

Issue 6

Fall 2009

MINOTAUR

The Official, Irregular Webzine of the [Mazes & Minotaurs](#) Revival

Double-Sized, Triple-Themed Issue !



HEROES, HORRORS & HYPERBOREA

Two Adventures, Official Background Material, New Creatures & Mythic Items, Optional Rules, Ideas for Maze Masters and more !



MINOTAUR n°6

A Word from the Editor

Heroes, Horrors & Hyperborea

Greetings, adventurous readers, and welcome to the sixth issue of the **Minotaur** !

After our highly focused Desert Kingdom special, we felt it would be a good idea to place this new issue under the blessing of Multifaria, the gaming goddess of variety – in other words, this issue contains a little bit of everything for everybody. That being said, most of this stuff can actually be grouped into three broad categories, so we just couldn't resist making this issue a triple-themed one.

First, we have stuff about northern **Hyperborea**, the land of Barbarians, with a **Mythika Gazetteer** full of never-before-published background information and a few local nasties in our **Mythic Bestiary**.

In the **Horrors** department, we offer you **Temple of the Black Goat**, a scenario for low-level characters, a **Maze Master's Lore** column about the darker deities of Mythika and a jumbo-sized feature article on the art of **devising new creatures** for M&M.

This issue also explores some variant paths for **Heroes**, with a **Twist In the Maze** column detailing an alternate approach to character advancement and a **Griffin Archives** article detailing an optional Fate point system straight from the 90s.

As an extra offering to Multifaria, we also throw in a few odd pieces for good measure : an interview with **Carlos de la Cruz Morales**, the man behind the monumental *Tomb of the Bull King* mega-module, some bonus optional rules by our very own Luke G. Reynard, a **Pandora's Box** column full of various wondrous items and, of course, the **Play Nymph** !

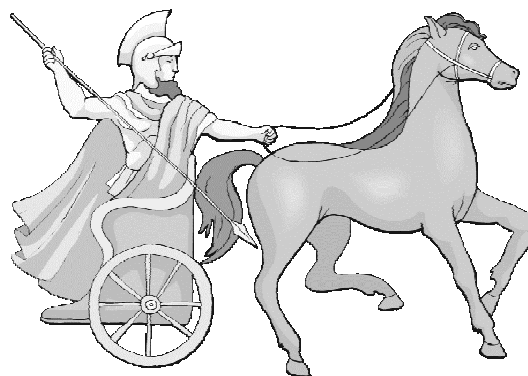
Lastly, we also bring you the second part of our epic Desert Kingdom adventure, **The Secret of Zerzura**, which will reach its thrilling conclusion in issue 7 !

Until then, may the goddess Multifaria watch over your adventurous expeditions and heroic odysseys !

Olivier Legrand (2009)



MINOTAUR MIRTH



- It's the new Lexos mini-coupé !

Random Encounter Table

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



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MYTHIKA GAZETTEER

HYPERBOREA

True and Verified Facts About the Barbarians of the Wild North

by Eurymion the Far-Travelled, Lyrist, Scholar and Adventurer

Translated by Olivier Legrand



North of the Land of the Three Cities, past the monster-infested **Helicon Mountains**, lies the frozen land of **Hyperborea**, home to fierce tribes of fur-clad, sun-worshipping Barbarians.

Maze Masters Guide, p 8

The Far North

The first thing to understand about Hyperborea is that it does not really exist.

There is no Hyperborean nation or culture. The very concept of Hyperborea is an abstraction invented by Minean scholars and explorers to put a single label on several very different tribal peoples who live north of the Minean lands ; as a name, Hyperborea (which can roughly be translated as « far north ») has no more cultural significance than other cartographic expressions of ethnocentrism, such as « terra incognita » or « the orient ».

This fact has not prevented most Minean scholars from treating the various Hyperborean peoples as a single nation of « barbarians » (another distinctive concept of ethnocentrism), despite the fact that the so-called Hyperborean tribes can be divided into at least three very different cultural groups, with different customs, different physical characteristics and even different deities...

The main reason for this over-simplistic classification is that those tribes share a common language, but anybody who has studied Borean knows that this « common language » actually includes many regional variations and dialects – far more than, say, our beloved Minean language.

Yet, those same scholars would cringe at the idea of Thenans, Heraklians, Argoseans and Seriphians being viewed as non-distinct components of a single, hypothetical Minean nation, even though they speak the same language, worship the same gods and have very similar customs : if we consider that the small cultural differences that exist between our four city-states are enough to give each one of them a distinct identity, then we must logically acknowledge the major differences that exist between the so-called « Hyperborean barbarians ».

In the course of my travels through the Hyperborean lands, I have come across three very different cultural groups, each with its own assortment of clans, tribes and warring factions : **Galleans**, **Cimbrians** and **Thuleans**.

It is very difficult to ascertain which of these three groups is the more numerous ; my own observations lead me to believe that they are roughly equivalent in population size but occupy very scattered settlements, making any form of demographic census practically impossible – not to mention the fact that none of these folks keeps anything remotely resembling archives or chronicles : they have no written language and have a very limited understanding of mathematics, making oral tradition the sole vector of knowledge transmission.

I will present these three groups in geographical order, from south to north. According to our civilized standards, the farther north you get, the more « barbaric » people become.



A typical summer afternoon in Hyperborea

Galleans

The territories which are closest to the Minean lands (roughly located between the Helicon mountains and the river Rhena) are under the control of the various **Gallean** tribes.

Most Mineans will be familiar with the typical appearance of Gallean warriors (which has in fact become the stereotype of all Hyperborean Barbarians) : tall, broad-shouldered men with long moustaches and braided hair, wearing strange leg-garments known as *trousers*, fight bare-chested and have an inordinate love of drink, songs and chariots.

Their hair color ranges from the palest blond to the darkest black and they often have green, grey or brown eyes. Their fair-skinned, long-haired women are renowned for their beauty - keep in mind, though, that the Gallean idea of beauty is quite different from our classical canons.

The gods of the Galleans may seem very different from our Olympian deities but actually share many common characteristics with them – most of the Gallean gods are anthropomorphic deities with recognizable spheres of influence (such as warfare, fertility, wisdom or even poetry) and are (more or less) organized into a fairly cohesive pantheon, known as the Tribe of Mother Earth (see *Gods of the Galleans* below for more details).



A young Cimbrian warrior charging into battle

Cimbrians

The lands north of the river Rhena are ruled by the **Cimbrians**, who are sworn enemies of the Galleans and regularly fight very bloody wars against them, as the Cimbrians try to expand their territory south of the river. The Cimbrians tend to be even taller and more massively built than the Galleans, with fair hair and grey or blue eyes.

Unlike Galleans, Cimbrians do not wear trousers, leave their hair unbraided and often display long, unkempt beards which they adorn with gold rings, knucklebones and other trinkets. While the Galleans tend to fight with sword or spear, Cimbrian warriors almost always select the sword or axe as their weapon of choice – and Cimbrian battle axes are big, nasty things which have very little in common with what a Minean soldier would call an axe.

On the whole, Cimbrians tend to be even more warlike than Galleans and seem to be obsessed with expanding their lands « south of the river ».

The gods of the Cimbrians are far more primitive and primal than the Gallean deities (who would already seem astoundingly « barbaric » to the average Minean) – in fact, « god » is a misleading term here, since the Cimbrians' deities include the forces of nature themselves (such as Thunder, the Sun, the Moon, Winter etc), what can only be called « animal archetypes » (such as the Wolf or the Bear) or even *places* (such as the Great Hyperborean Forest or the river Rhena).

Thuleans

The third group, the **Thuleans**, can be found farther north, in the mountains of the Thulean Range and west of the Frozen Sea ; they are very rarely seen south of the Great Hyperborean Forest.

Physically, the Thuleans are very close to the Cimbrians (and are often mistaken for them by foreign observers) but their hair are often of a fiery red, which has earned them the nickname of *Redheads* among the Cimbrians.

Thuleans also share many cultural traits with the Cimbrians – indeed, an ancient Cimbrians myth describes the Cimbrians and the Thuleans as 'two feuding twin brothers'. Despite these similarities (or perhaps because of them ?), the two cultural groups are very hostile to each other and often refer to themselves as 'blood enemies'.

That being said, there are some significant differences between Thuleans and Cimbrians, especially where religion (I use the term loosely) is concerned ; whereas the Cimbrians worship the forces of nature in a very primal (and surprisingly abstract) manner, the Thuleans have a single, supreme god : Ymir, who is, according to their myths, the King of Winter, the Father of all Giants and (of course) the distant progenitor of the Thulean nation – which is why many Thuleans refer to themselves as being « giant-blooded ».

The Land

The Hyperborean lands are defined by three very important natural borders : the Helicon Mountains, which mark the border between the Gallean territories and the Minean nations, the river Rhena, which separates the Gallean and the Cimbrian territories, and the Great Hyperborean Forest which acts as a natural frontier between Cimbrian and Thulean lands.

The River Rhena

The river Rhena acts as the perennial natural border between the two « nations » - again, I use the term very loosely, since both Galleans and Cimbrians are divided into many fractious, often rival clans which can only be united by the strongest, most ambitious warlords... and fortunately for Minean civilization, Galleans and Cimbrians have never united their forces : if such a thing happens one day, it will be a matter of generations before the Three Cities fall before the savage might of the wild north...

But let's get back to the river Rhena itself : to the Cimbrians, the river Rhena is not just a river but a *living goddess*. Indeed, the river is home to a clan of northern Naiads known as the Daughters of Rhena, who act as the sacred protectors of the river and the whole region.



An invincible force of proud Gallean warriors rafting across the River Rhena

The Great Hyperborean Forest

The **Great Hyperborean Forest** is not only a perilous forest full of dangerous creatures and ancient nature spirits. It is also a *sacred site*, at least to the Cimbrians, who view it as a border to the Land of the Dead, which is why even the bravest Cimbrian warriors will simply refuse to venture in the very heart of the forest, not because they are afraid (never even *suggest* this before a Cimbrian) but because *no living man should willingly enter the land of the dead*. Those who transgress this sacred rule are believed to become half-dead beings known as *Wights*, who sneak back into the world of the living to spread discord, strife and death.

The outer parts of the Forest are home to a clan of northern Dryads, the Huldres, who act as the sacred wardens of the woods and seem to have quite a lasting rivalry with the Daughters of Rhena.

Society

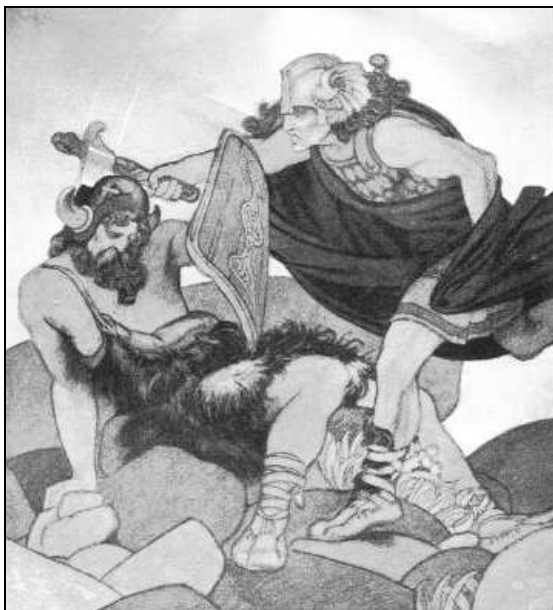
The social structure of Cimbrians and Thuleans is, to say the least, quite rudimentary: all free men are warriors and all warriors are free men. The only people who do not belong to this category are women, slaves and children; in most tribes, male children are considered to be grown men around the age of 13. As in Minean society, women have strictly domestic roles and slaves are, well, slaves.

There are no professional traders or craftsmen among the Hyperboreans: blacksmiths, carpenters and other essential artisans are simply warriors who also happen to possess craft skills which they use in the service of their tribe in times of peace.

Each tribe is ruled by a king – but don't be fooled by the royal title: most of these tribal kings are little more than village chieftains. In most tribes, kingship seems to be a hereditary privilege, inherited through the male bloodline but other modes of succession, (including election, designation by Druids and single combat to the death) certainly exist.

Galleans follow this tribal organization too but have a slightly more complex social structure, since their society also includes what we might view as a form of priesthood, whose members, the Druids, are held in the highest respect by their fellow tribesmen, including the kings themselves. The largest Gallean communities also have a few Lyrists (known as *Bards*), who are also held in the highest regard; they act as storytellers, poets, musicians and keepers of tribal history – which is an especially important role in a culture which has never possessed any true form of written language.

The greater « cultural sophistication » of the Gallean people (again, I use the term loosely, since we are talking about *Barbarians* here) is also reflected in their pantheon of deities, who do show an intriguing resemblance to some of the true gods (see below).



A political argument, Hyperborean style

Lastly, it should be noted that a small proportion of Gallean Druids and Bards are « druidesses » and « bardesses » and that Gallean women (especially those of royal blood) are sometimes treated with a degree of respect and devotion unknown among the brutish Cimbrians and Thuleans, probably because of the influence of Bardic songs and poetry, which often celebrates feminine grace and also includes quite a few tragic love tales.

Culture

To Galleans, Cimbrians and Thuleans, battle is everything ; it is in war that a man finds the best opportunities to assert his personal strength, be in the form of physical might, moral resolve or both.

Indeed, might and will are a Hyperborean warrior's most important qualities. They have little interest (or regard) for things like strategy, troop formations or military leadership : they do not have « armies » as we understand them, but hordes of howling, savage warriors (some of them even fight completely naked) that pour on the battlefield like waves of rage and blood... Ah, I guess I'm getting a little too poetic, here...

Speaking of poetic metaphors, a Gallean Bard once told me that Hyperborean warriors fight like wolves and this image may actually be more meaningful than it first appears : a lone Hyperborean warrior certainly fights like a savage lone wolf and a Hyperborean warlord's command of his warriors is indeed very close to the instinctive, animal authority of a pack leader over the other wolves and among the Cimbrians and Thuleans, this authority can indeed be challenged in exactly the same way as in pack of wolves, by single combat (which is one of the reasons why most Hyperborean kings treat their warriors with extreme largesse).

Despite some deep cultural differences, Galleans, Cimbrians and Thuleans have very similar visions of man, life and the world in general. They value courage, honor and loyalty above all things ; in Hyperborea, traitors, cowards and oathbreakers are more hated and

loathed than one's actual enemies. They believe that one man's word is his bond and that a man's honor (or dishonor) is also shared by his kinsmen.

Family and blood are of extreme importance to them ; indeed, no Hyperborean will ever completely trust a man who has no family or who does not know who his ancestors were. Their deep-seated sense of honor also tends to make them immensely proud, overbearing and quick to take a slight or pick a fight... but it also makes them utterly loyal to their kinsmen and friends.

Aside from unfailing courage in battle, the most important quality a king is expected to display is not political acumen (luckily for their civilized neighbors...) or even common sense but generosity, in the forms of largesse (gifts, boons, spoils of war etc) and hospitality (feasting, drinking, more drinking etc).

Because they do not keep written records and rely entirely on oral tradition, Hyperboreans have no concept of history as we understand it. Their Druids do not see time as a line but as a circle (and can be represented by various circular symbols, such as a ring or a serpent) : events repeat themselves in a cyclic (but often quite obscure) manner, which (of course) can only be correctly interpreted by Druids and it is only by observing the hidden patterns of the past that the future may be foretold – which probably explains the Galleans' obsession with *patterns* of all sorts (be it in crafts, poetry or destiny) and the extreme importance of genealogy (as opposed to history), which study is another prerogative of Druids and Bards.

Myths

Each of the three Hyperborean cultural groups has its own founding myth.

As mentioned above, the Thuleans believe themselves to be the mortal descendants of Ymir, the first Giant (exactly *how* their gigantic progenitor could actually impregnate a mortal, human woman is better left to the imagination). This mythic tale is almost certainly a fabrication but may actually conceal a small measure of truth, since the northern reaches of Hyperborea are also home to a race of half-giants known as the *Giant-Kings*, who are viewed with great awe by the Thuleans ; perhaps some of these Giant-Kings mingled with some mortal women (probably of Cimbrian stock, which would explain the many similarities between the two cultures) during the Age of Myth, giving birth to the Thulean race as well as to the whole Ymir legend.

The founding myth of the Cimbrians is at the same time more prosaic and more mysterious : Cimbrians believe their ancestors were the children of *Father Sky* - also known in Borean as Crom (« thunder ») or Wota (« storm ») - and *Mother Earth*, often identified with the Great Hyperborean Forest itself.

Galleans have a much more complex (and quite cryptic) founding myth – involving Mother Earth, the Sun and the Moon, some sort of gigantic Serpent and a « Cosmic Egg » which, depending on which Druid you talk to, might represent anything from the world itself to the womb of each woman or some sort of magical cauldron tied to the cycles of life.

Giant Kings & Dwimmerlaiks

During the Age of Myth, a small clan of supernatural beings known as the Giant Kings fell from the stars in the northern parts of Hyperborea. Despite what their name may suggest, these beings are not true Giants but Large-sized, pale humanoids with sorcerous psychic powers. Soon after their arrival, they started building five great cities, whose names have now been lost in the mists of time, all located in the farthest reaches of Hyperborea.

They easily inspired awe in the local barbarian tribes, the ancestors of the present-day Thuleans, who soon treated them as living gods and became their mortal vassals and servitors. To the Thuleans of that time, the Giant-Kings were the "Children of Ymir"; according to Thulean lore, Ymir was the name of some primordial Giant but perhaps it was simply the name of the star from which the so-called Giant-Kings had fallen...

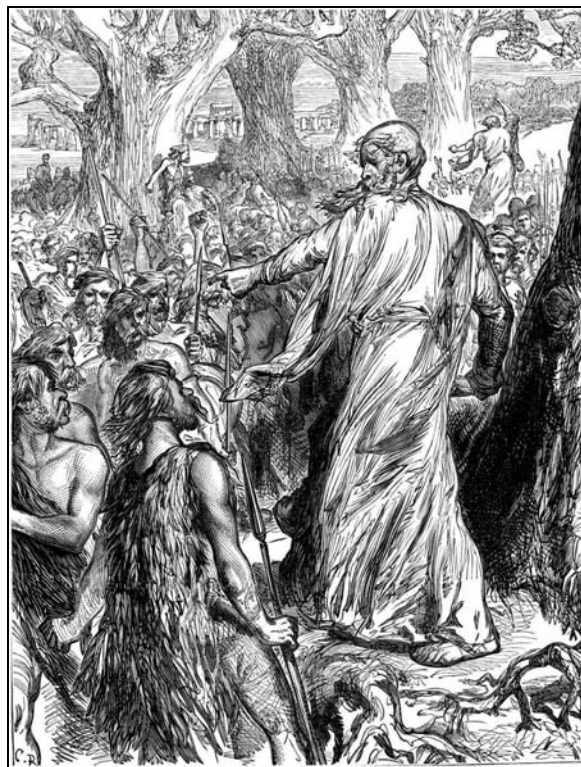
During centuries (perhaps even millennia), the Giant-Kings ruled over their small but mighty empire as the undisputed masters of the northernmost parts of Hyperborea. Then, during the Age of Magic, the supremacy of the Giant-Kings was challenged by a powerful alliance of undead Autarch sorcerers known as the Witch-Kings or Dwimmerlaiks. With the help of their dark sorcery, a few unique artefacts and legions of undead warriors known as Wights, the Dwimmerlaiks obliterated the civilization of the Giant-Kings in a matter of decades.

After the downfall of the Giant-Kings, Hyperborea fell under the dominion of the Dwimmerlaiks, who had established their own Dark Kingdom in the heart of the Great Hyperborean Forest. Toward the end of the Age of Magic, the Witch-Kings themselves were finally defeated by an alliance of Thulean, Cimbrian and Gallean heroes led by the legendary warrior Corma, who was of mixed Gallean / Cimbrian stock and later attempted to unite all the Hyperborean tribes under his own "high kingship", only to be treacherously murdered by a mysterious assassin, who still remains unidentified to this day – the Gallean bards often say that the "great dream of the North" (Hyperborean unity) died with Corma.

Nowadays, the glory of the Giant-Kings has sunk into oblivion and only survives in a garbled form in a few obscure Thulean tales about the great giant Ymir and his children, the Giant-Kings. The ruins of their Five Nameless Cities still exist in the northern reaches of Hyperborea, beyond the territories of the Thulean tribes and may still be inhabited by a few degenerate remnants of the Giant-King race.

As for the Dwimmerlaiks, their Dark Kingdom no longer exists but the last members of their undead order may still be encountered in the darker depths of the Great Hyperborean Forest...

See this issue's *Mythic Bestiary* for more details about Dwimmerlaiks, Wights and Giant-Kings.



A Druid blessing warriors before battle

The Gallean Pantheon

As mentioned above, the Galleans have a pantheon of deities which is not entirely unlike that of the true Olympian gods ; indeed, most scholars seem to agree on the opinion that most of these so-called barbarian gods are actually Olympians in disguise.

There are many strong elements in favor of this hypothesis : the similarities between some of the Hyperborean deities and some Olympians (such as Zeus and Taranis or Apollo and Belenos) are obvious and uncontested and it is quite logical to think that gods and goddesses should assume forms that best suit the culture of their human worshippers – deities like the almighty Zeus or Apollo certainly have the power to appear as they wish to us mere mortals.

There are, however, a few problems with this theory ; the fact that some of the Olympians do not seem to have any homologue in the Hyperborean pantheon can easily be explained by various mythical and cultural factors but there are also a few Hyperborean gods who really *cannot* be interpreted as Olympian alter egos – which is quite unsettling if you consider (like most sensible, cultured persons do) the Olympians to be the only true gods in existence, since it brings forth various metaphysical questions such as : if Taranis is in fact Zeus, who in Hades is the sinister Gallean war goddess known as the Morrigan ? And if this entity does exist, how can true Olympian gods accept to be associated with them in the same pantheon ?

There are of course some possible (but purely hypothetical) explanations and I have included some of these fascinating theories in my description of these « rogue » Gallean gods (see below)... but the truth of the matter will probably remain a mystery, simply because the gods of the Hyperboreans (unlike the

Olympians) *never* manifest themselves *in person* (with the possible exceptions of the Horned God and the Morrigan), a fact which has of course given rise to all sorts of scholarly speculations.

The only major Olympian male god that does not seem to have a Gallean homologue is Ares. Oddly enough, the Gallean pantheon does not have a male war god ; instead, this niche is filled by the sinister goddess known as the Morrigan (see below). Neither Hera nor Artemis seems to have a Gallean equivalent, which is not as odd as it may seem at first, since the Galleans' view of women does not really leave much room for jealous, scheming wives or for Amazon role models.

While these mythological similarities and scholarly speculations are certainly fascinating, they should not make us forget that the Galleans' understanding of religion is *very* different from our classic Minean worldview : the gods of the Gallean pantheon do not have individual priesthoods and are served as a collective entity by the Druids – this alone drastically changes the way men interact with gods (and, conversely, the way gods interact with men, too).

Taranis

This majestic, lightning-wielding god of storms is an obvious local equivalent of Zeus. It should be noted, however, that he is not perceived as the supreme ruler of the gods but as one of the three god-kings, along with Belenos and Lyr.

Belenos

This bright solar god is clearly the local form of Apollo ; like him, he is also associated with poetry and skill. Although often described as the supreme god of Hyperboreans by Minean scholars, Belenos is just one of the three god-kings of the Gallean pantheon, along with the more tempestuous Taranis and Lyr – but the bright, triumphant sun god does seem to be the most popular member of the kingly triad.

