Grace is limited to the barest number of men needed to man the ship, and as such these sailors and their captain are unable to assist the heroes in any tasks that involve going ashore. Captain Syagros is fiercely defensive of his men and knows that should a single one of them be lost then the voyage is doomed to failure.

The ship has all the usual characteristics of a round ship (see *Players Manual*, p 42-43), except for its exceptional Fortune bonus of +3, which reflects the ship's own good luck (the Titan's Grace has already weathered quite a few perilous voyages) as well as the discreet attention of Athena herself.

### No Fire

If the heroes who took part in AA2 failed to retrieve the Fire of Prometheus things are going to be difficult for them.

Without the fire to re-light the Great Lighthouse of Xandare, the final battle will feature a tremendous number of spirit opponents who would otherwise be held at bay by the power of the lighthouse. Heroes and armies alike will find themselves greatly outnumbered.

### No Chains

If the heroes who took part in AA2 failed to return with the Promethean Chains, this adventure will prove all but impossible.

Without the chains to bind the Sea Witch and keep her foul magics in check, her enhancements to the Atlantean forces will make them almost unstoppable.

## Act I : To Sail To War

After a reasonable time has been allotted for the heroes to procure any supplies they feel that they need, they should set sail westward towards their destiny. Throughout Argos the heroes are recognized and treated with respect and graciousness.

Note, though, that the heroes cannot recruit any additional sailors or warriors to accompany them since all able-bodied men and women are already committed to the forces that will directly engage the Atlanteans at Xandare.

Once underway, trouble begins. The Sea Witch is well-aware of the heroes and their mission, and she seeks to stop them before they can arrive at Xandare and attempt to turn the tide of the battle.

Her powers are divided among the strains of raising the strength of the Atlantean force, summoning and controlling the spirits who will supplement those forces and trying to interfere with the heroes' mission. It is this very division of power that prevents the Sea Witch from crushing the heroes outright.

Using her magical and elemental powers, the Sea Witch constantly attempts to whip up a severe storm to dispatch the heroes. To reflect this, the Maze Master should add 5 to any and all weather rolls (*Players Manual*, p. 42) made for the voyage.

In addition to her weather manipulation, the Sea Witch sends the following foes are set against the heroes during the voyage to Xandare.

### Attack of the Roc

Some several days (1d6+4, if you like) out from Argos, the heroes' ship is beset by a **Roc** (*Creature Compendium*, p. 94).

The Roc seeks to destroy the heroes' ship with well-placed Crushing Missiles. If possible, the Roc will also try to steal the Promethean Chains by seizing any hero who is carrying them and flying off to its remote island lair a few short hours sailing distance away, just at the edge of the horizon.

If the chains are lost in this fashion, the heroes may adjust their course and attempt to rescue their comrade and the chains. The heroes will only have 2 full days to accomplish this side trek before they must return to their trip to Xandare.

Any further delay will result in the force of Atlantis engaging the forces of Mythika without having been weakened by the heroes.

The Roc, driven to this brazen attack by the magic of the Sea Witch, will cease its attacks after 7 full rounds or after it has sustained 25 points of damage. The Sea Witch does not have enough power to force the Roc to fight until death.



*Deadly Horns of the Sea : the Quinotaur*

### Attack of the Quinotaurs

Several days' worth of smooth sailing are brought to an end when (1d6+3 days after the Attack of the Roc), the Sea Witch brings forth a trio of **Quinotaurs** (*Creature Compendium*, p. 91) to deal with the heroes. The Quinotaurs' sole aim is to destroy the heroes utterly. They will fight to the death and will not flee under any circumstances.

### Attack of the Fomoroi

If the heroes have survived the first two encounters, the Sea Witch is prepared (after 1d6+2 days) to bring forth her most dangerous allies, a pair of Fomoroi (see Fomoros, *Creature Compendium*, p. 42).

The Fomoroi seek to sink the ship, extinguishing the Fire of Prometheus forever. These Fomoroi are, like the Roc and Quinotaurs before them, driven by the will of the Sea Witch. The Maze Master may choose to have these foul creatures fight as long as desired.

## Act II : The Lighthouse Of Nes

On the western side of the island of Xandare lies the ruined city of Nes.

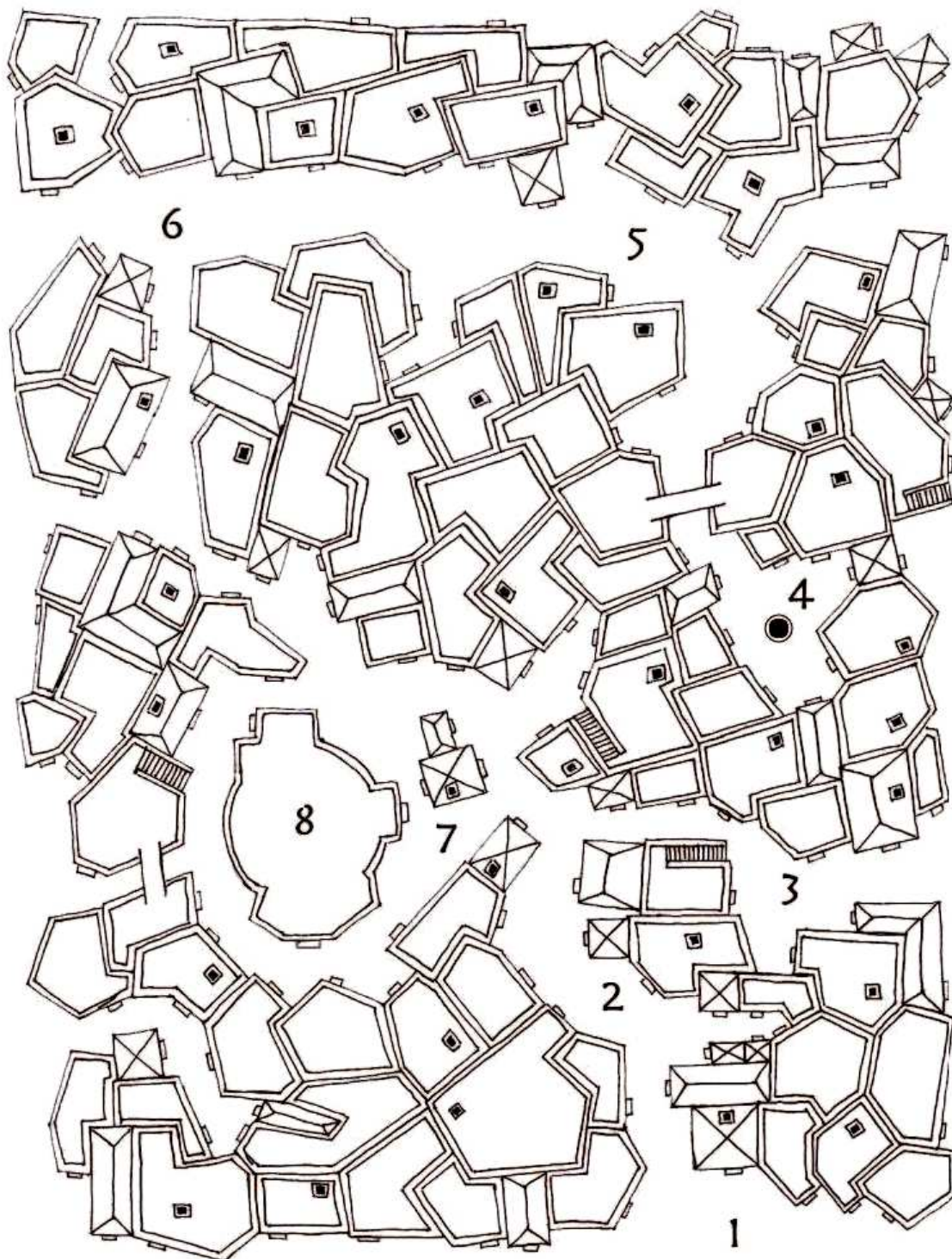
Once a great kingdom that stood as a bulwark against various invaders from the West, Nes is now little more than a shattered relic from a distant time.

The Great Lighthouse, which used to guide Minean ships home as well as serve as a bold warning to all those who sought to enter into the realm of the Land of the Three Cities with harm on their minds, stands unbroken against the sky, its light long extinguished.

Here, amidst these ruins, the heroes must make their way to the top of the Lighthouse and re-ignite the lamp with a flame more powerful than any in the world, the Fire of Prometheus.

## Wrath of the Sea Witch – Adventure Map

### The Ruins of Nes



THE RUINS OF NES

Check out <http://paratime.ca/cartography/> for more fantastic maps by Tim Hartin !



## Landing at Nes

The waters of the bay above which Nes sits are dark and still. The heroes' ship glides silently towards the docks.

As the ship lands, though, the waters churn with hellish life, as a dozen or more **Sons of Dagon** (*Creature Compendium*, p. 106) spring from beneath the waves to engage the heroes before they can set foot on the firm ground of the city.

## The Ruins of Nes

From the docks where the heroes make landfall it is a short climb up a gently sloping and unguarded road to the city of Nes itself. Getting from the periphery of the city to the Lighthouse is an altogether different, and more dangerous, journey.

The streets of Nes are mazelike and strewn with giant rocks and rubble, as well as numerous guards and dangers put in place by the Sea Witch and her Atlanean allies.

Refer to the map **Ruins Of Nes** (see previous page) for this portion of the adventure.

### 1. The Sleepless Guard

The primary entrance into Nes from the docks below is guarded by 5 tireless **Midas Men** (see *Creature Compendium*, p. 75).

These Animates stand ready to attack any who enter the ruins of Nes.

### 2. The Sleeping Guard

As a backup to the Midas Men (*The Sleepless Guard*, above) the Atlanteans have stationed a force of 10 **Atlantean War Slaves** (*Creature Compendium*, p. 9) here.

Unless the battle in Area 1 grew particularly noisy, these guards are found lounging about lazily.

### 3. Plaza of the Temples

This area used to be home to multiple temples when Nes was a thriving city.

Scattered amongst the ruins are one or two **Living Caryatids** (one if there are four heroes or less, two if there are five or more – see *Creature Compendium*, p. 70) that will attack any who enter this area.

**Note:** If the heroes are accompanied by Kypris and Aglaia (see *Unlikely Allies*, below) then the Living Caryatids do not attack.



So, where is this blasted Plaza, anyway ?

## 4. Unlikely Allies

Kypris and Aglaia, a pair of **Alseids** (see *Creature Compendium*, p. 5) make their home here, guarding the long-dry well of Nes. So long as the heroes remain respectful, both of the Alseids as well as their city, these two spirits will actively seek to aid the heroes on the remainder of the journey. Nothing would please the Alseids more than to see the Sea Witch bound and removed from their domain.

## 5. Giant Slug Attack !

Nes has been abandoned for so long that the stranger forms of life on Xandare have begun to encroach upon it. This area is home to a **Giant Slug** (*Creature Compendium*, p. 48), that attacks any who enter this portion of the city.

## 6. Plaza of the Sirens

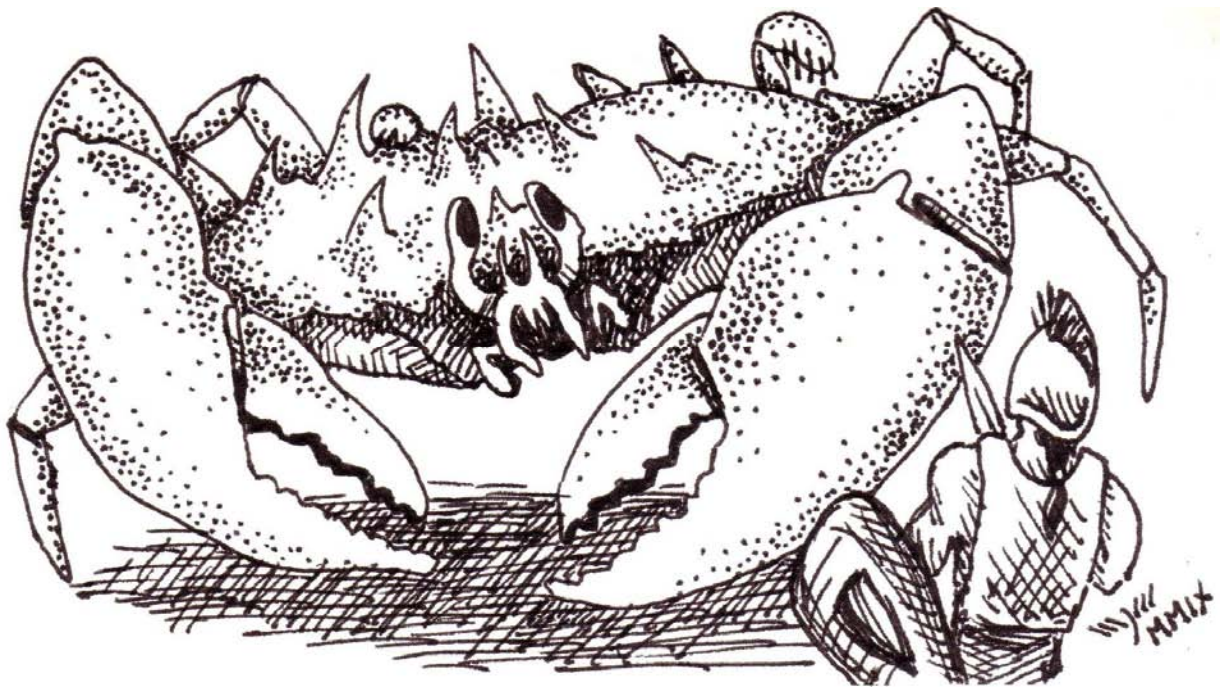
A small force (equal to the size of the party) of **Sirens** (*Creature Compendium*, p. 105) makes its home in this area, awaiting the coming battle against the Mythikan army. Most of the Sirens are away at any given time, aerially surveying the island in advance of the battle. Those that remain fiercely attack all who encroach upon their territory.

## 7. Plaza of the Crabs

Around the base of the lighthouse the Sea Witch has gathered three **Giant Crabs** (*Creature Compendium*, p. 47), summoned from the depths of the Umbrian Sea. These ravenous creatures attack relentlessly.

## 8. Inside The Lighthouse

The ground floor of the lighthouse, which contains the winding marble stairs that led to its pinnacle, is occupied by **K'aanzere**, an unspeakable Crab Demon from beyond the sea of space. This eldritch horror exists solely to devour the flesh and souls of men.



*Facing K'aanzere the Crab Demon from Beyond*

### **K'aanzere Crab Demon from Beyond**

**Taxonomy** : Monster

**Description** : Absolutely unspeakable (see illo).

**Size** : Large

**Ferocity** : Dangerous

**Cunning** : Average

**Mystique** : Eldritch

**Movement** : 60'

**Initiative** : 14

**Melee Attack** : +6

**Damage** : 2d6 (pincers)

**Defense Class** : 20

**Hits Total** : 30

**Detection / Evasion** : 0

**Mystic Fortitude** : +4

**Special Abilities** : Fearsome, Mindless, Grapple ( Might = 20), Natural Armor, Regeneration (2 Hits per battle round), Supernatural Vigor.

**Awards** : Glory 320, Wisdom 40.

Once the heroes have successfully entered the Lighthouse and defeated K'aanzere, they must still ascend the winding marble stairs to the lamp, which must be lit with the fire of Prometheus. But things are seldom as simple as one would hope: there are a few more obstacles along the way.

### **A Difficult Climb**

A winding marble stairway cut into the exterior of the monolith that is the Lighthouse of Nes leads to the top, where the heroes must ignite the flame with the Fire of Prometheus.

From platforms and landings at different levels, a number (150% of the party) of **Atlantean War Slaves** (*Creature Compendium*, p. 9) hurl javelins at the heroes as they climb.

These small groups will enter into melee combat as they are reached.

### **The Atlantean Guard**

The long stairway reaches a new level at last, but peace is not to be found on this floor.

Here, directly beneath the Lighthouse's lamp stands Tereus and Taxiles, **Atlantean Nobles** and a group of **Atlantean War Slaves** (see *Creature Compendium*, p. 9, for both) equal to twice the size of the party.

This group will fight to the death in order to keep the heroes from reaching the top of the Lighthouse.

### **To Tame The Witch**

High atop the Lighthouse, where the wind howls and a light rain has begun to fall (making the area dangerously slippery) the lamp of the Lighthouse sits dark as night. As the heroes approach to light it, though, the Sea Witch herself appears and engages the heroes in battle...

As a result of her eldritch powers of the forces of the sea and sky, the heroes will be unable to light the lamp until they have dealt with the Sea Witch, either by defeating her outright or by successfully binding her with the Promethean Chains. The heroes must defeat the Witch in order to light the lamp.

Binding the Sea Witch with the Promethean Chains without defeating her in combat will not be easy, but it is possible. To bind the Sea Witch one character must succeed in a Wrestling attack (*Players Manual*, p. 26) against her in the same round – which will be no mean feat given her prodigious Defense Class.

If the Sea Witch does not manage to break free from the grapple (as per the usual wrestling rules), her attacker will then be able to bind her with the Promethean Chains. Up to three characters may attempt to grapple the Sea Witch in the same battle round ; if several of them succeed, she will have to *break free* from each attack separately, thereby increasing the chances of the heroes.

Once bound, she will shriek and scream and curse the heroes with foul words and dark oaths (though no magic is actually wrought) as she writhes in pain under the weight of the chains.

Slowly, she begins to revert to her original (and beautiful) human form and begs for mercy; however, anyone freeing her from the chains will be viciously attacked by her as she immediately reverts to her monstrous form.

If she is left in the chains and not released, she will eventually fade into nothingness, at last defeated and at last at peace.

With the Lighthouse's lantern glowing brightly with the Fire of Prometheus and the Sea Witch defeated, the Atlanteans' chance for victory in the Great Battle of Xandare diminishes significantly.

Maze Masters whose players are unlikely to want to play out the battle may skip to the *Aftermath* section below to sum up the outcome of the battle. Groups who would like to play out the battle - or any group that has not successfully relit the Lighthouse and chained the Sea Witch - should continue to **Act III**.

The Sea Witch, who began her life as a beautiful human maiden, has grown so twisted and foul in her appearance that she is beyond terrifying to the sight of men. She retains her beautiful face, but her body is now a misshapen parody of her former grace, with a bloated belly, weed-encrusted squamous skin and grotesque tentacles where her hands used to be. She is a powerful user of elemental magic (she was once a great elemental mage focused on Water & Air) but through dark pacts with unspeakable forces she has developed other powers which have irremediably twisted her body as well as her soul.

## The Sea Witch



**Taxonomy :** Monster

**Size :** Medium

**Ferocity :** Deadly

**Cunning :** Crafty

**Mystique :** Unearthly

**Movement :** 60' (240' cruising underwater)

**Initiative :** 18

**Melee Attack :** +6

**Damage :** special

**Defense Class :** 25

**Hits Total :** 20

**Detection / Evasion :** +10 / +8

**Mystic Fortitude :** +10

**Special Abilities :** Amphibious, Cruise (240'), Elemental Magic (see below), Fearsome, Grapple (tentacle-like arms, Might = 16), Invulnerability, Magic Resistance, Poison (instant death, kiss – see below), Regeneration (1 Hit / round), Sixth Sense, Supernatural Vigor.

**Awards :** Glory 360 , Wisdom 270. See also the section on *Glory and Other Rewards* at the end of the scenario.

**Elemental Magic :** The Sea Witch has the powers of an Elementalist with a Mastery of +6, a Mystic Strength of 18 and a total of 24 Power points. Her elements of choice are Air and Water, with Water, of course, as her primary specialty. This ability adds 40 to her base Glory award and 200 to her Wisdom award.

