

Issue 9

Spring 2011

MINOTAUR

The Official Webzine of the *Mazes & Minotaurs* Revival



MIDGARD & MYTHIKA!

RIDE WITH THE CENTAURS OF SICANIA – EXPLORE THE ARCHIPELAGO – MASTER THE SECRETS OF THE RUNES – ENJOY 70+ PAGES OF FREE M&M GOODNESS, INCLUDING TWO COMPLETE ADVENTURES, NEW CREATURES AND TREASURES, OPTIONAL RULES AND PLENTY OF OTHER COOL STUFF !





MINOTAUR n°9



A Word from the Editor

Best of Both Worlds

Welcome, dear readers, to the ninth issue of the *Minotaur*, the one-and-only official webzine of the *Mazes & Minotaurs* movement – a truly special issue, since it will take you to two very different fantasy worlds of adventure: good old Mythika, with its pseudo-Greek tropes and trappings and the Norse-inspired world of Midgard (from the recently released *Vikings & Valkyries* supplement), with its trolls, fjords and horned helmets!

This issue, the *Minotaur* bring you the best of both worlds – in 70+ jam-packed pages!

Let's sink our teeth in the Mythika section first! We start with a *Mythika Gazetteer* on Centaurs, followed by *Seven Days to War*, an epic, 20+ page adventure by our friend Andrew Pearce – yes, the man who brought you the *Zerzura* trilogy is at it again! This time, Andrew takes us to a hitherto unknown part of Mythika, the Archipelago of the Seven Islands – so yes, this big scenario also doubles up as a bonus mini-gazetteer!

Then, we have a very special *Mythic Bestiary*, with five new creatures AND five new special abilities, followed by a scholarly study of the skies and stars of Mythika (the Almanac is back!) and a handy game-aid for *Maze Masters* – lists of all the M&M creatures described in the *Creature Compendium* and in our previous issues, categorized by habitat. Speaking of creatures, Luke G. Reynard's *A Twist in the Maze* offers us an in-depth study of winged beasts, along with some optional aerial combat rules. Not to be outdone, the *Official Oracle* brings us some important rule clarifications and updates.

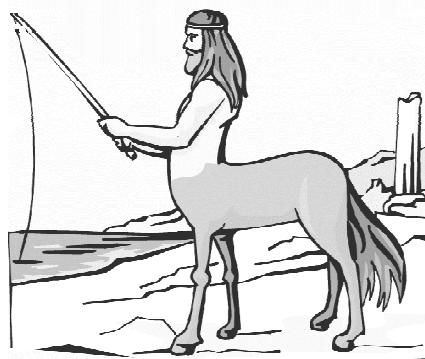
Last but not least, we have our super-special *Vikings & Valkyries* section – which includes a complete introductory adventure, GMing tips by Peter Larsson, a *Maze Master's Lore* about (yes!) Runes and a Norse-themed collection of new mythic items in this issue's *Pandora's Box*.

Oh – did I mention the *Play Nymph*?

Have fantastic adventures – in Mythika or Midgard!

Olivier Legrand (2011)

MINOTAUR MIRTH



- Who said Centaurs can't have sea adventures?

Viking Expedition Roster



Yelling Jarl: Olivier Legrand.

Scholarly Skald: Andrew Pearce.

Valorous Viking: Gabriel Hunter.

Hearty Huscarl: Peter Larsson.

Seasoned Sea-wolf: Marcus Bone.

Battle-mad Berserker: Lyzishadow.

Vanir Veteran: Colin Chapman.

Troublesome Troll: Luke G. Reynard.

Crafty Cartographer: Tim Hartin.

Artists of Asgard: Various Illustrators; Emmanuel "Croquefer" Roudier.

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

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You loved her in issue 6 and now she's back – but this time she's by Gustave Doré.

CENTAURS

OF THE SICANIAN PLAINS

Written by Olivier Legrand

Located north of the Thanatari Mountains and east of Amazonia, the great plains of Sicania are the native territory of the Centaur race. Sicania is often called “the untamed land” for it has never been settled (let alone conquered) by humans – which makes it a unique case in the history and geography of Mythika. This *Gazetteer* takes a closer look at the culture and history of the Sicanian Centaurs, with some never-before-published information about one of Mythika’s proudest Folks.

Centaur Tribes

Centaur society is formed by semi-nomadic tribes of hunters-gatherers, with strictly defined roles: males do the hunting and protect the tribe, while females do the gathering and perpetuate the tribe.