Lyr

This mighty, wrathful sea-god is clearly Poseidon under another name. Although he is recognized as one of the three god-kings of the Gallean pantheon, he rarely receives any form of active worship, the sea being seen by most Hyperboreans (including Druids) as a hostile territory well outside the dominion of man.

Ogmios

This god of learning, eloquence and wisdom shares quite a few traits with the Olympian Hermes but is usually depicted as an old crafty sage rather than as a dashing, wing-footed athlete.

Gobannon

The smith god of the Gallean pantheon is clearly Hephaestos under another name. It should be noted, however, that he does not appear to have a lame leg or any other form of physical disability.



The Horned God (aka the Hyperborean Dionysos)

The Horned God

This savage, stag-horned god presides over the wilder and darker aspects of nature (including madness and wild sex) and also appears to be a trickster god (albeit a dark and primitive one), making him a very probable candidate for the Hyperborean incarnation of Dionysos.

Dagda

This enigmatic hooded god appears to rule over the Underworld and the darker mysteries of life and death, making him a very probable equivalent of Hades. He is sometimes known as the *Druid God*.

Danu

This earth-mother goddess plays a major role in the various myths of the Galleans ; she clearly appears to be the Hyperborean equivalent of Demeter but is sometimes described as being the mother of Taranis and other deities, which would take us in the direction of Rhea, the ancient titan-goddess mother of Zeus.

Belisama

This graceful goddess is associated with skill and wisdom, making her an obvious equivalent of Athena... but Belisama is also associated with hearthfire, domestic life and « womanly duties », which clearly correspond to the sphere of influence of Hestia, as well as with love and feminine beauty, which would make her the obvious local homologue of Aphrodite...

Indeed, Belisama is often referred as « the triple goddess » and depicted as a triad of young women, which does seem to suggest that Belisama is actually some sort of « collective guise » shared by the three Olympian goddesses.

Morrigan

This goddess of war, death and carnage is usually depicted as a very ugly woman armed with a spear. As the bloodthirsty queen of the battlefield, she is also associated with crows.

Many wild theories have been concocted about the true identity of this goddess – some scholars have even suggested that she could actually be a *female* aspect of the strangely absent Ares (never even *hint* at such a theory in the presence of a true Ares devotee).

The most probable explanation is that the Morrigan is actually a « barbarian daughter » of Ares, forever exiled (or barred) from Olympus because of her excessive bloodlust and left in charge of the « wild north » by her warlike father.

Life, Death & Fate

The way Hyperboreans envision concepts like fate and afterlife may seem quite hazy and confusing by our more « civilized » standards.

They acknowledge the existence of destiny (as a cosmic and as a personal force) but have no real concept of *fortune* as we understand it ; they seem to believe that a man's fate is cast from the moment of his birth (and even before that).

And yet they also think that strong-willed individuals are able to *make their own fate*, which is not as contradictory as it might seem to the mind of a Thenan Philosopher : for those northern barbarians, a man's life is a constant battle between his own willpower and the (often hostile) forces of destiny and it is at a moment of a man's death that Druids will be able to tell whether this battle was won or lost, by examining his deeds and accomplishments as well as the circumstances of his death and, in some cases, various omens that may have occurred during his life.

If the dead man is declared the victor, his spirit will either journey to some weird otherworld or be reborn in a newborn baby's body (different tribes seem to have different and often quite nebulous beliefs about afterlife) and his name will be celebrated by the Bards in their song and tales ; if, on the other hand, the dead man was « defeated by fate », his name will only be remembered by his those who knew him in life and his spirit will apparently dissolve into the mysterious, impersonal forces of destiny.

This vision of life and death can of course be interpreted as a mythical metaphor of man's struggle for survival in a natural environment as savage and harsh as Hyperborea but it also emphasizes two fascinating aspects of Hyperborean culture : the role of Druids as judges of the living and the dead and the importance of personal renown (be it a warrior's glory or a sage's reputation for wisdom) – not only as a social asset but as a vital, mystical force that defines the very fate of a person's spirit after death.

Olivier Legrand (2009)

The Blue Men The Barbarians' Barbarians



In the Bones of War mountains, west of the Great Hyperborean Forest lives a fearsome folk of howling savages known to the Hyperboreans as the Blue Men, not because they have blue skins but because they cover their bodies with blue war paints in the shape of spirals, serpents and other strange patterns. They sometimes come down from their mountainous enclaves to raid the westernmost parts of Hyperborea, especially the ones settled by the Galleans, who view the Blue Men to be their most irreducible enemies.

Little is known about the customs of the Blue Men; they speak a strange, guttural language which no human throat can manage and they appear to worship strange, loathsome, serpent-shaped "gods" known as the Worms of the Earth, to whom they routinely sacrifice human victims. One of the few certain facts known about the Blue Men is that they are anthropophagi – eaters of human flesh. This alone is enough to make the Blue Men odious and abhorrent to Hyperboreans who (despite what some misled or over-imaginative Minean scholars would have you believe) have the strongest taboo against cannibalism.

Even though they do look humans, as far as the Hyperboreans are concerned, the Blue Men are not humans but *beasts in human form* – which not only explains why they eat human flesh but also why the art of metallurgy seems to be completely unknown to them. According to most Hyperborean Druids, union between a Blue Man and a human (ie Hyperborean) woman can only produce monstrous, accursed half-breeds that cannot be allowed to live. The other way around (a Hyperborean mating with a Blue Woman) is simply taboo – and for all that the Hyperboreans know, Blue Women may not even exist. According to another belief, the Blue Men are a degenerate race of humans with demon-tainted blood; they are also said to abduct Hyperborean children to replace them with their own spawn - warped, evil babies known as *changelings* – but this may simply be a 'bogeyman story' invented by Hyperborean mothers to scare their unruly children ("Be quiet or the Blue Men will get you !"). Or perhaps the truth is both simpler and uglier and the Blue Men simply capture human children to eat them, because they are easier to carry away than full-grown adults.

See this issue's *Mythic Bestiary* for more details on those abominable painted savages.

TEMPLE OF THE BLACK GOAT

A *Revised Mazes & Minotaurs* mini-scenario for novice adventurers, by **Olivier Legrand**

Temple of the Black Goat is a short scenario for a small party of first level adventurers. It can easily be run in a single, 3 to 4 hour gaming session and can fit smoothly in any ongoing campaign.

An Auspicious Encounter

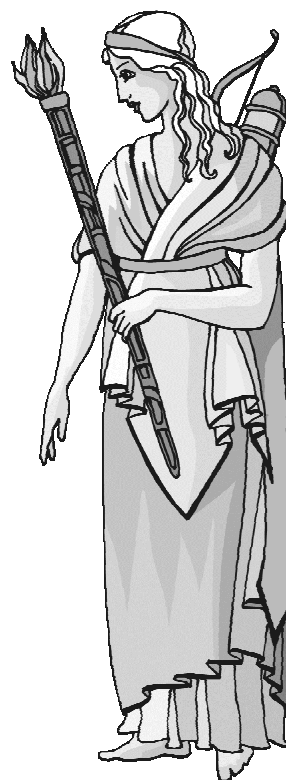
During the course of their travels, the adventurers meet a young Priestess of Artemis named **Keira**. The best way to introduce her is to have her come to the adventurers' help – perhaps she suddenly appears to assist them with bolts of Divine Wrath while they are fighting a dangerous beast or monster or perhaps she arrives after the fight to heal them with Divine Vitality. Whichever way the Maze Master sets things up, the overall idea is to have Keira befriend the characters by helping them in a tight spot.

Keira will then explain to the characters that she also happens to be on an adventure of her own – no better than an adventure, a *divine mission*. And now that she thinks of it, perhaps her chance encounter with the adventurers was in fact predestined by the goddess Artemis herself ! She will tell the following story to the characters...

Deep in a nearby forest lies an abandoned temple of Artemis. Some thirty years ago, it was raided by a savage horde of Tragos and other Beastmen, who slaughtered its priestesses and desecrated the sacred place by their foul deeds and odious habits. Their descendants are still occupying the former temple and their vile presence is an insult that the goddess Artemis can no longer bear.

Through a Divine Vision, the goddess Artemis has sent one of her most devoted young priestesses (that's Keira herself) on a sacred mission : journey to the lost temple, drive away (or, preferably, exterminate) the foul Beastmen and reclaim the place on behalf of her goddess. Of course, young Keira cannot be expected to carry such a heroic task all by herself so she will need the help of brave and bold adventurers such as the player-characters.

If the adventurers seem too greedy to be content with intangible rewards like glory or the personal satisfaction of helping to execute a deity's will, Keira will explain to them that the high priestess of her temple has promised a vast financial reward to those who would help young Keira to carry out her sacred mission. This is of course a complete lie, since Keira embarked on her divine-inspired quest without the permission (or knowledge) of her high priestess (who also happens to be her aunt, but that's somewhat irrelevant). In other words, Keira is an adventurous (read : runaway) young priestess who got bored with sacerdotal duties and decided it was time to "really do something for the goddess" – like, for instance, reclaiming a long lost temple.



Keira, a young Priestess of Artemis

Keira the Priestess

Level 1 Priestess of Artemis, age 19

Attributes : Might 8, Skill 12, Luck 17, Wits 15, Will 17, Grace 16.

Combat : Initiative 12, Melee +2, Missile +5, Basic Defense Class 15, Hits Total 7.

Saving Rolls : Athletic Prowess +2, Danger Evasion +8, Mystic Fort. +8, Phys. Vigor +5.

Personal Charisma : +8 (+9 with reputation)

Weapons : Bow, dagger.

Magic : Divine Prodigies of Artemis, Spiritual Aura +6, Mystic Strength 18, Power 7.

Note : Using the optional variant formulas given in previous issues of the *Minotaur*, Keira's Danger Evasion would be +5 instead of +7. Her Mystic Fortitude would be unchanged.

Suspicious adventurers may also wonder why, in the last 30 years, the priestesses of Artemis haven't tried to reclaim the temple before. If they question Keira about that, she will reveal the ugly truth : a few years after the tragic event, her own temple did send an expedition to the lost temple but these priestesses and the adventurers who escorted them were never heard from again...

Trail of the Black Goat

The abandoned temple of Artemis has been colonized by a band of evil Beastmen (actually a pack of Tragos) led by an unusually charismatic (and mystically inclined) Caliban.

Under the Dark Satyr's tutelage, the goat-heads have turned the place into a temple dedicated to their own deity, a malevolent earth spirit known as the Black Goat of the Woods. Over the years, the odious orgies and foul sacrifices performed by the Tragos in the lost temple has attracted other followers to the cult of the Black Goat – including local Degenerate Men and a few perverted Silenes. Of course, the worshippers of the Black Goat do all the things that one might expect from mad, degenerate cultists, including bloody sacrifices, gratuitous torture, bestial orgies and other things better left to the imagination.

The Caliban "priest" now rules over a small force of fanatically loyal (and completely crazed) adepts, who have managed to exterminate (or drive away) the former inhabitants of the woods, including Bee-folk, Sylvans and Acteons (who fought with utter courage but were eventually butchered by the servants of the Black Goat).

As a consequence of the cult's growing menace, the nearest human villages have been deserted for several years – and of course those rare wayfarers who are foolhardy enough to venture into that part of the woods usually end up as the main course (or worse) in the next orgy of the Black Goat's minions. It is to bring an end to this insufferable situation and to reclaim the lost temple in the name of Artemis that Keira needs her newfound friends' help. Of course, from this point on, we shall assume that the adventurers do accept to help Keira in her daring mission, otherwise there would not be an adventure. If you feel like your players need some extra persuasion, have their characters ambushed by a few Tragos sent by their Caliban master to purge the forest of their unwelcome presence.

The trip to the ruined temple should be pretty uneventful, since the activities of the cult have driven away most of the denizens of the forest (including most wild animals). The Maze Master should insist on the eerie, gloomy silence of the woods – as if *something* had driven away all life from the area... If you want to accentuate the dark tone of the adventure, the characters could stumble on the grisly remains of a few Acteons – severed heads impaled on tree branches, garlands made of entrails – you get the idea.

The cultists have grown lax in their surveillance of the woods – they simply can't believe anyone would be stupid or crazy enough to venture so deep in their territory... so unless the adventurers do something really stupid, they should be able to approach the temple undetected. If you want to spice things up a bit, have them encounter a few marauding Tragos, Degenerate Men looking for hallucinatory mushrooms or even some drunken Silenes having bestial intercourse in the woods.

The Cultists

The size of the cultists' force should depend on the might of the player-characters' party and should be calculated as follows, with "X" corresponding to the total number of levels in the group, including Keira.

One Caliban cult leader

2X Tragos

3X Degenerate Men (and 2X Degenerate Women who never fight and behave like scared beasts)

1X Silenes

Thus, if the party is made up of four 1st level player-characters plus Keira, there will be a total of ten Tragos, fifteen Degenerate Men and five Silenes.

These creatures' stats can be found in the *Creature Compendium*. The Tragos are unarmored, do not carry shields and are armed with swords or spears, while the Degenerate Men and Silenes are armed with clubs and stone axes. All these creatures are crazed fanatics and will fight to the death, except for the Silenes who are just cowardly bullies.

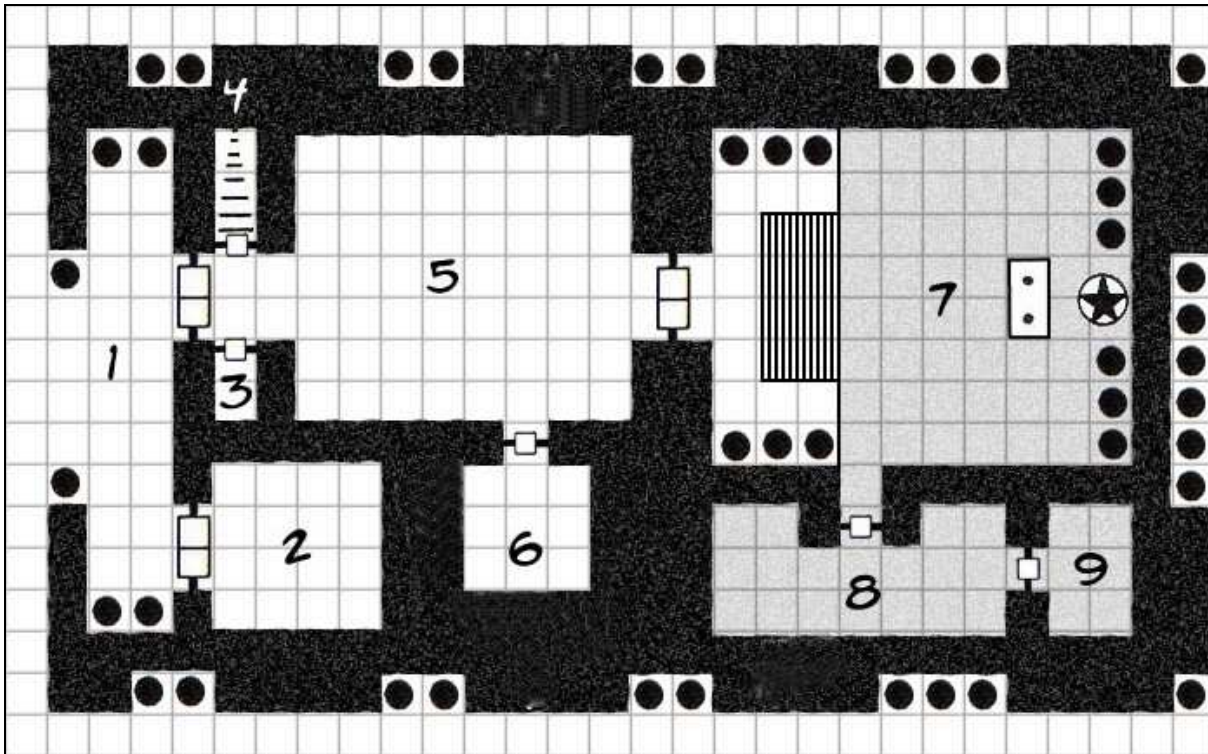
The Caliban 'priest' is armed with a vicious sickle and a magical thyrsos staff (see p 15).

The Lost Temple

Once the adventurers get near the temple, the sight which awaits them will depend on the moment of their arrival. During daytime, most of the cultists are in the large communal room (see map) - either asleep, drunk or otherwise trying to recover from last night's debauchery (-4 to detection rolls).

Then, as dusk draws closer, they begin to grow more and more restless, starting to chant, feast and otherwise worship their foul goddess in ways which are, again, better left to the imagination. Things culminate to a paroxysm of collective frenzy at midnight, the hour at which the Caliban usually leaves his private premises in the temple to join his "flock" in their bestial orgies which take place in the worship chamber (see map). These "revels" then proceed until dawn, at which point most of the celebrants start to doze off into sleep or drug-induced stupor; during their orgies, they ingest enormous amounts of hallucinatory mushrooms which are regularly collected by the Silenes.

MAP OF THE LOST TEMPLE



 = 10 ft. x 10 ft.

1 : Entrance

This location is usually guarded by 1d3+1 Tragos (see *Creature Compendium*, p 118). Like all the other Beastmen met in this adventure, they are unarmored and do not carry shields.

2 : Storage Room

This is where the cultists keep their food – including the partially dismembered carcasses of a few fellow cultists and perhaps one or two unwary adventurers.

3 : Mushroom Storage

This closet is filled with heaps dried hallucinatory mushrooms. Anyone foolish enough to eat these things will have to make a Physical Vigor saving roll (target number 15) for each handful. Failure means that the character will suffer from hallucinations, disorientation and warped perception for the next three hours (-2 to Danger Evasion, Melee, Missile and Initiative). Effects are cumulative. Note that the cultists are accustomed to the ingestion of these mushrooms and do not suffer such penalties.

4 : Stairway

These stairs originally led to a lower (underground) level but access has long been blocked by stone boulders and rubble. It would take three Feats of Strength to clear the way. What awaits below is left to the imagination of the Maze Master.

Alternatively, the stairs could be unblocked and lead to a large chamber filled with the grisly remains of dozens (hundreds ?) of victims, in which case a nauseating stench should logically emanate from the stairs : anyone trying to go downstairs will have to make a Physical Vigor saving roll (against a target number of 10) or throw up after the first two or three steps (make the same saving roll for each minute spent below). Characters who throw up will immediately and instinctively retreat upstairs.

5 : Large Communal Room

This is where the members of the Black Goat cult sleep, eat and spend most of their non-ceremonial time. Depending on the time of the day, it may be completely empty, filled with sleeping cultists or occupied by roughly one-half of them (plus most of the Degenerate Women).

The Caliban Priest

The Caliban 'priest' has the same stats as a standard member of his race, except for his Mystique, which is Eldritch, reflecting a special psychic connection with unseen forces.

The Caliban also carries three mythic items on his person : an **Amulet of Protection** and a **Ring of Good Fortune** (both stolen from adventurers who were killed and eaten a few years ago by the cultists), which give him various saving roll and Defense Class bonuses, and the **Thyrsos of Pain**, a staff with special properties (see below for more details).

Size : Medium

Ferocity : Aggressive

Cunning : Clever

Mystique : Eldritch

Movement : 80'

Initiative : 19

Melee Attack : +3

Damage : 1d6 (weapon ; a vicious sickle)

Defense Class : 18 *

Hits Total : 12

Detection / Evasion : +6 / +12 *

Mystic Fortitude : +6 *

Special Abilities : Grapple (M = 16), Lightning Fast, Stealthy (18), Supernatural Vigor, Uncanny Agility.

Awards : Glory 75*, Wisdom 10.

** These scores take into account the bonuses granted by the Caliban's Amulet and Ring.*

Thyrsos of Pain

This magical thyrsus staff (Enc = 2) is the most prized possession of the Caliban. It gives him the power to cause excruciating pain (but no physical damage) to a single target of his choice within 20', simply by pointing the staff in the victim's direction.

The target must make a Mystic Fortitude saving roll against a target number of 15 or writhe in helpless agony for the rest of the battle round. While in this state, characters are completely unable to act and suffer the same penalties as for being prone (-4 to melee EDC).



The Caliban, leader of the Black Goat cult

6 : Prison

This is where the cultists keep their prisoners before they butcher them during their demented orgies.

The heavy barred door is always guarded by two **Tragos** armed with spears. The cell currently holds one **Acteon** captive named Kernos, who is the sole survivor of his tribe (see *Creature Compendium*).

Kernos is down to 5 Hits because of various injuries inflicted on him before and after his capture. The cultists intend to sacrifice (and devour) him during their next full blown orgy. If he is given a weapon, Kernos (who, like all Acteons, is a devotee of Artemis) will gladly join the adventurers in their search-and-destroy mission. Keira will heal him back to his maximum Hits total of 12, which will cost her 3 points of Power.

7 : Worship Chamber

This is where the cultists of the Black Goat celebrate their foul ceremonies during night-time.

The star mark on the map indicates the location of a man-sized statue which once represented Artemis but has been defaced and mutilated by the cultists and now acts as a grotesque representation of their dark deity : the arms of the statue are missing and its head has been crushed and replaced by the horned skull of a dead goat. The body of the statue is covered with dried blood and other yucky stuff best left to the reader's imagination.

This sacrilegious vision will cause the righteous fury of any Priestess or devoted worshipper of Artemis (included, of course, Keira herself); such characters will receive a +2 bonus to their Melee attacks when fighting the cultists. This bonus lasts for the rest of the adventure and only applies to characters who have chosen Artemis as their patron deity.

8 : Caliban's Private Apartments

This is where the Caliban leader of the cult usually spends his daytime. This room is separated from the Worship Chamber by a reinforced door which the Caliban closes with a very strong bar when inside (he doesn't trust his 'flock' that much – especially the Silenes, whom he wrongfully suspects of plotting his demise); the barred door can be broken down with a successful Feat of Strength or by doing it a total of 10 Hits of damage using axes, maces and other similar weapons.

Unlike the rest of the temple, the Caliban's living quarters are well-kept and even have some decent pieces of furniture. The room contains nothing of real interest... except for a hidden door leading to the Secret Treasure Room (see below).

This hidden door can only be found by characters who conduct a careful search of the room and make a successful detection roll (target number 15). It is protected by a trap (Concealment 17, Danger 15) : a poison-coated needle (death in 1d6 battle rounds).

9 : Secret Treasure Room

This concealed room contains all the treasure the greedy Caliban has managed to amass since the temple was taken. It includes **200** silver pieces worth of gold, silver, bronze coins and jewels for each character in the party (including Keira) as well as several mythic items (all of which are detailed in the *Maze Masters Guide*) :

3 amphorae full of **Wine of Dionysus**

3 phials of **Potion of Healing** (3 doses per phial)

1 phial of **Potion of Celerity** (3 doses)

1 **Aegis**

1 **Sword of Ares**

1 **Bow of Artemis** and 1 **Quiver of Artemis**

1 **Harp of Poetic Insight**

1 **Flute of the Shepherd**

Options & Complications

Maze Masters who wish to make things tougher or trickier for the poor adventurers might consider the following complications or alterations :

The Caliban Sorcerer

The Black Goat has granted the Caliban priest full Psychic Powers. In this case, his Thyrsos becomes either a Staff of Power or a Staff of Command and he will also have some Enslaved creatures to his service, such as several Acteon warriors, a Dryad (who could use her powers to lure new victims to the temple) or perhaps even some Large Monster with a suitable theme, such as a Moon Spawn, a Wood Titan or even a Capricorn Horror.

Dark Festival

The adventurers have chosen the worst moment to raid the temple – that of some dark festival which attracts many other worshippers of the Black Goat to the lost temple in the woods. Such evil pilgrims could include more Calibans, Silenes and Tragos, as well as humans who have secretly converted to the cult (such as, say, a local Noble or his son).