**Kiss of Death :** In melee combat, the Sea Witch's only real weapon is her deadly poisonous kiss but she can only attempt to kiss an opponent whom she has successfully Grappled (don't forget that grappling attacks always occur after all other melee attacks). A Grappled victim who fails to break free will not be able to avoid the Witch's deadly kiss (since he is immobilized) and will be instantly killed unless he makes a Physical Vigor roll against a target number of 15. If the victim survives, the Witch will try to maintain her hold to kiss him again on the next round but this prevents her from using any other form of attack.



## Defeating the Sea Witch

The goal, as you'll recall, is to bind the Sea Witch with the Promethean Chains, not to defeat her in head-to-head combat. Though fighting her to the death is certainly possible, it is likely to be a very tough task and one that will almost undoubtedly see the death of several heroes.

The Sea Witch is not only an extremely tough and deadly opponent, she is also a very crafty one, able to anticipate all the characters' moves and tactics and react accordingly. She knows full-well that the heroes possess the Chains of Prometheus (if they do) and understands the power the chains would have over her if she were to be bound by them. Therefore, she will avoid melee combat as much as possible, using her Elemental powers to their fullest. Only when (if) she runs out of Power Points - or if the heroes manage to close in on her despite her best efforts - will she engage them in combat, using her grappling tentacles and lethal kiss.

Keep in mind that It should be noted that the Sea Witch's incredibly high Defense Class of 25 makes her almost invulnerable in combat – and almost impossible to bind with the Chains of Prometheus... Clever use of special tactics such as Subterfuge or Bashing Attack might slightly improve the heroes' chances of success but magic is probably the most effective way to deal with the Sea Witch. The most useful powers here will not be the ones which directly harm the Sea Witch but those which lower her Defense Class (such as the Sorcery power of Confusion – but keep in mind her Mystic Fortitude of +10 !) or which increase her opponents' Melee mod (which also applies to wrestling attacks). And of course, there are always Divine Intervention...

A particularly devious Maze Master might have the Sea Witch flee to the water if she is close to being defeated, cruising away at 240' per round. Be aware, though, that the Sea Witch's primary objective is to keep the heroes from relighting the lamp of the Lighthouse with the Fire of Prometheus, so she will not flee readily.

## Act III: The Battle of Xandare

For Maze Masters whose players are the sort to want to play out epic battles, the following section will allow you to focus on the details of the Battle of Xandare. For Maze Masters whose groups are **NOT** the sort who would enjoy such things, skip ahead to the Aftermath! section.

The climactic Battle of Xandare can be simulated using the Warfare Rules from the *M&M Companion* (p. 37-43). The following sections present the armies that will take part in this battle.

## Resolving the Battle

The results of the battle, if it is being played out, depend entirely upon the actions of the heroes. Generous Maze Masters may choose to allow for divine intervention (including *Divine Intervention*, as detailed in the *Players Manual*, p. 31) if they feel that the tide of battle is turning against the heroes and the group is not the sort to be comfortable with dealing with the kind of aftermath that such a defeat will bring. Considering Athena's involvement in these events, any Divine Intervention called for by a Priestess of Athena will have twice the usual chances of success.

*Mazes & Minotaurs* is, of course, modeled on sources that frequently see the good guys win even when logic says they shouldn't. The Greek myth-inspired sources that are the foundation of M&M aren't shy about having the Gods step in when needed. Players and Maze Masters should be willing to embrace the same spirit... but see *What? The Bad Guys Won?* at the end of the scenario for possible ways of turning a defeat into an interesting option.

Once the Battle of Xandare is finished, proceed to the *Aftermath!* section.

## The Mythikan Forces

The Mythikan Forces appear as follows. No bonuses or penalties for Omens or Oratory (*M&M Companion*, p 39) have been included. Maze Masters should free to determine the effects of those variables prior to beginning the actual battle.

### Herealkian Soldiers

Combat Factor: 8                      Regimental Size: 150  
Regimental Strength: 1200

### Thenan Soldiers

Combat Factor: 6                      Regimental Size: 150  
Regimental Strength: 900

### Argosean Archers

Combat Factor: 6                      Regimental Size: 150  
Regimental Strength: 900

### Centaur Archers

Combat Factor: 11                      Regimental Size: 100  
Regimental Strength: 1100

### Amazon Warriors

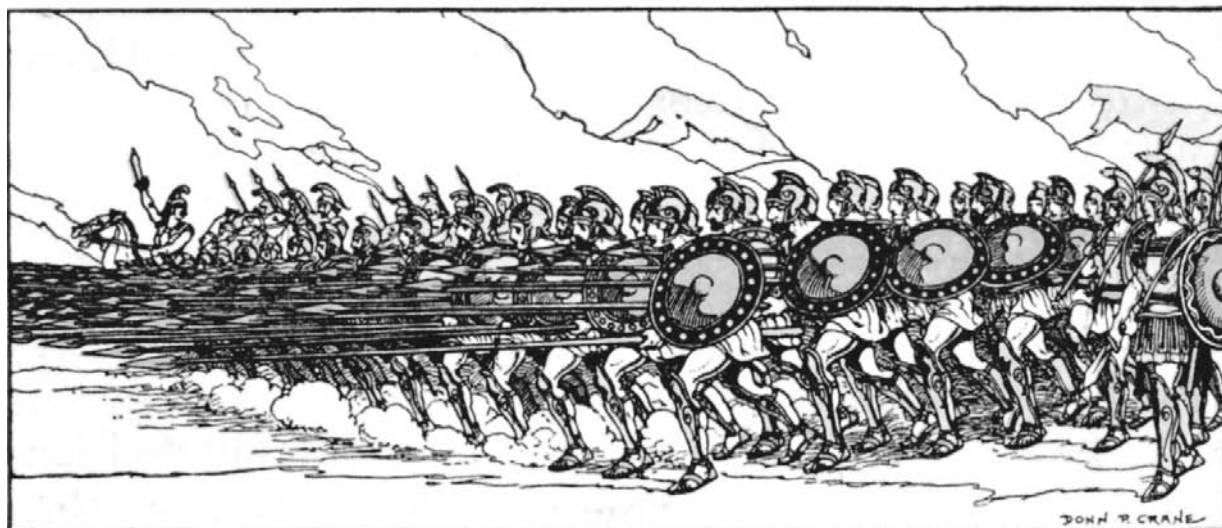
Combat Factor: 8                      Regimental Size: 100  
Regimental Strength: 800

### Barbarian Warriors

Combat Factor: 6                      Regimental Size: 100  
Regimental Strength: 600

**Total Strength = 5500**





*For the sake of hope and civilization, chaaaaarge !!!*

## The Atlantean Forces

If the heroes succeeded in binding the Sea Witch, the Atlantean Forces appear as follows:

### Atlantean War Slaves

Combat Factor: 7                      Regimental Size: 300  
Regimental Strength: 2100

### Atlantean Nobles

Combat Factor: 8                      Regimental Size: 50  
Regimental Strength: 400

### Midas Men

Combat Factor: 11                      Regimental Size: 30  
Regimental Strength: 330

### Sons Of Dagon

Combat Factor: 4                      Regimental Size: 150  
Regimental Strength: 600

### Sirens

Combat Factor: 7                      Regimental Size: 100  
Regimental Strength: 700

If the heroes failed to light the Lighthouse at Nes, the following additional VERY POWERFUL forces should be included in the Atlantean Army:

### Fomoroi

Combat Factor: 28                      Regimental Size: 25  
Regimental Strength: 700

### Keres

Combat Factor: 16                      Regimental Size: 50  
Regimental Strength: 800

**Total Strength (without Fomoroi & Keres) = 4130**

**Total Strength (with Fomoroi & Keres) = 5630**

If the heroes failed to bind the Sea Witch, her unearthly powers will have a tremendous effect on the strength of the Atlantean forces, supernaturally boosting their Combat Factor by +5 each (and even +10 in the case of the Fomoroi) :

### Atlantean War Slaves

Combat Factor: 12                      Regimental Size: 300  
Regimental Strength: 3600

### Atlantean Nobles

Combat Factor: 13                      Regimental Size: 50  
Regimental Strength: 650

### Midas Men

Combat Factor: 16                      Regimental Size: 30  
Regimental Strength: 480

### Sons Of Dagon

Combat Factor: 9                      Regimental Size: 150  
Regimental Strength: 1350

### Sirens

Combat Factor: 12                      Regimental Size: 100  
Regimental Strength: 1200

If the heroes failed to light the Lighthouse at Nes, the following additional VERY POWERFUL forces should be included in the Atlantean Army:

### Fomoroi

Combat Factor: 38                      Regimental Size: 25  
Regimental Strength: 950

### Keres

Combat Factor: 21                      Regimental Size: 50  
Regimental Strength: 1050

**Total Strength (without Fomoroi & Keres) = 7280**

**Total Strength (with Fomoroi & Keres) = 9280**

## What? The Bad Guys Won?

Oh my. This is an entirely unexpected outcome. Are you certain the bad guys won? Really? Alas, then dark times indeed lie ahead. Though the battle was only between an advance force from Atlantis and a limited Mythikan army, news of the Mythikan defeat will spread quickly back to Atlantis. Emboldened by their success the Atlanteans will launch a full-scale invasion of Mythika, bringing to bear all their might and magic against the free world.

Perhaps from this terrible defeat a new, more unified-of-purpose Mythika can band together, lead by a new generation of heroes, and fight back against the Atlantean scourge. Let us just pray that the Sea Witch was defeated, for if she remains alive and allied with Atlantis, all hope is almost certainly lost...

Or is it? As much as its source material is about the heroes winning, the truth is that *Mazes & Minotaurs* is a game, not a work of fiction. The chances that the heroes will fail in this adventure – either in confronting the Sea Witch herself or in the Battle of Xandare – are not small. Maze Masters should only pull as many punches as they feel is right.

A loss in the Battle of Xandare doesn't have to spell the end of Mythika, though it might well herald the end of the current campaign. Still, when one walks out of one room one often walks into another. Consider the example campaign setting discussed in the *Movies & Minotaurs* article in issue 1 of *The Minotaur*, you know, the one with the evil empire and the valiant rebels... Hmm, that's kind of an interesting theme, now that I think about it. Someone should make a movie (or six) dealing with such things.

## Glory & Other Rewards

The Sea Witch, with her various (and very powerful) allies, represents a menace of extreme magnitude, which could alter the very fate of Mythika. Thwarting such a menace should bring *each* warrior in the group an extra reward of 500 Glory points, in addition to any Glory gained during the adventure itself. Magicians in the group should also receive an equivalent amount of Wisdom, considering the highly mystical nature of the Sea Witch menace.

Such an epic victory should also bring other benefits to the valiant adventurers – such as the possibility of becoming Athena's Divine Agents (see the *M&M Companion*, p 8). Even if they don't meet these requirements or if Divine Agent status is not part of the Maze Master's plans for the group, Athena should reward these valorous heroes with one divine boon in the form of one appropriate item for each hero (see the *M&M Companion*, p 11 for a list of mythic items related to Athena).

## The Umbrian Alternative

So your heroes have turned out to be zeroes and utterly failed to secure the Chains and Fire of Prometheus, eh? That makes proceeding in this adventure more than a little difficult. There is one alternative, though.

Rather than undertaking the adventure as it is outlined here, a clever (desperate?) Maze Master could improvise an expedition to Umbria in the hopes of gathering Umbrian forces to supplement the Mythikan armies. The Umbrians are no fans of Atlantis, so I hear, so they might just be able to be convinced to set aside their differences with the Land of the Three Cities long enough to put Atlantis in its place. For more information on Umbria and its people, see this issue's *Mythika Gazetteer*.

## Aftermath

### If You Did Not Play Out The Battle

With the Lighthouse relit and the Sea Witch destroyed, the Atlantean forces were easily defeated. Mythika is once again safe. The Three Cities and the major non-Minean peoples have bravely fought against a common foe.

For a brief time goodwill and camaraderie will reign. Of course, the petty squabbles and rivalries will return, they always do. But for now, peace and harmony rule in Mythika.

The happy few who made victory possible through their bravery and cunning are lauded. Those who gave their lives to defend Mythika are commemorated in song and poem.

The heroes themselves may well go on to become Divine Agents after a series of adventures as grand as these. Regardless, their names will be known across the world.

Those who would seek to do harm to Mythika will know of her powerful sons & daughters and will likely think twice before moving against such might.

### If You Did Play Out The Battle

Thanks to, or perhaps in spite of, the efforts of the heroes, the Mythikan army has defeated the expeditionary force from Atlantis.

The heroes will be praised (or cursed) as appropriate to their actions. Maze Masters should not be shy about allowing successful heroes to achieve true legendary status, for playing such a vital role in this battle is surely an epic achievement.

Andrew Trent (2009)

# MYTHIKA GAZETTEER

## HERE COME THE

# UMBRIANS

"It's our world. The Mineans just live in it."

Written by **Kevin Scrivner**

*What if you met the heroes of legend and it turned out that they weren't, after all, very nice people? It is all very well to sing ballads about the exploits of an Odysseus, a Robin Hood, or a James Bond. It's quite another thing to have such a cunning, ruthless, determined person as your next-door neighbor. What if he wanted to borrow a cup of sugar? Or the expensive tool set your wife got you for Christmas? Or your daughter? What if he had messianic pretensions?*



*A stern, grim Umbrian Warlord*

### Overview

Page 13 of the *Maze Masters' Guide* refers to "the forefathers of the Minean civilization."

That's the Umbrians. Just ask them.

At the dawn of the Heroic Age they explored the world, fought Titans, monsters and barbarians, and established overseas colonies so that the fat, lazy Mineans can enjoy the fruits of their labors. The Umbrians feel the Mineans owe them something. Seizing the Three Cities wouldn't be conquest but merely taking back their own.

Brutal and warlike, the Umbrians consider the citizens of Heraklia soft on national defense. They would rather pillage than trade. Commerce is for wimps, battle for real men. They take especial delight in preying on Argosean merchantmen that stray into the Umbrian Sea. Their autocratic, top-

down society consists of large semi-feudal estates ruled by petty kings who owe allegiance to a high king. They tend to shoot first and listen only after they've been impressed by the speaker's might and bravery. If you can't beat up the boss, you'll have trouble gaining an audience in Umbria. Physically Umbrians are imposing, 6-feet-tall in a 5-foot-tall world. They tend to have long, straight noses; thick, dark locks; and swarthy complexions.

### Religion and Magic

#### Religious Practices

Although the Umbrians ostensibly worship the same Olympian pantheon as the Mineans, religion is one of the things that set Umbrian culture apart. Unlike the Mineans, who worship in huge public temples, Umbrians honor the gods in private shrines often no larger than a cabinet or closet.

Even the temple complex in Talos is a structure no larger than a 21<sup>st</sup> century fast-food restaurant. It is divided into sections devoted to the Olympians, Rhea the Great Mother (whose veneration is related to the worship of Cybele), and Kokalos, founder of the Umbrian nation now deified. The three sections are separate. Worshippers must exit one and enter another by a different door.

In contrast to the 40-foot-tall life-like sculptures of gods common in the east, Umbrian god figures are highly stylized, doll-sized, and comparatively primitive. To Minean eyes they'd look like a child's art class project. The largest of them are about 4-1/2 feet tall. Despite their skill in carving bone and stone, Umbrian depictions of the gods are always of fired pottery, with details either in glaze or painted on afterwards. The most revered figures, the ones in the Talos temple, are obviously ancient.



*Rhea the Great Mother as seen by the Umbrians  
(yes, these two thingies are actually snakes)*

## Deities

The gods' names may be the same, but the Umbrian interpretation of them might offend or shock a Minean. Of course, the Umbrians would say that the Mineans are heretics. Kokalos and other national and local heroes have their shrines alongside those of the Olympians.

## The Great Mother

Umbrians revere **Rhea the Great Mother** above all other deities. Zeus is important primarily because he's her son. Annual festivities in her honor constitute one of the few big public events in Umbrian life and feature sinuous dances by scantily clad, snake handling priestesses.

## Gods

**Ares** and **Hephaestus** are the primary gods acknowledged in Umbria, the providers of the proper martial spirit and the tools to carry it out.

Umbrians view Ares as a disciplined soldier and master strategist, the template for the ideal man who sets his goal and pursues it relentlessly. They're infuriated when some easterners portray him as a vicious bully. Their war god would never allow himself to be seduced by that slut Aphrodite.

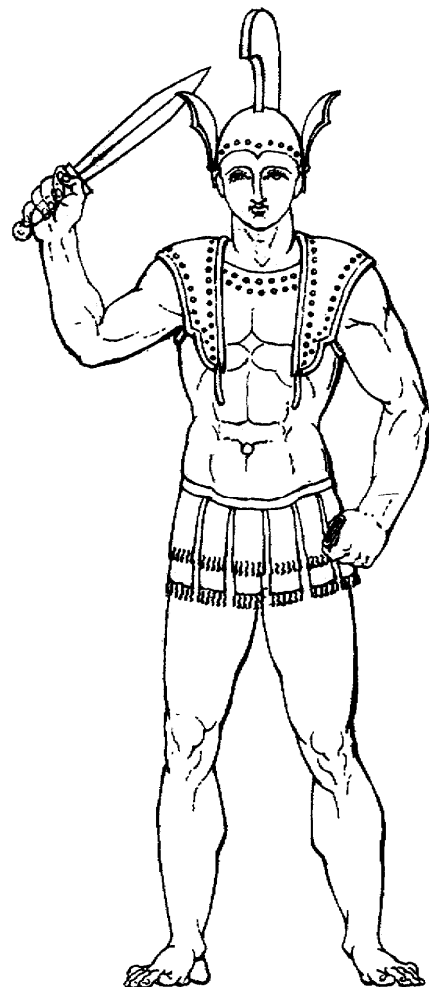
In a similar manner, Umbrians reject the Minean picture of Hephaestus as a cripple who can't manage his own household. Their Hephaestus is a fit, brawny creator of weaponry and fortifications, depicted in manly stances usually reserved in the east for Apollo (a Johnny-come-lately deity the Umbrians refuse to recognize).

Poseidon is honored in his role as the lord of horses rather than as a sea god, since the Umbrians began sailing only relatively recently. He's more highly regarded than his brother Zeus, who isn't seen as particularly useful. The Umbrians are a ruthlessly practical folk.

## Other Goddesses

Athena, Artemis, and Hera are perceived as aspects of the Great Mother and aren't worshipped separately. Demeter, on the other hand, is highly respected by sturdy Umbrian farmers and cattlemen. In her guise of the grieving mother, she also functions as an underworld goddess, taking on qualities that easterners usually ascribe to her daughter Persephone.

Chaste Hestia, that noble provider of social order and marital fidelity, is also an important goddess, particularly among the female population. Lustful, capricious Aphrodite, in contrast, gets scant respect (since people with any sense of decency would honor Hestia). Her rare shrines tend to be located in the seedier sections of towns and villages, where she is regarded as the goddess of prostitutes and thieves (since she steals men's hearts).



*A depiction of Ares as the supreme Umbrian god  
(well, more accurately, that's probably how they  
would represent him if they knew how to draw)*



## Oracles & Priestesses



*A Triad of Umbrian pseudo-Priestesses wearing their typical pseudo-costumes*

The snake-handling priestesses of Umbria are not true Priestesses in the usual M&M sense of the term – in other words, they do not have access to Divine Prodigies (or to any other form of true magic, for that matter). In game terms, such characters should be treated as Minor NPCs with a specific profile (see below).

Umbrian Oracles should simply be given the same profile, with a higher degree of Mystique; depending on the Maze Master's whim, their oracular powers should either be complete quackery or a true divine gift of prophecy (in which case those powers should be placed entirely into the hands of the Maze Master– like those of Melaclea the Oracle in the *Tomb of the Bull King* module).