A very important thing to understand about Centaurs is that they are a very unruly and turbulent people – one that makes Hyperborean Barbarians look strictly disciplined in comparison. This restless, often bellicose aspect of their nature is directly reflected in their society, which is based on a few rudimentary principles and is constantly shaken by conflict, from friendly quarrels between brothers to endless family feuds and even all-out tribal wars.

Centaur society is loosely organized into a number of different tribes. Each tribe is led by a chieftain – usually the strongest warrior of the tribe. His position can always be challenged by other warriors (or ‘stallions’ as they tend to call themselves) – usually in single combat to the death.

Many young, ambitious Centaur stallions have risen to glory (or met an untimely death) in this manner and there are no clearly-established other methods of succession. In many cases, however, ageing chieftains choose to designate an heir apparent to assume leadership of the tribe after their death – but such successions rarely go unchallenged.

Chironian Centaurs (*Creature Compendium*, p 25), who, as detailed below, play a crucial role in Centaur society, often try to limit the amount of bloodshed following the death of a chieftain, which is one of the main reasons they travel from one tribe to another, instead of joining a particular community.



- This is Sicaniaaaa !!!

Clans & Bands

Two very important subgroups exist within each tribe: clans and bands. Clans are extended families, often ruled by their elders, while bands are groups of young warriors united by friendship, common experiences and a willingness to eclipse other bands by their prowess, bravery and recklessness. Of course, these two types of groups often overlap: at the core of most bands lies a group of “alpha stallions” who usually belong to the same clan.

The concepts of “clan” and “band” also tend to go in opposite directions: while the clan, with its ruling elders, embodies a form of stability and order (in the loosest sense of the term), the band represents the spirit of freedom and lust for life (including battle) inherent to Centaur nature. Because of this, these two social concepts often come into conflict – but they are also frequently rocked by their own internal conflicts: personal competition and jealousies often cause a band to split (usually into smaller, rival bands) and many clans have been wracked by internecine struggles and strife (which usually take far longer to heal than mere band rivalries and may sometimes cause a clan to split into two enemy factions – a very extreme and irreparable event, which the Chironians always try to prevent.

The Six Great Tribes

There are six great Centaur tribes in Sicania, each named after its mythic founder (choose or roll at random on 1d6 for Centaur adventurers: Epos, Ekilon, Pholos, Arkantos, Pelion and Ixion).

The Epos tribe is considered to be the mightiest in war, the Pholos and Arkantos tribes have been sworn enemies for more than two centuries and the tribe of Ixion is the main proponents of the war against the Amazons.

Some legends also mention a seventh tribe, also known as the "lost tribe" or the "cursed tribe" but this latter title may actually refer to the Brutaurs (see p 7 for more details).



Centaurides

Compared to their impetuous and bellicose males, Centaurides tend to be very peaceful and amicable creatures; in fact, they may well be the main reason why the whole Centaur race managed not to exterminate itself in an endless series of clan feuds and tribal wars. They *never* become warriors; to a Centaur (or a Centauride, for that matter), war is an exclusive privilege of the male heritage, just like motherhood is an exclusive privilege of femininity. Within this worldview, a fighting Centauride is not only impossible but simply inconceivable. This, of course, may explain why Amazons and Centaurs find it so hard to get on with each others.

Centaur tradition considers Centaurides to be the property of their clan; they are closely watched by the males (as the most valuable treasure of the tribe) and the most graceful among them must usually be won by conquest (another cause of bloodshed among young, reckless stallions). A Centauride is expected to take her own life rather than let herself be sullied by a non-Centaur male – fortunately, this almost never happens, since (despite what many stallions seem to believe) very few non-Centaur creatures find themselves physically attracted by Centaurides; the great exception to this rule are, of course, Satyrs. The offspring of such unions are the Sataurs (*Creature Compendium*, p 26), who are always treated as untouchable outcasts by Centaurs.



Sagittarians & Chironians

Two types of exceptional individuals play a very important (and very special) role in Centaur society: Sagittarians and Chironian Centaurs (see *Creature Compendium*, pp 25-26).

As master archers, Sagittarians form the highest rank of the Centaurs' warrior elite and often have a lot of influence over their own clan, band or tribe.

Chironian Centaurs tend to travel alone, moving from one tribe to another, acting as itinerant Lyrist and sacred counsellors. Each year, in winter, all the Chironians of Sicania gather around a supreme sage known as Chiron to exchange information and debate the affairs of the world in general and the Centaur race in particular. Despite what many humans believe, "Chiron" is not the name of a single individual – it is actually a sacred name (which can roughly be translated as "poetic sage"), held by the wisest Chironian alive: when this Chiron dies, his successor is naturally designated by a divine sign from Apollo, during the next winter gathering.

So you wanna be a Sagittarian ?