More Crawling Chaos

Guided by dark visions sent to him by the Black Goat and thanks to a foul ritual involving a massive blood sacrifice, the Caliban is about to summon a Crawling Aberration onto the mortal plane as the messenger of the Dark Goddess of the Woods.

The Mad Old Crone

The priestesses of the previous expedition were NOT all slaughtered by the Beastmen – one of them survived and was kept alive by the foul creatures, who inflicted such horrors on her that she became hopelessly insane. In her madness, she had a vision of what she thought to be a darker, more primitive aspect of Artemis and joined the Beastmen cult as the Caliban's consort.

She is now a raving mad, withered old crone who has forgotten her true past – so the fact that the real Artemis has stripped her of her Divine Prodigies does not worry her at all... especially since her new goddess has granted her new powers, similar to those of a Priestess of Cybele (see *M&M Companion*, p 25), including the dreadful prodigy of Divine Emasculation.

Written by **Olivier Legrand** (2009)

Temple map by **Tim Hartin**

Visit Tim's great cartography site at <http://paratime.ca/cartography/>

THE OTHER GODS

With a few exceptions (such as the mentions in the *Creature Compendium* of Pestia, the Great Rat-Mother of Ratlings and Gorgora, the Great Devourer Mother of the Ogres), the vast amount of background material published for *Mazes & Minotaurs* has left the topic of nonhuman religion almost untouched.

Recently, the mega-module *Tomb of the Bull King*, which featured Wildmen and Troglodyte worshippers of the Goddess Rhea (the Titan mother of Zeus, often identified with Cybele and with the snake-wielding goddess of ancient Crete), has shed a novel, very interesting light on the subject, raising many questions, hypotheses and speculations...

The goal of this article is to explore the matter further by presenting an overview of the non-Olympian gods worshipped by the various nonhuman and pseudo-human races of Mythika, from the barbaric Beastmen to the decadent Atlanteans .

Warning : *Some of the cults and entities detailed below were inspired by various ideas found in the works of HP Lovecraft; R.E. Howard, C.A. Smith and J.R.R Tolkien and mercilessly twisted, transformed and recycled to fit the peplum-esque paradigm of Mazes & Minotaurs.*

Gods of the Beastmen

Even though humans remain its dominant (or, at least, its most prolific) species, the world of Mythika also has a very large population of nonhuman Folks, including a myriad of different Beastmen races, which are usually organized in tribal or semi-tribal communities.

Since they do have a society of some sort, these creatures are almost bound by the laws of ethnology (not to mention the laws of fantasy gaming) to have some sort of religious practices, no matter how primitive or crude... but since the Olympian deities are so obviously anthropomorphic, it seems highly improbable that they should be worshipped by beast-headed humanoids (especially the more brutish or evil ones).

There are exceptions, of course, as exemplified by the Acteons' and Bearmen's devotion to Artemis, but on a general basis, it seems quite logical to assume that nonhuman Folks have different gods of their own – *made in their own image*, if you will - entities who may not seem as divine as the majestic Olympians but are nevertheless regarded as true deities by their worshippers. Who (or what) are these deities ?

But before we begin our study of the Gods of the Beastmen, let's take a quick look at those nonhuman Folks who *do* worship Olympian deities.



Welcome to the world of non-Olympian worship !

With a few exceptions, **Poseidon** and **Artemis** are the two Olympian deities who are widely worshipped in nonhuman circles. Poseidon is, of course, the supreme deity of Tritons and Mermaids (as well as the odd Ichtyocentaur), while traditional nonhuman devotees of Artemis include Acteons, Bearmen, Bee-folk, Sylvans, Wildmen and other woodland Folks.

Other Olympian-worshipping Folks include Lesser Cyclops and Obsidians (worshippers of Hephaestus), Hawkmen and Icarians (who worship Zeus and Apollo), Myrmidons (who worship the Olympians in pretty much the same way as Minean humans) and, of course, the diminutive Muscusii and Rhabdosians, who are respectively devoted to Athena and Poseidon.

As noted in the *Players Manual* (p 16), Centaurs usually have little religious inclination but those who do usually select Apollo or Artemis as their patron deity.

Satyr and their kin (including the malevolent Calibans) worship **Dionysos** (see *M&M Companion* p 26), whom they refer to as « the Great God Pan » and whom they usually envision as the progenitor of the Satyr race.

It should be noted that Dionysos is a very ambiguous deity, whose changing and complex nature is perfectly reflected in the various incarnations of the Satyr race : the Great God Pan is equally present in the true Satyr's lusty and festive energy as he is in the Calibans' darker passions, the Silenes' raucous drunkenness, the Fauns' playful mischief or the Sataurs' hallucinatory madness.



The Dark Mother in one of her many guises

The Dark Mother

This primal earth mother goddess is known by many names. She has been identified with Cybele (see the *Mazes & Minotaurs Companion*, p 25) and with the Great Goddess Rhea, the Titan mother of Zeus but nonhuman Folks know her under a variety of sinister denominations - the Dark Mother, Gorgora the Great Devourer or Shub-Niggurath the Black Goat of the Woods with a Thousand Young...

She also has many guises : a gigantic black goat, a headless, vaguely humanoid but distinctively female body with a bloated belly, a writhing and obscene mass of flesh, tentacles and maws...

The cult of the Dark Mother is especially popular among Ogres, Tragos and Degenerate Men. Their approach to religious practice is as crude and barbaric as their other customs, usually involving a lot of blood sacrifices, mass slaughter, gruesome orgies and little else.

Mordiggos

This dark god of carnage and death is often depicted as a dog, a dog-headed humanoid or some other canine creature, including a humanoid with the three heads of a Cerberus. He is (naturally enough) mainly worshipped by Cynocephals, Hyenakins and Lycans.

Some scholars view Mordiggos as a degenerate (or perhaps more archaic ?) version of the Underworld God Hades but this may be just another fancy theory ; travellers who have journeyed to the Desert Kingdom have also pointed out his resemblance to Anubis, the jackal-headed progenitor god of the Anubians, who also seems to be connected with death and the underworld.

Lastly, Mordiggos is also believed by some students of arcane lore to be the original teacher of the Stygian Necromancers' dark arts and forbidden knowledge. Ceremonies performed in his honor by his worshippers include ritual massacres, macabre dances and all sorts of anthropophagous and cannibalistic feasts.

Pestia

Pestia the Rat-Mother, Mistress of the Plague, is the goddess of Ratlings, who envision her as an enormous, bloated female rat or, sometimes, as a « rat-king » (or, more properly, « rat-queen ») – a mass of rats with intertwined tails, looking like a single monstrosity with multiple heads and bodies.

As ruthless and vicious as the epidemics she embodies, Pestia is corruption incarnate. The Ratlings seem to identify her with the plague itself – not symbolically, but literally : they view plague-infested areas as sacred places, infected and tainted by the divine corruption of the Rat-Mother.

The Serpent Goddess

This other (?) earth mother goddess has also been identified with Rhea and Cybele as well as with the underworld goddess Persephone ; she is thought by some scholars to be another avatar of the same entity as the Dark Mother. She is mainly worshipped by some (but not all) tribes of Troglodytes, Lizardians and Wildmen... but NOT, despite what some pedantic scholars erroneously believe, by Serpent Men (who worship their own snake-father god, Set). She is usually represented as a reasonably human-looking woman with snakes coiled around her arms (or, in some versions, with snakes *in lieu* of arms) or as a gigantic serpent (sometimes with the head of a woman).

The Serpent Goddess is tied to caves, darkness, snakes and the mysteries of life and death ; she is supposed to rule over mythical creatures known as the Serpents (or Worms) of the Earth. Her rites of celebration are very primitive and do include blood sacrifices (of beasts, humans, other Folks etc) but are, on the whole, less aberrant and grotesque than those of the Dark Mother, as if she represented a more mystical, less degenerate form of the same earth mother deity.



Mordiggos, Canine God of Death



Anubis, another (?) Canine God of Death

Anubis, Bastet et al

These two mythical beings are believed to be the respective progenitors of the Anubian and Ubasti Folks. For more about them, see last issue's mammoth-sized *Mythika Gazetteer*, which also contains fascinating information about other animal-headed gods of the Desert Kingdom, including the crocodile-headed Sobek and the enigmatic Sutek, supreme god of the Orycters.

The dark half Desert Kingdom pantheon also includes the ophidian Set, the patron deity and, some say, the progenitor of the elder Serpent Men race – once again, we refer you to last issue's mega-gazetteer for more details about this dark and devious deity.

Hanuman the Ape God

Hanuman is the god of the Apemen – a primitive and bloodthirsty idol appearing as either a jet black or ivory white giant apeman. According to some unverified tales, Hanuman is actually a real, gigantic ape living in the deep Charybdian jungles, which the brutish and superstitious simians have chosen as their 'living god'.

Amrah the White Lion

This majestic, ivory-white lion god is the deity of the Leonids. Amrah is the divine embodiment of leonine majesty, strength and pride. The surprisingly spiritual Leonids view him not as a living being of flesh but as the powerful, immortal spirit king of the savannah, ruling over the entire animal (and demi-animal) kingdom.

Humungos the Great Hog

Humungos the Great Hog is the god of Boarmen, who envision him as a gigantic boar or boarman. Humungos is the epitome of boarmanity, embodying brute strength, destructive fury and snarling, grunting pigheadedness. There is little else that can be said about him...

The Atlantean Triad

The pseudo-human Atlanteans worship a triad of deities which they refer to as "the Ancient Ones". According to their unhallowed, twisted mythos, those Ancient Ones were the true and original rulers of the cosmos before the Olympian usurpers somehow robbed or cheated them of their power and sovereignty over the universe.

No matter how blasphemous and preposterous such beliefs might seem at first, Minean scholars have long pointed out the many similarities between the Ancient Ones of the Atlantean pantheon and some of the primal Titans defeated by Zeus and the Olympians before the Age of Myth (see *Maze Masters Guide*, p 11). It should also be noted that, unlike the Mineans and most other Mythikan peoples, Atlanteans envision their deities as wholly monstrous, aberrant or abstract entities rather than as anthropomorphic beings, making their gods disturbingly *alien* by Minean standards.

One factor that definitely makes it very hard to assess the true nature of the Atlantean gods (or even their very existence, for that matter) is the fact that Atlantean religion has no Priests in the usual M&M sense of the term, the conduct of religious ceremonies being one of the many prerogatives of the haughty Atlantean Nobles. And no Priesthood means no Divine Prodigies... which are usually the quickest and easiest way to prove the reality of your god's power.

Kthalos, Lord of the Deep

Kthalos is the Atlantean god of the sea, oceans and marine abysses - a terrible, unfathomable entity which would make Poseidon pass for a nice guy. Kthalos is usually depicted as an enormous octopus-like monster with a single, cyclopean eye – an image embroidered on the sails of most Atlantean warships. Kthalos can easily be identified with the Titan Okeanos (ocean). The three "Sea Titans" Dagon and Ktolos and Kraken (see *Minotaur Quarterly* n°1, p 38) are either his sons or his living manifestations (or perhaps both ?), depending on which source you consult. Because of the naval nature of the Atlantean empire, Kthalos is also associated with martial might, supremacy and conquest.

Astor, Lord of the Ether

Also known as *He Who Must Not Be Named*, Astor is the god of air and the mysterious dark void which extends between the stars. Some Minean scholars have identified him with the very first Titan, Ouranos, the "sky father", despite some major differences in their respective myths; others have identified Astor with the Titan Atlas, whose name might well be the origin of the word "Atlantis". As far as the Atlanteans themselves are concerned, Astor is said to dwell on the distant world of Carcosa, somewhere in the Hyades constellation, and is often described as the brother of Kthalos (rather than as the first, uncreated Titan). Atlantean metaphysicians like to point out the cosmic symmetry of the two entities: while Kthalos, "the King Below" rules over the abyss of the ocean, Astor the "King Above" rules over the abyss of the celestial void. Kthalos and Astor are sometimes referred to as the "Twin Gods of the Abyss".



A truly unspeakable vision of Yoxothos

Yoxothos, Lord of the Spheres

The third member of the Atlantean Triad is Yoxothos, a god of Time and the Spheres (whatever that means). It is an abstract cosmic entity, which the Atlanteans also associate with all intellectual pursuits, including the study of Sorcery and other arcane arts; Atlantean texts are full of cryptic references to Yoxothos as “the Keeper of the Gate”, “the Gate and the Key”, “the Opener of the Way”, “the One Beyond” and, of course, the ever-popular “One in All and All in One”.

Because of his connection to time, Yoxothos has often been identified to the Titan Kronos by Minean scholars, even though the Atlantean sacred texts make absolutely no mention of Yoxotos eating his own children or being overthrown by some rebellious son (yes, that would be Zeus). Atlanteans do not picture Yoxothos as a bearded old man or as a ravenous giant (two traditional images of Kronos) but as a nexus of shifting, iridescent spheres.

Other Atlantean Gods

The complex Atlantean mythos also includes a number of other Ancient Ones who are not actively worshipped, are not (obviously) part of the Triad but have direct links with its members. In other words, the Triad is probably just the prominent part of a broader, more ancient pantheon of cosmic entities – and here again, Minean scholars point out the similarities with the primal Titans.

These other Ancient Ones include (among others) :

Axathos : The personification of blind, mindless, Primal Chaos, the Beginning and the End of Everything, the true center of cosmos (well, you get the idea). For some obscure reason, Axathos is sometimes described as Yoxothos’ “brother”, “father” or “cosmic twin”.

Ubbosatha : Also known as “the Unbegotten Source”, this subterranean deity is seen as a protoplasmic mass of organic matter – the oozy, primal soup from which all life on Earth was originally spawned. Minean scholars view it as a distorted, warped equivalent of Gaia.

Zathoqua : Nobody seems to know what (if anything) this chthonian, roughly toad-shaped being is supposed to represent or embody – it may be a forgotten deity or perhaps the Atlanteans’ own Trickster God.

Other Nonhuman Cults

Arachne

The Mother of all Spiders is of course worshipped by the Daughters of Arachne, who view her as a supreme, all-devouring entity of living darkness, whose web shall one day entrap the entire world.

Atlas & Hyperion

Along with other lesser-known Titans and Titanides, Atlas and Hyperion are honored by the Titanians, who see as the truly divine progenitors of their race, unjustly banished and punished by those Olympian upstarts.

The Great Eye

This strange deity (?) is depicted as a single, fiery eye by its worshippers, which, despite what you might think at first, include neither the Lesser Cyclops (who are all devotees of Hepahestus) nor the Gigantic ones (who are probably too dumb to have a patron deity at all); like many of Mythika’s weirder beliefs, the Cult of the Eye comes from the East and is mainly present among the Arimaspians and Orkoï nomadic tribes; its worshippers view the Eye as an omniscient entity of ruthless power and domination - but they wouldn’t put it that way, since words like ‘omniscient’ and ‘entity’ are too complicated for them - “Eye see all, eye know all, eye rule all” is a much likelier version of their religious dogma.

The Machine

This abstract, mechanical entity is worshipped by the demented Derros, who often define themselves as “Servitors of the Machine”. This imaginary entity is of course a metaphorical reflection of their obsession with machinery – an obvious fact which has not prevented some demented metaphysicians from making inane speculations about this “Machine” being some secret invention of Hephaestus, devised for some inscrutable purpose - a ludicrous hypothesis which, incidentally, is viewed as a heinous heresy by the Derros themselves, who acknowledge no other deity than their Machine.

The Monolith

Another fairly abstract deity, the Monolith is supposed to be a monumental parallelepiped of black obsidian endowed with cosmic awareness. It is only worshipped by Obsidians, who claim to be its living extensions – and indeed, the society and culture of Obsidians does seem to be monolithic and collectivist.

Selene

The Moon Titanide is worshipped by the Selenites, who also view her as the mysterious mother of their race.

Olivier Legrand (2009)

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

FAVORED BY FATE

An optional Fate points system for MAZES & MINOTAURS, by Igor A. Rivendell

Many recently-published RPGs feature the concept of Hero / Fate / Karma points – a pool of points which a player can spend to turn the odds in his character's favor, make him succeed at heroic tasks in desperate circumstances or even allow him to "cheat death" in the manner of so many fictional heroes. Such a system could add an extra touch of epic heroism to Mazes & Minotaurs, as noted by our Philosopher friend in a recent issue of the Griffin.

This article presents an attempt to bring such a system to the game without disrupting its venerable, time-tested mechanics. The rules detailed below are, of course, entirely optional and should only be used by those Maze Masters who really want to add a sense of destiny (or simply an extra touch of "pulpy" heroism) to their M&M campaigns.

Fate and Fortune

But before we see how our Fate points work in game terms, let's examine more closely how the concept of Fate relates to (and differs from) the concept of Fortune, as reflected in game terms by the all-pervasive, omnipresent attribute of Luck.

At first, having both Luck and Fate as separate game concepts may seem somewhat redundant, especially given the fact that a character's Luck already affects so many things in the game (no, don't worry, we won't go into the old "Luck-is-too-powerful" debate here).

Yet, on closer inspection, we find that Fate and Fortune actually represented very different things for the ancient Greeks – and could thus conceivably be reflected by different game concepts in M&M. Without going too heavy on metaphysics (we'll leave this to our Philosopher friend), we can define the difference between Fortune and Fate as follows : Fortune is essentially random and always retains an element of unpredictability, while Fate appears to be rooted in certainty and ineluctability.

The unpredictable and random aspect of Fortune is already quite well reflected by the effects of Luck in game terms : a character's Luck score affects all his attack and saving rolls (as well as basic Defense Class, Personal Charisma etc) but never really gives the absolute certainty of success or survival : even characters with extraordinary Luck scores can miss a foe or fail a saving roll.

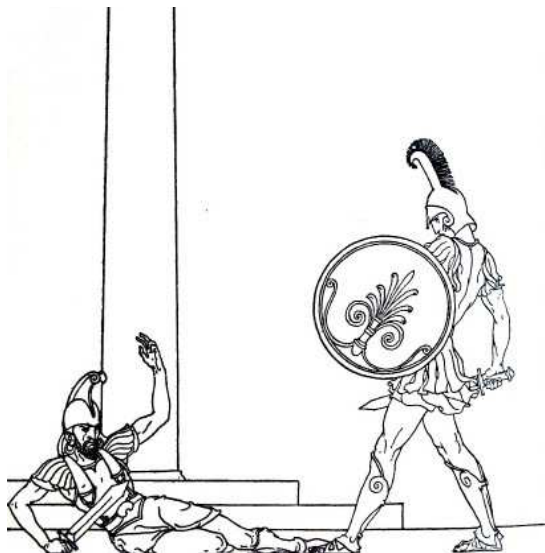


Behold the Power of Fate !

If we want to add an element of Fate in the game, we will have to make its impact on play significantly different from that of Luck – Luck and Fate should not only be different things, they should work differently in game terms.

Yet, for all their differences, Fate and Fortune also share some (very) common elements : both are supposed to be out of a character's control, both may help or hinder characters in critical situations, both are linked to the will and whim of the Gods and, last but not least, despite their apparent opposition, Fate and Fortune somehow seem to be inextricably tied to one another – much like the two plates of the same (cosmic ?) balance.

But enough metaphysics ! Keeping all the above in mind, let's now see how Fate points could work with the Revised *Mazes & Minotaurs* rules.



- Hold on ! I've still got one Fate point to spend !

Fate & Level

All player-characters start their adventuring career with 1 Fate point at first level. Once spent, Fate points cannot be recovered : the only way to get a new Fate point is to reach a new level.

Each time a player-character reaches a new level, he gains a number of Fate points equal to this new level – but these points must be spent before the character reaches the next level.

Fate points which are not spent before a new level is reached are simply lost; they will not be added to the Fate points granted by the new level. Thus, a character who reaches level 5 will have 5 Fate points, regardless of how many Fate point he spent at level 4 (or at any other previous level).

This rule has two important consequences. First, it is impossible for characters to “hoard” or “save” Fate points from one level to another. Secondly, the higher a character's level, the more Fate points he gets to spend. Why ? Because each new level represents an important step in the accomplishment or in the revelation of the character's destiny : thus, the higher the level, the more important a character becomes in the grand tapestry of things.

In other words, the number of Fate points available to a character can never be higher than his level. In reality, since spent Fate points are not recovered.

Calling on Fate

Whenever a player must make an attack roll or saving roll for his character, he may decide to spend 1 Fate point instead. In this case, the player does not need to roll the d20 : everything is resolved as if he had rolled a result of 20, plus the appropriate saving roll or attack mod.

This rule applies to all attack and saving rolls – including the Physical Vigor roll that must be made when a wounded character falls to zero Hit. Thus, a character's life may be saved by the power of Destiny, in the form of a wisely-spent Fate point.

The way Fate points work illustrates the “certainty” concept mentioned above : while a character's Fortune (Luck) affects most of his die rolls (as well as attacks made against him, since a character's Luck affects his Defense Class), Fate “refuses” randomness and replaces it by a one-time certainty.

In combat, spending a Fate point instead of making an attack roll is usually a sure hit... but will also often result in an automatic critical hit, if the optional Homeric Combat tables from the *Mazes & Minotaurs Companion* are used.

Remember what we said earlier about the subtle connection between Fate and Fortune ? Let's see how a character's Fate points interact with his Luck. At first, there does not seem to be any link between the two, since Luck does not affect Fate... but since Fate points are used to replace Luck-related die rolls, players of characters with high Luck scores are more likely to trust their character's good fortune and thus less likely to spend their precious Fate points except when their character's life is directly threatened. Thus, a character's Fortune does interact with his Fate (and vice versa) but in a suitably subtle and flexible manner.

The Limits of Fate

Fate points can only affect attack rolls and saving rolls (both of which are made on 1d20); they cannot be used to influence reaction rolls or other non-d20 rolls, such as damage rolls or feats of strength.

A character's Fate points can only affect his own deeds : they cannot be used to affect someone else's saving rolls, nor can they be used to make your opponents miss you – such things remain the sole province of Fortune, in the form of a character's Luck (which always modifies his Defense Class).



- Sisters, the guy has only 1 Fate point left !



Fate points are NOT for everyone !

The “automatic 20” granted by the expenditure of 1 Fate point should be more than enough to succeed in most circumstances, although some Invulnerable creatures with an extremely high EDC might still remain unhittable (if their EDC is greater than 20 + the character’s attack mod), in which case the Fate point has been (horror !) spent in vain.

This might seem a bit unfair but (a) should occur very rarely and (b) simply means that some very powerful beings are (at least partially) protected from (or by ?) the powers of Fate... unless they meet the hero whose Fate was to defeat them (or, in game terms, a warrior with a high-enough attack mod and a few Fate points to spend).

A similar situation may also arise with Mystic Fortitude rolls made against a Mystic Strength so high that the target has absolutely no chance to resist, even with a roll of 20 or the intervention of Fate. There again, we find the idea that some very powerful beings (in this case, very powerful wielders of magic) can “overcome” the Fate of those who are not strong enough to oppose them.

Who’s Got Fate ?

Creatures should never be given Fate points, no matter how powerful they are. Major NPCs, on the other hand, can be given Fate points by the Maze Master, within the usual limitations.

A simple system to use is to take the character’s level and subtract 1d6 : if the result is positive, this shows the number of Fate points available to the character; if the result is zero or negative, then the NPC has no Fate points left. Alternatively, you might also decide to make Fate points an exclusive prerogative of player-characters, who are, after all, the heroes of the story.

If you intend to graft this system to your ongoing M&M campaign, the easiest method is simply to give each player-character a number of Fate points equal to his current level and simply assume that no point were expended so far (and how could they have been expended, since they did not yet exist ?). If you find this method too generous, assume that 1d3 Fate points have already been used.