**Ferocity** : Peaceful

**Cunning** : Alert

**Mystique** : Weird (Priestess) / Eldritch (Oracle)

**Movement** : 60'

**Initiative** : 11

**Melee Attack** : 0

**Damage** : n/a

**Defense Class** : 13 (14 for Oracles)

**Hits Total** : 4

**Detection / Evasion** : +2

**Mystic Fortitude** : +2 (+4 for Oracles)

**Special Abilities** : None.

**Awards** : None - but plenty of trouble.

## Attitudes Toward Magic

In keeping with their preference for personal observance instead of religious spectacle, Umbrians tend to be suspicious of flashy public displays of supernatural power. It isn't that they doubt the gods' ability to act on their behalf. But they believe the gods assist those who plan wisely and strive determinedly. Seeking the aid of a magician is taking a shortcut, in effect cheating.

Besides, everyone remembers that the ancient Autarchs were rebels against divine authority. Those who seek to attain their powers risk falling into their impiety. Umbrians are therefore typically hostile toward Sorcerers, Shape Shifters and Elementalists.

Lyrists have their uses but are watched carefully lest they turn their powers against the public good, that is, against the state. Also keep in mind the fact that most Lyrists are devotees of Apollo, who is far from being the favorite god of the local ruling class.

Nymphs, like other non-human beings, simply don't fit within the Umbrians' frame of reference. They'll tend to treat Nymphs as they would young women. Should a Nymph harm someone with her powers, even in self-defense, she'll be viciously persecuted as a witch.

## Society & Culture

### Rulership

Umbria is ruled by a high king selected from one of several noble houses which claim (extremely remote) divine descent. He oversees the *pentarchs*, military governors over the five kingdoms that comprise the Pentarchy.

Like the claim that his ancestors constructed the Bronze Gates, the Umbrian king's claim to divinity may well have a basis in fact. How the gods regard their distant relations, or whether they regard them at all, is unclear. The legends of divine visitations to the old families, not unlike the fairy godmother stories of later peoples, are persistent.

### Economy

Although kings have hoards of fine things seized during raids, the average Umbrian citizen is poorer and enjoys fewer creature comforts than his eastern counterparts. Life is more rural and decentralized than in the Three Cities. People spend most of their time working in the fields, training for battle, or making the tools for both war and agriculture. There's little opportunity for shopping or the arts and none at all for types of lively social, scientific and political discussions enjoyed in Minean cities such as Thena. In theory, each kingdom of the Pentarchy is supposed to be able to depend on its own resources and manufacturing capacity in order to keep fighting if its neighbors succumb to an enemy. In practice, they specialize and trade goods and services among themselves.

The kingdoms of the Pentarchy are entwined by a network of narrow paved roads designed to speed chariot messengers. Umbria's broad fields and temperate climate enable generous harvests and large herds of livestock. Famine is rarely a problem, and Umbria is one of the few nations of the Middle Sea able to export grain.

## Umbrian Nobles



Like the Tritonian Sea Princes (see *Minotaur Quarterly* n°1), Umbrian aristocrats should not be treated as Nobles in game terms, but either as Minor NPCs with a specific profile (see below) or as a member of the optional Umbrian Warlord class (see next page) for Major NPCs and (you never know) player-characters.

**Ferocity** : Dangerous

**Cunning** : Alert

**Mystique** : Normal

**Movement** : 60'

**Initiative** : 13 (15 charging)

**Melee Attack** : +4 (+6 charging)

**Damage** : 1d6 (weapons)

**Defense Class** : 12 (18 w. shield & armor)

**Hits Total** : 12

**Detection / Evasion** : +2

**Mystic Fortitude** : 0

**Special Abilities** : Charge into Battle.

**Awards** : Glory 30 (45 with shield and armor).

## Crafts & Arts

Because of the emphasis on authority and on plunder, Umbrian culture has become less innovative and creative than that of the Mineans. New ideas and inventions are harder to launch. Umbrians make fine pottery, intricate golden jewelry, and well-crafted bronze weaponry, but it's the same stuff they've been making for centuries. Militarily, they offset their dated bronze equipment with hard training and the sheer numbers made possible by bountiful grain harvests.

Whatever their technological shortcomings, one thing Umbrians excel at is stone working.

Umbria's coasts and political centers are dominated by heavy fortresses comprised of massive blocks of dry-fitted stone. The walls can be 15-20 feet thick, pierced by pointed arches that allow the giant rocks to support their own weight. Granted, the largest and most impressive structures were built in antiquity, but the Umbrians keep them in good

repair. Early Minean explorers coined the term "cyclopean" to describe them, thinking them the work of Mythika's infamous one-eyed giants until they ran up against the real builders. Heraklia may boast of its imposing citadel but the Heraklium is a mere copy, Umbrian travelers sneer.

In contrast to their grim exteriors, the inner walls of fortresses and citadels are frequently plastered and garishly painted with battle and hunting scenes. Vast woolen tapestries keep out drafts and also provide decoration.

## Trade

Despite their supposed scorn for trade, the Umbrians do quite a bit of it in return for olives and oil, raisins and wine, cotton and linen cloth, metals and finished goods. The primitive state of food preservation in Mythika prevents them from shipping beef abroad, although they manage limited quantities of dried meat and cheese. Their bone and ivory carving is famous; western scrimshaw is in high demand throughout the kingdoms of the Middle Sea. Their distinctive carved stone and ceramic vessels, decorated with sea animal motifs, are coveted in the Land of the Sun, the Desert Kingdom, and Tritonis. Umbrian corsairs attack Argosean and Midian vessels fiercely to cut off the supply of cheap imitations.

Umbrian jewelry is all the rage in the agoras of the Three Cities - a fact that worries more than one eastern ruler is that the Three Cities depend on Umbrian grain to help feed their citizenry and upon Umbrian lumber to build their fleets.

Because of this, one item they won't trade with the west is iron weaponry or tools. The embargo is an ongoing source of friction between Umbria and the Three Cities. Smuggling is such a temptation for greedy merchants that Argon the Proud recently imposed the death penalty upon any crew caught with an iron cargo west of Seriphos.

## The Umbrian Language

Scholars claim the Umbrian language is an archaic form of Minean, sharing common words and word order. If so, it is definitely not your great-great-grandson's Minean.

Umbrian is as distant from the language spoken in the Three Cities as the Middle English spoken by Geoffrey Chaucer is from modern English. When Umbrians write, they do so in an unfamiliar script that scholars compare to that of ancient Tritonian inscriptions. But it is nothing that a Minean (or modern Tritonian) could read.

Umbrian documents consist of sun-dried clay tablets, which are carefully stored in baskets on the shelves of royal archives.

## WARLORD



Most Umbrian aristocrats should be treated as Minor NPCs (see previous page), but truly exceptional individuals (such as major foes and, if the Maze Master allows it, player-characters) should belong to this new optional class. In game terms, the Warlord class is a variant of the regular Noble class, with different primary attributes and slightly different special abilities.

The fact that Luck is not one of its primary attributes reflects the fact that, despite what they might believe or claim, Umbrian lords do not enjoy the same amount of divine favor as Nobles from the Three Cities or Seriphos.

**Category :** Warriors.

**Primary Attributes :** Might and Will.

**Gender :** Male only.

**Basic Hits =** 12

**Strength of the Earth :** Warlords add +2 to their Might and Will scores.

**Conquering Spirit :** Warlords add their Will bonus to their Initiative score.

**Weapon of Choice :** Sword.

**Level Benefits :** Each level beyond the first gives a Warlord +4 Hits, +1 to Luck and +2 to one of Will, Might, Wits or Skill.

**Possessions :** As Nobles.

**Background Talents :** All Umbrian Warlords must select Tactician as one of their two background talents. The other talent can be Equestrian, Orator, Sailor or Wrestler.

**Patron Deities :** Ares.

**Reputation Effect :** The Warlords' Reputation affects all their dealings with their compatriots.



*Classic minimalist Umbrian woman's fashion at its best*

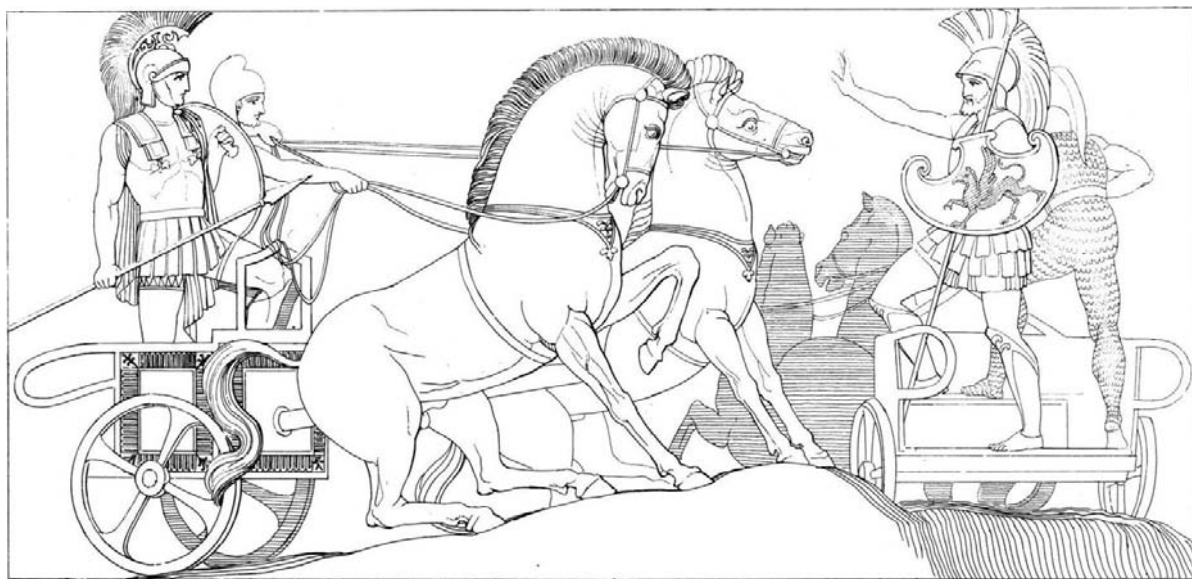
## Clothing

Typical dress for Umbrian men isn't much different from that of their eastern counterparts. They wear loincloths or kilts in warm weather, short-sleeved, high-length woolen tunics and leggings in cooler weather. Kings and priests occasionally don eastern-style robes but usually only for ceremonial occasions. Umbrian soldiers wear conical bronze helmets covered with boar tusks and carry large figure eight shaped ox-hide shields. As a secondary weapon, they carry long, thin stabbing swords, or rapiers, a contrast to the shorter, two-edged slashing weapons preferred in the east.

Umbrian women have an undeserved reputation in the east as morally loose seductresses. This is partly because of the events that led to the Umbrian War, partly because of travelers' descriptions of the frenzied annual dances in honor of Rhea, but mostly because of their costume, which scandalizes Minean women garbed in their comparatively modest chitons. From the waist down, Umbrian women wear enough multicolored woolen cloth to hide an elephant. Their torsos, however, are covered by tight, short-sleeved bodices that expose and accentuate their breasts. This style isn't considered lascivious in Umbria but a practical concession to permit women to stop whatever they're doing and breast feed the next generation's soldiers at a moment's notice. It is worn by women of all social classes, who are rarely allowed by their husbands or fathers to go out in public except during civil and religious festivals.

The fact that most Umbrian women are admirably chaste doesn't prevent the Umbrian secret service from putting their titillating reputation to good use. For their part, Umbrian women consider the chiton indecent since it reveals the calves and ankles of Minean women, a part of their bodies they would never allow a male who wasn't a close relative or spouse to see.





*A chariot encounter between an Umbrian Warlord (left) and a Minean Noble (right –Ares, just look at his shield...)*

## Warfare

### The Army

The backbone of the Umbrian army, as with most armies in Mythika, is its infantry spearmen. However, its glory is its chariots and cavalry, whose intimidating ranks are unrivaled by any other kingdom near the Middle Sea.

Umbria's wide pastures make possible a wealth of horses. On the open battlefield, the Umbrian army may be unbeatable. In more rugged terrain it loses its overwhelming advantage but Umbrian troops remain tough, determined fighters even when the odds aren't in their favor.

The optional character classes and combat rules on Pages 5 and 17 of the *M&M Companion* are standard for Umbrian warriors. The nation's total military forces roughly equal that of the combined armies of Heraklia and Thena, formidable but insufficient to overwhelm the Three Cities united.

### The Navy

Before its defeat by the Three Cities, Umbria was primarily a land power. The humiliating loss changed all that. Umbrian sailors may not be as skilled at fleet maneuvers as their Argosean counterparts and their ships may not be quite as agile, but they've got all the forests of Umbria and Sybaris to build them with while the Mineans have to import wood to construct their fleets.

Although they're not good at inventing things themselves, Umbrians are proficient at copying the latest naval innovations from captured Minean vessels. The monarchs of the Three Cities regard Umbrian warships as pirates and treat their crews

as such. But Umbrian captains hold military commissions and their raids are guided by a grand scheme to control shipping in the Middle Sea.

The Umbrians ruthlessly hunt and sink real pirates themselves. They'll spare foreign merchant ships so long as the captains are willing to pay Umbrian tolls, don't try to approach the Bronze Gates, and aren't carrying "contraband" (i.e., cargoes whose delivery the Umbrians judge would be detrimental to their economic and military interests).

### The Secret Service

There is no such thing as an innocent Umbrian tourist. Talos regularly sends diplomats, traders, athletes, students and artisans throughout the kingdoms of the Middle Sea, but their real job is to spy out the land and assess opportunities for conquest or exploitation. These travelers comprise the foot soldiers of that shadow army, the Umbrian secret service. Soldiers in the regular army may scoff that scholars and merchants weren't able to pass the physical but secret service operatives are chosen for their quick wits and carefully trained to be meticulous observers.

They rarely engage in flashy exploits (although the occasional assassination or sabotage attempt is not unheard of) but the typical agent will be intimately familiar with his host nation's language and cultural trends, the current political gossip, which Umbrian products are and aren't selling and who the competition is, how many and what type of ships are in the harbor, where the local barracks is and how many men train there, and whom to approach for under-the-table goods and services. To his neighbors, he'll appear earnest and affable, a friend of dogs (so they don't bark at him when he's sneaking around) and children (who frequently and unconsciously provide tidbits of information).



## Umbrian Spies



- What do you mean 'SPY' ? Surely there is some misunderstanding ! I'm just an innocent tourist !

In game terms, most Umbrian spies and secret agents are simply Minor NPCs with a higher Cunning than the average soldier or bandit. The following statistics should be used for such rand-and-file spies :

**Ferocity** : Aggressive

**Cunning** : Clever

**Mystique** : Normal

**Movement** : 60'

**Initiative** : 13

**Melee Attack** : +2

**Damage** : 1d6 (weapons)

**Defense Class** : 12

**Hits Total** : 8

**Detection / Evasion** : +4

**Mystic Fortitude** : 0

**Special Abilities** : Stealthy (16).

**Awards** : Glory 25.

Only a few elite agents and spies extraordinaire will actually be Major NPCs; in game terms, such characters should qualify as Thieves, with the Actor talent (see *M&M Companion* p 4).

There are persistent rumors about a small group of Umbrian expert spies known as the Seven Secret Soldiers, whose members are believed to be equipped with all sorts of mythic items and magical gadgets that allow them to go unnoticed and escape unharmed while carrying on deep infiltration missions all over Mythika. Whether this is just a fancy tale, clever propaganda or reality is left to the decision of each individual Maze Master...

## History

### Founding Myth

Umbrian kings may claim divine ancestry but oral tradition indicates a more humble and practical origin. The earliest and most verifiable stories say the ancestors of the Umbrians were the soldiers of an ancient garrison charged with manning and defending the Bronze Gates, a duty their descendants still hold sacred untold centuries later even though they no longer remember who it was that gave them this mission. Recent incursions by the Atlanteans make it a continuing necessity regardless. The great fortress of Ithkos was established by General Kokalos, the garrison's commander, to house his troops and oversee the passage between the Great Ocean and the Middle Sea. As their population increased, the Umbrians gradually expanded northward, the mountains and jungles beyond the Southern Gatepost being considered inhospitable to colonization.

Given the Umbrians' ancestral mission, the nature of their written language, and their regional divisions, some scholars have speculated that Ithkos was originally an outpost of the fabled Tritonian empire, established to fend off the Atlantean onslaught. In their version of events, Kokalos was an admiral of the shattered Tritonian fleet wrecked with his sailors on the Umbrian coast. Sensing opportunity in isolation, he chose to set up his own kingdom rather than attempt to re-contact the eastern sea princes even after his little colony had prospered enough to be able to build ships again.

Mentioning this slanderous « Tritonian theory » is a sure way for visiting adventurers to touch off a feud with the local warlord. At the very least, outraged Umbrians who overhear such an insult will clamor to duel the offender to the death. The aforementioned scholars say (from a safe distance) that Umbrians' touchy pride is another evidence of their possible Tritonian ancestry.

### The Umbrian War

#### The True Story (?)

Naturally, the war was all the Mineans' fault. If the stubborn people of the Three Cities had had enough sense to accept Umbrian sovereignty, all that unpleasantness could easily have been avoided.

The trouble began when Pendimenes, a visiting prince of Thena, fell madly in lust with Ardonithe, a nubile participant in the religious dances who also happened to be the daughter of the Umbrian monarch, Klimentes.

Umbrian histories say it was young love at work. Thenan chronicles claim Pendimenes was set up from the moment of his arrival and that aphrodisiac drugs, magic, or old-fashioned seduction were responsible for his actions.



*A PG-13 depiction of Ardonithe with a few friends*

Since their union would have potentially put his grandson on the throne of Thena, Klimentes encouraged the lovers. Pendimenes' father, the current Thenan king, was aghast for the exact same reason when he learned of the relationship.

Unfortunately, by the time his preemptory order for Pendimenes to come home reached Talos, Ardonithe was quite obviously with child.

Furious, Klimentes accused the prince of debauching and attempting to abandon his daughter. He imprisoned Pendimenes and sent a demand to Thena either for a shotgun wedding or suitable reparations, say, control of all Thenan colonies west of the Helicon Mountains.

Since neither choice was in his best interests, the king of Thena called upon his fellow Minean monarchs to help defend the city from enemy armies already marching and sailing eastward. Reluctant to get involved at first, they eventually formed the Minean Coalition when Umbrian soldiers began landing on their own shores.

Meanwhile, Pendimenes and Ardonithe escaped Talos by sea but were shipwrecked on the isle of Zethos, where she gave birth to a son. Umbrian troops overran the island shortly thereafter.

The lovers' fate is unclear but two weeks later in Talos Klimentes publicly presented an infant that he claimed as his grandson and heir -- and the rightful heir of Thena.

Thenan histories variously assert that Ardonithe died in childbirth, that the baby was stillborn, and the prince leaped from the cliffs of Zethos in grief; or that Pendimenes, Ardonithe and the child were

slaughtered by the invaders, who failed to recognize who they were. The child displayed by the Umbrian king had to be an imposter.

## Defeat & Consequences

Before the war, there is no record of Umbrian land forces ever being defeated. For much of the conflict, Umbrian cavalry and chariots swept all before them. The Mineans' rocky domains didn't have enough arable land to support the vast numbers of horses and men the westerners were able to throw at them, although the Three Cities tried to compensate by importing horses from the Land of the Sun. Their superior weaponry didn't help them. It doesn't matter much that your iron sword can cleave your opponent's bronze blade when you're outnumbered two or three to one. The real advantages the Mineans had were their superior seamanship and the Umbrians' extended, vulnerable supply lines. Umbrian vessels, ungainly coastal barges designed to haul troops and horses, were no match for sleek, swift Minean warships.