Fate & the Gods

Despite what some of you might expect, the Gods **do not** grant extra Fate points to their champions and protégés. There are two reasons for this.

The first justification is that the Gods themselves acknowledge the power of Fate and prefer to abstain from meddling with them (at least in a too blatant or obtrusive way), since this could upset the Balance of Destiny (whatever that means).

The second, much more convincing reason is that, all things being equal, a Fate point remains less powerful than a Divine Call (a type of Divine Boon detailed in the optional rules on divine agents given in the *Mazes & Minotaurs Companion*)... as well as far less spectacular, and you know how much those deities like to show off.

In fact, when you come to think of it, a Divine Boon can be seen as a super-powerful version of a Fate point. It would therefore be quite fair to rule that Divine Agents can no longer earn Fate points, for they have placed their destiny into the hands of their divine patron. Thus, a character who becomes a Divine Agent at level 4 does not receive the 4 Fate points he should normally receive for reaching level 4, but will receive the usual 3 Divine Boons granted to new agents instead. Each time he reaches a new level, he will gain a new Divine Boon, as per the usual rules, but no Fate point.



Randomia, Goddess of Game Balance

This may seem harsh but keep in mind that Divine Agents are already extremely powerful and that Divine Boons ARE more powerful than Fate points. The “divine destiny” justification is also perfectly logical and consistent with mythical tales.

Lastly, this rule also has the advantage of presenting Fate as an alternative to divine affiliation, by giving a specific advantage to those characters who do NOT become Divine Agents, either because they don't meet the requirements or simply because they don't want to : the right to make (or at least to follow) their own Fate.

Fate & Doom

Words like “fatal” or “fatality” remind us that Fate also has a dark, tragic facet. In many mythic tales, heroes who have been protected by Fate are often punished by Fate as well, either for having called on the powers of Fate one time too many or for having thought themselves mightier than Fate itself in a classical crisis of hubris. In game terms, this dark, tragic dimension of Fate (which we shall call Doom) represents the necessity of counter-balancing the wonderful advantages granted by Fate points.

So how can we simulate all this in game terms ?

Each player should keep a running total of all the Fate points spent on behalf of his character. This total, called the Destiny total, is a direct indication of how many times the character has called on Fate during his entire life. If a character's Destiny total ever reaches his current Luck score, then he is on the verge of Doom. In other words, characters should never let their Destiny exceed their Luck, because this would mean Doom.

Each Fate point spent beyond a character's Destiny limit will literally “force Fate”, qualifying as an act of *hubris* : the Fate point will have the usual effect but will also cause the permanent loss of 1 point of Luck. In other words, Fate will still give the character what he wants but will make him pay a heavy price for that, affecting his long-term Fortune.



- Why, WHY did I have to run out of Fate points ?



- Excuse me, ladies, are you the Three Fates ?

Depending on a character's Luck score, the loss of a single point may or may not have a direct impact in game terms : falling from 16 to 15, for instance, will not reduce the character's Luck mod, but falling from 15 to 14 would reduce it from +2 to +1. Luck losses that do not affect the Luck mod should be interpreted as warning signs of impending doom, while losses that do reduce the Luck mod are clear and manifest retributions on the character's fortune.

Thus, characters who have reached their Destiny peak can still call on Fate... but at a potentially devastating price, since a reduction of Luck can sometimes create the difference between life and death. That's what Doom is all about.

If a Doomed character manages to increase his Luck over his Destiny limit (usually by reaching a new level), then he is no longer Doomed – but will obviously have to tread a very fine line if he doesn't want to be Doomed once again.

Also note that such a reversal of fortune is only possible for characters whose Destiny does not exceed their Luck by more than one point : those who are already way past the limit of their Destiny are simply beyond redemption. Since Luck represents divine favor, this possibility of offsetting Doom by increasing one's Luck shows that even the Gods can sometimes be merciful too.

Lastly, since Divine Agents no longer earn Fate points, they are virtually immune to the effects of Doom – precisely because of their divine patron's attention and protection.

Igor A. Rivendell (1989)

MYTHIC BESTIARY

HYPERBOREAN HORRORS

Undead, Giant Kings & Savage Half-Men from the Northern Wildlands



Blue Men

Taxonomy : Folk

Description : Howling, man-eating painted savages from the Bones of War mountains; see this issue's *Mythika Gazetteer* (p 11) for more details.

Size : Medium

Ferocity : Aggressive

Cunning : Alert

Mystique : Weird

Movement : 60'

Initiative : 14

Melee Attack : +3

Missile Attack : +2

Damage : 1d6 (weapon)

Defense Class : 15

Hits Total : 8

Detection / Evasion : +6 / +4

Mystic Fortitude : +2

Special Abilities : Charge into Battle (Initiative 16, Melee +5), Missile Weapons (javelins, 120'), Sharp Senses, Stealthy (16), Uncanny Agility.

Awards : Glory 50.

Children of Ymir

Taxonomy : Monster

Description : Also known as Giant-Kings; not true giants but tall (9'to 10'), thin, hunched and hairless humanoids with almond-shaped heads, albino-white skin and reflective yellowy eyes.

Size : Large

Ferocity : Deadly

Cunning : Alert

Mystique : Eldritch

Movement : 90'

Initiative : 15

Melee Attack : +8

Damage : 2d6 (weapon)

Defense Class : 16

Hits Total : 36

Detection / Evasion : +6 / +4

Mystic Fortitude : +8

Special Abilities : Crushing Damage (req. grapple), Fearsome, Grapple (Might = 20), Magic Resistance, Sixth Sense, Supernatural Vigor, Tough Skin.

Awards : Glory 400, Wisdom 50.

Additioabal Lore : The origins and history of the Giant-Kings of Hyperborea are described in detail in this issue's *Mythika Gazetteer*.

Giant Kings of Old

The stats given above represent the degenerate remnants of the race; in their long-gone days of glory, the Giant Kings had a more majestic appearance, as well as a Clever degree of Cunning and full-blown Psychic Powers; the mightiest among them even had Crafty Cunning and Unearthly Mystique. Whether or not such ancient, primal beings still exist in the current era of Mythika's history is entirely left to the Maze Master's discretion. Perhaps such "Kings of the Giant-Kings" are buried somewhere beneath the lost ruins of their kin's Nameless Cities in a state of artificially-maintained suspended animation – which could be the true facts beneath the various tales of buried sleeping giants found in Hyperborean lore.



Dwimmerlaik

Taxonomy : Spirit

Description : These very powerful, dangerous and malignant undead beings inhabit the darker depths of the great Hyperborean Forest. They look like human skeletons whose empty eyesockets are filled with an evil, greenish light. They use their psychic powers to prey upon human victims and often use *Wights* (see below) as their servitors and sentinels.

Size : Medium

Ferocity : Deadly

Cunning : Crafty

Mystique : Unearthly

Movement : 60'

Initiative : 17

Melee Attack : n/a

Damage : 1d6 (touch)

Defense Class : 18

Hits Total : 20

Detection / Evasion : +10 / +8

Mystic Fortitude : +10

Special Abilities : Fearsome, Life Energy Drain * (touch), Magic Resistance, Psychic Powers (Psychic Gift +6, Mystic Strength 18, Power 24), Sixth Sense, Stealthy (18), Supernatural Vigor.

Awards : Glory 130, Wisdom 540.

Additional Lore : Dwimmerlaiks are the undead revenants of the sorcerer-kings of a long-forgotten, possibly prehuman race who battled against the Giant-Kings (see below) during the Mythic Age. As hinted above, they are responsible for the creation of Wights, which are brought back to unlife by the Dwimmerlaik's foul life-energy drain powers.

* Humans killed by a Dwimmerlaik's Life Energy Drain automatically become Wights (see below). As soon as they are reanimated, Wights become automatically Enslaved to the Dwimmerlaik who created them; these undead slaves do not count against the Dwimmerlaik's usual maximum of Enslaved beings.

Wight

Taxonomy : Spirit

Description : Undead revenants bent on spreading discord, strife and destruction among the living. They look like abnormally pale and gaunt humans with hauntingly dead eyes; an eerie aura of gloom seem to surround them at all time. Most of them haunt the deeper parts of the Great Hyperborean Forest, as noted in this issue's *Mythika Gazetteer*.

Size : Medium

Ferocity : Dangerous

Cunning : Alert

Mystique : Eldritch

Movement : 60'

Initiative : 16

Melee Attack : +4

Damage : 1d6 (weapon)

Defense Class : 16

Hits Total : 16

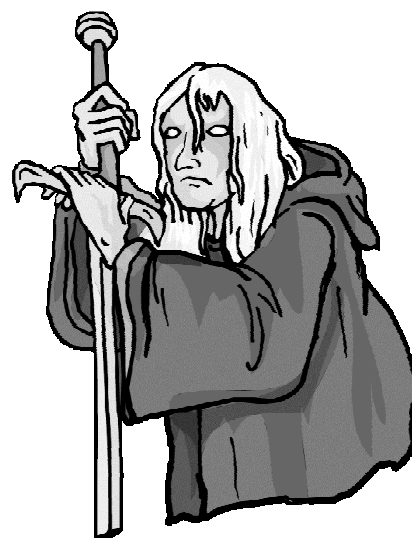
Detection / Evasion : +4

Mystic Fortitude : +8

Special Abilities : Fearsome, Magic Resistance, Stealthy (16), Supernatural Vigor.

Awards : Glory 65, Wisdom 90.

Additional Lore : Wights are brought back to life (or rather 'undeath') by the *Life-Energy Drain* ability of Dwimmerlaiks, as detailed above. There is no other way of creating a Wight. Since their soul is still trapped in their undead bodies, they qualify as Spirits rather than as Animates.



Creatures devised by Olivier Legrand & Peter Politis

The illustration for the Dwimmerlaik was taken from Wikimedia Commons, released under the GNU license.

MYTHIC BESTIARY : SPECIAL FEATURE

CREATURE CRAFTING

How To Create Your Own Mythic Bestiary, by **Olivier Legrand** (2009)

Creature Creation 101

The M&M creature construction system detailed in chapter II of the *Maze Masters Guide* was designed with several implicit assumptions in mind, some of which may not be immediately apparent to players and Maze Masters – the hidden nuts and bolts of the system, if you will. One of the purposes of this article is to discuss these inner workings and implicit assumptions in explicit detail, so that Maze Masters wishing to craft their own creatures can use the system to its fullest potential.

Concept

The first step of creature creation is, of course, coming up with an interesting concept – and there's no system for this! Assuming you are not adapting a creature from a book, movie or other fictional source, you'll have to rely on your creativity here.

One method which works quite well for old school, you-can-never-have-too-many-monsters games like M&M is starting from a picture – either a mental one or an actual image. In fact, many creatures in the vast M&M bestiary were created in this manner, starting from the image. Many of the marine creatures described in the first issue of *Minotaur Quarterly* are perfect examples of this approach ; such beings as the Hexapod or the Hogrebos started life as unnamed, undefined illustrations and were simply constructed from scratch to fit what their picture showed or suggested (yes, that's how we managed to find accurate pictures of such improbable creatures).

Basic Questions

Assuming you have a pretty clear concept in mind, statting up a creature for *Mazes & Minotaurs* breaks down to four basic questions :

1. What is the **Size** of the creature : Tiny, Small, Medium, Large or Gigantic ?
2. What is the **Taxonomy** of the creature : Folk, Beast, Monster, Animate or Spirit ?
3. What are the **Ferocity**, **Cunning** and **Mystique** ranks of the creature ?
4. What are the creature's **Special Abilities** ?

Everything else is just calculations, as detailed in the *Maze Masters Guide* (p 15-16).



- Mmh, let's see what we have here...

The Question of Size

Size is probably the easiest characteristic to define. The five Size categories used in the rules (Tiny, Small, Medium, Large, Gigantic) are very clear-cut, which should allow you to select the appropriate category very easily, using the following guidelines :

Tiny : Bee-Folk, Myrmidons, Muscus, Rhabdosians, rats, scorpions, most birds.

Small : Derros, Lares, Lemures, Morlocks, Ratlings, Fauns, Sirens ; cats, small dogs, huge birds.

Medium : Men, most Beastmen, Centaurs, Tritons, Minotaurs, Harpies ; hounds, wolves, lions, horses.

Large : Bronze Colossus, Cerberus, Chimera, Giant Boars ; bears, bulls, rhinos.

Gigantic : Giants and Gigantic Cyclops, Dragons, Hydras, Titanic Statues ; elephants, whales.

Since this is a very clear-cut, five-grade scales, some creatures will seem to fall precisely between two Size categories : some fantastic Monsters, for instance, may seem to be « huger than Large » without being truly Gigantic. Faced with such cases of « Size dilemmas », Maze Masters will have to use their own judgment ; if you find yourself unable to choose between two Size categories, simply devise two versions of the creature (such as a Large version and a Gigantic version), check the resulting numbers and make your choice based on how hard a time you wish to give your adventurers. Keep in mind that Size is one of the most important features of a creature ; among other things, it is the main factor in determining how much damage a creature can deal and also has a major incidence on how well it fights and how much damage it can sustain.

As can be seen from the examples above, each Size category is quite broad ; the Medium category, for instance, encompasses anything from a large dog to a lion or horse.

Speaking of horses, they are a typical example of a « Size dilemma » that occurred during the design of the M&M rules ; on one hand, common sense seemed to dictate a Large Size for horses, since they are much bigger and heavier creatures than men (the 'average' for Medium-sized creatures) and are not that less big or heavy than, say, bulls, who are clearly Large animals... yet, this choice would have made horses far too strong in game terms so it was decided to stretch the Medium Size category as much as possible, in order to include horses at its upper end (and putting bulls at the lower end of the Large category).

This Size dilemma was not solved with zoological facts or real-world calculations but with what we might call « gaming logic » : horses were made Medium-sized in game terms so that they could be killed in one or two blows or arrows, just like in the books and movies which M&M takes its inspiration from. This decision also ensured that Centaur player-characters would be categorized as Medium-sized beings too and would not gain the outrageous advantages associated with a Large Size. In a game like *Mazes & Minotaurs*, fun, simplicity and genre tropes should always trump scientific facts or tactical realism.

The Importance of Taxonomy

Although this might not be readily apparent, a creature's category (Beast, Folk, Monster, Spirit or Animate). has a great deal of impact on its profile and abilities. The differences between these five categories should be pretty obvious to anyone as far as the descriptive or narrative side of things is concerned but Maze Masters who wish to craft their own creatures should also consider what these distinctions actually mean in hard, technical game terms.

Each creature class has a set of special restrictions and benefits inherent to its category. As explained in the rules, a creature's Taxonomy may have a direct impact on its worth in terms of Glory, Wisdom or Experience : Beasts are worth twice their Glory award in Experience points to Hunters, Monsters have their Glory award doubled, making them opponents of choice for all Warriors, Spirits have their Wisdom award doubled, making them opponents of choice for all Magicians.

But there are other, subtler limitations and privileges which, while not explicitly mentioned in the *Maze Masters Guide*, were taken into consideration when designing the various creatures described in the *Creature Compendium* or in the various issues of the *Minotaur*. Until now, these Unwritten Laws of Creature Design were one of the best-kept secrets of Legendary Games Studio and are revealed here for the very first time, in all their Exclusive Mythical Glory – uh, sorry, I got carried away... The following sections examine the hidden nuts and bolts of creature creation for each of the five Taxonomy categories used in the rules : Beasts, Folks, Monsters, Spirits and Animates. Each of these sections also include a detailed Example showing how these design principles work in practice.



- Fire-breathing BULL ? You gotta kiddin' me ! What about the restrictions on Special Abilities for Beasts ??

Beasts

Beasts, Not Monsters

Beasts are just common animals – ones that actually exist in the real world, such as wolves, horses or lions.

The only exceptions to this rule listed in the *Creature Compendium* are a few tougher variants of natural animal species, such as the Giant Bat (which is « only » man-sized) and the Hyperborean Wolf and the various types of fantastic horses, such as the Magical Horse, the Pegasus, the Unicorn and even the Sea Horse.

Although one might still wonder why the Giant Bat was not categorized as a Monster (perhaps it had something to do with keeping abusive players from gaining enormous amounts of Glory by shooting down hordes of Giant Bats or perhaps the person who designed this creature does believe that man-sized bats actually exist in the real world...), the reasoning behind the « equine exception » can easily be inferred : Pegasi, Unicorns and other fantastic horses are, like true Horses, essentially « noble creatures » and thus cannot reasonably be labelled as Monsters, even in the broadest sense of the word. It should also be noted that categorizing these beings as Beasts rather than as Monsters is a purely symbolic or semantic distinction, since killing them does not bring any Glory at all, as noted in their respective *Creature Compendium* entries.

With the exception of the aforementioned fantastic mounts, the vast majority of Beasts are natural, mundane creatures. This, of course, has some incidence on their Ferocity, Cunning and Mystique ranks (see below) and also bars them from possessing truly supernatural abilities such as Breath Weapon, Fearsome, Insubstantial, Invulnerability, Life Energy Drain, Magic Resistance, Mindless, Multiple Heads, Petrification, Psychic Powers, Regeneration, Sixth Sense, Supernatural Vigor or Vocal Entrancement.

Again, fantastic horses are the proverbial exception here ; both Pegasi and Unicorns have the Sixth Sense and Supernatural Vigor abilities.

Ferocity

A quick survey of the various Beasts described in the *Compendium* shows us that the vast majority of Beasts (including Brown Bears, Wild Boars, Bulls, Elephants, Horses, Rams, Stags and Wolves) are defined as Aggressive (+1), only a few exceptional cases (Cave Bears, Lions, Rhinos, Hyperborean Wolves...) are defined as Dangerous (+2)... and *no Beast* is ranked at Deadly (+3). This is not an oversight but a deliberate design choice, the idea being to leave the higher Ferocity ranks to Monsters and other mythic creatures.

In M&M, most wild animals will have an Aggressive (+1) rank in Ferocity; at first, this might seem quite surprising but remember that genre tropes and the spirit of adventure gaming take precedence over realism and zoology here. Wolves, for instance, are probably far more dangerous in reality than they are in M&M – but in an old school adventuring RPG, wolves (and most wild animals) *should* definitely be low-level threats, if only in comparison to the more fantastic opponents that can be encountered by adventurers on a fairly regular basis.

This line of reasoning should be taken into account when statting up new Beasts for the game... and if you don't agree with this, well, rejoice, for the M&M creature rules were deliberately designed to be as flexible and adaptable as possible. If, for instance, you want your wolves to be a more significant threat for low-level adventurers, simply upgrade the Wolf's Ferocity by one rank, from Aggressive (+1) to Dangerous (+2); this will give the Beast a better Melee attack, a higher Initiative and 4 extra Hits, making it a much tougher customer.

Cunning

Cunning does NOT mean intelligence so, yes, in a game like M&M, some normal animals *can* be defined as Clever (+2). That being said, most Beasts will have either an Average or Alert (+1) degree of Cunning and even the most Cunning ones cannot really qualify as Crafty (+3). As for Ferocity, the supreme degree of Cunning should remain the privilege of Folks and other supernatural creatures. The easiest way to gauge a Beast's Cunning is to compare it with other Beasts. Beasts with an Average Cunning include Bears, Boars, Bulls and Stags. More Alert Beasts include Eagles, Elephants, Horses and Wolves and the only Clever natural animal is the Fox. All other Clever Beasts are fantastic horses (Unicorns, Pegasi, Magical Horses).

Mystique

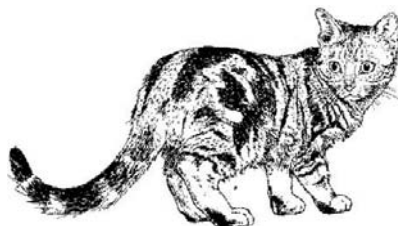
Since Beasts are mundane animals, their Mystique should always be Normal (0). Fantastic mounts are, once again, an exceptional case, precisely because of their fantastic nature: Sea Horses are Weird (+1), Unicorns Eldritch (+2) and Pegasi truly Unearthly (+3).

Special Abilities

As noted above, Beasts cannot normally possess special abilities which reflect some sort of magical or supernatural quality. Typical special abilities for Beasts include Aquatic, Charge Into Battle, Gallop, Lightning Fast, Sharp Senses, Stealthy, Tough Skin, Trample, Uncanny Agility and (for flying animals) Winged. Other (rarer) possibilities include Camouflage, Crushing Damage, Entangle, Grapple, Natural Armor or Poison.

Example of Beast Creation

Cats



Concept : Ordinary household cats. I'm not sure we really need stats for them but, hey, it will help illustrate how the system works.

Size : Cats are obviously Small creatures.

Ferocity : Despite what some people would have you believe, cats are neither Peaceful nor Dangerous creatures and fall into the usual Aggressive Ferocity rank for Beasts.

Cunning : Are Cats as Alert as Wolves and Horses or as Clever as Foxes? Since I love cats and they are often depicted as such in fiction, I decide to go for Clever. This will give them good starting Initiative and Detection / Evasion scores, which only makes sense.

Mystique : Don't listen to those people who believe cats are actually highly psychic beings from another world. For all their pretentious enigmatic posturing, cats are just cats and should be content with a Normal Mystique. That being said, if you really want to, you could give black cats a Weird (+1) Mystique.

Special Abilities : Taking a look at the list in the Maze Masters Guide, we find several special abilities that seem to fit the concept of cat perfectly: Lightning Fast, Sharp Senses, Stealthy and, of course, Uncanny Agility. We know some of them would really like to have Wallcrawling but the answer is no.

Cat

Taxonomy : Beast

Description : Common household cat.

Size : Small

Ferocity : Aggressive

Cunning : Clever

Mystique : Normal

Movement : 60'

Initiative : 19

Melee Attack : +3

Damage : 1d3 (bite and claws)

Defense Class : 14

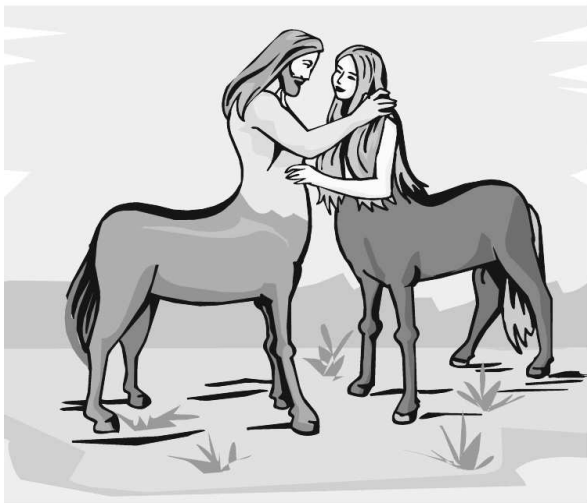
Hits Total : 4

Detection / Evasion : +8/+10

Mystic Fortitude : 0

Special Abilities : Lightning Fast, Sharp Senses, Stealthy (20), Uncanny Agility.

Awards : You gotta be kidding.



- Hi babe, wanna go for a ride ?

Folks

Folks, Not Monsters

The distinction between Folks and Monsters are primarily (but not exclusively) based on social and biological characteristics.

Unlike most Monsters, Folks tend to live in groups and usually have some form of society or culture, ranging from the crude, quasi-feral lifestyle of most Beastmen tribes to the decadent civilizations of Atlanteans or Derros. Folks are almost always humanoid (as exemplified by the various Beastmen tribes) or part-humanoid (Centaurids, Tritons etc) in form.

Since a huge size is often perceived as evidence of true monstrosity, most Folks are Medium-sized or smaller. Gigantic beings can never be categorized as Folks ; such giant-sized creatures are always Monsters, Beasts or Animates. Large Folks do exist but are quite rare, since most Large humanoids or semi-humanoids usually qualify as Monsters (or are perceived as such by humans, which amounts pretty much to the same thing) ; the only Large Folks listed in the *Creature Compendium* are Bucentaurs, Lesser Cyclops, Megalopodoi and Titanians. The decision to make these beings Folks rather than Monsters was largely based on their overall attitude and behavior rather than on their physical characteristics, appearance or abilities : they live in groups, seem to have a form of society or culture etc. That being said, the line separating Large Folks from Monsters can be pretty thin, as exemplified by the Tigermen of Kathai.

Ferocity

The Ferocity rank of a Folk can encompass many different factors, including inborn savagery, physical strength and, of course, skill at arms – but Maze Masters should always keep in mind that Folks, like Beasts, are supposed to be less dangerous (at least physically) than truly supernatural creatures. Exceptions are, of course, always possible but on the whole, Folks represent a lower threat level than Monsters, Spirits and the more powerful Animates.

The Ferocity of the 70 different Folks described in the *Creature Compendium* entries can be broken down as follows : roughly 20% of them are defined as Peaceful (0), another 20% as Dangerous (+2), a *single one* (Stygian Lords) as Deadly (+3)... and everybody else (roughly 60%) as Aggressive (+1).

An Aggressive (+1) Ferocity represents the standard level for most fighting Folks, including almost all Beastmen (Boarmen, Cynocephals, Lycans, Tragos etc), mythical demihumans (Centaurids and Tritons) and 'quasi-men' (Arimaspians, Atlantean War Slaves, Degenerate Men, Wildmen etc).

Peaceful (0) Folks either have a genuinely pacific and nonviolent culture (Icarians, Sylvans, Swamp Folk, Carapax, Ghostlings...) or an indolent, sensual or playful nature (Satyrs, Dolphins, Centaurides, Mermaids...). Since Ferocity has a direct impact on Hits Total, most of these creatures have a low Hits Total (4 or 8 if they have Supernatural Vigor) and can usually be defined as « non-fighters », which does NOT necessarily make them defenseless or harmless (Sylvans, for instance, are quite good at shooting down undesirable intruders from cover).

So what do the more Dangerous Folks have that their rank-and-file cousins lack ? Taking a closer look at the *Compendium* entries, we find that these Dangerous Folks can be classified in four broad categories :

- Beings who are defined as 'special' or 'champion' versions of a more general Folk (Chironian Centaurids, Sagittarians, Ubasti of Royal Blood).
- Beings who are inherently more Dangerous than most Folks because of their superior strength or agility (Leonids, Lizardians, Ogres, Troglodytes).
- Beings which could well have been categorized as Monsters but were not (such as Lesser Cyclops, Klaatakaa'rr) – 'quasi-Monsters', if you will.
- Beings with a true warrior-culture and tradition of martial skill (as opposed to a tribal culture and a tradition of savagery and violence) : this category includes Atlantean Nobles, Hawkmen, Myrmidons, Obsidians, Titanians.

Maze Masters should always keep these categories in mind when designing a new Folk ; if your Folk is a fighting Folk but cannot really be included into one of the four special categories outlined above, then you should probably keep its Ferocity at the usual Aggressive (+1) rank.

Also remember that a creature's Ferocity rank has a major influence on its Hits Total and this is especially important in the case of Medium-sized being : depending on its Ferocity, a Medium-sized creature will have a total of 4 Hits (Peaceful), 8 (Aggressive), 12 (Dangerous) or 16 (Deadly), with the Supernatural Vigor ability adding a further +4. These values can be directly compared to the Basic Hits of warriors : 12 at level 1, 16 at level 2 etc. In other words, a single 1st level warrior tends to be more dangerous in combat than a single Beastman... which is one of the reasons why Folks are usually encountered *in groups*.



I'm a Folk and I'm proud of it !

Whereas a Monster's strength is often tied to its monstrous size or special abilities, the strength of Folks usually lie in their numbers. Notable exceptions rule include Folks with Psychic Powers ; even a single Stygian Lord or Atlantean Noble can mean a lot of trouble for a low-level party, especially if the Maze Master plays him accordingly to his Crafty Cunning, which leads us nicely to the next topic...

Cunning

The Cunning of Folks is a much more variable factor than Ferocity or Mystique ; it runs the full range of possible ranks, from Average (0) to Crafty (+3), with no particular restriction or limitation. The simplest way of gauging what a new Folk's Cunning rank should be is to compare it with the Cunning of existing Folks. Here are a few typical examples for each rank, taken from the *Creature Compendium* :

Average (0) : Apemen, Atlantean Slaves, Bearmen, Boarmen, Bucentaurs, Brutaurs, Lesser Cyclops, Degenerate Men, Morlocks, Ogres, Orkoï, Sons of Dagon, Triclopes, Troglodytes, Wildmen etc.

Alert (+1) : Acteons, Centaurs, Cynocephals, Hyenakin, Leonids, Lycans, Myrmidons, Obsidians, Sand Folk, Swamp Folk, Titanians, Tragos, Tritons etc.

Clever (+2) : Bee Folk, Carapax, Chironian Centaurs and Sagittarians, Dichotomians, Dolphins, Ghostlings, Hawkmen and Icarians, Lizardians, Mermaids, Satyrs and their kin, Selenites, common Ubasti, Zorbas etc.

Crafty (+3) : Anubians, Atlantean Nobles, Derros, Ratlings, Serpent Men, Silent Lurkers, Stygian Lords, Sylvans and Ubasti of Noble or Royal Blood.

Maze Masters should also keep in mind what this characteristic means in game terms : a creature's Cunning modifies its Initiative score and Detection / Evasion bonuses. In other words, a being's Cunning affects its ability to strike first in combat and also determines how hard it will be to surprise, trick or ambush. Cunning also has a direct impact on a creature's use of certain special abilities, including Missile Weapons and Stealthy, which are quite common among Folks.

Furthermore, a closer look at the various examples listed above leads to the following observations :

a) Folks who may be described as slow-witted, brutish or just plain dumb have Average (0) Cunning, while Folks who are noted for their quick wits, ingenuity, wisdom or superior intellect are Clever (+2) ; Folks who seem to fall somewhere between these two categories have (logically enough) an Alert (+1) rank of Cunning.

b) With the exception of Sylvans, all Crafty Folks can be described as utterly vicious and wicked. Many of them (Anubians, Atlantean Nobles, Derros, Serpent Men, Stygian Lords and Noble Ubasti) belong to (or descend from) decadent, pre-human civilizations. In other words, a Crafty Cunning should usually be the sign of a devious and cruel mind or a corrupt, ancient heritage.

Mystique

Folks tend to be on the lower end of the Mystique spectrum : most of them have either a Normal or Weird (+1) Mystique rank, depending on how, well, « weird » they are. The major exception to this rule are Folks with Psychic Abilities, such as Anubians, Atlantean Nobles, Serpent Men, Stygian Lords or Ubasti of Royal Blood who all have an Eldritch (+2) Mystique.

Thus, as far as Folks are concerned, Psychic Powers and an Eldritch Mystique seem to go hand in hand – which is pretty logical (as far as logic can be applied to such things). That being said, the *Compendium* does include a couple of exceptions : Selenites (who have Eldritch Mystique but lack Psychic Powers) and Ghostlings (who have Psychic Powers but only a Weird Mystique), two Folks which, interestingly enough, originate from a different world (the Moon for Selenites and another plane of existence for Ghostlings).

No Folks may have an Unearthly (+3) Mystique : this supreme rank is normally restricted to the most powerful Spirits and to some Monsters (as well as to those darn Pegasi – yet another case of unabashed fantastic horse favoritism).

Special Abilities

As a general rule, Folks do not normally have access to the most spectacular (or truly *monstrous*) abilities such as Breath Weapon, Invulnerability or Petrification. Exceptions are always possible but in most cases, the possession of even one of those abilities should be enough to take a creature out of the Folk category and into another class (usually Monster).

Typical abilities for Folks include Aquatic or Amphibian, Charge Into Battle, Grapple, Lightning Fast, Missile Weapons and Marksmanship, Sharp Senses, Stealthy, Supernatural Vigor, Tough Skin, Uncanny Agility and Winged. Other, less common possibilities include Sixth Sense, Psychic Powers, Regeneration etc.

Lastly, it should be noted that, no matter how stupid or single-minded some of them may appear to be, creatures which are categorized as Folks can never be Mindless : they are, by definition, sentient beings with the ability to learn, adapt and (in most cases) speak a language of their own.

Example of Folk Creation

Turtlemen



Concept : So we need an extra creature for the *Mythic Bestiary* and all we have in stock is the illustration above. A race of Turtlemen could be an interesting (if slightly exotic) population for a Mysterious Island or act as the guardians of some ancient, forgotten treasure.

Size : Even if their carapace makes them very bulky and heavy, Turtlemen are of human height and thus qualify as Medium-sized creatures.

Ferocity : Neither Peaceful nor Dangerous, Turtlemen are given the usual Aggressive rank for Folks.

Cunning : Given their looks, Turtlemen can safely be assumed to be fairly slow and not particularly good at thinking on their feet, which gives them Average Cunning.

Mystique : Definitely Weird (I mean, just look at them).

Special Abilities : Their carapace is obviously a form of Natural Armor. After a quick glance at the list, we also select Amphibian, Grapple, Supernatural Vigor and (just to make them a bit more special) Magic Resistance.

Turtleman

Taxonomy : Folk

Description : See above.

Size : Medium

Ferocity : Aggressive

Cunning : Average

Mystique : Weird

Movement : 60'

Initiative : 11

Melee Attack : +2

Damage : 1d6 (weapon)

Defense Class : 17

Hits Total : 12

Detection / Evasion : 0

Mystic Fortitude : +6

Special Abilities : Amphibian, Grapple (Might 16), Magic Resistance, Natural Armor, Supernatural Vigor.

Awards : Glory 45, Wisdom 30.

Monsters

Monstrosity Defined

Monsters are, well, Monsters – they tend to be unique, aberrant, « impossible » beings with a complete disregard for things like social life, biological credibility or ecological self-consistency.

Nobody knows exactly how they come to life but they are certainly not « born » as natural beings are : as far as the Gods themselves know, there are no female Minotaurs, male Gorgons or mating season for Chimeras. If your « Monsters » live in communities, breed and raise their young, then they are most probably not Monsters, but Folks.

Size is an essential component of monstrosity. Since the concept of *monster* is tied to the idea of a direct physical threat to humans and other man-sized beings, Tiny Monsters are virtually nonexistent and Small Monsters are extremely rare : the *Compendium* lists only four Small Monsters (Floating Eyes, Sirens, Tragostomos and, yes, Magical Foxes) and one single Tiny Monster (Stirges). Conversely, many Monsters have a Large or even Gigantic Size.

As detailed below, being a Monster also has a direct incidence on a creature's Ferocity, Cunning and Mystique ranks.

Ferocity

The Ferocity of a Monster should always be at least Aggressive (+1) and is more likely to be Dangerous (+2), if not Deadly (+3). Roughly 50% of the Monsters listed in the *Creature Compendium* qualify as Dangerous (+2) creatures. The other half is distributed as follows : Peaceful 2%, Aggressive 14%, Deadly 34%. In other words, the Ferocity of Monsters is inherently very high, with Dangerous and Deadly Monsters being the most common.

It should also be noted that the only two « Peaceful Monsters » listed in the *Compendium* are, well, special cases : Telchines, who are very special creatures and were labelled as Monsters rather than Folks mainly because of their very special origin (divine curse, you know), and (wait for it...) Giant Slugs, whose Peaceful rank obviously reflects extreme, well, sluggishness rather than any form of inclination toward nonviolence.



Monsters & Size : sorry, no Baby Chimera !



And NO Dwarf Minotaur either.

When designing a new Monster, don't hesitate to make it Dangerous or even Deadly. This is what Monsters should be, after all. Keep in mind that a creature's Ferocity, like its Size, has a direct impact on its Hits Total. This is one of the reasons why a lot of classic Medium-sized Monsters like Gorgons or Minotaurs were given a Deadly of Ferocity : this not only made them very lethal in direct combat but also gave them the maximum Hits Total for their Size, giving them a truly monstrous degree of endurance and vitality.

Cunning

Although many Monsters follow the « big, bad, dumb critter » stereotype, many of them do have a high level of Cunning. The *Creature Compendium* lists quite a few Clever (+2) Monsters, including many creatures taken from (or inspired by) myth and legend (Basilisks, Chimerae, Fomoros, Gorgons, Harpies, Lamiae, Leucrotas, Manticores, Phoenix, Sirens...), as well as some vicious giant predators (Giant Rats, Stygian Serpents) or beings noted for their sheer malevolence (Malacorn, Tragostomos).

Crafty (+3) Monsters are quite rare but definitely exist - the *Compendium* lists several examples of such creatures, all noted for their propensity to mislead, taunt or lure their victims or opponents : Asheeba, Daughters of Arachne, Floating Eyes, Sphinxes, Telchines and (again...) Magical Foxes.

Mystique

Since Mystique is partly tied to how weird a creature looks or how unnatural it is, most Monsters will have a Weird (+1) rank of Mystique.

Roughly 55% of the Monsters listed in the *Creature Compendium* are Weird. The remaining ones are almost equally distributed between the Normal (0) and Eldritch (+2) ranks.

There is, as usual, a proverbial exception : the Phoenix, the only Monster in the whole *Compendium* graced with a truly Unearthly (+3) Mystique, but this obviously reflects the truly unique nature of this mythical (and even mystical) being.

A more detailed analysis of the Mystique rank distribution between the various Monsters described in the *Compendium* leads to some interesting results, which can be summarized as follows :

a) A Monster's Mystique should always be Weird (+1), unless there's a good reason to downgrade it to Normal (0) or to upgrade it to Eldritch (+2), as detailed below.

b) Monsters which are simply giant versions of common animals (Giant Boars, Giant Bulls, Cave Spiders etc) should have a Normal Mystique (0). This also applies to dinosaurs (Pterodactyls, Tyrannosaurus), quasi-dinosaurs (Gigantosaurs) and monstrous insects (such as Stirges, who are, after all, little more than giant mosquitoes).

This reasoning can also be extended to Giants (the « giant version » of humans !), as long as they remain perfectly humanoid – any serious anatomical deviation from the humanoid model (such as the Gigantic Cyclops' single eye or the Two-Headed Giant's... two heads) is enough to bump the being's Mystique to the Weird (+1) level. Exceptions are always possible : the *Compendium* does include a few Monsters with Normal Mystique which cannot really be integrated into the (b) category described above : Abominathol, Carnivorous Cloud, Swamp Horror, Tigermen of Kathai and Trolith.

Good reasons to give a Monster an Eldritch (+2) rather than a Weird (+1) Mystique include the following :

- Having the Petrification ability (Basilisks, Cockatrices, Fomoros, Gorgons)
- Having Multiple Heads of a different type (Chimera)
- Being a reptile with Multiple Heads (Hydras)
- Having a Large Size, the body of a quadrupedal feline and a human-looking head (Lamassu, Sphinx)
- Having the upper body of a human and the lower body of a reptile (Lamia, Sons of Cecrops)
- Looking like the bad dream of a demented taxidermist (Chimera, Manticore, Peryton)
- Having an unspeakable appearance and Lovecraftian name (Crawling Aberration, Seven-Mawed Thing)
- Having Psychic Powers – a rare gift for Monsters (Floating Eye, Lamia, Psychotaur)
- Having unique magical powers over the elements (Fomoros, Telchines)
- Being a chaotic, twisted, evil version of a benevolent fantastic Beast (Malacorn)
- Being a sacred or god-related Monster (Olympian Eagle, Stygian Serpent)
- Having eyes all over your body (Argusoid)
- Being a variant of an existing Monster, with higher Mystique as your only *raison d'être* (Albinotaur)

These guidelines only pertain to Monsters and are only, well, guidelines ; exceptions and special cases are always possible (such as the Catoblepas, who is the only Monster in the *Compendium* who has the Petrification ability but only a Weird (+1) Mystique).

Example of Monster Creation

The Lake Monster

Concept : Let's suppose we want to design a big lake monster inspired by Nessie and other similar legendary creatures. We also decide that, unlike Nessie, our Lake Monster will be perfectly able to leave its lake and walk on land (for the sake of seeing the players' faces when this happens in play).

Size : This is obviously a Gigantic Monster.

Ferocity : Like most Monsters, this creature's Ferocity should be either Dangerous or Deadly. Since we are unable to make up our mind, we look for a reasonably similar creature in the *Creature Compendium* and find that the Sea Serpent is Dangerous ; since there is no reason to suppose that Lake Monsters should be inherently deadlier than their marine cousins, we settle for Dangerous.

Cunning : We decide to make our creature Alert, like the Sea Serpent.

Mystique : Here again, there is no real reason to deviate from the Sea Serpent template so our Lake Monster will be Weird.

Special Abilities : Checking the list from the *Maze Masters Guide*, we choose the following – and fairly obvious – special abilities for our Lake Monster : Amphibian, Fearsome, Magic Resistance, Sixth Sense (which will make the creature harder to trick), Supernatural Vigour, Regeneration, Tough Skin, Trample (since, unlike the Sea Serpent, our Lake Monster can actually walk on land).

Lake Monster

Taxonomy : Monster

Description : Four-legged amphibian lake monster.

Size : Gigantic

Ferocity : Dangerous

Cunning : Alert

Mystique : Weird

Movement : 120'

Initiative : 15

Melee Attack : +8

Damage : 3d6 (bite)

Defense Class : 17

Hits Total : 50

Detection / Evasion : +6 / +4

Mystic Fortitude : +6

Special Abilities : Amphibian, Fearsome, Magic Resistance, Regeneration (3 Hits / round), Sixth Sense, Supernatural Vigor, Tough Skin, Trample.

Awards : Glory 850, Wisdom 60.



- Hello Mr Lyrist, did you know I had Magic Resistance ?

Special Abilities

As noted above, Monsters have access to the most spectacular (or outrageous) special abilities such as Breath Weapon, Fearsome, Invulnerability, Multiple Heads or Petrification.

Most Monsters should be hard to kill ; Supernatural Vigor is a very common ability for Monsters, giving them extra Hits and making them immune to poisons (sorry, guys, no cheap 'poison arrow' trick against my Chimera !) and even those which do not enjoy full Invulnerability usually have at least one other ability that makes them harder to kill, such as Tough Skin, Natural Armor or Regeneration.

Many Monsters also have Magic Resistance, giving them a good Mystic Fortitude defense against the attacks or tricks of most magicians ; it should be noted, however, that most Monsters remain more vulnerable (or 'less impervious') to the effects of magic than to the effects of direct combat. This is one of the reasons why most *Mazes & Minotaurs* adventuring parties include at least one magician : no matter how tough or valorous your warriors are, there will come a time when a well-aimed blast of Divine Wrath or an opportune use of sorcerous Enslavement will save the day...

Spirits

The Nature of Spirits

Spirits are inherently preternatural, otherworldly beings with a strong connection to some cosmic force – be it divinity, nature, fate, chaos or death. Despite what the term « Spirit » might imply to some readers, not all Spirits are ethereal, disembodied beings : while some of them are Insubstantial (such as Cacodemons, Charonts Eolians, Flamoids and, of course, Ghosts), many of the Spirits detailed in the *Creature Compendium* actually have a body or, at least, a tangible bodily envelope. Examples of such « incarnate Spirits » include Alseids, Curetes, Empusae, Furies, Hags, Keres, Lares, Lemures etc.



Spirits come in all shapes and styles

It should also be noted that being a Spirit does not prevent a creature from being Mindless – indeed, many Spirits possess this special ability, which, in their case, usually reflects an absence of emotion, free will or personality rather than an absence of purpose or thought process.

For some arcane mythical reason, Spirits tend to be of Medium Size; the *Creature Compendium* only lists three Small Spirits (Lares, Lemures and Oracle Owls) and two Large ones (God Shadows and Stilchios); from this we may deduct that there are no Spirits of Tiny or Gigantic Size (and no, Gods are NOT Gigantic Spirits; they are Deities, which is another thing entirely).

As detailed below, Spirits usually have a high Mystique rank and are normally the only creatures whose Mystique can reach the supreme Unearthly level. Their Ferocity and Cunning vary widely and may reach the supreme Deadly or Crafty levels.

Ferocity

A Spirit's Ferocity rank may be interpreted in a variety of ways – as the usual measure of fighting prowess or as a more mystical reflection of persistence and relentlessness. A Spirit's Ferocity rank can run the full gamut from Peaceful (0) to Deadt (+3); in fact, the *Creature Compendium* lists more Dangerous or even Deadly Spirits than Aggressive or Peaceful ones:

Peaceful (0) : Lares, Oracle Owls, Ghosts.

Aggressive (+1) : Alseids, Eolians, Lemures, Ghosts.

Dangerous (+2) : Charonts, Empusae, Flamoids, God Shadows, Shadows, Stichios, Ghosts.

Deadly (+3) : Cacodemons, Curetes, Furies, Hags, Keres, Salamanders.

Ferocity loses some of its importance in game terms for Insustantial Spirits (and other Insustantial beings) since these beings cannot normally make physical attacks (and thus have no effective Melee score); it remains nonetheless an important characteristic even for these Incorporeal creatures since it also affects their Hits Total as well as their Initiative.

Cunning

Spirits should always be at least Alert (+1) and may easily be Clever (+2) or even Crafty (+3). The following examples may help Maze Masters evaluate the Cunning rank of their own Spiritual creations:

Alert (+1) : Charonts, Curetes, Eolians, Flamoids, Furies, God Shadows, Salamanders, Stichios, Ghosts.

Clever (+2) : Alseids, Keres, Lares, Lemures, Shadows, Ghosts.

Crafty (+3) : Cacodemons, Hags, Oracle Owls, Ghosts.

Mystique

Mystique is naturally the forte of Spirits. The Mystique of a Spirit should be either Eldritch (+2) or Unearthly (+3), depending on its overall level of power, as shown by the following examples:

Eldritch (+2) : Alseids, Charonts, Empusae, Ghosts, Hags, Lares, Lemures, Stichios.

Unearthly (+3) : Cacodemons, Curetes, Eolians, Flamoids, Furies, God Shadows, Keres, Oracle Owls, Salamanders, Shadows.

Special Abilities

Some special abilities are mandatory for Spirits. All Spirits have Magic Resistance and either Insustantial or (if they do have a body) Supernatural Vigor.

In addition to these automatic benefits, Spirits have access to a wide variety of other abilities, including (but not restricted to) Fearsome, Invulnerability, Life Energy Drain, Lightning Fast, Mindless, Psychic Powers, Regeneration, Sixth Sense and Stealthy.



*What is this Green Man doing here ?
Find out next page...*

Example of Spirit Creation

The Green Man

Concept : After reading a fascinating book on *The Green Man* (you know, those weird, disturbing foliate face sculptures which crop up in many medieval churches), I decide that a "Green Man" would make an interesting type of Spirit for M&M – it would be a forest Spirit, humanoid but made of living vegetation, not necessarily malevolent but unforgiving to those who hurt the forest or trespass on his sacred domain.

Size : Medium (roughly man-sized).

Ferocity : The Green Man is a Dangerous (+2) Spirit – "as dangerous as the forest itself".

Cunning : The Green Man is a wise and canny Spirit but not given to devious tricks; I give him a Clever (+2) rank in Cunning.

Mystique : Eldritch or Unearthly ? Since the Green Man appears to be a very earthy Spirit, I choose the lower (but still very high) rank of Eldritch (+2).