The ultimate Umbrian defeat at sea by a Minean combined fleet secured the independence of the Three Cities but spurred the creation of the dangerous Umbrian navy which dominates the western half of the Middle Sea today.

## Politics

### Current Affairs

Umbrians don't view themselves as ruthless, warmongering conquerors. Instead, they consider it their destiny, their duty, to unite the kingdoms of the Middle Sea against the threat represented by the Atlantean and Stygian empires, and possibly Tritonis should the sea lords get too big for their kilted britches. Only Umbria is strong enough to save Civilization As We Know It from the forces of darkness, and to achieve this noble goal Umbria must be in charge. All this nonsense about freedom and independence only strengthens the hand of the enemy. But Umbria will help those eastern idiots see the truth. It will make them see it.

## Foreign Relations

### Atlantis

Umbrians resent the Atlanteans as rivals but haven't been strong enough to make war on them openly. The end of centuries of Atlantean isolation coincided with the birth of the Umbrian navy. The ships of each nation have been prowling the other's coastlines for the past several decades. The sheer cliffs along Umbria's northwestern shore make landings by enemy craft nearly impossible, and the Umbrian fleet has stoutly defended the passage through the Bronze Gates. On the other hand, Talos isn't confident of its ability to invade Atlantis with a sufficient force to take the island.



*The fine art of diplomacy, Umbrian style*

Umbrians have also learned to fear Atlanteans' supernatural powers after a number of their cleverest spies returned as mindless drones.

### **Charybdia**

Ithkos Minor, the fortress protecting the Southern Gatepost, is a sizeable town whose inhabitants include loggers, miners, and hunters as well as soldiers. Patrols and work crews have sparred with the tribes of the Opar Mountains for generations. The steep mountain terrain has prevented Umbrian horsemen from overwhelming the Oparians, who easily melt away into the trees when they don't choose to fight. On the other hand, the fortress is too strong and well established for the tribal warriors to destroy. Settlers' attempts to establish farms along the eastern coast of the peninsula have been retarded by constant attacks, and it has generally been easier to import food from the north. Despite a long presence on the northern shore of Charybdia, the Umbrians haven't penetrated the interior. In their quest for sources of iron, however, they're becoming more aggressive in their explorations.

### **Sybaris**

Unfortunately for the people who live there, both the Atlanteans and the Umbrians consider Sybaris theirs for the taking and conduct regular raids for goods and slaves. Atlantis wants control over its former colony. Talos recognizes that any land attack upon Umbria must come through its northern neighbor. Umbria covets Sybaris' forest-covered hills and began incursions before such patrols became a military necessity. Clashes between Atlantean and Umbrian skirmishers have not yet escalated into war. The Sybarians have tried to avoid their unwelcome visitors by fleeing into the deep woods. Prevented them from tending their fields and their nets, the once prosperous inhabitants of Sybaris have begun to suffer from hunger and disease.

### **The Three Cities**

Talos has sent secret negotiators and agitators to the traditionalist nobles of Heraklia's "Sword" faction, who agree with Umbria that the Minean world should be forcibly unified politically and militarily against outside threats. Both the Umbrians and the Heraklian hegemonists find Thena's drift toward republicanism abhorrent and dangerous. Theseos' folly could destroy the family, respect for the gods, and wreck cherished cultural institutions. More urgently, his policies could end with every Minean (and Umbrian) enslaved under the heel of Atlantean (or Stygian) tyranny. The major sticking point in these discussions, of course, is who gets to be in charge after the takeover.

Umbrian agents have found some sympathy for their arguments among the Thenan nobility, but the latter are less willing to stick their necks out than the Heraklians, a weakness that only reinforces Talos' desire to wipe Thena off the map.

### **Tritonis**

The expansionist stirrings of Acharnia have aroused Umbrian fears of yet another seaborne rival menacing its eastern coast. Unwilling to create a second front, Talos has instead sent diplomats and trade representatives to Tritonis both to forestall misunderstandings over its naval maneuvers and to keep a close watch on a potential enemy. Although each kingdom's representatives are all oily smiles in public (the possibility of an Umbrian-Tritonian alliance gives the Three Cities nightmares), there is a lot of tension below the surface.

The Tritonian Sea Princes are not stupid, and they are uncomfortable about depending upon Umbrian imports, too. The arrogance and mutual disdain of each nation's nobles requires a diplomatic protocol complex enough to make the average adventurer's eyes cross.





*A typical Umbrian fortified outpost*

## The Land

### Geography

Physically, Umbrian is like a huge bowl, with rocky cliffs along the shores of the Great Ocean sloping down toward the Middle Sea. There are forests in the northern border with Sybaris but much of the land consists of rolling hills and grassy plains. Umbria has much more flat, arable land than the mountainous region of the Three Cities, with room for large herds of cattle and horses (and a corresponding greater role for cavalry and chariots).

The capital and only major city is **Talos**, fortress of the high king. It is relatively recent, a previous high king's attempt to circumvent rivalries by establishing a capital separate from the traditional holdings. The River Eridanus runs into it from the forests of Sybaris to the north. The high king's traditional title is "Keeper of the Bronze Gates," which the Umbrians claim their founders built. Given the ancient Umbrians' penchant for massive fortifications and building projects, this is possible.

The five kingdoms of the Pentarchy are: **Ithkos** (the oldest and closest to the Bronze Gates), **Pythonos**, **Lysaidon**, **Danaan**, and **Antarnus**. There are several substantial port villages, including several on the coast of the Great Ocean.

### Talos

Most Umbrian district capitals consist of an elevated fort surrounded by an unprotected mud-brick village.

Talos, in contrast, is an actual planned city. In addition to an imposing acropolis, it has paved streets, durable stone public buildings, a well-conceived sewer system, and defined commercial and religious sections. The average inhabitant's home may still be of mud brick, but the entire metropolitan area is defended by stout walls. The city is impressive rather than beautiful.

Talos was designed by the noted engineer Hycranus, who claimed to be a descendant of the mythical inventor Daedalos. Whatever his family roots, the city's layout demonstrates Hycranus' skill.

Agamnos II, the monarch who commissioned the city's construction, is said to have imprisoned Hycranus in its sewers just as Minos imprisoned Daedalos in the labyrinth to prevent the engineer from revealing militarily useful information to other clients. Whether this is true or merely a legend is uncertain. The story doesn't mention whether Hycranus figured out a clever means of escape like his supposed ancestor did. When maintenance personnel report strange sights and sounds in Talos' drainage tunnels, people say it must be Hycranus hard at work on his next big project.

### The Bronze Gates

This massive metal portal constructed in antiquity is capable of sealing off the Middle Sea from the Great Ocean, operated either by magic or prehistoric machinery. The structure would be visible from orbit were the inhabitants of Mythika capable of space flight. Currently the Gates are apparently frozen about three-quarters open.





*Outside a typical Umbrian royal residence*

Originally built to protect the civilization of the Middle Sea from some great threat from outside, the Gates enable those who hold them to control access to the Great Sea (and thus opportunities for trade and exploration beyond the Minean world). Argosean sailors may hate Umbrian naval harassment when they attempt to pass the Gates, but the flip side of Umbrian bullying is that their navy and control of the Gates has prevented the Atlanteans from sweeping in and turning the Middle Sea into their personal lake.

Possession of the Gates, by the way, doesn't necessarily imply that the Umbrians know how to operate them. Uncovering the means to actually open and shut them might be the goal of a campaign. The gates are defended by appropriately cyclopean fortifications on each shore.

### **The Tomb of Klimentes**

Actually not one tomb but a series of burial mounds north of the southern fortress of Ithkos that house the remains of ancient Umbrian kings and their families. Modern royals are buried there, too, older interments being moved aside to make room for newer ones. From the outside, each tomb is a hill with an imposing masonry entrance on one side. The bronze doors are sealed to discourage robbers since the tombs are reputed to be loaded with golden jewelry, costly weapons, and jeweled grave fittings piled calf-deep. Inside, a paved and stone-lined passage leads to a 40-50-foot diameter dome or beehive-shaped chamber.

The bodies of kings, especially the earliest ones, are typically placed in huge jars while those of their

family members are put into narrow pits dug into the floor. After a funeral, the passageway leading to the burial chamber is refilled with gravel and other rubble, which must again be dug out before another burial can take place.

Despite the golden inducement they contain, instances of tomb robbing are relatively rare. The reason has less to do with reverence for the dead or the difficulty of opening sealed entrances than with the discovery of mangled, modern, non-royal bodies in several tombs. Apparently, the would-be robbers never made it out alive.

### **The Pythian Oracle**

The oldest of Umbrian holy places, these eerie caverns gave the district of Pythonos its name.

In the largest of the caves, a huge crack in the floor vents strange vapors said to be the breath of mighty Python, emissary of Rhea. The inhalation of these vapors, Umbrians believe, enables attendant shrine priestesses to determine the will of Rhea on matters both great and mundane.

The pronouncements of the priestesses are to be ignored at one's peril.

Other than setting up a typical small shrine inside and building living quarters for the clergy near the cave entrance, the Umbrians haven't modified or explored the caverns, particularly since strange moans, cracking and gurgling noises (said to be the restless movements of the Divine Serpent) occasionally emanate from them. It isn't known how deep they are or what, if anything, other than Python is down there.

## High King Meinetes

Meinetes, a gray wolf of a man in virile early middle age, has been on the throne for 30 years. He was selected by general acclaim of the warlord assembly as a young man after demonstrating his valor at sea against the Atlanteans and defeating other candidates in combat trials. His strength and martial skill remain indisputable but Meinetes has always believed that a warrior's brain is his most powerful weapon. He's been crafting Umbrian ascendancy for years and has seen his naval and diplomatic programs come to fruition.

Meinetes tends to listen more than he talks, gives his carefully selected pentarchs plenty of autonomy, and has a reputation for being just. Unlike some of his officers who roar and boast, he is most dangerous when he's being quiet. Although he can be grim, Meinetes has a wry sense of humor and has been known to surprise both warlords and foreign visitors with his biting observations.

The High King is a firm believer in advancement based on merit and required first his sons and now his numerous grandsons to prove their mettle by serving Umbria abroad. He's got one of his grandsons participating in the Sybaris annexation campaign, another exploring the unknown lands of Charybdia, and others quietly keeping their eyes and ears open in Tritonis and the Three Cities.

### Level 6 Umbrian Warlord

**Attributes** : Might 20, Skill 20, Luck 20, Wits 16, Will 21, Grace 11.

**Combat** : Initiative 21, Melee +12, Missile +10, Basic Defense Class 16, Hits Total 36.

**Saving Rolls** : Athletic Prowess +12, Danger Evasion +11, Mystic Fortitude +9, Phys. Vigor +13.

**Personal Charisma** : +9 (+15 to Umbrians)

**Weapon of Choice** : Sword.

**Background Talents** : Equestrian, Tactician.

**Mythic Items** : Breastplate of Ares, Javelin of Destiny, Sword of Ares. *For a level 6 hero, Meinetes has relatively few mythic items; this reflects the fact that Umbrians (at least officially) despise magical objects as "unfair advantages", except if they are family heirlooms, which is indeed the case of Meinetes' three items.*

When fighting in complete war gear (helmet, shield and his Breastplate of Ares), Meinetes has an EDC of 24 and a Mystic Fortitude of +11. His Sword of Ares gives him a +4 damage Skill-based bonus. Meinetes' formidable Initiative of 21 takes into account the Will bonus granted by the Warlord class; without it, his Initiative would be 16.

*Using the optional variant formulas given in previous issues of the Minotaur, Meinetes' Danger Evasion would be +10 (instead of +11) and his natural Mystic Fortitude would be +11 (instead of +9).*



*A highly stylized and flattering portrait of King Meinetes*

## The Divine Agent Option

In some campaigns, the Maze Master may choose to make High King Meinetes a Divine Agent of Ares (see the *M&M Companion*, p 8-12 for more details on Divine Agents). Since Divine Agent status always require a Luck of 20+, Meinetes would only have achieved this role upon reaching level 6, earning the following three divine boons : a score of 21 in Might and Skill and a Helmet of Ares, making him an even more formidable (and even invincible ?) fighter.

## Editor's Post Scriptum

### Nobles, Warlords & Sea Princes

Like the Sea Prince class from *Minotaur* n°1, the new optional Warlord class detailed in this article was developed as a variant of the Noble class as described in the *Players Manual*.

If, however, you are using the alternate version of the Noble class described in *Minotaur* n°2, both Tritonian Sea Princes and Umbrian Warlords should have their Initiative bonus restricted to melee combat only, for purposes of game balance (since alternate Nobles, while still retaining Luck as a primary attribute as well as their Luck-based Initiative bonus, do not enjoy the 2 extra Luck points granted to the official version of the class (as detailed in the *Players Manual*). If you have no idea of what in Hades we are talking about, well, nevermind – just trust us on this. ☺

# TRICK... OR THREAT ?

A Maze Master's Field Guide to Dirty Tricks and Clever Stratagems

by Olivier Legrand



## Tricks & Stratagems

We all have in mind the way the famous Greek hero Odysseus managed to trick, lure or outwit his most dangerous foes (such as the Cyclops Polyphemus) or the clever stratagems used by so many fictional heroes to avoid direct confrontation with supposedly invincible monsters...

Yet, the M&M rules do not include anything about the use of tricks against creatures, beyond the rules on Subterfuge tactics, which can only be used in melee combat.

Sure, the *M&M Companion* does include rules about traps and deception but neither topic really covers the kind of tricks and stratagems we are discussing here : the traps described in the *M&M Companion* are physical traps and the type of deception covered in the Influence rules is purely verbal and cannot be used on Beasts or Monsters.

Unlike indoor or outdoor traps, tricks and stratagems do not require any material trigger and rely on purely psychological elements, such as distraction or disorientation. And unlike deception, they do not require any form of social interaction with their intended target – indeed, one of the chief purposes of such stratagems is to work against enemies that cannot be persuaded, seduced or intimidated, like wild animals, monstrous creatures or fanatical fighters... This article presents simple optional rules that allow Maze Masters to handle such stratagems in game terms without excessive complication, die rolling or number-crunching.

## A Question of Wits

But before we proceed any further, we must tackle one of the Great Perennial Problems of roleplaying : player intelligence vs character intelligence...

A character's ability to devise tricks and stratagems should logically depend on his Wits score, since this attribute represents (among other things) cleverness and ingenuity. But let's be honest : giving a player a significant advantage simply because he made a Wits roll would not be a very exciting solution. Sure, some games do use « idea rolls » as an abstract way to reflect a character's intelligence (as opposed to the player's intelligence – or lack thereof)... but, sincerely, how « fun » is the following dialogue ?

**Player** – *We should try to trick this darn Minotaur out of its lair... Do I have a clever idea ?*

**Maze Master** – *Roll your Wits.*

**Player** – *Made it ! I do have a clever idea. What is it ?*

During a game session, tricks, stratagems and other brilliant ideas are much more enjoyable when they are the products of a player's own cleverness and imagination – rather than the products of an abstract game procedure (and a lucky die roll). On the other hand, one may rightfully object that if a character's Wits has nothing to do with his effective cleverness and ingenuity, then this attribute is pretty pointless.

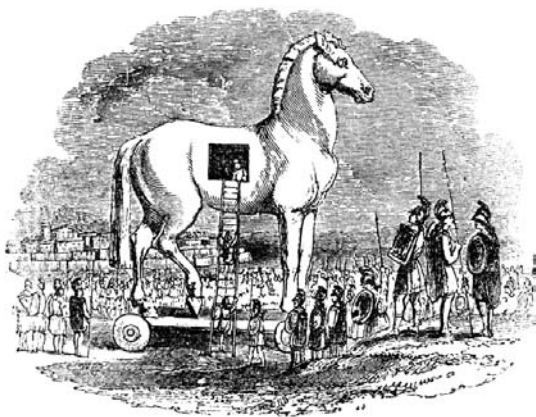
So, ideally, devising tricks and stratagems in M&M should depend on player intelligence AND character intelligence. Combining these disparate elements doesn't *have* to be difficult. In fact, the easiest way to achieve such a compromise is to give each element (player intelligence / character intelligence) a different function in game terms.

Player intelligence should be the only source of clever ideas. In other words, there is NO way a Wits roll is going to GIVE you an idea you were not bright enough to have in the first place.

So where does my character's Wits score come into play, you ask ?

The answer is simple : your character's Wits score is used to see whether or not he can put your clever idea in practice. Thus, astute players will be able to take full advantage of a character's high Wits score, while players with low-Wits characters will find it far harder to turn a clever idea into an effective result.





- Don't really expect this thing to work twice, do you ?

In other words, the « cleverness » of a trick does NOT depend on the trick itself but on the Wits score of the trickster. That's right : if two characters with different Wits score have exactly the same idea for a stratagem, the idea of the character with the better Wits score will « work better » than the other.

This reasoning might seem a bit weird at first but remember that we are simulating myth and fiction here, not reality. In many mythic or fictional tales, the clever plans or subterfuges used by heroes are not THAT clever... but they almost always work – not because they were intrinsically clever but because they were thought up and carried out by a « clever hero ». The following rules are based on a similar reasoning (*Wow, Luke, you really deserve an award for Acrobatic Justification on this one - Editor*)

According to this reasoning (and to the rules given, below) characters with high Wits (such as Thieves or Hunters, who both have Wits as one of their primary attributes) are more likely to use tricks because *their* ideas will tend to work better.

## My Cunning Ploy...

Because of their very nature, tricks and stratagems can only be adjudicated by the Maze Master on a case-by-case basis.

When a player comes up with one of these « clever ideas », the Maze Master must decide whether or not this idea can effectively be used to trick, lure or otherwise fool a creature.

Examples of appropriate ideas include using food to lure an animal out of its lair, attracting (or diverting) a monster's attention with loud noises or rubbing oneself with odoriferous herbs to fool a creature's sense of smell.

Examples of inept or stupid ideas include trying to make a flying creature crash into a tree, wall or mountain by distracting its attention, trying to make a Chimera sick with noxious fumes or attempting to scare a Minotaur with loud cries.

The Maze Master should take into account the idea itself as well as the current circumstances : time, space and equipment may be crucial factors here.

To see if a trick or stratagem actually works, Maze Masters should use the following procedure :

**a)** Roll 1d6 for the trickster and add his Wits mod.

**b)** Roll 1d6 for the intended victim and add its/his Cunning mod (eg 0 for Average Cunning, +1 for Alert, +2 for Clever and +3 for Crafty). Beings with Sixth Sense also get a +2 bonus here. If the victim is a major NPC, use his Wits mod in lieu of Cunning.

**c)** Compare the two rolls. If the trickster's roll is higher, the trick or stratagem works. If the intended victim's roll is higher, the target sees through the trick and does not fall for it. If the two rolls are equal, the victim is uncertain and hesitates : repeat the procedures but this time, a tie will be enough to alert the intended victim.

Thus, characters with high Wits may be able to trick the most cunning beings, while characters with low Wits can only hope to lure the dumbest victims...

Speaking of dumbness, Mindless creatures should be made *completely* immune to trickery ; this may seem paradoxical, but when you come to think of it, you've got to have a mind in order to be stupid... Thus, tricks and stratagems will be totally useless against Animates and many Spirits.

Speaking of this, the intended victim's taxonomy should also be an important factor here : it is pretty obvious that some tricks that may work on Folks just won't work on Beasts and vice versa.

The Maze Master will also have to adjudicate the effects of a successful trick or stratagem – again, on a case-by-case basis. In most cases, this effect will be either surprise (as per the usual surprise rules) or distraction (the creature's attention is diverted from a specific spot for a variable number of battle rounds – if in doubt, simply roll 1d6). In all cases, a successful trick should result in a specific behavior, action or event rather than in a numerical bonus.

## Elaborate Tricks

The d6-based procedure detailed above only covers the "intellectual" aspect of things. In many cases, the proper execution of a stratagem will be a more complex process, involving other crucial elements (which may require their own die rolls). Here are the most common examples of such extra complications and refinements :

**Stealth / Concealment** : If the trick requires that the trickster remains unnoticed by his intended victim, the required stealth / detection rolls should be resolved before the trick itself... and if the trickster is detected, then the stratagem simply won't work.

**Influence / Manipulation** : Some stratagems may also require the use of influence or deception (*M&M Companion*, p 31-32). In such cases, use the same method as for stealth above : the trick can only be attempted if the influence or deception succeeds.<sup>1</sup>

**Traps** : If the trick is all about leading the target into a physical trap (falling into a pit etc), then the poor victim should be allowed the usual detection roll *after* falling for the stratagem.

**Magic** : Some stratagems may also involve magic, such as the Illusions created by a Sorcerer. In such cases, make the victim's Mystic Fortitude saving roll first and proceed with the trick itself if this roll fails.

## Group Situations

You know the saying : strength is in numbers... but strength and intelligence are not the same thing. In other words, the number of victims you are trying to trick does not really have a significant impact on your chances of success. On the other hand, the presence of a single, brighter individual in a group of intended victims might change everything.

If the trick is aimed at a group of victims (such as, say, a band of Boarmen or a pair of guards), the system stays the same : the Maze Master should only make one roll for the whole group. If the targets do not have the same degree of Cunning, simply use the highest Cunning in the group; likewise, a single being with Sixth Sense will be enough to grant a +2 on such a collective roll.

On the other side of the trick, the Maze Master should always use the highest Wits modifier in the party, even if that character was not the one to come up with the clever idea in the first place : this does not mean that this character "steals" the idea, but that his superior ingenuity and cleverness will improve its chances of working as intended. The only exception to this rule is when the actual execution of a trick or stratagem (as opposed to its planning or installation) involves several characters : in such cases, the tricksters' roll should be modified by the *lowest* Wits mod in the group ("Damn it, that stupid fool Pyros has ruined everything !").

## Final Considerations

Tricks and stratagems can add an extra "fun factor" to many adventure encounters... but don't let them rule the game. The Maze Master is the final judge on what may (or may not) qualify as a « clever idea » and should never hesitate to say NO.

If a player comes up with a ludicrous or inept idea, the Maze Master should inform him that this « trick » has no chance to work ; if the player insists on trying it anyway, the trick will automatically fail, preferably in a catastrophic or humiliating manner... don't overdo this, however, otherwise your scenario will soon transform into a sword-and-sandal version of some Roadrunner / Wile E. Coyote cartoon.



*Big + Dumb + One-eyed = Obvious Trick Victim*

If a player comes out with a really, really clever or devious idea, the Maze Master may give him a +1 bonus on his d6 roll.

Conversely, a very crude (but not completely inept) idea may give a +1 bonus to the creature's d6 roll (making the stratagem less likely to succeed).

Also keep in mind that even the stupidest victim won't fall for the same trick twice : tricks and stratagems should be about creativity, not repetition.

Lastly, sadistic Maze Masters may consider using tricks and stratagems *against* the unfortunate player characters. In this case, simply use the system the other way around, adding the highest Wits mod in the party to the d6 roll.

Of course, players who are bright enough to see through the Maze Master's cunning ploy do not need to make this saving roll ; sometimes, player intelligence DOES demonstrate its superiority over character intelligence...

**Olivier Legrand (2008)**

<sup>1</sup> Speaking of influence and deception, the simple d6-based system described in this article could also be used to resolve bluffing and other forms of verbal manipulation for those who dislike the optional Influence rules given in the "M&M Companion" or find them too complex for their own gaming tastes.

# PANDORA'S BOX

## A regular selection of new mythic items for Mazes & Minotaurs

The last two installments of Pandora's Box presented a wide array of mythic items specifically created for warriors (issue 2) and magicians (issue 3); this issue, we finally give our friends the specialists their fair share of magical treasure, with a dozen plus one wondrous mythic items, specifically designed with Thieves and Hunters in mind.



### Blade of Treachery

This black-bladed dagger will only reveal its magical powers when used by a person with a Luck of 13+. It does extra damage (equal to the wielder's Luck bonus), but only when used to make *sneak attacks*. It confers no special advantage when used in standard combat. (Enc = 0)

### Bow of Marksmanship

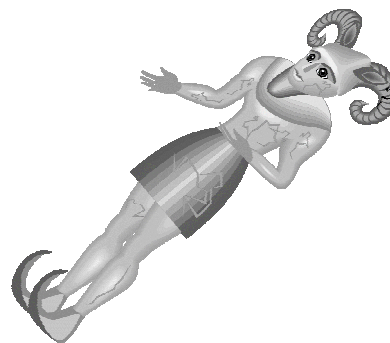
This magical bow can only be properly used by characters who have chosen the bow as their weapon of choice. It allows its user to ignore all penalties to his Missile rolls - including penalties caused by range, bad visibility or mythic items such as a *Cloak of Blending* or a *Cloak of Shadow* (see below). (Enc = 1)

### Cap of Absolute Direction

This magical item looks like an ordinary hunting cap, adorned with a long feather. It gives its wearer an unerring ability to always find the direction of the north, even if he is lost underground. In addition, if the wearer is a Hunter, he will receive a +4 bonus on all his tracking rolls. (Enc = 0)



- Mmmh, must be north by northwest...



### Charm of Kismet

This magical pendant appears a 1" tall miniature of a strange satyr-like being (see illustration above), said to represent the mysterious god Kismet, an eastern deity of fate and fortune who is apparently very popular among the rogues and cutthroats of Khandaria, the notorious City of Thieves. It only reveals its magical properties when worn by a Thief, adding +2 to his Thievery bonus. (Enc = 0)

### Cloak of Blending

This magical cloak allows its wearer to blend with his surroundings, much like creatures with the Camouflage special ability. It adds +4 to the target number of all detection rolls made to spot the character but does not affect his stealth rolls and only fools the sense of sight : it will not make a sneaking character harder to hear and has no effect on creatures with the *Sharp Senses* special ability. The Cloak also gives a -2 penalty to all missile attack rolls made against its wearer. (Enc = 0)

### Cloak of Imposture

When the hood of this cloak is put on its wearer's head, he becomes completely unrecognizable even to his closest acquaintances. The features of the wearer are not really altered but the wearer's face will simply be treated as that of a perfect stranger by those who know him as long as the hood is worn. The illusion is dispelled as soon as the hood is taken off. Note that the enchantment does not make people amnesiac - they will not forget the character's "new face" and will not treat him as a new stranger every time they see him with the hood on. (Enc = 0)





*Dammit ! Where are those stupid shadows ?*

### Cloak of Shadow

This magical garment seems to be made of the darkest shadow, woven into the form of a cloak. When worn in a dark or shadowy environment, it adds +4 to the wearer's stealth rolls as well as to the target number of all detection rolls made to detect his presence; it also gives a -2 penalty to all missile attacks made against the wearer. The powers of the Cloak of Shadow do not work in daylight or in brightly illuminated locales. (Enc = 0)

### Finder-Keeper Stone

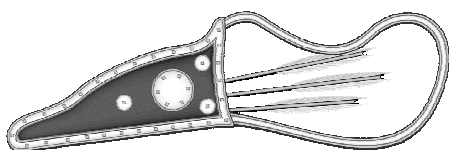
This egg-sized, grey-blue stone will begin to glow whenever it is within 30 feet of any amount of gold, silver or jewels worth at least 100 silver pieces; the greater the overall value, the brighter the stone will glow. The glowing will also intensify as the stone gets nearer to the treasure. For some strange reason, the stone does not react to copper or bronze coins or to treasure worth less than 100 sp, nor does it react to mythic items, which are, by their very nature, priceless. Once a treasure has been found, the wielder of the stone will also be able to appraise its worth with 100% accuracy. (Enc = 0)

### Headband of Nocturnal Sight

This plain-looking metal headband gives its wearer perfect night vision, negating any penalty to attack and detection rolls caused by darkness (including underground and magical darkness, such as that created by a *Cloak of Shadow* (Enc = 0).

### Quiver of Protection

This magical quiver adds +2 to the Defense Class of its wearer against all melee and missile attacks, as well as to his Danger Evasion score. (Enc = 1)



*Behold;.. the Sandals of Stealth !*

### Sandals of Stealth

These nondescript, ordinary-looking sandals add +4 to their wearer's stealth rolls and to the target number of detection rolls made to spot, hear or even track him. If, for some reason, only one sandal is worn, the bonus is reduced to +2. (Enc = 0)

### Spear of the Great Hunter

This magical spear can only be properly used by Hunters; its magical properties only operate against Beasts and Monsters. When used in melee, it allows the Hunter to benefit from his Skill-based damage bonus; when thrown as a javelin, it doubles this damage bonus. (Enc = 2)

### Talismans of the Beasts

These magical pendants of primitive craftsmanship have been carved in bone, horn or ivory in the shape of various miniature animals (Enc = 0).

They were obviously made a long, long time ago, by the "primitive priests" (no, there is no Minean word for *shaman*) of a now extinct tribe of Wildmen from the great savage forests of Sybaris.

Each talisman confers to its wearer a different ability reflecting the symbolic virtues associated with the animal. For some obscure mystical reasons, the magical properties of these talismans only operate when worn by Hunters.

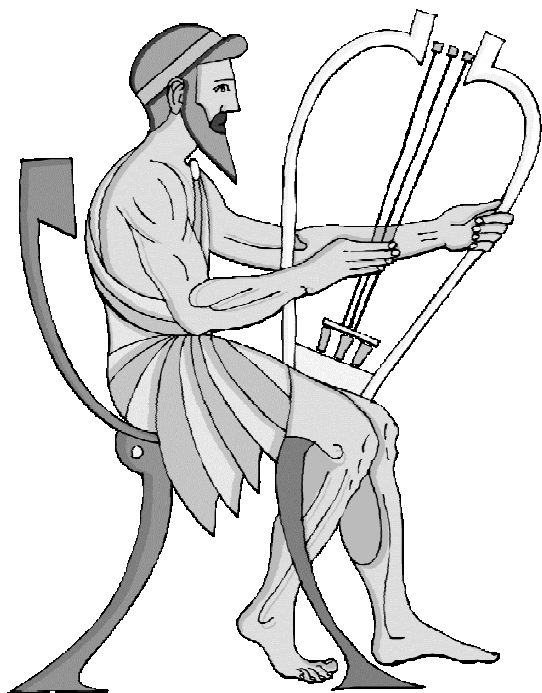
There are six different Talismans (Bear, Boar, Bull, Lion, Eagle and Stag) but they all have the same effects in game terms, adding 1 pt to the wearer's Luck score, up to a maximum of 21, as well as a +1 mod to his Hunting bonus (no maximum limit).

A single Hunter may wear several Talismans of the Beasts at the same time (provided he was lucky enough to acquire more than one) but no more than his Level : beyond this limit, all the talismans will simply cease to operate, as if the maximum number of pendants a Hunter may wear was a direct reflection of his hunting prowess (as represented by his Level). It should also be noted that the effects of duplicate talismans cannot be combined : the animals have to be different for the talismans to have cumulative effects.

Olivier Legrand (2009)

# SINGING A NEW TUNE

Revisiting the Lyrists' Repertoire, by Igor A. Rivendell (2008)



Lyrists are one of the greatest M&M classes... I mean, WHO can resist the idea of nonviolent, harp-playing poets turning song and music into magic ?

Unfortunately, Poetic Magic as detailed on pages 37-38 of the *Players Manual* suffers from various minor design flaws and small inconsistencies that really ought to have been fixed when the rules were Revised, back in 1987.

This article presents two alternate powers to fix these problems as well as a closer examination of some common situations (What happens when a Lyrists gets interrupted in the middle of a Song ?) and a few new options (such as singing a *cappella*).

## Songs of Freedom

What's wrong with *Song of Freedom* ?

First, its effects do seem a bit too powerful for a Magnitude 2 power, since it grants total immunity to Sorcery and various other threats, all this for a mere expenditure of 2 Power points : this is *really* much more powerful than the +2 bonus granted by 1-point powers such as *Divine Blessing* or (to remain in the realm of Poetic Magic) *Song of Inspiration*.

This power also makes the audience immune to Fear (with a capital F) and here we see great potential for endless litigations across the gaming table : what is Fear with the capital F ? Does this mean that characters under the influence of a Song of Freedom are immune to the effects of the Fearsome special ability of some creatures – in which case these creatures' EDC and Initiative have to be lowered by 2 against those characters only ? Does this affect the "panic effect" such creatures may have on a character's followers ?

Of course, it is perfectly possible for individual Maze Masters to "house rule" such things... but this really seems like a departure from the "fast & simple" spirit of the M&M rules, which tend to favor streamlined mechanics over exceptions and special cases.

That being said, the greatest problem with *Song of Freedom* is of a different nature and has to do with self-consistency. The *Players Manual* clearly states that Lyrists are themselves totally immune to the effects of Poetic Magic, including beneficial ones.

See the problem here ? A Lyrists can make his fellow adventurers completely immune to Sorcery and Petrification, without being able to bestow such protection on itself... so the next time Harpos the Lyrists sings his Song of Freedom to protect his friends from the petrifying gaze of a Gorgon, all the serpent-haired shrew has to do is to direct her gaze on the harp-playing guy himself.

Sure, our friend Harpos could try to play from a concealed location... but such situations and ideas will probably make the game more comical rather than more heroic.

Note that this reasoning could also apply to Sorcery. Since Lyrists cannot benefit from their own Songs, all Narkos the evil Sorcerer has to do to foil the effects of Harpos' Song of Freedom is to Compel him to stop playing... and *voilà*, it's Psychic Attack time once again for our poor Lyrists friend !

Still, I like the name *Song of Freedom* (perhaps a hidden tribute to Bob Marley ?) and the general concept behind it (poetry defeating sorcery, fear and other negative forces) so instead of replacing it by an entirely new power, I have decided to rework its effects in order to make them more consistent with its modest Magnitude level of 2 and to avoid the "immunity paradox" detailed below. See next page for the description of this variant *Song of Freedom*.

## Magnitude 2 : Song of Freedom

This Song can be used to free other characters or creatures from Enslavement by a Sorcerer or creature with Psychic Power.

The Enslaved being must be within the usual radius of 5 times the Lyrists's Orphic Voice bonus; the song may affect several individuals (up to the Lyrists's Orphic Voice bonus), at no additional Power cost. Playing this Song takes one minute (10 battle rounds).

At the end of the Song, each targeted listener is allowed a Mystic Fortitude saving roll *with a bonus equal to the Lyrists's Orphic Voice* against a target number equal to the Mystic Strength of their master : if this roll is successful, the target will be instantly freed from Enslavement. If the roll is failed, however, the Enslaved being will be forever unable to hear this particular Lyrists's Songs of Freedom.

These effects may seem pretty modest at first but remember that Enslavement is supposed to be a *permanent* condition which can only be broken by death or divine intervention.

The fact that it can also be used against creatures also makes it a very effective power against those Sorcerers who protect themselves by an Enslaved menagerie of Monsters (and such Monsters will always be susceptible to the effects of the Song, since Mindless creatures cannot be Enslaved in the first place anyway !).

On a more, well, poetic level, this redefined *Song of Freedom* also accentuates the Apollonian aspect of Lyrists, as divinely-inspired poets - liberation from Enslavement being, in effect, a minor form of divine Intervention).

## Poetic Injustice

Then there is Song of Glory. Man, do I hate this power... First, it allows a character to "gain" Glory points for nothing. This is SO wrong ! Glory points should always be earned for something that deserves it : having your Lyrists friend gives you a big Glory boost simply by singing about your exploits feels a bit like cheating, doesn't it ?

The old *Myth & Magic* supplement (in which Lyrists were first introduced) used the Original M&M rules, in which a magician's repertoire of powers was limited by his level. This made *Song of Glory* a supreme and ultimate ability which could only be used by 6<sup>th</sup> level Lyrists... but since magicians in the Revised rules have access to their full repertoire of powers right from level 1, this already quite dubious power became even more problematic. And the same goes for Satires, their reversed version, which obviously have more to do with Celtic bards than with Greek (or even pseudo-Greek) poets.



In addition, this so-called supreme power becomes completely useless once your Lyrists has composed a Song of Glory for every warrior in his group... unless he wants to become a "Lyrists for hire" and earn his living by composing Songs of Glory for all the warrior NPCs of Mythika (or Satires for their enemies). This is absurd and, above all, boring : where is the *magic*, the *enchantment*, the *poetry* ? This power should really be dumped in favour of something a bit more interesting, magical and, yes, powerful (this is a Magnitude 6 power !). The *Song of Life* described below takes its inspiration from the Magnitude 6 power of Napaea (Kiss of Life) as well as from the sad tale of Orpheus and Eurydice.

## Magnitude 6 : Song of Life

This power was designed to replace the Song of Glory described in the *Players Manual*.

This beautiful elegy has the power to resurrect persons who have just been killed, calling them back to the world of life by its entrancing music. Unlike all other Songs, a Song of Life can only be directed at a single person, whose name must be integrated into the words of the Song for the magic to operate.

As usual, the subject must be within (Lyrists's Orphic Voice x 5) feet of the Lyrists; in addition, the Song can only work if the chosen individual has been dead for a number of battle rounds equal to or lower than the Lyrists's Orphic Voice bonus : beyond this limit, his soul has already entered the Underworld and cannot be brought back – as illustrated by the tragic tale of Orpheus and Eurydice. Persons who have died from natural causes (old age etc) cannot be brought back by this Song, which can only affect those who died "before their time" because of some sudden fatality – combat, magic, poison, accidents etc.

This Song takes one minute (10 battle rounds) to perform; if the Lyrists is interrupted before the Song is concluded, the soul will depart forever to the Land of the Dead.





## The Power of Music

Unlike all other types of magic, Songs of Power take several battle rounds (usually 10) to perform... and this raises a very important question : when does a Lyrist expend his Power points ? At the start of a Song or at the end of it ? This might be extremely important if the Lyrist is interrupted (see below).

The *Players Manual* rules give no clear answer to this question, although the description of the Magnitude 1 Power (Song of Inspiration) clearly states that the Power points is expended "at the end"... but this *cannot* work for powers which start to operate immediately and have a continuous effect, like *Song of Soothing* and *Song of Wrath* : in such cases, spending the Power at the start of the Song is the only logical procedure, as implied (but not in a very clear manner) by the description of the *Song of Soothing* ("Lyrists may play this song over and over, with a renewed expense of Power (and a new Mystic Fortitude roll for targets) every time"). In the end, all this seems a bit confusing and clearly calls for some clear, explicit ground rules.

Looking at the Lyrist's (revisited) repertoire, we can see that there are two broad categories of Songs : Songs with a beneficial effect (*Songs of Inspiration, Freedom, Comfort and Life*) and Songs which allow the Lyrist to influence or hurt his intended targets (*Song of Soothing* and *Song of Wrath*).

Beneficial Songs share a common feature : their magic operates once the Song is over. In such cases, the Power must be spent once the Song is over, to channel its magic to its intended audience.

*Songs of Soothing* and *Songs of Wrath* have the same *modus operandi* : unlike the four other types of Songs, both need to overcome their targets' Mystic Fortitude and both take effect right from the start, operating in a continuous manner for a certain duration, as long as the Lyrist keeps playing.