Special Abilities : Since the Green Man is a Spirit and has a physical body, he automatically has Magic Resistance as well as Supernatural Vigor. Right from the start, I make some obvious choices for my forest guardian : Camouflage (in the green), Regeneration, Sharp Senses, Sixth Sense and Stealthy. Uncanny Agility would also work quite well with the "body of leaves" concept; I also want to give him the power to ensnare his opponents with vegetal vines – something the Entangle ability will represent perfectly. Finally, I also decide to grant my Green Man Invulnerability, emphasizing his tie to the primal forces of life

The Green Man

Taxonomy : Spirit

Description : See above.

Size : Medium

Ferocity : Dangerous

Cunning : Clever

Mystique : Eldritch

Movement : 60'

Initiative : 16

Melee Attack : +5

Damage : 1d6 (claws)

Defense Class : 24

Hits Total : 16

Detection / Evasion : +12 / +8

Mystic Fortitude : +8

Special Abilities : Camouflage, Entangle (10', Might 16), Invulnerability, Magic Resistance, Regeneration (1 Hit per round), Sharp Senses, Sixth Sense, Stealthy (18), Supernatural Vigor, Uncanny Agility.

Awards : Glory 130, Wisdom 120.

Animates

Artificial & Unnatural

Animates are artificially animated creatures ; many are mechanical constructs or statues brought to life by magic but this category of creatures also includes some vegetal, mineral or wholly unnatural lifeforms, as exemplified by Vines of Tantalus and Rocky Pythons, as well as by the various types of undead animated by necromancy (Skeleton, Stygian Hound, Mummy etc). Animates come in all shapes : humanoid, quadrupedal, birdlike, insectoid, serpentine, arachnoid... Likewise, their Size can be anything from Small to Gigantic; most Animates, however, will be either Medium or Large.

Animates are, by definition, Mindless creatures. The only exception listed in the *Compendium* is the vegetal Attack Kelp; whether this exception is an oversight or as a unique feature is left to each Maze Master's discretion. Because of their Mindlessness and artificial nature, Animates tend to behave in a very uniform or repetitive manner, which makes them very different from other creatures : their decision-making ability is virtually inexistent and they often exist for a single, very specific purpose from which they will never willingly deviate. That being said, keep in mind that Mindless creatures are immune to 'clever tricks', as noted in the *Trick or Threat* article from *Minotaur n°4*.

Ferocity

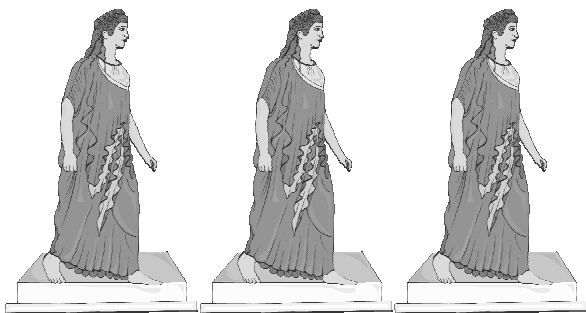
The Ferocity of an Animate may be anything from Peaceful (Singing Keledon) to Deadly (Iron Warrior). Ultimately, it depends on the purpose for which the Animate was created. Truly Deadly Animates are quite rare (the *Creature Compendium* only lists three : Iron Warriors, Minotons and Titanic Statues); most combat-ready Animates will be either Aggressive (+1) or Dangerous (+2), depending on how tough, relentless and hard to defeat you want them to be.

Cunning

Because of their Mindlessness, Animates are unable to improvise, learn by experience, figure out clues or use complex tactics. Cunning tends to be the weak spot (or, perhaps, the "missing component") of Animates. All Animates should have an Average Cunning, as befits a Mindless creature, unless their actions are *directly* controlled by some internal or external operator, in which case the Animate's Cunning will reflect that of the operator (as in the case of the Derros Warcraft).

Mystique

Like Cunning, Mystique is a pretty clear-cut affair as far as Animates are concerned. Almost all the Animates described in the *Creature Compendium* have a Weird Mystique, except for three special cases detailed below. So, in other words, being an artificial creature is enough to make you Weird (+1) but not enough to make you Eldritch (+2) or even Unearthly (+3), which would normally denote some form of superior psychic ability or a link with some higher, unseen, mystical force.



A trio of Crushing Women starting to animate

The three exceptions described in the *Compendium* are Attack Kelps (the only Animate with a Normal Mystique rank), Mummies and Titanic Statues (who both have an Eldritch Mystique) and the Tragic Floating Head (the only Animate with Unearthly Mystique). Each of these exceptions is actually a special case, with a good reason for having an unusual Mystique : unlike all other Animates, Attack Kelps seem to be natural lifeforms and are not animated by any form of magic (unlike, for instance, the Vines of Tantalus) ; Mummies are, well, highly *mystical* creatures (well, at least more than the other undead Animates, who are little more than walking bones) and the Tragic Floating Head is, well... the Tragic Floating Head. As for the Titanic Statue, just ask Hephaestus - maybe Animates taken from a Ray Harryhausen movie always get special treatment.

Special Abilities

Being Mindless makes them completely immune to the effects of Sorcery, Poetic Magic and similar powers... but it should be noted that no Animate (except the very anomalous Tragic Floating Head) described in the *Compendium* has Magic Resistance, presumably because a creature animated by magic cannot be inherently resistant to its effects (being Mindless is another thing entirely). Their Mindlessness also seems incompatible with Psychic Powers and perceptive abilities like Sharp Senses or Sixth Sense. Other very mystical abilities like Life Energy Drain or Insubstantial also seem to be beyond their reach (but hey, you never know - Bronze Age vampiric holograms, anyone ?

On the upside, many Animates have Supernatural Vigour, reflecting a superior degree of magical or mechanical stamina. Other appropriate abilities for Animates include Natural Armor or even Invulnerability.

The Tragic Floating Exception

The bizarre, unfathomable Tragic Floating Head (*Creature Compendium* p 117) seems to qualify as a living (?) exception to the various observations presented in this article about Animates. With its Crafty Cunning, Unearthly Mystique, Sixth Sense and Magic Resistance, the Tragic Floating Head clearly violates all known rules of Animate design. In fact, one might wonder if this outlandish creature is really an Animate (or really a creature at all, for that matter); for all we know, the Tragic Floating Head may actually be a *vehicle* or construct controlled by an outside, possibly extra-dimensional operator (and if this is ever proven true, remember you read it here first).

Example of Animate Creation

The Crushing Woman

Concept : Imagine the statue of a beautiful woman, taking you into her graceful bronze arms... and then crushing you mercilessly to death in her unbreakable embrace. This creature idea was inspired by Prosper Mérimée's famous short story *La Vénus d'Ile*. Such a being could make a very interesting culprit in a closed room whodunit scenario; alternatively, a whole legion of Crushing Women advancing toward the adventurers at the same mechanical pace with their arms wide open and a sad, unchanging expression on their sculpted face could also make a real nightmarish (and slightly Freudian) scene for a more combat-oriented scenario.

Size : Medium

Ferocity : First, I wanted to make the Crushing Woman absolutely Deadly but it makes more sense to make her 'only' Dangerous, putting her on par with Midas Men and Living Caryatids, rather than with ultimate killing machines like Iron Warriors or Minotons.

Cunning : Average, like all Animates.

Mystique : Weird, like the vast majority of Animates.

Special Abilities : Mindless and Supernatural Vigor seem pretty mandatory. The Crushing Woman's mode of attack also requires Grapple and Crushing Damage. Her bronze skin will also give her Natural Armor.

Crushing Woman

Taxonomy : Animate

Description : See above.

Size : Medium

Ferocity : Dangerous

Cunning : Average

Mystique : Weird

Movement : 60'

Initiative : 12

Melee Attack : +4

Damage : 1d6 (crushing damage)

Defense Class : 17

Hits Total : 16

Detection / Evasion : 0

Mystic Fortitude : +2

Special Abilities : Crushing Damage, Grapple (Might = 16), Mindless, Natural Armor, Supernatural Vigor.

Awards : Glory 70, Wisdom 20.

Note : The Crushing Woman's Grapple and subsequent Crushing Damage are her only forms of attack.

This concludes our exploration of the Fine Art of Creature Crafting. Have fun making your own monstrosities !

Olivier Legrand (2009)

A TWIST IN THE MAZE

A Regular M&M Column by **Luke G. Reynard**

ADVENTURES & ADVANCEMENT

(or : doing away with the whole Glory / Wisdom / Experience thing)

Even in a straightforward, heroic adventure RPG like M&M, there are many different gamemastering styles.

When you come to think of it, there are probably as many Maze Mastering styles as there are Maze Masters... but once a session is over, Maze Masters really tend to fall into two broad categories : those who delight in counting each and every Glory or Wisdom point gained by the player-characters (not to mention Experience for those darn Thieves and Hunters) and those for whom this activity is a boring, pointless exercise in number-crunching and the worst part of what being a Maze Master is all about (and I'll say nothing about the 'fun' of arbitrating players' arguments and complaints). If you belong to the first category, then you might as well stop reading now ; if, on the other hand, you would gladly throw away the arbitrary, unwieldy and ridiculously meticulous Glory / Wisdom / Experience system in favor of a much simpler method of character advancement, then rejoice, for this is precisely what this article is all about.

The basic idea behind this alternate approach is a very simple one : characters simply go up in level once they have completed a certain number of adventures, without having to keep an obsessive total of Glory, Wisdom or Experience points. The higher the level of the character, the more adventure he must complete in order to level up.

This number of required adventures is equal to the level the character is trying to reach.

Thus, it would take two adventures to go from level 1 to level 2, three more adventures to reach level 3, four more adventures to reach level 4 and so on. Thus, reaching the legendary 6th level would take a grand total of twenty adventures, which is a more spectacular achievement than it may seem at first.

Let's get down to the specifics of the system. First, we need to define what « completing an adventure » actually means and what it does NOT mean.

Adventure is not always synonymous with *game session* : an adventure should be defined as a complete scenario, which may actually cover one or several sessions of play. Furthermore, *completing an adventure* does not just mean participation or mere survival but does include the idea of success. In other words, the Maze Master may simply decide that a given adventure does not count toward a character's advancement either because it was not challenging or perilous enough or because the character completely failed to accomplish the overall goals of the scenario.



The heroic Luke G. Reynard battling the Great Monster of Needless Complexity in the Labyrinth of Optional Variants

Ultimately, it is the Maze Master's responsibility to present his players with adventures that are challenging and perilous enough for their characters but which have attainable objectives. So the term *adventure* in this context should really be taken as *suitably challenging adventure* - but every Maze Master worth his salt already knows this, right ? I mean, nobody is going to pit a group of first-level neophytes against a Chimera or, at the other end of the spectrum, annoy sixth-level living legends with a handful of marauding Boarmen...

Regardless of which advancement system you are using, the challenges of an adventure should always fit the overall power level of the player-characters.

But let's get back to our freeform advancement system. Maze Masters who find this approach interesting but a bit too schematic or rigid may make things more flexible by introducing two special types of adventure scenarios : mini-adventures and maxi-adventures.



- Come on, Mino, let's do this on our own ! There's no way I'm gonna share these Glory points with anybody else !

A mini-adventure is a short scenario which does challenge the characters' abilities but cannot really be compared to a full-blown adventure in terms of difficulty, length or danger ; mini-adventures simply count as half-adventures for advancement purposes.

In other words, a 1st level character could reach level 2 after completing two full adventures or four mini-adventures or one full adventure and two mini-adventures. Conversely, maxi-adventures are scenarios which are especially challenging, difficult or dangerous and which usually take several game sessions to complete. A maxi-adventure counts as two full adventures for advancement purposes.

Thus, completing a single maxi-adventure may be enough to reach level 2. This idea could also be extended to include mega-adventures, with each mega-adventure worth two maxi-adventures (or four full adventures) : the recently-published *Tomb of the Bull King* is a perfect example of such a mega-adventure (or mini-campaign, depending on how you look at it).

In addition of freeing the Maze Master from what can often become a dreary exercise in bookkeeping, this variant advancement system also has the big advantage of making the advancement of player-characters a group effort (since each adventure will have the same advancement worth for all those who were actively involved in it) rather than the competition it can sometimes become – or « Glory hounding » as it is known among some M&M players. This collective approach to character advancement is also a simple and effective way to promote the kind of team spirit or fellowship often found in fantasy novels and movies featuring groups of heroes.

As noted in the first lines of this article, this alternate approach will not appeal to every group's gaming sensibilities - some players actually enjoy the competitive aspects of character advancement and are very attached to the idea of rewarding each individual character according to his own merits, heroism, resourcefulness or number of 'kills'.

Such players may find this freeform system a bit too 'collectivist' for their tastes, since it apparently does not allow the Maze Master to give 'extra credit' to characters who have been especially brave, clever, resourceful, heroic or brilliant during a game session – but this is not really a problem (or even not a problem at all) when you start considering the player-characters' party as a group, rather than as an accidental or artificial gathering of individualists.

Remember what we said earlier about successfully completing adventures ? Well, since heroism and resourcefulness are often the keys to success, each individual character can now actively contribute to the advancement of the group as a whole : the more heroic or resourceful you and your fellow adventurers prove to be, the more likely you are to successfully complete an adventure and advance accordingly – so that when Pyros the invincible Spearman saves the day (and the lives of his fellow adventurers !) by single-handedly defeating that Manticore, everybody in the party will benefit from his heroic behavior...

Luke G. Reynard

Only the bravest heroes dare enter the...

TOMB OF THE BULL KING

A mega-module for *Revised M & M*

Myriads of Monsters

Tons of Treasure

Plenty of Perils

A sinister curse has fallen on the colony of Coristea. Ancient powers have awakened, forgotten secrets have been unearthed and dark monsters once again threaten the land of men. Will your heroes brave the dangers and mysteries of the Tomb of the Bull King ?

Find out in the ultimate maze adventure !

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PANDORA'S BOX

A regular selection of mythic items for Mazes & Minotaurs

BAZAAR OF THE BIZARRE

After the various thematic installments of our previous issues (marine items, items for warriors, for magicians, for specialists, Desert Kingdom items...), we felt it was time for Pandora's Box to present a diverse (and suitably old-school) assortment of rings, amulets, potions and other magical paraphernalia for heroic adventurers of all classes and levels.

Amulet of Acuity

This amulet makes its wearer completely immune to the effects of the Sorcery powers of *Confusion*, *Illusions* and *Cloak*. (Enc = 0)

Amulet of Persuasion

This amulet boosts its wearer's rhetorical eloquence, granting him a +4 bonus to his Persuasion talent (see *M&M Companion*, p 31). (Enc = 0)

Belt of Lightness

This belt reduces its wearer's starting Encumbrance score to 5 (instead of 10). Thus, a Spearman in full gear (helmet, breastplate, shield, spear, sword, total Enc of 9) with a Belt of Lightness will have an Encumbrance total of 14 instead of 19. Thus, the Belt allows its wearer to carry more stuff before being *encumbered* but also offers a major advantage in situations where Encumbrance is used as a target number, such as climbing, swimming, sneaking etc.

Cloak of Princely Bearing

This enchanted, beautifully woven cloak of the finest purple adds +2 to its wearer's Personal Charisma; this bonus is doubled for Nobles. (Enc = 0)



I dunno, dude... Are you sure about this Charisma bonus ?



Yes, unfortunately, Gorgon Stones only work once.

Gorgon Stone

When worn as an amulet, this nut-sized bloodstone offers an extremely effective but one-off defense against the Petrification powers of Gorgons, Basilisks and similar creatures.

The first time its wearer must make a Mystic Fortitude roll to avoid Petrification, the magic of the bloodstone absorbs the supernatural energy of the Petrification attack : no saving roll is made and the Petrification automatically fails. This miraculous effect can only happen once, however : as it absorbs the force of the Petrification attack, the stone itself is turned into an ordinary piece of grey rock, with no magic left in it.

Potion of Alacrity

One single dose of this potion will make the drinker exceptionally watchful and alert for 1 hour, granting him a +2 bonus to Initiative and Danger Evasion.

If the character drinks the equivalent of two doses, this bonus will be raised to +4, for the same duration (1 hour). Drinking more than two doses at the same time will have no extra effect (other than wasting some precious potion). This potion is usually found in small phials of 3 doses each.



Time for a little Alacrity / Endurance cocktail !

Potion of Endurance

Each dose of this magical potion will make the drinker completely indefatigable for one hour, granting him the same benefits as the Divine Gift of Endurance (see *Players Manual*, p 31). Multiple doses will increase the duration of these effects, at the rate of 1 hour per dose. This potion is usually found in small phials of 3 doses each but larger containers may of course exist.

Potion of Pneumatic Immunity

One dose of this potion makes the drinker completely immune to drowning, suffocation and other breathing hazards (including the effects of poison gases or fumes) for one hour. Taking multiple doses will increase this duration by one hour per extra dose. This potion is usually found in small phials of 3 doses each but larger containers may of course exist.

Ring of Missile Deflection

This enchanted ring grants its wearer a +4 bonus to his Defense Class against all Missile attacks. It has no effect against Melee attacks or special distance attacks which do not require a Missile roll to hit (such as *Psychic Attack*, *Divine Wrath*, *Entangle* etc).

Ring of Self-Control

This ring gives its wearer a +2 bonus to Mystic Fortitude when resisting magical powers which try to influence his actions or emotions, which includes the *Compelling* and *Enslavement* powers of Sorcerers, the *Nature's Seduction* of Nymphs, the *Songs of Soothing* of Lyrist and the *Vocal Entrancement* of some creatures.



- Yeah, I know... but who needs clothing when you've got the Scent of Aphrodite™ ?

Scent of Aphrodite

When sprinkled over one's person, this subtle magical perfume will grant a bonus of +4 to that individual's Seduction influence talent (*M&M Companion*, p 31) as well as to his first reaction rolls from individuals of the opposite sex. These effects last for 1d6 hours.

The Scent of Aphrodite is usually found in very small (but extremely stylish) phials which contain enough perfume for a dozen applications. Using multiple doses will not result in a higher bonus or increased duration.

Wristband of Archery

This leather wristband gives its wearer a +2 bonus to Initiative and Missile scores when using a bow. Wearing one Wristband of Archery on each wrist will not result in a higher bonus. (Enc = 0)



Amazon model displaying a Wristand of Archery

Olivier Legrand (2009)

Dear Minotaur



Dear Editor,

It's been a while since I last wrote you, so I just thought I'd drop you a line to let you know that I'm OK, just in case you were wondering.

For once, I have no particular query, comment or retort I'd like to see published in your pages, but you know what they say about old habits.

Steven Hanson, New York (NY)

Dear Steven,

We hadn't heard of you since issue 4 and, to be frank, we were just beginning to get used to this new situation. Are you sure old habits never die ?

Dear Minotaur,

When are you going to give complete control of the zine to the awesome Luke G. Reynard ?

Gerald Kuyner (no listed address)

Your anagrams are showing, Luke – Ed

Write to / for the Minotaur !

*If, unlike our friends Steven and "Gerald", you have serious questions, comments or contributions for the **Minotaur**, you can reach us at :*

olivier.legrand6@free.fr

Issue 5 Desert Kingdom Errata

Some of our most observant readers noticed an omission in the *Heroes of the Desert* article from our last issue : in the section on background talents, we are told that "a *Priest's choice of talents varies according to his deity* (see below)" - but unfortunately this below simply never happens.

So here is the missing information (as well as the humble apologies of the entire staff of the *Minotaur*).

All Khettim Priests have the *Scholar* background talent and a second talent which varies according to their patron deity :

Ra or Thoth : Healer or Orator.

Typhon or Set : Actor, Beastmaster or Orator.

Hathor or Taweret : Healer.

Sobek : Beastmaster or Healer.

Horus or Maat : Orator.

Bastet : Actor or Musician.

Khnum : Healer or Wrestler.

Meretseger : Tomb Robber.

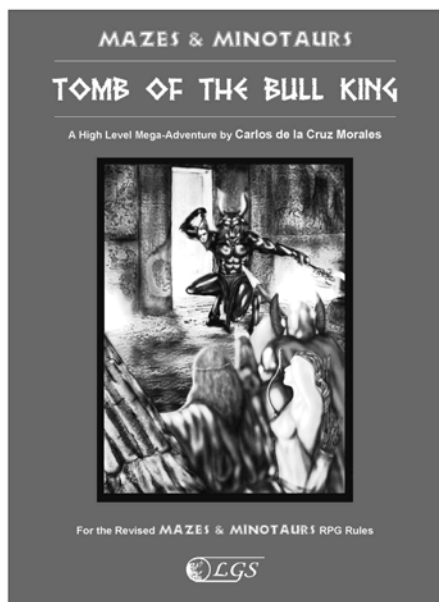
Sekhmet : Armorer or Tactician.



- Hey, did you hear ? These bumbling idiots at the Minotaur forgot to give us background talents !

MEET THE BULL KING

Our Spanish friend Carlos de la Cruz Morales, author of the **TOMB OF THE BULL KING** mega-module, has agreed to answer some of the Minotaur's questions. **Warning** : This interview contains a few spoilers about the adventure...



Q : With its 200+ page count, *Tomb of the Bull King* can only be described as a mega-adventure. How did this herculean project got started ?

I just loved the *Mazes & Minotaurs* rulebook¹, with its clear rules, great layout and silly jokes. I was amazed to see Mithras' original idea developed so perfectly. And the game was free!

The website included a page listing the titles of all the adventure modules which were (n)ever published for M&M in its fictional alternate reality², with a note from Olivier saying that if anybody actually wanted to write one of these imaginary scenarios, they should drop him an e-mail – which I did. I thought I could contribute to the gift Olivier had made to the RPG community by writing one of these adventures.

So I e-mailed Olivier, offering to write the first scenario from the list – and it was "Tomb of the Bull King"³. I gave him a brief overview of my ideas. I'm sure he didn't expect to receive such a long adventure in the end... but neither did I expect to work two years on it!

¹ Carlos is talking about the first version of the M&M rules (the so-called « 1972 edition ») ; when he started working on *Tomb of the Bull King*, the Revised rules were still in the making...

² This page can be found at <http://storygame.free.fr/suppl.html> (you'll have to scroll down a bit to find the list)

³ This title was suggested by Paul Elliott, a.k.a Mithras, as a very plausible title for the very first M&M scenario.

Q : What were your main sources of inspiration - for the adventure as well as for its backstory about the colony of Coristea and the curse of the Bull King ? How did the idea of making the Bull King the Judge of the Dead rather than, say, a straight Minotaur, come to life ?

I love Greek Mythology, and the name of the adventure was the first step. Who could be the Bull King in Greek Mythology better than Minos, the legendary King of Crete who ordered to build the Labyrinth to imprison the original Minotaur ?

And Mythika's equivalent of Crete was obviously the isle of Proteus, described in the rulebook as a savage island filled with ruins and monsters.

My original plan was to write a classical dungeon - sorry, maze - adventure. And the best starting point I could think of was the historical location often thought to be the real, original Labyrinth: the Palace of Knossos, the capital of Minos' Kingdom. According to some theories, the legend of the Labyrinth may have been inspired by the many rooms and corridors in the Palace of Knossos. I found a good map on the web and began to use it as a basis for my own Maze.

The idea of the Bull King as a Judge of the Dead was inspired by Greek Mythology too. According to myth, after his death, Minos became one of the three judges of the souls who come to Hades so I decided our Bull King would be a Judge of the Dead too and that his former palace would be one of the entrances to the Underworld – the Tomb of the Bull King.

But I needed a major, supreme monster - so I decided to use an unusually powerful Minotaur. First, I envisioned this unique Minotaur as a creature of darkness, summoned from the infernal regions by an ancient curse to wreak havoc on the island of Proteus.