In such cases, the Power must be expended right from the start : as implied in the *Players Manual*, this allows the Lyrist to affect his intended targets for a number of rounds equal to his Orphic Voice bonus, as long as he keeps on playing... and if he wants to affect them for a longer time, he simply has to start playing the Song all over again (which requires a new expenditure of Power and gives his targets a new Mystic Fortitude saving roll).

To sum up : beneficial Songs take effect once they are finished and require a final Power expenditure, while Songs which need to overcome their targets' Mystic Fortitude require a preliminary expenditure of Power and operate continuously for a certain duration, as long as the Lyrist keeps playing.

## Don't Shoot the Harpist !

What happens when a Lyrist is interrupted in the middle of a Song ? And what exactly can qualify as an interruption ?

Oddly enough, such obvious questions were never really addressed in the M&M rules. If a Lyrist is interrupted while performing a Song, it is quite obvious that he will have to start over again... but does he lose any Power in the process ?





Well, this particular question is no longer a problematic issue if we use the clarified rules for Power expenditure given above : if the Song was a beneficial one and the Lyryst is interrupted, the Song is aborted but no Power is lost; on the other hand, if the Song required a preliminary Power, then the Power has already been expended.

But how exactly do you interrupt a Lyryst ?

Well, the excellent Luke G. Reynard tackles this very problem in this issue's *A Twist in the Maze* and what he says there about magicians, concentration and distractions fits in perfectly with our own lyrical musings (*Hey, we're an interactive webzine ! – Ed*).

## Going A Cappella

As most of you probably know, *singing a cappella* means *singing without musical accompaniment*.

The *Players Manual* explicitly states that Lyrists must sing AND play the harp to work their magic : in other words, Lyrists who have somehow lost their precious musical instrument are left completely powerless. This seems a bit unfair (since no other magician class can be deprived of its powers in a similar manner) as well as somewhat illogical, since a Lyryst's talent is based on his Orphic **Voice**.

The harp should be an important component of Poetic Magic, but not a vital, indispensable one. Maze Masters who agree with this reasoning should simply allow a *cappella* Lyrists to use their magical powers but at *double* the normal Power cost. Thus, an *cappella* Song of Life would require a hefty expenditure of 12 Power points.

## Target Audiences

Finally, there is the question of who (or what) can be affected by a Lyryst's powers – especially in the case of *Songs of Soothing* and *Songs of Wrath*, which are often used against nonhuman creatures. Here again, some clarifications are needed.

The description of the *Song of Soothing* states that it can be used against “a mortal, animal or monster”, which leaves out Spirits and Animates... but the description of *Song of Wrath* includes no such restriction. That being said, the general description of Poetic Magic clearly states that Mindless beings cannot be affected by a Lyryst's magic - this includes all Animates... but not all Spirits : Ghosts, Empusas or Cacodemons, for instance, are *not* Mindless.

Since a Spirit is not “a mortal, animal or monster”, such beings should not be affected by *Songs of Soothing*... but since they are *not* Mindless, they *should* logically be vulnerable to the effects of a *Song of Wrath*. So how do we reconcile these seemingly contradictory facts ?

The rationalisation is actually quite logical (and poetic too !) : Spirits like Ghosts, Empusas or Cacodemons may not be Mindless but they are *not* alive and the otherworldly rage, despair, passion or sheer malevolence that drives and inhabits them makes them immune to the emotions of the living (and consequently to the emotion-based effects of a *Song of Soothing*)... but not to spiritual attacks, which is exactly what *Songs of Wrath* are supposed to be - Q.E.D !

## Last Notes

Well, I've got nothing to add... but I simply could not resist the temptation to end this lyrical article with a paragraph called *Last Notes*. ☺

Only the bravest heroes dare enter the...

## TOMB OF THE BULL KING

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## MAZE MASTER'S LORE

# MYTHIKA'S MIGHTIEST

Part Three : **Lydia** the Huntress, **Eurybiad** the Lyrst and **Pyros** the Spearman

by **Olivier Legrand**

*For our final instalment of "Mythika's Mightiest", we thought it would be a nice (and appropriately nostalgic) idea to look back at some of the very first adventurers created for the original Mazes & Minotaurs rules and reward them with true legendary renown (as well as fully Revised statistics) : Lydia the Huntress and Eurybiad the Lyrst both started life as the first characters of their respective classes, back in the days of "Men & Monsters" and "Myth & Magic"... and then of course there is our good old friend Pyros the Spearman, who has been there from the very beginning (and who was NOT roasted by a Chimera's fiery breath, despite what some persistent rumors would have you believe). May such heroic paragons inspire the exploits of younger adventurers everywhere in Mythika and beyond ! Long live M&M !*



*Lydia back when she was a 1<sup>st</sup> level neophyte*

## Lydia the Huntress

Lydia was born north of Thena, in a small village of the Helicon Mountains. The last children of a large family of simple, country (actually mountain) folk, she soon proved to be a willful and headstrong girl, blessed (or, in the view of her parents, *cursed*) with a particularly independent and adventurous spirit. At a very young age, she took a deep interest in the goddess Artemis and began practicing archery. Soon, her marksmanship made all the local Hunters (who were all male) green with envy and tales of the sharpshooting girl-prodigy soon spread out to all the region, drawing an unusual (and mostly unwelcome) amount of visits from strange men and women who claimed to have foreseen the child's "great destiny" or who wanted to "take the child to Thena" and give her the "education" she deserved. Moreover, the girl's impertinent attitude and her foolish talk about becoming "a great heroine someday" and keeping her virginity sacred for Artemis soon began to irritate the young men of her village.

A few days after the girl's thirteenth birthday, they decided to "give her a lesson" and to teach her how "real women" were supposed to behave by capturing her during one of her numerous hunting escapades and do away with her virginity whether she wanted it or not. When the local bullies assaulted her, Lydia fought for her honor and slew them all. When she realized that the local villagers would almost certainly kill her for slaughtering some of their boys, she decided to leave village life behind her for good and ran to the woods. There, she led a pretty feral existence, living among the wild beats of the forest, honing her woodcraft and survival skills, as well as her outstanding accuracy with the bow.

Later, there would be tales telling how Artemis, in her mercy, extended her invisible hand to protect her young devotee as she survived in the wild – but it was really Lydia's resolve and resourcefulness, more than divine favor, which allowed her to survive and grow up as a deadly and fearless Huntress.

When she turned 19, she decided to leave the woods and the mountains and to go south to discover civilization – namely the great wondrous city of Thena. There, she met and befriended other valiant adventurers, including Eurybiad the Lyrst and Pyros the Spearman, whom she joined in a series of perilous expeditions which took her all across Mythika, from the northern reaches of the Sybarian forests to the southern shores of Midia.

Together with her brave companions, Lydia the Huntress accomplished all sorts of daring exploits; her most famous moments included killing a charging Gorgotaur with a single arrow right through the eye (after which she became known as "Lydia Bullseye"), holding back a Chimera on her own with only five flaming arrows and the time when she managed to trick a Gigantic Cyclops into believing that the only cure for his bellyaches was (wait for it) an arrow in the eye. Over her adventuring years, Lydia also managed to track down and kill (or, in some cases, capture) an impressive number of Monsters and rare magical Beasts, including the Kothian Lion, the Catoblepas of Zendra and the ever-elusive Stag of Alkenios.





Lydia the Huntress as a 6<sup>th</sup> level divine agent of Artemis, with her faithful dog companion Kynon

In the later part of her career, Lydia the Huntress eventually became a divine agent of the goddess Artemis, who gave her various divine boons, among which were several mythic items (see her detailed profile) and a fabulous hunting dog named Kynon, who has become Lydia's faithful pet and sidekick. She now roams the wilder regions of Mythika, acting as her divine patron's champion and messenger.

### Lydia In Meta-Retrospect

Perhaps more than any other character, Lydia's adventuring career reflects and echoes the evolution of the M&M rules over the years.

Her killing of a Gorgotaur with a single arrow, for instance, reflects the use of the optional Critical Hits rules detailed in the *M&M Companion* (and which were first published in the original *Men & Monsters* supplement), while the trick she played on the Gigantic Cyclops definitely looks like a clever use of the Persuasion influence talent (again, see the *M&M Companion* or, for those ultra-nostalgic grognards among you who stick to the Original rules, the *Unveiled Addenda* supplement).

Lastly, Lydia's reconversion as a divine agent of Artemis is a perfect illustration of what the optional Divine Agents rules detailed in the *M&M Companion* (and first published in the old *Myth & Magic* supplement) can add to *Mazes & Minotaurs* campaign at the higher levels.

## Lydia the Huntress

**Level 6 Huntress**, age 32, divine agent of Artemis and former adventurer

**Personality** : Lydia has always been a clever, resourceful and utterly fearless person; now that her "savage years" are behind her, she has traded her erstwhile boyish recklessness for the wiser virtues of self-discipline and patience, although she is still known to react in a rash, "wild" manner every now and then. Although she never boasts of her exploits, she is very proud of her prowess and marksmanship and will have difficulty resisting challenges to any form or archery contest.

**Attributes** : Might 11, Skill 21, Luck 20, Wits 18, Will 21, Grace 14.

**Combat** : Initiative 18, Melee +10\*, Missile +13\*, Basic Defense Class 18\*, Hits Total 20.

**Saving Rolls** : Athletic Prowess +10\*, Danger Evasion +13\*, Mystic Fortitude +11\*, Physical Vigor +10\*.

**Personal Charisma** : +11\*

**Weapon of Choice** : Bow.

**Special Abilities** : +5 to missile damage versus Beasts or Monsters; Hunting Bonus +8.

**Backgrnd Talents** : Mountaineer, Woodsman.

**Mythic Items** : Amulet of Artemis, Bow of Artemis, Quiver of Artemis, Girdle of Protection, Tunic of Fortune.

**Kynon the Dog** : Lydia's pet is of course an Artemisian Greyhound (see the *Mythic Bestiary* of the *Minotaur* n2 for stats). Its Bond to Lydia is 11 and it knows the following Tricks (see *M&M Companion* p 35) : Attack, Guard, Heed, Message, Protect, Save, Search, Stay.

**Divine Boons** : Lydia became a divine agent of Artemis at level 4, which gives her a total of five divine boons : two of these were taken as mythic items (see above), one was an increase of her Will, one was the magical dog Kynon and the last one was a *Divine Call*, which Lydia hasn't used yet.

\* These scores take into account the +1 bonus to Luck mod granted by Lydia's Tunic of Good Fortune. Her Defense Class also takes into account the +2 bonus granted by her Girdle of Protection.

**Note** : Using the optional variant formulas given in previous issues of the *Minotaur*, Lydia's Danger Evasion would also be +13 but her Mystic Fortitude would also be increased to +13.

Her Hunting bonus of +8 and her Amulet of Artemis give Lydia a total bonus of +12 on all her detection and stealth rolls. As for all Hunters, the target number of detection rolls made against her is increased by her Hunting bonus, to a pretty astounding score of 23.



Famous illustration of Eurybiad the Lyrist

## Eurybiad the Lyrist

Eurybiad the Lyrist is a true living embodiment of his class – a poet, a magician, a lover, a wanderer...

Born some 45 years ago on the island of Seriphos, Eurybiad started travelling across Mythika right after the end of his tuition; leaving the shores of his home and the tutelage of his old mentor Melios, he sailed off to the Three Cities where he soon began to acquire quite a reputation as a sacred poet and musician... He soon met and befriended a band of adventurers, among which was a young Dryad named Attala, whose preternatural grace and beauty struck a chord in the Lyrist's poetic soul... A hero may take up a life of adventure for a variety of reasons : glory, honor, thrill-seeking or the prospect of vast earthly riches... Eurybiad did it for *love*.

Together with Attala and her companions, Eurybiad soon embarked on a series of perilous quests and daring expeditions, which took them all across the Middle Sea – they fought fantastic monsters, found fabulous treasure... and gained quite a few enemies in the process. It was in Tritonis that the brave band of adventurers finally met their doom, tricked and ambushed by a treacherous Sea Prince and his men. Most of Eurybiad's companions were slain – including Attala, the love of his life, who was killed by a deadly thrust of the Sea Prince's magical trident... As the sole survivor of the group, Eurybiad barely managed to escape, swearing revenge on the traitorous Tritonian lord. A few weeks later, he managed to infiltrate the Sea Prince's court in the guise of a sycophantic poet, eager to please the Tritonian lords with glorious songs about the might of their so-called empire... One night, he found himself alone with the haughty Sea Prince who had ordered the slaughter of his beloved Attala and his friends. He killed the man with a Song of Wrath, acting as an instrument of poetic vengeance...

## Eurybiad the Lyrist

**Level 6 Lyrist**, age 45.

**Personality** : Despite (or perhaps *because of*) his profound wisdom and vast experience, Eurybiad is a very assertive and opinionated fellow, who never hesitates to speak his mind and who can be quite blunt with those he despises or mistrusts, regardless of their social standing; some Philosophers and Nobles would consider such an attitude a complacent abuse of the Lyrist's bardic immunity but Eurybiad is beyond such petty squabbles – over his years of adventuring, he has seen enough to know that true love, friendship or honesty are very rare (and all the more precious) virtues.

**Attributes** : Might 9, Skill 10, Luck 21, Wits 20, Will 17, Grace 19.

**Combat** : Initiative 14, Melee +5, Missile +9, Basic Defense Class 17, Hits Total 18.

**Magic** : Orphic Voice +9, Mystic Strength 21, Power points 28.

**Saving Rolls** : Athletic Prowess +5, Danger Evasion +12, Mystic Fort +12, Phys Vigor +8.

**Personal Charisma** : +12 (+18 towards Lyrists, Nymphs and devotees of Apollo or Athena).

**Background Talents** : Musician, Orator.

**Mythic Items** : For a veteran adventurer of legendary fame, Eurybiad owns very few mythic items. His only known magical item is his trusty *Harp of Poetic Insight*, which is also fitted with *Strings of Orpheus*. He also owns the seven scrolls of the *Complete Works of Homeros*, which he gathered over the course of his travels and adventures; many Lyrists have approached him to request the favor of having access to those wondrous works - but he only grants this privilege to those who have already earned enough Wisdom and renown by their own deeds (which, in game terms, means level 4 or more). See the *Maze Masters Guide* (p 46) for a full description of these mythic items.

**Note** : Using the optional variant formulas given in previous issues of the *Minotaur*, Eurybiad's *Danger Evasion* would be reduced to +9 but his *Mystic Fortitude* would stay the same, since his *Grace* and his *Wits* both give the same modifier of +4.

Having barely escaped from Tritonis, Eurybiad came back to the Three Cities but the loss of Attala had changed him forever. Haunted by grief and sorrow, he went through a long period of deep melancholy before joining another band of heroic adventurers, along with Pyros the Spearman and Lydia the Huntress.

With these new comrades, Eurybiad embarked on a new series of heroic adventures and dangerous journeys, which culminated with the epic quest for

the lost Head of Orpheus, a unique mythic artifact of wondrous power (see *Maze Masters Guide*, p 49). The starting point for this epic expedition was a recurring vision that haunted Eurybiad in his dreams. The Lyrst and his friends had to overcome many perils and tribulations before they could retrieve the mythic Head - just in time to prevent a rival force of Atlanteans from seizing the artifact for their own dark purposes... In the wake of this climactic confrontation, Eurybiad managed to overdose on the divine Wisdom that poured from the Head of Orpheus, falling once again in a deep state of melancholy... from which he was cured by the divine intervention of the muse Calliope herself, who also revealed herself to be the source of the Lyrst's haunting dreams before taking the Head of Orpheus to a secret and secure place...

After this final adventure, Eurybiad decided to retire from adventuring. A celebrated poet and storyteller, he now lives in the city of Thena, acting as a mentor for younger Lyrists and adventurers, whom he regularly entertains and entrances with tales of his fantastic adventures.

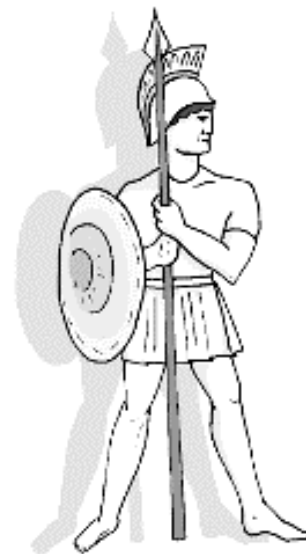
### Eurybiad In Meta-Retrospect

Many veteran Minotaurians consider Eurybiad (or, more correctly, Eurybiad's player) to be one of the very first true *roleplayers* to have played *Mazes & Minotaurs*.

According to all accounts, Eurybiad's love affair with the Dryad Attala was the first time that a romantic relationship was actually roleplayed by someone (and in case you're wondering, Attala was a player-character too). Later, after the tragic death of Attala, the guy who played Eurybiad also was the first *Mazes & Minotaurs* player to *decide* that his character would go mad with grief and that, once his vengeance had been carried out, would have no other option than to take an indefinite break from adventuring (and active play).

Several players who were present at the gaming table this fateful evening still remember Eurybiad's player saying something like : *"Well I would like to keep on playing Eurybiad... but there's no way he could go on adventuring after sustaining such a loss. It would be completely out of character."* According to the more enthusiastic witnesses, the face of roleplaying was changed forever.

After Eurybiad's semi-retirement, his player did not take a replacement character but started his own campaign as a Maze Master... It took him more than one year to come back to his old character and only because his Maze Master has promised him *"a quest that is JUST MADE for Eurybiad - I mean come on, man..."*. And so did Eurybiad embark for his last and greatest adventure - the quest for the Head of Orpheus. But that's another story...



*The earliest known portrait of Pyros the Spearman*

## Pyros the Spearman

Pyros could have been just another elite hoplite in the armies of Thena the Golden... but at the age of 20, he started *adventuring* with a bunch of other Thenan guys, including a short-lived but extremely valorous Noble named Faros. Together with his newfound comrades, Pyros took part in all sorts of heroic expeditions and perilous quests, exploring ancient ruins, killing fearsome monsters, finding lost treasure and generally having a hell of a good time.

Thanks to his fighting prowess and steadfast self-discipline, the stalwart Spearman soon became the most seasoned warrior of his adventuring group, acting as its *de facto* military leader, teaching the other Spearmen in the party to protect their magic-using comrades (such as the Verena the Priestess or Mandragos the Sorcerer) with the famous Shield Wall maneuver.

It would be impossible to list all the creatures which were vanquished by Pyros during his adventuring career - suffice it to say that this list would contain three Gigantic Cyclops, a dozen Minotaurs, three or four Hydras, at least two Manticores and, of course, countless hordes of variously assorted Beastmen.

And then there was the Chimera.

What exactly happened is a bit unclear. According to all accounts, Pyros the Spearman met his doom while fighting a Chimera, after having been mortally engulfed by the monster's fiery breath. News of his tragic death arrived to Thena and his surviving adventuring partners explicitly confirmed that Pyros the Spearman was no more. As a matter of fact, some of them were found in the possession of pieces of Pyros' equipment (including his Aegis shield and trusty magical spear), which they had "salvaged" from their friend's body *"because it would have been a pity to leave such stuff behind."*



Pyros soon became the subject of various heroic tales – you know, the kind of stories adventurers like to tell each other when they sit around the fire or get drunk in the tavern after a more-or-less successful expedition in some hellish cavern...

And then, one year after its well-documented death, Pyros the Spearman reappeared in Thena. Not a dead ringer or lost twin brother, but Pyros himself, with all his memories intact. Apparently, the only things he couldn't remember (or wouldn't talk about anyway) was what had exactly happened in the Chimera's cavern on that fateful day... and what he had done during the year of his supposed death. There was, of course, much talk about this rather unusual situation. The theory of an elaborate hoax was soon abandoned and even the most stubbornly rational Philosophers had to agree that there were only two possible explanations to Pyros' return : either the man had been brought back from the dead by some mysterious Divine Intervention or *he had actually fought his way out of Hades himself*, which, considering his records and personality, did not seem *that* implausible (indeed, there are some unverified claims that some of his new adventuring partners once heard him mutter something about the time he had to fight two Cerberus at the same time – a truly formidable deed which, strangely, was never mentioned in the chronicles of his exploits).