I started discussing these ideas with Olivier by e-mail and we ended up creating the ancient history of Proteus, as told in the Appendix of the scenario. Over the course of these discussions, the true nature of the Minotaur evolved into something a bit more complex, since he also became the bestial part of the Bull King himself – his dark and savage half, if you will.

Q : What are your favorite parts or elements of this mammoth-sized scenario ?

The map. I spent six months modifying the original Knossos map to transform it in the Tomb of the Bull King, using my Paint software! I can assure you that *this* was a truly herculean task. It was worth it, though : I really love the final map.



As I created new rooms, I imagined the creatures, traps and treasures they contained, grouping them as big sections: the Central Courtyard, the various Temples, the Palace of the Judge of the Dead...

I only began to write the adventure after the map had been completed – or at least a first version of the map : as I wrote the detailed description of the various rooms and sections of the Tomb, new ideas regularly popped up and I started to make changes to the map as I went along... so the map was not truly finished until the scenario itself was completely written. The only thing I don't like about the map is that ridiculous dragon in section 182 ; several times, I told myself I really had to Paint a better one but it eventually ended up in the final version of the map...

Among the various denizens of the Tomb, I really like the Lamperer who wanders through the labyrinthine complex, lighting the green-fire torches of some sections – the parts of the Tomb where the heroes can travel between the past and the present of the palace...

Other favorite bits of mine include the story of the Three Sages, their final confrontation and the climactic battle with the great Minotaur at the center of the Tomb, with the two armies of creatures fighting in the background – a suitably epic finale, I think.

Q : Which parts or encounters are the most challenging or dangerous, in your opinion ?

The Crypt of the Bone Priest is fairly hard ; if they are given the chance, I think the adventurers should definitely avoid this spirit-infested area. Also, a cruel Maze Master could kill the entire party using the various ambushes the adventurers might fall into: the Boarmen and the Dragon, the Degenerate Men and the Hags or the Beastlord and his minions...

Q : Which were the toughest parts to write ?

The Hags area and the Palace of the Judge of the Dead, with its temporal shifts - not because they were harder to write, but because they were the last ones I wrote and I was really getting tired at that point.

Incidentally, the adventure was written roughly in the order marked by the number of the rooms.

Q : Any last word of advice for bold adventurers who are about to venture into the Tomb ?

The adventure is fairly hard. Adventurers who try to rely exclusively on weapons and magic will probably meet their doom in the Tomb : even if they manage to kill most of the Minotaur's minions before tackling the monster, they will probably be killed at the final battle if they have not made enough allies to support them. I included this vital piece of advice in the speech made by Aquio the Centaur before the party enters the Tomb – Aquio is really the spokesman of the author here.

Q : And a last word of advice for the Maze Master ?

I think it's very important that the Maze Master understands the whys and wherefores of the war which is going on in the Tomb between the Minotaur's minions and the followers of Great Goddess Rhea so that he can extrapolate the behaviors of the various denizens of the Tomb in play, as well as their reactions to the adventurers' own actions.

Also, the scenario does have some spare room for the Maze Master's own ideas ; some encounters can be expanded, empty rooms can be filled and new subplots can be developed. Here is a quick example : on some level, I know there must be some kind of implicit, underlying connection between the Alseid from section 109 and the Wildmen : the Alseid can control spiders and the Wildmen use Giant Spiders in some places – perhaps it was the Alseid who taught them how to tame those creatures ? I didn't write anything specific about this but a creative Maze Master could certainly invent a quick « side quest » around this arachanean theme, expanding upon the information given in the adventure.

Q : Let's leave the Tomb of the Bull King for a final question. What can you tell us about the Spanish translation of Revised Mazes & Minotaurs ⁴?

My brother, Sergio, was very impressed with M&M too. He suggested we made a Spanish translation of the Revised rulebooks and Olivier was really enthusiastic about this idea. Sergio did the main translation work and I acted as the editor, correcting errors and oddly-constructed phrases.

Olivier gave us access to the original Word documents of the rulebooks and we replaced the English text by the Spanish one... but since Spanish tends to be more verbose than English, putting it all in the right places was not such an easy task as it might seem... We have put the *Manual del Jugador* (Players Manual) online last year and my brother has just finished translating the *Maze Masters Guide* so we expect to release the *Guia del Maze Master* pretty soon⁵. Then will come the enormous *Creature Compendium*...

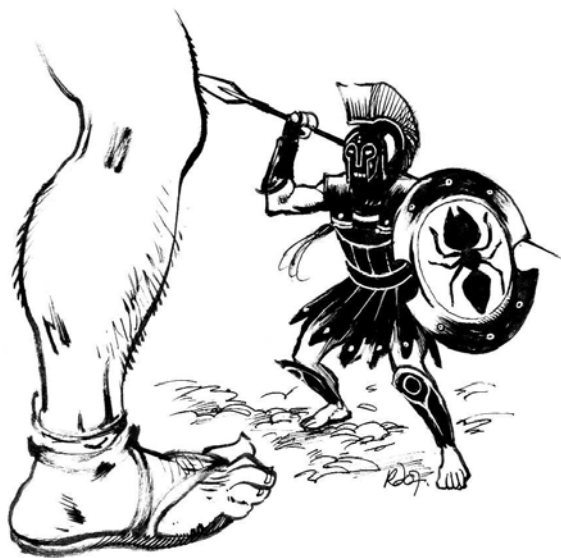
⁴ <http://mazesandminotaurs.free.fr/spanish.html>

⁵ In fact, by the time you are reading this, the *Guia del Maze Master* is already available !

~~OFFICIAL ORACLE~~

~~Official Oracle is a now 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.~~

Hello, gentle readers ! Luke G. Reynard speaking ! Forget about the pompous, sanctimonious, oh-so-Official Oracle and let's TWIST AGAIN IN THE MAZE !



It is generally agreed upon that the M&M rules handle the various Size categories of creatures in a simple, neat and efficient fashion. I actually tend to agree with the consensus here, too... as far as Medium, Large and Gigantic creatures are concerned. The truth is that the M&M rules do not do justice to Small or Tiny creatures – and I'm not talking about the dubious concept of game balance here but about simple, basic common sense. I'm talking about the following simple question : why on Mythika should a character's helmet protect him against the melee attacks of Small opponents (who simply cannot reach his head) - not to mention Tiny opponents, whose melee attacks are unlikely to hit above their man-sized opponents' legs.

Just take a look at the great illustration above, taken from the Myrmidon entry in the *Creature Compendium* : as they say, a picture is worth a thousand words.

Obviously, a character's helmet should only protect him against attackers who may be able to hit his head, while a breastplate should give you no special protection against attackers whose height does not rise above his knees. In game terms, these perfectly sensible statements should translate as follows :

Helmets should not offer any protection against the melee attacks of Small or Tiny creatures.

Breastplates should not offer any protection against the melee attacks of Tiny creatures.

Thus, in some cases, *smaller can be better*.

This extremely simple and perfectly sensible rule adjustment has the obvious advantage of making opponents like Myrmidons or Bee-folk a bit more challenging (and even quite dangerous if their Tiny weapons are coated with poison !) but it also has several other interesting consequences in game terms :

If this rule is used, armor (even if magical) is no longer the universal defense it tends to be in M&M.

This restriction also establishes a pretty neat distinction between the protection granted by helmets and breastplate and the protection granted by Tough Skin, Natural Armor or Invulnerability, which is completely unaffected by the relative Size of the attacker.

This attack adjustment can also work in the characters' favour when fighting Large or Gigantic creatures. A Gigantic Giant wearing a suitably Gigantic helmet and a Gigantic breastplate (assuming such things do exist) should not get any special protection against the melee attacks of adventurers.

Last but not least, this rule adjustment also gives an excellent reason to invest in **greaves**, a type of leg armor which, incidentally, were often worn by Greek hoplites. Until now, greaves had no real *raison d'être* in M&M, since its combat system has no hit location system (which is, in itself, a pretty good thing)... but with this rule adjustment, greaves suddenly become extremely useful additions to a character's armor.

Wearing a pair of greaves will give you a +2 bonus to EDC against the melee attacks of Small creatures and a +4 bonus against the melee attacks of Tiny creatures, offsetting such creatures' offensive advantages against armored man-sized opponents. In other words, a fully armor-clad character wearing a helmet, a breastplate and a pair of greaves will have his normal EDC against all opponents, regardless of their Size.

A pair of greaves cost 50 silver pieces and has an Encumbrance of 2 (1 for each greave).

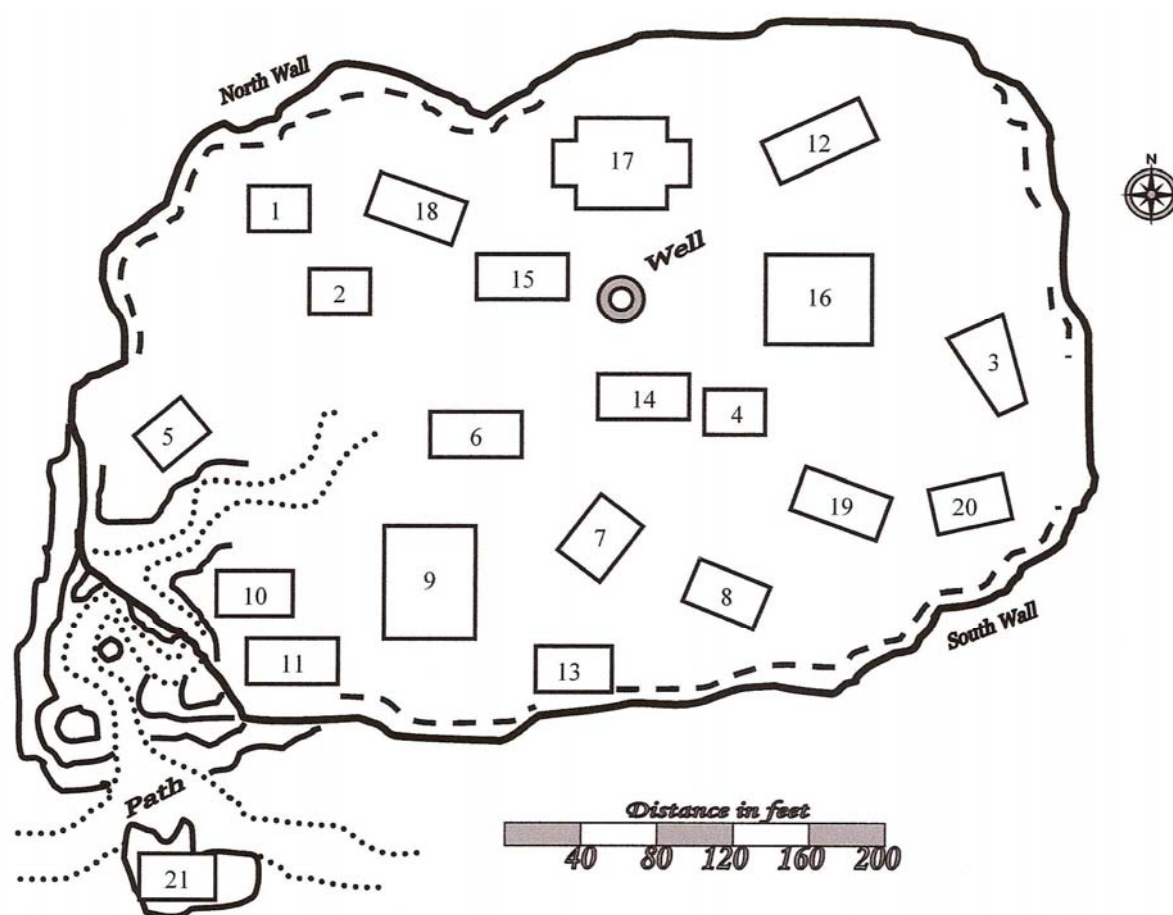
I wanted to talk about greaves in last issue's much acclaimed column about historically accurate weapons and armor but I was prevented from doing so by the editor, on the fallacious grounds that all this stuff about Small and Tiny creatures was somewhat off-topic. Since this issue IS a « creature special », I just couldn't resist the opportunity to have the last word on this.

Luke G. Reynard

THE SECRET OF ZERZURA

An Epic Desert Kingdom Adventure in Three Parts by Andrew Pearce

PART TWO : THE RUINS OF BEYDA



The Story So Far...

Our intrepid adventurers have been recruited by the High Priestess of Hathor, the Queen Mother Amenteti, to verify the existence of the fabled Oasis of Birds, Zerzura. The High Priestess believes it to contain the resting place of the mythic heroes Osiris and Isis. Armed only with a map of uncertain accuracy, some obscure references from the Book of Hidden Pearls, and their own ingenuity, the adventurers have set out – little realising that there is a traitor within Amenteti's inner circle, her servant Akenhathor.

Thanks to Akenhathor's treachery, the Cult of the Dark Gods is also on the trail of Zerzura. The adventurers have braved the wrath of the fiercely independent Ubasti of Khofer, and are now on the second part of their perilous journey – one that will bring them to the mysterious citadel of Beyda...

Act III: Ruins in the White Desert

The Journey Continues...

After a day or two in the Khofer oasis, the adventurers set out on the second leg of their journey. This lasts for three days, and once again for each day of travel, and each night of rest, the Maze Master makes a secret roll upon the Random Event table given on page 49 of the Minotaur Issue 5. A reminder to the Maze Master that characters with the Desert Scout background talent (possessed by most Khettim) are advantaged on all Danger Evasion rolls whilst traversing the Great Desert.

On the third day of their journey, the colour of the desert sands change markedly to that of a white, creamy colour. The ground becomes rockier as the massive chalk formations that are exposed by periodic sandstorms in the area become more visible.



The ominous ruins of Beyda...

The Ruins of Beyda

The ruins of Beyda will be reached near sunset on the third day out of Khofer (barring delays). The ruins themselves consist of twenty or so buildings atop a rocky, chalky outcrop with a single, solitary winding path that ascends along the south-western hillside from the desert wastes below.

As the adventurers approach Beyda, they realise that a particularly fierce desert sandstorm is approaching. Characters with the Desert Scout background talent will recognise immediately that the party cannot afford to be caught out in the open, and that they must take shelter in one of the buildings. The fierce storm will last all night, and will preclude all movement. In the morning, the PCs may wish to explore the rest of the ruins.

Running along the northern and southern edges of the hilltop is a mud-brick curtain wall. Scattered remains indicate where a similar defensive wall once ran along the eastern edge of the hill.

The following sections indicate what the adventurers find in each building. All the buildings are single-storied (as was customary in the Old Kingdom period), and the majority are single-roomed: but a few of the larger buildings consist of several rooms. Some are seriously dilapidated, with partially-ruined walls or roofs, whilst others are in fairly robust condition.

Format of Descriptions

Each building is described using the following format:

Description: A general overview.

Encounters: Which creatures or NPCs are present in the building (not included in empty buildings).

Closer Inspection: This entry indicates the possibilities of finding a special treasure, a secret door or some hidden object. This paragraph is not included in buildings which contain no hidden items, treasure items, secret traps or passages, or other special features.

The History of Beyda

Beyda was first settled by humans from the Khet valley in the Age of Myth, at a time when the climate of the Desert Kingdom was less harsh. Under the First Dynasty, Beyda was home to an unusual cult who worshipped both Ra and Typhon with equanimity. During the so-called 'War of the Gods' between Samekhe and Ra-neptah, the last rulers of the First Dynasty, Beyda was largely forgotten.

However, Beyda was the site of one of the last battles between the two factions, and was the final burial place of Satamun, the powerful queen of Samekhe. It then served as the home of a sect dedicated to Typhon that remained hidden in the desert for two and a half centuries after the fall of the Old Kingdom. Eventually, the Sect of Satamun died out – but not before laying several traps and secret curses around the burial chamber of their long-dead mistress.

For more than five hundred years, the very existence of Beyda has largely been forgotten, and, apart from the odd wandering monster, it has remained a silent, crumbling monument to past glories. Most of the city has vanished beneath the shifting sands – only the citadel, on its rocky promontory, has survived. However, about twenty years ago, the citadel was discovered and occupied by a tribe of Sand-folk. These vicious denizens of the desert are a small tribe, and consequently make use of only part of the citadel – but they will be immediately hostile to any strangers who intrude upon their territory.

Building n°1

Description: A simple, single-chambered building. The roof is intact, and the entrance is through a doorway on the south side with a broken wooden door. There are three large, half-rotten chests in the room.

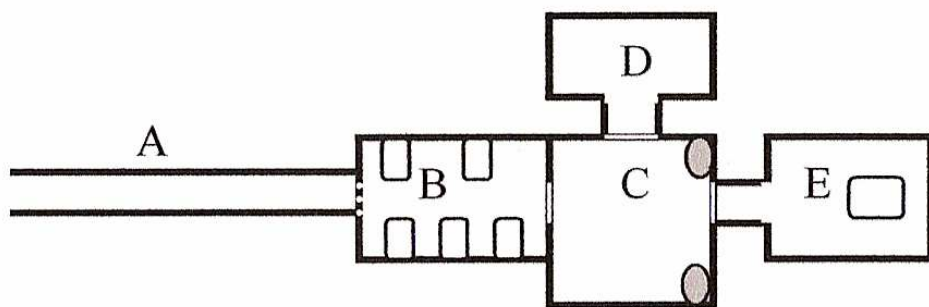
Encounters: The room is home to a single venomous giant snake (see *Creature Compendium* p 49 for stats), hidden in the corner behind the largest of the chests.

Closer Inspection: One of the chests is empty; another contains an assortment of rotten linen clothes that will largely disintegrate on being handled; the third contains three small clay tablets (each with an Enc of 1) inscribed with a strange script that only vaguely resembles the hieroglyphic script of High Khemi.

Building n°2

Description: A simple, single-chambered building. The eastern wall is in ruins, and the roof is partially missing. The entrance is a doorway on the north side.

Closer Inspection: The southern wall is beautifully decorated with wall-paintings of athletic human figures hunting elephants, lions and gazelles, as well as strange, aardvark-headed creatures (actually Orycters). The northern wall, by contrast, is decorated by terrifying images of the semi-legendary *Shaalud*, or desert worms. Peculiarly, the images appear to depict the fearsome worms being ridden by desert nomads... There is nothing else of any note in this room.



Building n°6 a.k.a The Tomb of Satamun

Building n°3

Description: A peculiar, single-chambered building, narrower at one end than the other. The entrance is through a doorway on the north side. There are two half-rotten chests in the room, and half a dozen large amphorae.

Closer Inspection: All the amphorae are empty, as is one of the chests. The other contains a set of four beautifully engraved canopic jars (which any Khettim adventurer will immediately recognise as the special repositories used for the storage of the organs of a mummified body). These particular jars have clearly never been used. They each have an Enc value of 2, and are each worth 100 silver pieces.

Building n°4

Description: A much-dilapidated single-chambered building, the west and south walls have partly fallen, and most of the roof has collapsed. The floor is covered by rubble, which is especially thick in the south-west corner.

Closer Inspection: Beneath the rubble in the south-west corner, a keen-eyed individual will spot what looks like a small chest (a Detection roll with a target number of 17). Removing the rubble to expose the chest requires a feat of strength. If the feat of strength is unsuccessful, there is a 50% that the adventurer will nevertheless disturb the delicate balance of rubble and stones holding up what's left of the west wall. If so disturbed, the remaining parts of the wall will begin to collapse, inflicting 2d6 on the adventurer attempting the feat of strength if he fails a Danger Evasion roll with a target number of 20, and similar damage on any other adventurer within 10 feet who fails a Danger Evasion roll with a target number of 15. The chest (if recovered) will be found to hold an Eye of Horus amulet (grants +2 to wearer's Mystic Fortitude), a somewhat battered bejewelled golden chalice (Enc = 1) worth about 15 gold coins, and an assortments of bracelets and necklaces worth 300 silver pieces.

Building n°5

Description: A plain, unadorned room, with an entrance on the north-east side.

Encounters: A small colony (1+1D3) of feisty giant bats roost in this room (see page 47 of the *Creature Compendium* for statistics).

Building n°6

Description: The plain walls of this room, with an entrance through a broken, stone doorway on the western side, is covered with hieroglyphs inscribed in an ancient form of High Khemi that is difficult to understand.

Closer Inspection: Adventurers with a knowledge of High Khemi will recognise a particular royal name placed in a *shenu* ring on the lintel of the stone doorway – the name Satamun, the powerful queen of the First Dynasty Desert King Samekhe. This room is actually the antechamber to her hidden underground tomb. At the far eastern end of the antechamber is a secret mechanism (hidden in another *shenu* ring bearing the name of Satamun). Activating this will cause a floor slab to slide away, thereby exposing the tunnel leading down to Satamun's burial chamber. To spot the secret entrance the adventurers must pass a Detection roll with a target number of 18.

Tunnel (A): The tunnel descends for about 100 feet, before ending in a solid, stone door, engraved with a bas-relief figure of Typhon, which can only be opened by means of a hidden mechanism (the left-hand eye-slit of his mask). To spot the secret entrance the adventurers must pass a Detection roll with a target number of 15. The right-hand eye-slit is a trap: touch that, and a hidden blade swings down from the ceiling (Type: indoor; Effect: direct damage – swinging blade; 1d6 Hits; Concealment Rating 15; Danger Rating 15).

Room B: The first chamber holds the sarcophagi of the first five high priestesses of the Sect of Satamun. Each sarcophagus is trapped with a salt acid trap (Type: indoor; Effect: direct damage – salt acid; 1d6 Hits; Concealment Rating 15; Danger Rating 15). Within each sarcophagus are the mummified remains of a high priestess, as well as an assortment of charms, necklaces, bracelets and amulets (100 silver pieces worth in each sarcophagus), including a Silver Scarab Amulet (see page 43 of the *Minotaur* Issue 5) within the wrappings of each mummy. Located at the farthest end of the room is a secret door. To detect the secret entrance to the next chamber the adventurers must pass a Detection roll with a target number of 17.

Room C: This chamber is beautifully decorated with texts and art-work illustrating scenes from the life of Satamun. Located in the two farthest corners of the room, standing on ornate plinths, are statues of Khettim champions (in reality, these statues are *Shabtis* which

will become active and attack any intruder who does not, on entering the chamber, utter the pass-phrase that is written (in High Khemi) around the walls of this chamber – ‘May the memory of blessed Satamun be everlasting’ – within 3 battle rounds (see page 49 of the *Minotaur* Issue 5 for *shabti* statistics). *Note: uttering this phrase after the shabtis have become active will cause them to become passive once more.*

Room D: Hidden behind a secret door (to find it the adventurers must pass a Detection roll with a target number of 18) lies the treasure-chamber of Satamun. The contents include coffers, caskets and jars full of necklaces, bracelets, silver and gold trinkets, and jewels with an Enc of 7 worth 7,000 silver pieces. Unfortunately, this room also contains a Silver Beetle (see *Creature Compendium* p 104) that will immediately assaults the ears and bodies of any intruder.

Room E: Hidden behind a secret door (to find it the adventurers must pass a Detection roll with a target number of 19) lies the sarcophagus of Satamun. The sarcophagus is trapped with a salt acid trap (identical to those in room B). Within the sarcophagus are the mummified remains of Satamun, as well as an assortment of highly-valuable charms, necklaces, bracelets and amulets (total Enc of 1, valued at 1,500 silver pieces), including a Golden Scarab Amulet (see page 43 of the *Minotaur* Issue 5).

Also contained within room E – hidden in a niche under the sarcophagus (to find it the adventurers must pass a Detection roll with a target number of 18) – is a rare copy of the *Book of the Dead*. Its value (given its age) is incalculable. However, moving the Book will be sufficient to activate the last trap in the complex – the walls of the connecting corridor between chambers C and E (and between C and D) will begin to move together, and sand will start cascading into all the chambers from holes in the ceilings and walls (Type: indoor; Effect: entrapment; Concealment Rating 17; Danger Rating 15).

Building n7

Description: A simple, single-chambered building. The roof is intact, and the entrance is through a doorway on the north-eastern side with a broken wooden door.

Encounters: This building is home to 1d6 Sand-folk (see p 96 of the *Creature Compendium* for statistics).

Closer Inspection: If the Sand-folk are defeated, inspection will reveal their cache of 30 silver pieces.

Building n8

Description: A much-dilapidated single-chambered building, the eastern end has completely collapsed and is no more than a heap of ruins. The entrance doorway is in the north-west wall.

Closer Inspection: Any adventurer who chooses to rummage amongst the rubble of this building is likely to disturb a Rocky Python cunningly hidden amongst the ruins (*Creature Compendium* p 95). Otherwise, there is nothing of any note in what remains of this building.



A typical member of the Sand Folk race

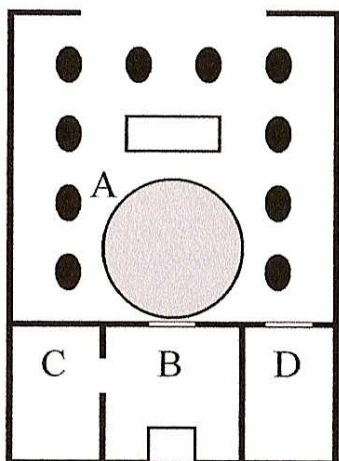
Building n9

Description: This impressive building is largely intact, and is clearly a temple. Those with knowledge of High Khemi will note that the pillars and walls are decorated with hieroglyphs – many of which, stylistically, are very different from those commonly found in the Desert Kingdom today.

Closer Inspection: The main hallway (A), entered through an archway on the north side, contains ten pillars; even though much faded, it is clear that the hieroglyphic inscriptions upon them are alternately decorated in black and gold. The main altar appears to be made of an unusual granite-like stone that is black with distinct streaks of gold running through it. On the east side of the altar is a relief of Ra, and on the west side a relief of Typhon. This temple is clearly very unusual, for, as any Khetim adventurer would know, Ra and Typhon are *never* worshipped together in the same temple. Closer examination will reveal that the face of Ra has been deliberately chiselled away. On the floor of the main hallway is a large circular carving of two sphinxes – one black, one white – that appear to be locked in mortal combat (see *Act IV: The Riddle of the Sphinx* below for further details).

Room B: There is a secret entrance to room B. To see the secret entrance the adventurers must pass a Detection roll with a target number of 17. There is a pit trap in the exact centre of the room (Type: indoor; Effect: falling + direct damage from stakes; 2d6 Hits; Concealment Rating 16; Danger Rating 16). The room contains a blood-stained altar, in front of a large bas-relief portrait of Typhon. A doorway leads to:

Room C: A storage room that contains candle-stands, incense burners, various jars and sacred vessels, and chests filled with rotten linen cloths and vestments.



Building n°9 a.k.a The Temple of Beyda

Room D: There is a secret entrance to room D. To see the secret entrance the adventurers must pass a Detection roll with a target number of 16. This chamber (at one time the personal chamber of the Chief Priest of Beyda, later taken over by the Chief Priestess of the Sect of Satamun) contains the remains of a bed, a table and chair, and, in an alcove, a small chest and a was-staff (see page 44 of the Minotaur Issue 5 for powers). The small chest is trapped (Type: indoor; Effect: poison – needle trap; death in 1d6 rounds if the victim fails a Physical Vigour saving roll; Concealment Rating 16; Danger Rating 15). The small chest contains jewellery to the value of 200 silver pieces, a Ring of Invisibility (*Maze Masters Guide*, p 43), and a small jar containing Ointment of Meretseger (see *Minotaur n°5?* p 43).

Building n°10

Description: A plain, unadorned room, with an entrance on the western side. There is nothing of any note in this building.

Building n°11

Description: A simple, single-chambered building. The roof is intact, and the entrance is through a doorway on the southern side. The room is filled with cobwebs, and has a strong, unpleasant odour.

Encounters: 2 Cave Spiders live in this room (see p 49 of the *Creature Compendium* for stats).

Closer Inspection: If the adventurers succeed in defeating the cave spiders, they will find the skeletal remains of recent victims (actually unwary Sand-folk), but nothing else of interest.

Building n°12

Description: This well-built, single-chambered building is one of the best-preserved within the citadel. The entrance is through a doorway in the south-west wall. The interior walls were once richly-painted, but they have been despoiled over the years by subsequent dwellers (most recently by the Sand-folk that have made their home in Beyda).

Encounters: This building is home to 1d6 Sand-folk.

Closer Inspection: If the Sand-folk are defeated, inspection will reveal their cache of 70 silver pieces. The room is also full of barrels, which contain various foul-smelling stores of grain and meat.

Building n°13

Description: This single-chambered building is in good condition. The entrance is through a doorway in the northern wall.

Closer Inspection: The well-preserved interior wall paintings depict priests performing various tasks in the nearby temple. The building was clearly once the dwelling place of the temple's priests. However, it is now the dwelling place of a Shadow, an insubstantial life-drinking spirit of darkness. The first clue that adventurers may have to its presence may come if they notice that there is one more shadow being cast in the room that the number of visitors within it...otherwise, there is nothing else of note in the building.

Building n°14

Description: A simple, single-chambered building. The roof is mostly intact, and the entrance is through a doorway on the northern side.

Encounters: This building is home to 1d6 Sand-folk.

Closer Inspection: If the Sand-folk are defeated, inspection will reveal their cache of 60 silver pieces.

Building n°15

Description: This unremarkable singled-roomed building is in good condition. The entrance is through a doorway in the eastern side.

Encounters: This building is home to 1d6 Sand-folk.

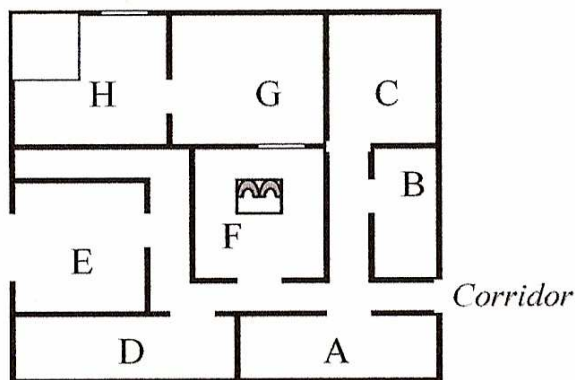
Closer Inspection: If the Sand-folk are defeated, inspection will reveal their cache of 60 silver pieces.

Building n°16

Description: This large building – the ancient palace of the citadel – is in reasonable condition, although the north-eastern corner wall has a large crack running down it, and the roof is somewhat dilapidated. The main entrance is through a doorway on the western side, but there is also a small entrance on the south-east corner.

Encounters: The Sand-folk by and large avoid the palace (although there is a 5% chance of adventurers running into a scouting/hunting party of 1d6 Sandmen whenever they are travelling through the connecting corridor). However, the palace is infested with a colony of Desert Ratlings (treat as normal Ratlings, but with sandy-coloured fur – see *Creature Compendium* p 93), whom the Sand-folk periodically fight and hunt.

Corridor: A connecting corridor runs through the palace of Beyda. Along the walls, empty brackets mark the places where bright torches once burned. There is a 5% chance of encountering 1d6 Sandmen, 5% chance of encountering 1d6 Desert Ratlings.



Building n°16 a.k.a The Palace of Beyda

Room A: Empty room (once a storeroom, but long since picked clear of any objects of interest). Faded wall-paintings depict everyday life in Beyda more than half a millennia ago. 20% chance of encountering 1d6 Desert Ratlings.

Room B: As Room A.

Room C: Empty room. Once the palace kitchen (as suggested by the faded wall-paintings depicting food preparation). A large crack runs diagonally down the east wall, suggesting that this part of the palace may be unstable. There is a 30% chance of encountering 1d6 Desert Ratlings.

Room D: Empty racks suggest that this room was once the repository for scrolls and tablets – the records and archives of the palace. No scrolls remain, but careful inspection will reveal one half-broken clay tablet (Enc 1), written in an ancient, half-indecipherable High Khemi script (the PCs may be excited by this discovery, but, in truth, the tablet contains nothing more than a list of grain deliveries). There is a 50% chance of encountering 1d6 Desert Ratlings.

Room E: A few broken desks and benches are all that remains in this room – once a hallway where those petitioning the city's ruler would present themselves. 30% chance of encountering 1d6 Desert Ratlings.



Desert Ratling (notice the sandy color of the fur)

Cursed Treasure of the Desert Ratlings

If the adventurers succeed in defeating the Ratlings, they will find, hidden beneath one of the thrones, a bag containing the Ratlings' hoarded wealth: two yellow sapphires (worth 100 silver pieces each), 60 silver pieces, two daggers, and an ugly statuette of a Ratling (actually a statuette of Pestia, the Great Rat Mother and foul goddess of the Ratlings – the statue is cursed, and any human touching it must make a Physical Vigour saving roll against a target number of 15, or else succumb to a terrible wasting disease – the Curse of Pestia – that will inflict 1d6 points of damage ever day until they die or receive magical healing.

Room F: The throne-room where the governors of Beyda pronounced judgement (and where, for a brief, heady few years towards the end of the 'War of the Gods', king Samekhe and queen Satamun held court). The still-brilliant wall-paintings celebrate Samekhe and Satamun, and the Lone God whom they worshipped – Typhon, lord of darkness. In the centre of the room, on a raised dais, two imposing obsidian thrones are placed side by side. However, the effect of power and grandeur is somewhat spoilt by the figure of the fat, scruffy Ratling-chief who lounges on one of the thrones atop a stained, torn cushion. On sighting the intruders, the Ratling-chief lets out a high-pitched scream and, with surprising speed, scuttles for cover behind the thrones. In response to his alarm-call, 6+1d6 pairs of glowing Ratling eyes appear in the encircling gloom...

Room G: The private audience chamber of the king and queen. This room can only be accessed via a secret door at the back of the throne-room (To find the secret entrance the adventurers must pass a Detection roll with a target number of 18). This room has never been disturbed by the Ratlings or the Sand-folk, and consequently some of its furnishings have survived. Several faded wall-hangings remain on the walls. There are several couches and tables, and a beautiful *senet* gaming board made of pearl and obsidian which is worth 500 silver pieces (Enc 1).

Room H: Leading off the audience chamber is the palace bedchamber. In the far corner are the tattered remnants of a large bed with luxuriant silk and cotton coverings. Under the bed is a chest which contains 30 gold coins, 400 silver pieces and a magical Amulet of Ankh (grants the wearer a +2 bonus to all his Physical Vigor rolls). On the north wall is a secret exit from the palace (To find the secret door the adventurers must pass a Detection roll with a target number of 19).

Building n°17

Description: This large building is nothing more than a pile of ruins now. Clearly it has been ransacked many times, and there seems to be nothing worthwhile here.

Closer Inspection: Beneath the rubble, a keen-eyed individual will spot what looks like a glint of metal (a Detection roll with a target number of 18). Closer examination will uncover, miraculously undamaged, a Spear of Monster-slaying (page 37 of the Minotaur Issue 2).

Building n°18

Description: A plain, unadorned room, with an entrance on the south-east side.

Encounters: This building is home to 6+1d6 Sand-folk, the biggest concentration, including the current Chieftain of the Sand-folk (treat as having a Ferocity of Dangerous, raising his Initiative to 13, his Melee Attack to +4 and his Hits Total to 12: Glory 35).

Closer Inspection: If the Sand-folk are defeated, inspection will reveal the Chieftain's cache of 10 gold coins and 200 silver pieces, and a Thurian Sword (page 37 of the Minotaur Issue 2). *How this item from the days of King Letos, founder of Thena, ended up in the possession of a Sand-folk chieftain is quite a mystery!*

Building n°19

Description: An unremarkable single-chambered building, with an entrance on the south-eastern side.

Encounters: This building is home to 1d6 Sand-folk.

Closer Inspection: If the Sand-folk are defeated, inspection will reveal their cache of 30 silver pieces.

Building n°20

Description: A simple, single-chambered building. The western wall is in ruins, and the roof has completely collapsed. The entrance is a doorway on the eastern side. There is nothing of any note in this building.

The Well

The ancient well of the citadel remains in use by the Sand-folk and, remarkably, still provides a source of sweet, drinkable water.

Building n°21

Description: A simple, single-chambered building, the sole surviving building of Beyda outside the citadel proper, standing precariously on a small rocky outcrop to the south-west of the citadel.

Closer Inspection: Lurking within this building is a single, feisty giant scorpion (see page 48 of the *Creature Compendium*). Otherwise, there is nothing of any note in this building.

The Riddle of the Sphinx

What Lies Beneath

As already noted, the main hall of the Temple of Beyda (Building n°9) contains a circular floor carving – somewhat chipped and worn with age – of two sphinxes, one black, the other white, that appear to be locked in mortal combat. Inscribed in High Khemi around the edge of the carving are the words: **Speak, truth-seeker, and find what lies beneath.**

The answer to the riddle is simple enough – if a member of the adventuring party actually speaks the phrase 'truth-seeker' in High Khemi, there will be a click and whirr of grinding gears, as a sophisticated

mechanism causes the circular carving to drop about eighteen inches, then slowly slide to one side (taking 10 battle rounds), revealing a vast black chasm below.

As the adventurers gaze down into the darkness, they become conscious of a slow, heavy wheezing from below, and the sound of something shifting and flapping, accompanied by the distinct clank of chains. Then, around the edge of chasm, one after another, six bronze braziers burst into light with a blue, ethereal flame. In the mystical glow of the blue flames, the hitherto hidden inhabitant of the pit is revealed – 30 feet below the temple floor, chained to the floor by giant manacles, lies a remarkable sight: a pure-white sphinx.

The sphinx looks up at the adventurers, and gives each one of them a steely gaze. Then, speaking slowly and deliberately, but with a distinctly wheezy voice, the sphinx says (in High Khemi):

'Well, you are the first truth-seekers to come to Beyda in many a year. I had almost given up hope that any more would come...as you can see, I am somewhat disadvantaged at present; in fact, I have been entombed here for centuries.'

'I am Siphelax. Long ago, I lived in Beyda with my brother Clymendax, where we were honoured by the people of the city as messengers from the gods. Beyda was a fruitful city in those days, full of joy and plenty. But my brother turned to evil ways, and seduced many of the city-folk in his lust for power. He trapped me here, beneath the citadel, long ago. He cursed me by decreeing that I could only be freed by a truth-seeker: one of noble heart and honest mind who would be able to give the correct answer to the riddle that holds the key to my chains. Many have come in the past – though none now for many long years. If you are successful, then I will be released – free to pursue my vengeance against Clymendax. My gratitude to the noble truth-seeker who frees me will be great, as also the reward that he will receive...behold!'

Siphelax jerks his head in gesture beyond the circle of braziers, and the characters are able to see, dimly lit light by the ethereal blue flames, dozens of sacks and chests: some closed, some lying half-open, glittering from myriad of gems and jewels. A fantastic treasure hoard clearly lies below with the sphinx.

'All you need do,' continues Siphelax, 'to free me and receive your reward is to lower yourselves down to my level, and stand in the circle of braziers. Then I will speak the riddle. Give the answer, and I will be free!'

The sphinx chuckles: *'Of course, it isn't quite that simple. It never is, is it? Once I finish speaking he riddle, the great stone lid of my dank sarcophagus will start to close, as slowly but as surely as it opened. Only giving the correct answer to the riddle will stop its progress. I cannot help you from that point on – I can only speak the riddle: not its answer. It will do you no good to attempt to leave, either – look more closely, and you'll see what became of those who tried.'*

If the adventurers peer down into the chasm, those who make successful Detection rolls with a target number of 15 will make out several skeletons – clearly charred by some incredibly fierce flame. Siphelax nods his head, and says:

'The heat produced by the braziers isn't very great at present. But, alas, that can so easily change...

Oh, now three more things, before I forget: first, once I speak the riddle, only those who have already entered the circle of braziers may attempt to give the answer. Any one who remains above cannot speak – unless they want to rain down fire upon their comrades below.

And secondly, once the stone is back in place, it cannot ever again be unsealed, from either side, by any member of your party. So don't be tempted to leave someone above in the hope he will be able to break the seal: the enchantment won't permit it.

Finally, once you enter the circle and I speak the riddle, you can offer up as many different answers as you like. I shan't mind. But time will be pressing – and there is only one correct answer. Well, my friends, what is it to be? Do you truly have noble hearts and honest minds?'

If the adventurers decline to help Siphelax, the sphinx will start shrieking and cursing at them, his manner suddenly venomous and menacing. As he gets more angry and seems to lose self-control, his countenance will change dramatically from white to black. However, the stone carving will start to slide back into place, trapping Siphelax once more within his prison.

If some or all of the adventurers decide to help Siphelax, he will invite whom-so-ever wishes to take the challenge to join him in the circle of flaming braziers. 'Remember,' he says, 'only those who enter the circle may undertake the challenge.'

Siphelax's Riddle

The adventurers will need to make successful Athletic Prowess rolls to climb down into the pit, unless they are using ropes. Climbing down (or up) will take 3 rounds.

On entering the circle, as the adventurers' eyesight becomes accustomed to the half-light, they will see even more clearly that there are very many skeletons scattered around the pit: some clearly scorched by fire, others clawing and tearing at the walls or floors, as if in a final despairing madness they were trying to escape from the suffocating darkness of their deadly sepulchre.

When all are assembled, Siphelax will speak his riddle:

Whom do I serve?

***My first precedes pointedly,
possibly protruding, pregnant perhaps;***

***My second stands tall,
with taut arms outstretched;***

***My third is at first,
and stands astride, bearing all;***

***My fourth heralds high hopes,
hovering hawk-like above.***

***My whole speaks the word:
and behold! It is!***

Whom do I serve?

As Siphelax finishes the final sentence, the grind of gears is heard, and the stone lid begins its slow progress back into place (taking 10 battle rounds).

The solution to the riddle is P-T-A-H (a clue is that in each line, the most common letter used is the answering letter – so, for example, the letter T occurs 8 times in the second line, more than any other letter in that line). Ptah (also known as Ra or Ra-Ptah) is the god of light, who spoke the world into being (hence the final line *My whole speaks the word: and behold! It is!*). Ptah is also one of the two gods worshipped in the Temple of Beyda, and the adventurers may well infer that Siphelax, the white sphinx, is a servant of Ra-Ptah, whilst his brother Clymendax is a servant of Typhon.

If the adventurers fail to guess the answer in time, they will be trapped in the pit with a suddenly vituperative and malevolent sphinx, who will curse them for their stupidity. As Siphelax's countenance changes to deepest black, the fires in the braziers start to die down, and the seemingly gleaming treasure all around them is revealed to be as insubstantial as a desert mirage, the adventurers will realise that they are trapped with a truly unpleasant creature who, whilst chained, will still lash out as best he can in an attempt to harm the 'blundering fools' who have once again denied him freedom. The players are going to need to be inventive if they are to get out of this sticky situation...

If the characters panic and try to exit the pit before giving the correct answer, the fate of which Siphelax warned them will come to pass: the fires within the braziers flare up alarmingly, turning from mystical blue to fiery red-hot in an instant, and balls of fire spurt out, doing 4d6 damage to all characters (or only 2d6 on a successful Danger Evasion roll with a target number of 15). Siphelax himself will take no damage.

If the adventurers succeed in answering 'PTAH' before the pit has been sealed, the stone will immediately reverse direction, and start moving back into the fully open position. The sphinx's manacles and chains will burst asunder. Siphelax will stretch his limbs and wings fully for the first time in centuries.

'At last!' he cries, 'Liberty! Freedom to pursue vengeance against my enemies!' He turns towards the adventurers, a crafty smile on his face. 'Thanks to you, friends. I am truly grateful. You do have honest minds and noble hearts. But not, perhaps, the sharpest wits. For truth-seekers, you are surprisingly blind to the truth. A pity you cannot tell the difference between white...' Siphelax's countenance changes dramatically to deepest ebony, '...and black!'

With a shock, the adventurers realise why Siphelax was so unable to utter the name of Ptah which would have released him: because Siphelax is actually a servant not of Ptah, but of Typhon!

Siphelax stares at the adventurers balefully.

'Long ago I slew my brother Clymendax. Never mind Samekhe and Satamun: it was I who held the real power in Beyda for many lives of men. But for three centuries and more,' he hisses, 'I've been trapped here – ever since I was tricked by that hag Isis! Yet she was foolish enough to think she could trap me forever!'



The two faces of Siphelax the riddling Sphinx

A beautiful, yet strong female voice rings out clearly around the pit:

'No, Siphelax: that was not my intent. Rather it was to restrain thee for a while, in the hope that thou might learn wisdom and penitence. But if mercy should fail, then righteousness shall certainly prevail: for those who came to set free a penitent shall also have the power to meet justice upon an unrepentant malefactor. Such shall be thy doom, deceitful Siphelax: and my truth-seekers shall make it so.'

'Never!' cries Siphelax, looking all around, trying to find the source of the disembodied voice. Then, turning to the adventurers, he sneers:

'Still, as I've waited so very long, my retribution can be delayed just a little while longer...first let me give you your much-deserved reward, truth-seekers...'

Surprise, surprise, it's now time to fight a sphinx... (see page 107 of the *Creature Compendium* – note that Siphelax is Winged).

Exploring the Sphinx's Pit

Assuming the adventurers succeed in defeating Siphelax (it's a bit of a downer if they don't...), they will be able to look around the pit at their leisure. Things they discover include the following:

The manacles that imprisoned Siphelax are inscribed with the names 'Ra', 'Ptah', 'Horus', 'Isis' and 'Osiris': powerful charms indeed.

The bronze braziers are completely featureless. They will continue to burn with a cool, mystical blue fire for as long as the adventurers remain in the pit, but as soon as they leave, the flames will quickly die away.

The Chaining of the Sphinx

This brief tale, written in High Khemi, tells of the battle of wits between Isis and the sphinx Siphelax – the last inhabitant of Beyda from the Age of Myth. Siphelax had remained in Beyda long after the departure of the last members of the Sect of Satamun, guarding still the Temple of Beyda from all intruders. The tale tells how Isis challenged Siphelax to a riddling contest, and that after three days of testing one another, it was Isis who finally set a riddle that the sphinx could not solve. Siphelax was bound by Isis' sorcery beneath the Temple which he had for so long defended. The tale ends with the following enigmatic words:

This was the last challenge faced by Isis: for wearying at last of life itself, she now set out with her beloved. Together they searched for the last oasis, there to be renewed until they might come again to save the black land.

The 'treasure' is completely illusory: the more the adventurers stare at them, the more the chests and sacks fade away into nothingness. Any adventurer attempting to touch any of the treasure will simply see their hand pass through it. However, one item does not fade away...the farthest chest remains: a small silver coffer, upon which the adventurers will find with one word in High Khemi inscribed in pearl inlay: 'Truth-seekers'. The chest is not locked. Opening it, the adventurers will find three items: a small tablet entitled 'The Chaining of the Sphinx'; a Mace of Horus (see page 43 of the *Minotaur* Issue 5); and a Silver Scarab Amulet (also page 43 of the *Minotaur* Issue 5).

Next Issue: *The Oasis of Birds*, the thrilling conclusion to *The Secret of Zerkura*!

Minotaur Play Nymph n°6



ANDROMEDA, by Sir Edward John Poynter