Ignoring all those wild rumors, Pyros soon joined a new adventuring group (along with other heroes like Eurybiad the Lyrst and Lydia the Huntress) and went back to what he did best : exploring lost ruins, visiting mysterious islands, finding lost treasure and, above all, slaying monsters. After the denouement of the quest for the Head of Orpheus (see above), he decided that it was time for him to retire from adventuring and enjoy a nice, peaceful life in his country villa with his loving wife and three children (including a young boy named Pyros who wants to be a Spearman "just like dad"), enjoying the vast wealth accumulated over years of adventuring.

But before he laid down his shield for the last time, he had one last job to do. Kill the bloody Chimera.

### Pyros In Meta-Retrospect

What else can be said about good old Pyros ?

For myriads of M&M players around the world, the guy simply embodies the game, from his humble beginnings as a first level, original-rules Spearman to his apotheosis as a living legend, brought back from (to quote his friend Eurybiad the Lyrst) "the dark depths of Oblivion"... much like M&M itself, when you come to think of it.

As for the Spearman's mysterious resurrection, well, the "truth" is probably less poetic than the above text would have us believe. Surely it had something to do with that error in the original M&M rules, which gave Breath Weapons twice the range they should have had... but hey, we shall stick with the legend, shall we ?

## Pyros the Spearman

**Level 6 Spearman**, age 43, former adventurer, living legend and honorary general of Thena.

**Personality** : The three words that define Pyros best are stalwart, stubborn and self-disciplined. There is not much more to say beyond this, since despite his heroic accomplishments and all his accumulated Glory, Pyros the Spearman has always been (to quote his player) "a simple, straightforward, stand-up guy".

**Attributes** : Might 17, Skill 21, Luck 18, Wits 10, Will 17, Grace 8.

**Combat** : Initiative 15, Melee +12\*, Missile +9\*, Basic Defense Class 17\*, Hits Total 35.

**Saving Rolls** : Athletic Prowess +12\*, Danger Evasion +8\*, Mystic Fortitude +7\*, Physical Vigor +10\*.

**Personal Charisma** : +6\* (+12 with reputation)

**Weapon of Choice** : Spear.

**Backgrnd Talents** : Tactician, Wrestler.

**Mythic Items** : Aegis Shield, Breastplate of Ares, Helmet of Ares, Spear of Striking, Amulet of Protection, Tunic of Fortune. Yes, Pyros the Spearman *is* a walking mythic items store, like so many first-generation M&M heroes...

**Special Abilities** : When fighting in complete spearman's outfit (spear, shield, helmet and breastplate), Pyros has an Initiative of 18 and a melee Defense Class of 28... increased to an even more astounding score of 37 if he is equipped with his Breastplate of Ares, Helmet of Ares and Aegis shield.

*\* These scores take into account the bonuses granted by Pyros' Amulet of Protection and Tunic of Fortune, which he always wear. When wearing his Breastplate of Ares, Helmet of Ares and Aegis shield, his Basic Defense Class increases to a truly invulnerable 26 (!) and his Mystic Fortitude to a much better +11.*

**Note** : Using the optional variant formulas given in previous issues of the Minotaur, Pyros' natural Danger Evasion would be +8 (instead of +6), thanks to his high Skill, increased to +10 by his Tunic of Fortune and Amulet of Protection; his natural Mystic Fortitude would be +6 (instead of +5), increased to +8 when wearing the Amulet and the Tunic and to +12 when fully-equipped with his magical armaments.

In some circles, his ridiculously high Defense Class has earned our Spearman friend the nickname "Pyros the Invulnerable". In other circles, it has given rise to a controversy about the "Achilles' problem" (*Who he ? – Ed*). It should be noted that this prodigious EDC may make our friend Pyros almost invincible in battle... but does not make him invulnerable at all against other types of threats, such as (say) the fiery breath of a Chimera – OK, OK I'll never talk about it again.

Olivier Legrand (2009)

## MYTHIC BESTIARY

# HERE BE DRAGONS...

A Diverse Collection of Draconic Creatures for *Mazes & Minotaurs*



*A mysterious Draconian with his weird weapon*

## Draconians

**Taxonomy :** Folk

**Description :** These *very rare* reptilian humanoids look very much like Lizardians (to whom they are related), except for the distinctive "red gold" color of their scales. They also have a far higher Mystique, as well as an uncanny resistance to arcane forces. They fight with strange scythe-staves which also seem to be some sorts of sovereignty symbols.

**Size :** Medium

**Ferocity :** Dangerous

**Cunning :** Clever

**Mystique :** Eldritch

**Movement :** 60'

**Initiative :** 16

**Melee Attack :** +5

**Damage :** 1d6 (weapon)

**Defense Class :** 18

**Hits Total :** 16

**Detection / Evasion :** +8

**Mystic Fortitude :** +8

**Special Abilities :** Magic Resistance, Regeneration (1/rd), Sixth Sense, Stealthy (18), Supernatural Vigor, Tough Skin, Uncanny Agility.

**Awards :** Glory 95, Wisdom 50.

### Additional Lore

#### The Draconians of Mythika

Draconians seem to occupy a very high niche in the unwritten hierarchy of reptilian humanoids, well above the Lizardians (whom the Draconians see as degenerate savages – and just don't mention Troglodytes to them). Draconians claim to descend from the True Dragon, an enigmatic being who, according to their complex cosmology, existed *before* the universe and is now sleeping inside a Cosmic Egg, waiting for the end of Time (don't ask).

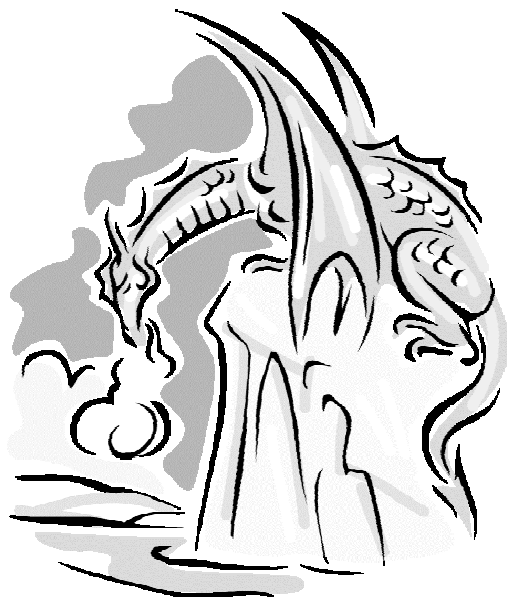
During the Age of Magic, the Draconians fought (and lost) a terrible magical war against their arch-enemies, the Serpent Folk, which almost caused their extinction. Since those fateful times, the Draconians have been almost entirely forgotten; the memory of their existence only survives in some ancient scholarly works (such as the invaluable scrolls of the great sage Gregorios of Staphordys).

Only a few Draconians have survived, hiding in a secret place called the Pass of the Dragon, located somewhere in the Thanatari Mountains.

#### Draconian Magic

Although they seem to be highly mystical beings, the Draconians do not possess any form of magical or psychic powers... or rather, no longer possess such abilities. Before they were defeated by the evil Serpent Folk, Draconians did possess impressive magical powers, apparently tied to mystical symbols they called *runes*. Whether the loss of their powers was the cause or the consequence of their defeat is unclear. The Chronicles of the Serpent Folk seem to imply that the Serpent Folk Sorcerers deprived the Draconians of their mystical might after having defeated them by virtue of their superior sorcerous powers, while the last Draconians do insist that the Serpent Folk actually stole their magical powers in order to defeat them and cause the fall of the mighty Draconian Empire (which, oddly enough, is not mentioned in the chronicles of any other folks).

Today, the magical legacy of Draconians mainly survive in the form of various mythic items (most encountered Draconians will carry at least one or two magical rings or amulets). Their most precious possession is a unique sacred artifact known as the *Hekatohedros* (which can roughly be translated as the "100-sided thing").



- Welcome to my ice sculpture museum...

## Ice Dragon

**Taxonomy :** Monster

**Description :** Ice Dragons are a unique breed of Dragons native (?) to the polar wastes north of the Frozen Sea. Their scales are white and they do not breathe flames, but clouds of supernatural, icy cold (which have the same effects in game terms). In addition, the gaze of an Ice Dragon can turn its victims to statues of ice.

**Size :** Gigantic

**Ferocity :** Deadly

**Cunning :** Alert

**Mystique :** Eldritch

**Movement :** 120' (480' flying)

**Initiative :** 16

**Melee Attack :** +10

**Damage :** 3d6 (claws & bite)

**Defense Class :** 20

**Hits Total :** 60

**Detection / Evasion :** +4 / +6

**Mystic Fortitude :** +10

**Special Abilities :** Breath Weapon (supernatural cold, 40', 3d6 Hits), Fearsome, Magic Resistance, Natural Armor, Petrification (40' see below for more details), Supernatural Vigor, Winged.

**Awards :** Glory 1550, Wisdom 100.

**Note :** The *Petrification* ability of Ice Dragons represent their ability to turn victims into statues of ice rather than stone. It works *exactly* like regular Petrification, except that the victim's first saving roll uses Physical Vigor instead of Danger Evasion.

## Singing Hydra

**Taxonomy :** Monster

**Description :** This weird monster has exactly the same appearance and characteristics as a classic Hydra (*Creature Compendium* p 61), except that it also has powers of *Vocal Entrancement*, which are magnified by the fact it has multiple heads.

**Size :** Gigantic

**Ferocity :** Deadly

**Cunning :** Alert

**Mystique :** Eldritch

**Movement :** 120'

**Initiative :** 16 + 1 per extra head

**Melee Attack :** +10

**Damage :** 3d6 (claws & bite)

**Defense Class :** 20

**Hits Total :** 60

**Detection / Evasion :** (Heads +1) / +2

**Mystic Fortitude :** +8

**Special Abilities :** Fearsome, Magic Resistance, Multiple Heads (up to 6 extra heads), Natural Armor, Regeneration (3 Hits / round), Supernatural Vigor, Vocal Entrancement (see below).

**Awards :** Glory 1000 + 100 per extra head, Wisdom 70 + 10 per extra head.

**Note :** Each extra head adds +1 to the target number of the Mystic Fortitude roll made to resist the *Vocal Entrancement*. This target number is 16 + 1 for each extra head (20 for a five-headed Hydra).

**Additional Lore :** According to some tales, these grotesque creatures started life as choirs of graceful female singers and were transformed into big, many-headed, cacophonous monstrosities by jealous goddesses (but so far, no goddess has taken the credit for *this*). Another theory claims they were created by some insane god of Chaos as a mockery of Lyrists and other makers of melodious music.



And now ladies and gentlemen... the Hydra Five !





- Who said wingless Dragons don't ROCK ?

## Stone Dragon

**Taxonomy :** Monster

**Description :** These gigantic, wingless dragons appear to be made of grey stone. They dwell in deep caverns located in the westernmost parts of the Helicon Mountains. Their grey, rocky hue and their uncanny ability to stay motionless for hours (as well as a surprisingly stealthy thread) allow them to masquerade as enormous stone boulders to take their enemies by surprise.

**Size :** Gigantic

**Ferocity :** Dangerous

**Cunning :** Alert

**Mystique :** Weird

**Movement :** 120'

**Initiative :** 15

**Melee Attack :** +8

**Damage :** 3d6 (claws & bite)

**Defense Class :** 19

**Hits Total :** 50

**Detection / Evasion :** varies

**Mystic Fortitude :** varies

**Special Abilities :** Camouflage (mountain rocks, 14) Fearsome, Magic Resistance, Natural Armor, Stealthy (10), Supernatural Vigor.

**Awards :** Glory 750, Wisdom 40.

## Wyvern

**Taxonomy :** Monster

**Description :** These huge (rhino-sized) creatures look like winged, two-legged dragons with a green-grey hue. In Mythika, they inhabit the highest climes of the Opar Mountains.

**Size :** Large

**Ferocity :** Dangerous

**Cunning :** Alert

**Mystique :** Weird

**Movement :** 90' (360' flying)

**Initiative :** 15

**Melee Attack :** +7

**Damage :** 2d6 (talons & bite)

**Defense Class :** 19

**Hits Total :** 30

**Detection / Evasion :** +6/+6

**Mystic Fortitude :** +2

**Special Abilities :** Dive into Battle (Initiative 19, Melee attack +11), Natural Armor, Sharp Senses, Supernatural Vigor, Uncanny Agility, Winged.

**Awards :** Glory 300, Wisdom 10.

**Note :** Wyverns might actually be used as steeds by characters talented (or foolhardy) enough to tame them - or Enslaved and used in this function by a Sorcerer, especially since they lack the Magic Resistance of most draconic creatures.



*Wyvern-riding 101 : forget about it...*

Olivier Legrand (2009)

# A TWIST IN THE MAZE

A Regular M&M Column by Luke G. Reynard

## GIVE MAGICIANS A FIGHTING CHANCE



- Frankly, do you see ANY reason, I mean any REAL reason why I shouldn't be allowed to wear this, too ?

### Rules & Restrictions

As in most other roleplaying games, magicians in M&M suffer from a number of more-or-less arbitrary restrictions, which usually have more to do with the concept of Game Balance than with the "reality" of magic as described in myth and fiction.

The two most blatant examples are the restrictions on armor and the need for magicians to maintain a *completely undisturbed* concentration for at least one battle round (and far longer for Lyrist) before releasing their powers. Both restrictions obviously have the same goal; which is to limit the efficiency of magicians in combat situations and leave the battlefield to warriors.

I won't argue with this reasoning, which is (after all) one of the pillars of old-school fantasy gaming; the problem I see here is not that these restrictions exist but that their treatment in game terms is far too clear-cut, with no room for special cases or middle ground : magicians simply *can't* wear *any* armor or they *lose* all their powers and their magical operations are *always* aborted if their concentration is disrupted, period.

Why is this a problem ? Because almost all other activities and aspects of an M&M character's adventuring life incorporate an element of chance and unpredictability : seriously wounded heroes can

avoid death with Physical Vigor rolls, magical powers can be resisted against with Mystic Fortitude rolls, characters can be missed by archers because their high Luck gives them a high Defense Class... so why should the restrictions on magic use be handled in such a binary, arbitrary manner ?

Here are a few simple optional rules for those who wish to make these restrictions a less clear-cut affair, without complicating the game too much.

### Magicians and Armor

According to the various class descriptions in the *Players Manual*, the reasons why magicians cannot use their powers while wearing armor are, well, pretty vague : the general idea here seems to be some freakish metaphysical incompatibility about magic and metal – but we won't argue with this, otherwise we might as well wonder why magicians *can* use bronze daggers or even swords. The real problem is not *WHY* but *HOW* armor should restrict a magician's ability to use his powers.

OK, so wearing armor disrupts magical activities... but does this disruption really have to result in a *complete* impossibility to use magic ? Wouldn't it be fairer (and, as weird as it might seem, more "logical") if armor *hindered* the use of magical powers, without prohibiting them completely ?

Over the years, many Maze Masters have developed house rules to handle such things – rules which usually result in a higher Power cost but this is a bit heavy... and also quite easy to forget in the heat of the moment.

The easiest way to handle this is to apply a penalty of -2 to the magician's Magical Talent for each piece of protective equipment (helmet, breastplate, shield). If this reduces the character's Magical Talent to 0 (or less), then he will be unable to use his powers with so much metal on himself.

Thus, a Sorcerer wearing a helmet and breastplate would suffer a -4 to his Psychic Gift – in other words, he would need a Psychic Gift of at least 5 to be able to use his powers with so much metal on himself and would always do so at a disadvantage.

At the discretion of the Maze Master, this penalty could be halved to -1 in the case of Priests wearing magical helmets, breastplates or shields directly associated with their patron deity – such as a Priest of Ares wearing a Breastplate of Ares or a Priestess of Athena wearing a Helmet of Athena.

This Magical Talent penalty should *not* affect the magician's Mystic Strength; in other words, wearing armor should make a magician's powers less efficient or powerful but not easier to resist.

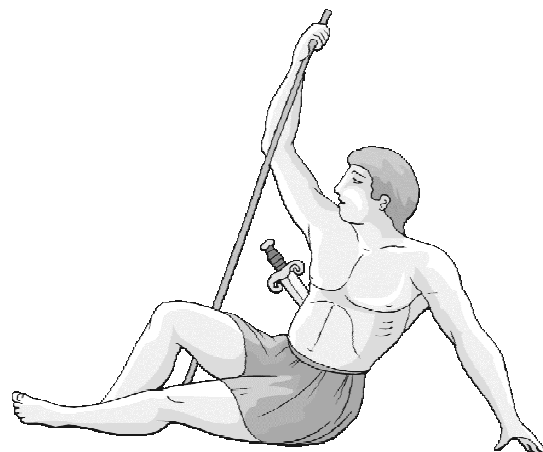
## Magicians and Concentration

Why shouldn't a powerful or strong-minded magician be able to maintain his concentration *in spite of possible distractions*? Sure, in most such situations, a magician's concentration should be disrupted... but making this disruption *likely* rather than *automatic* could add an extra element of chance and drama to the use of magic powers during fast-and-furious scenes. So *HOW* exactly do you manage to break a magician's concentration?

The most obvious method seems to be direct physical injury : normally, any successful attack against a magician occurring while he prepares his magic should be enough to break his concentration and abort the whole operation... but magicians with a superior Will should be given a chance to succeed *despite* the pain. The easiest way to reflect this idea in game terms is to decide that an attack has to inflict more Hits of damage than the magician's Will bonus to break his concentration.

Thus, a magician with a Will of 13 or 14 (Will bonus +1) will be able to retain his concentration if he suffers only 1 Hit of damage, but it would take at least 5 Hits of damage in a single attack to break the concentration of a magician with a Will of 19 or 20 (Will bonus +4).

The main exception to this rule should be surprise attacks, which (if successful) should *always* break a magician's concentration, regardless of how much damage they do.



*This Elementalist volunteered to playtest the new rules on injuries and concentration*

In the case of magical operations which require a magician to maintain his concentration over several rounds (such as the various *Songs* of Lyrist, who often have to play for a whole minute before their magic takes effect), possible interruptions may also include magical distractions - such as, say, the *Nature's Seduction* of Nymphs or the *Swirling Winds* of an Air Elementalist : in such cases, magicians who fail their saving roll against the distracting magical effect will automatically lose their concentration, while those who successfully resist the attack will remain focused if they made their saving roll by at least 5 points.

If, for instance, a Sorceress wants to keep a victim under her Compelling while attacked by an enemy Sorcerer's Psychic Attack with a Mystic Strength of 17, she will have to roll a total of at least 22 on her Mystic Fortitude saving roll to resist the Psychic Attack and maintain her Compelling; if she rolls anything from 17 to 21, she will resist the attack but her concentration will have been broken.

But what about non-violent, non-magical distractions (you know, things like trying to break the magician's concentration by making loud noises, silly gestures etc) ? Well, frankly, such cheap tricks should simply *never* be allowed to work – so, yes, forget about interrupting a Lyrist's Song by shouting or singing "something else"), unless the Maze Master thinks the diversion would be enough to actually cause *surprise* in a combat situation.

Well, that's all, folks... for now ! Next time, we'll talk about Something Completely Different (*yeah, enough with trashing the rules...*). In the meantime, be sure to check my friend Igor A. Rivendell's article, which details some nifty optional and variant rules for that most enchanting of classes, the Lyrist.

Next time, we'll talk about multiclassing – or how to play a Barbarian-Thief-Lyrist (*nice try, Luke – Ed*)

Luke G. Reynard

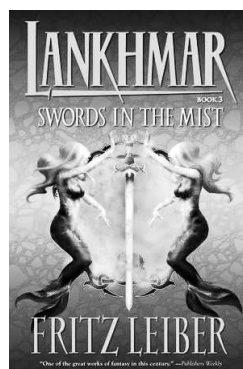
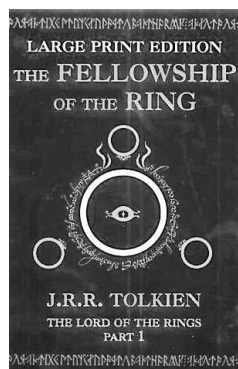
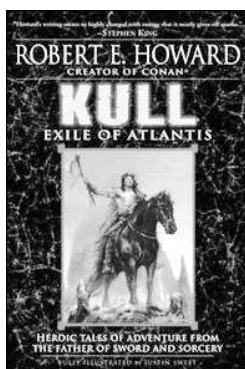


Each issue, **Griffin Archives** unearths an old Griffin article from the glorious 1980s

# THE ART OF MINOTAURIZATION

Or : How to Steal Ideas from Fantasy Classics to Build Unique *M&M* Campaigns

Our first issue's **Griffin Archives** presented an article called **Movies & Minotaurs**, which showed how easily popular epic movies (like *Star Wars*) could be transposed in the sword-and-sandal fantasy world of *Mythika*... so why not apply the same treatment to your favorite fantasy novels and cycles ? Here are four examples – four fantasy classics turned into not-so-classical campaign backgrounds for your favorite heroic adventure RPG.



## Barbarian King !

In Robert E. Howard's **King Kull** tales, a barbarian warrior from a primitive Atlantis has conquered the throne of the ancient, civilized, glorious but slightly decadent kingdom of Valusia.

While he has staunch supporters among nobles and commoners alike (not to mention an utterly loyal army and an even more loyal Pictish bodyguard), our barbarian king also has very determined enemies, including aristocratic conspirators, foreign monarchs, Serpent Folk and, of course, the arch-necromancer Thulsa Doom.

What would happen if a Barbarian warrior from Hyperborea was to conquer the throne of the decadent but still powerful kingdom, such as Umbria or even a post-war Thena ?

Such an unusual monarch would surely need a band of brave adventurers (perhaps his former adventuring comrades ?) at his service to help him guard his kingdom against conspiring Nobles, Sorcerers and other menaces – including, perhaps, the rebirth of some secret Serpent cult, rising from the forgotten past of the city or kingdom (BTW see the *Mythika Gazetteer* in issue 2 for a possible Thena / Serpent connection).

Wouldn't this make a great campaign, full of danger, intrigue, dark sorcery and bloody battles behind palace walls ? Of course, giving the role of the king to a Barbarian player-character could only make things more interesting...

And just like the Kull stories, such scenarios could also include some philosophical interrogations about the meaning of life and death (or freedom and power), usually before (or after) a fast-and-furious scene of good old-fashioned heroic bloodshed.

## War of the Amulet !

In J.R.R. Tolkien's **Lord of the Rings**, the evil overlord Sauron attempts to extend his dark sovereignty over all Middle Earth, with hordes of vile Orcs, Trolls and even a solitary Balrog – not to mention those damn Ringwraiths.

The story involves an epic quest to destroy the One Ring, Sauron's master artifact of power, before he can recover it. The heroes come from the various Free People who bravely oppose Sauron's rule – Elves, Dwarves, Hobbits and, of course, Men... well, I guess I can stop here. Simply replace the various key elements of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy with appropriate Mythikan counterparts and *voilà* !

Let's start with the bad guys. Replace the southern, evil kingdom of Mordor by the southern, evil kingdom of Stygia, turn the Ringwraiths into Stygian Lords (just look at their illustration in the *Creature Compendium*...), the Orcs into various Beastmen and the Trolls into Cyclops and other Giant-kins...

And who would be Sauron ? Well, who could fill the role of a dark overlord of treachery and corruption better than the jackal / serpent god Set, who is *obviously* be the ruling divine power of Stygia ?

As for the Rings of Power themselves, amulets will probably fit better within a sword-and-sandal paradigm – hence our “*War of the Amulets*” title.

And what about the good guys ? Well, Mythika's Free People would of course include civilized humans from the Three Cities, Barbarians from Hyperborea, Amazons, Centaurs... On the magical side of things, Priests, Nymphs, Lyrists as well as Elementalists could all find a place in a Fellowship (no, let's call it a Sodality) of the Amulet.

## City of Thieves !

In Fritz Leiber's **Lankhmar** tales, we follow the adventures (and misadventures) of Fafhrd the barbarian and the Gray Mouser, two heroic rogues, swordsmen and womanizers. Although they often wander across the world of Nehwon in search of adventure, their footsteps always bring them back to the great megalopolis of Lankhmar, queen of all fantasy cities and home to the most famous Thieves Guild in *sword and sorcery* fiction.

Full of heroic bravado and picaresque flair, the adventures (and misadventures) of Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser sometimes take a darker, almost tragic flavor as our heroes fight Death itself or try to gain “the price of forgetfulness”...

Where would Mythika's counterpart of Lankhmar be located ? Where else than in fabled, cosmopolitan, Kandaria ? As the main eastern port of the Middle Sea (and the main gateway to the exotic Land of the Sun), this city of thieves, merchants and wonders has an unparalleled potential for urban adventuring, magical intrigue and swashbuckling action.

Like Leiber's Lankhmar, Mythika's own City of Thieves probably host temples devoted to deities from all around Mythika, from the familiar Olympians to Mithras, Isis or Assur, and be home to decadent aristocrats, ancient criminal societies in the style of Lankhmar's Thieves Guild or Slayers Brotherhood, decadent nobles, unforgettable women and, of course, a few mysterious Sorcerers in the style of Sheelba of the Eyeless Face and Ningauble of the Seven Eyes, the two not-so-human wizards who act as occasional mentors of Fafhrd and the Mouser...

## Beastmen Empire !

In Michael Moorcock's **History of the Runestaff** cycle, a post-apocalyptic Europe is invaded by the Reich-like Dark Empire of Granbretan and its hordes of beast-masked warlords and soldiers, with the help of sinister sorcerers-scientists.

Only a handful valiant heroes, including the valorous Duke Dorian Hawkmoon of Köln, dares to defy the despotic and perverse rule of the Granbretons, helped in their quests, battles and tribulations by the mysterious higher power of the Runestaff...



*Forging New Campaigns from Old Books*

Let's get back to Mythika... and let's imagine the various tribes of Beastmen (you know - Bearmen, Boarmen, Tragos and other usual spear-fodder) have united to form a horde so powerful that no human army can resist them. Cities are captured, sacked and destroyed. Kingdoms fall, heroes die and, soon, the whole Minean continent lives under the dominion of the dark Beastmen Empire... but a few valiant adventurers refuse to bow down before the beast-headed brutes : proud Nobles and stalwart Spearmen from fallen cities, undaunted Barbarians and Amazons from, the last surviving Centaurs and, well, you get the idea.

The Beastmen are, of course, helped by some evil Sorcerers who have them actively hunting down other practitioners of magic – Priests, Lyrists, Nymphs, Elementalists and free-thinking Sorcerers - so every type of characters could conceivably join the fight against the Beastmen Empire (including Thieves and Hunters, as heroes of the common folk), under the protection of a higher power – not the Runestaff but, of course, the Gods themselves.

And just like Moorcock's Granbretan is ruled by a deathless, globe-encysted emperor of tremendous power, the Beastmen Empire could also be led by some unseen, sinister force...

## Mixing the Remixes

Another fun thing to do is to mix elements from two (or more) different sources into a single campaign background. See next page for three examples of such crossovers, based on the four campaign concepts presented in this article...

## Three Megamix Campaigns

### Lord of the Beasts

This idea combines the **War of the Amulets** and **Beastmen Empire** concepts - yes, this means that we are going to mix elements from *The Lord of the Rings* and *Hawkmoon*.

This is actually quite an easy thing to do, since both cycles involve free people trying to defend the world against the dark hordes of an evil empire. Simply make our Sauron-like Set of Stygia the true power behind the Beastmen Empire (after all, he too has an animal head), with affiliated Sorcerers and Stygian Lords and *voilà*... again !

### His Majesty's Rogues

This idea combines our two other concepts, **City of Thieves** and **Barbarian King**.

Simply apply the "Barbarian becomes king" concept to the cosmopolitan city of Kandaria and have your heroes rise in prestige and reputation with the local criminal guilds, merchant houses and noble factions by performing all sorts of daring burglaries, secret missions and adventurous expeditions before they are recruited by the king himself to become his trusted agents and troubleshooters !

### The Ultimate Crossover Epic

Let's now try to combine our four concepts (yes, all four of them !) into a grand patchwork-like tapestry of heroic action and adventure ! Once again, this is actually easier than it may seem at first...

A former Barbarian adventurer conquers the throne of an ancient civilized kingdom on the verge of decadence, with a cosmopolitan "city of wonders" as its capital...

And since the new king does not belong to one of the various political factions, he has to recruit his most trusted agents among the adventurers, rogues and other fortune seekers of the local megalopolis.

During one of their covert missions, these "King's Adventurers" discover the existence of a secret Serpent cult with ties to faraway Stygia and its dark overlord, the evil god Set and soon, rumors of tribes of Beastmen starting to unite into a great horde begin to reach the bordering states.

Will the **Barbarian King** and his loyal agents from the **City of Thieves** manage to defeat the **Master of the Amulets** and his **Beastmen Empire** ?

Only your Maze Master knows the answer !

Olivier Legrand

## Dear Minotaur



Dear Editor,

*I've just finished reading your (otherwise brilliant) third issue and I feel compelled to express my feeling of disgruntled exasperation after reading Danielle R. Virgo's alternate version of the Amazon class – the so-called "liberated version" which does away with all the classic features that true Mazes & Minotaurs gamers have come to love, such as high Grace scores, chainmail bikinis and bare-breasted archery – well I, for one, happen to LIKE such "sexist clichés" and find Miss Virgo's "variant" as tasteless as it is pointless. Besides, what do women actually KNOW about RPGs ? Surely Miss Virgo's time would be better employed with other, more feminine pastimes, such as cooking, aerobics or (if she has a more artistic temper) flower arranging. I mean, if we don't draw a line, what will come next ? Female Barbarians ? Replacement of our beloved Playnymph with a gossip column ? Come on guys, we've got to stand united on this ! Shield wall !*

Steven Hanson, New York (NY)

Dear Steven,

*Thanks for expressing your opinion on our Letters page. Everyone is entitled to have one, after all. Besides, your letter is the only one we've received since last issue, so I guess we really had to include it. Since we cannot speak for miss Virgo herself, we have transmitted your letter to her and she has kindly accepted to reply on this very page, thereby giving us a wonderful opportunity to expand this fascinating column beyond its usual single letter from Steven Hanson (New York). Here is her reply :*

Dear Mr Hanson,

*For the record, I am actually working on an article on the fine art of flower arranging in Mythika – just kidding, of course, you pathetic sexist dork. Guys like you are the very raison d'être of my Liberated Amazons. I suggest you try to get a life or, should this fail, try to squeeze into a chainmail bikini yourself and try to be next issue's Playnymph.*

Danielle R. Virgo

*At last - our own very first pointless controversy, coming to life before our very eyes... Wow ! We are so turning into a real RPG magazine !*



# OFFICIAL ORACLE

**Official Oracle** is a new semi-regular department offering answers to questions about the **Mazes & Minotaurs** game rules and how these rules can be interpreted in special situations or applied to topics which are not explicitly covered in the various M&M rulebooks. As its title implies, all the answers given in this column can be treated as official rulings (if such things really matter to your gaming group) This issue, we take a look at two rather unorthodox fighting techniques which were overlooked in the rules - knife throwing and staff fighting. **O.L.**

## Knife Throwing

*The Players Manual mentions that Thieves can select the thrown knife as their Weapon of Choice but the rules on missile weapons do not contain any information about knife throwing. What is the range of a thrown knife ?*

*Also, if the damage of a thrown dagger is the same as in melee (1D3, unless used for a sneak attack - but thrown weapons can't be used for sneak attacks, can they ?), what would be the point of taking the thrown knife as Weapon of Choice as opposed to, say, the sling ?*

Did we forget to cover thrown knives in the rules about missile weapons ? Oops...

First of all, a throwing knife is not the same thing as a dagger. As far as melee and sneak attacks are concerned, knives, daggers, poniards and other similar weapons all share the same characteristics (1D3 damage in combat, 1D6 for sneak attacks) but only knives which have been specifically balanced for throwing can be used as missile weapons. If you try this with your usual, standard dagger, then the attack will simply fail. Knives specifically balanced for throwing should cost 20 silver pieces (as opposed to 15 sp for a standard dagger).

Throwing a knife requires a lot of Skill. In game terms, only characters with a Skill of 13 or more (ie with a Skill modifier of at least +1) will be able to use such a weapon. Thieves with a Skill of 13+ who select the thrown knife as their Weapon of Choice will benefit from the usual advantage of rolling two D20s when attacking and keeping the highest roll.

A well-aimed thrown knife can be as deadly as any javelin; damage from a thrown knife should be 1D6 (not 1D3). The biggest disadvantage of the thrown knife (in addition to being a "one-shot" weapon) is its limited range. A thrown knife has an effective range of 20'. Unlike other missile weapons, it does not receive any short range attack bonus but can be used at long range as per the usual rules (with a -2 attack penalty and a maximum range of 40').

You are correct in assuming that missile weapons can't be used to make "sneak attacks" (as implied in the *Players Manual*, p 25) or, to put it correctly, that "missile sneak attacks" don't get any special attack bonus or extra advantage (apart from the intrinsic advantage of sneakiness).

## Staff Fighting

*The M&M rules say nothing about using staves as weapons. It does seem unlikely that a staff should do the same amount of damage as a true battle weapon, so which rules should we apply the next time our Sorcerer wants to use his Staff of Command as an emergency melee weapon ?*

*Also, shouldn't staff-fighting exist as a special melee technique ?*

A quarterstaff used as a weapon will inflict 1D6 Hits of *subdual* damage (as per pugilism) rather than real combat damage – unlike pugilistic damage, however, this damage will not be affected by the attacker's Might mod.

In addition, characters fighting with a staff can use the following special melee tactics, provided they meet their specific requirements : *Weapon Parry* (*Players Manual* p 24, requires a Skill 13+), *Disarming* (*M&M Companion*, p 14, requires a Skill of 13+) and *Double Attack* (*M&M Companion*, p 14, requires a Melee bonus of at least +4).

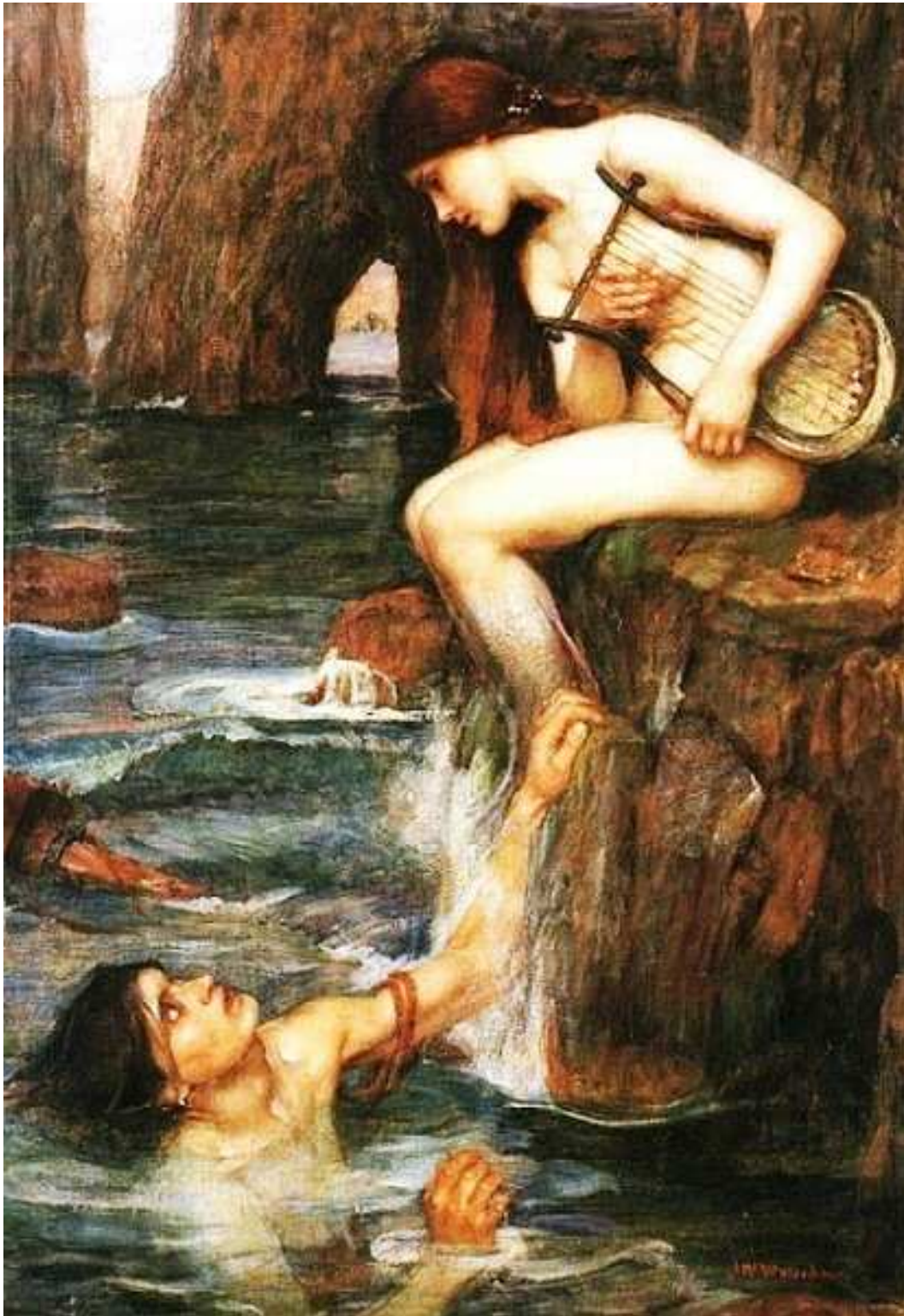
Staff-fighting characters can also use a special *Trip* maneuver, which works exactly like a *Bashing* attack (*M&M Companion*, p 14), except that it also requires a Skill of 13+.

For all their advantages, staves as weapons also have quite a few serious limitations. First, they are only effective against Medium-sized (or smaller) opponents; striking a Large creature (or a Gigantic one, for that matter) with a staff will simply have no effect and attempting to parry a Cyclops' enormous club with a staff will simply result in its breakage, which leads us to the next big drawback of staves – they are far easier to break than real weapons.

Whenever a staff is successfully used to parry an attack made by a battle weapon, roll a damage die as if the attack had struck home (adding any damage bonus for class, mythic items etc); if the final damage roll is 5 or more, the staff is shattered and can no longer be used as a process. Lastly, the *Weapon Parry* and *Disarming* special maneuvers are completely ineffective against opponents armed with spears (remember that, in M&M, spears rule !).

Only a Thief may select the staff as his *Weapon of Choice* (but this is quite unlikely among adventurers, considering the existence of daggers and slings).

# Minotaur Play Nymph n°4



*THE SIREN, by John W. Waterhouse*