Over the last few years, some Minotaur readers have been asking for a Sagittarian player-character class – but (a) there is no such thing as "prestige classes" in M&M and (b) the Centaur class as described in the *Players Manual* already encompasses the Sagittarian role: to qualify as a true Sagittarian, a Centaur player-character must have taken the bow as his weapon of choice and have a Missile mod of +6 or better.

In other words, a Centaur archer may start as a Sagittarian right from 1st level or may acquire this status at a subsequent level, as soon as his Missile mod reaches +6. This status will give him no extra benefits in game terms, unless the Maze Master is feeling especially generous, in which case he may give the archer an extra Reputation bonus of +2 when dealing with other Centaurs.



The First Centaurs

Nothing is known about the actual origins of Centaurs, the earliest recorded moment in their mythical history being the Quest for the Sun (see below). It is certain, though, that the first Centaurs appeared roughly at the same time as the first humans, at the dawn of the Age of Myth.

It is generally believed that these progenitors of the Centaur race were created by the goddess Gaia (since Gaian is the native tongue of Centaurs); they were much more primitive than their descendants, falling somewhere between the two main branches of the Centaur race in the present day: the "true" Centaurs and the degenerate, beastly Brutaurs.

Those "Gaian Centaurs" (or "proto-centaurs" as some scholars now call them) were little more than primitive savages - but they had one thing which already set them apart from the other Beastfolk: a deep reverence for the Sun.

The Centaurs had regarded the Sun as their guide since the first days of their race, always moving from East to West, from the edge of the world where the sun rises to the edge where it sinks into glorious twilights of blood and gold.

It should be noted that Centaur communities continue to follow this "go west" pattern even to this day – which is one of the causes of their ongoing war against the Amazons (but more on this later).

The first Centaurs did not really identify the Sun as a deity, because they had no concept of the divine; they simply saw the Sun as a mysterious and majestic presence, which they felt an instinctive need to follow in its great course from one horizon to another. This myth explains the roving spirit that dwells in every true Centaur's heart – but it also sets the stage for the first recorded event of their mythical history : the great Quest for the Sun.

The Quest for the Sun

Having no knowledge of astronomy (and little knowledge at all, actually), the first Centaurs wondered where the Sun disappeared during the night. One day, a band of particularly valorous (or foolhardy) Centaurs, whose names remain unknown (but did they have names at all, back in these days ?) decided to go beyond the horizon and find the nocturnal abode of the great shining globe. And because this was the Age of Myth, they actually succeeded; after many perils and tribulations, they eventually reached the Sun – and were consumed in its glory. But their sacrifice created the spark that changed the fate of the Centaur race forever, for it had attracted the divine attention of Apollo.

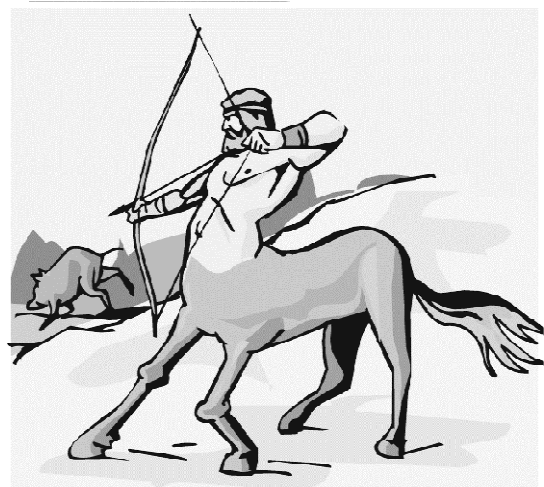
The Olympian god was so impressed with the bravery and spirit of the sun-chasers that he decided to take the Centaur tribes under his protective wing; the sun god appeared to them in all his majesty, bringing them a revelation of the divine as well as the two objects which would shape the future of the true Centaurs : the bow and the harp.

The Gift of the Bow

The discovery of the bow did not simply give the Centaurs a better missile weapon; it also transformed them into more evolved beings, for true marksmanship with the bow demanded a degree of skill and focus far greater than that required by the use of the javelin – not to mention the craftsmanship needed to actually manufacture a bow.

Those who mastered the new weapon became the cultural champions of their race and the heralds of its new way of life – the first Sagittarians.

Ever since these mythical days, Sagittarians have always been regarded with the highest respect by other Centaurs – not simply because they are "good shots" but because they embody the very spirit of their race's destiny and mythic identity.



The bow: one of the pillars of Centaur culture



The harp: another pillar of Centaur culture

The Gift of the Harp

With the gift of the harp came the discovery of song, music and poetry. This opened a whole new world to the Centaurs – a world where things like honor, beauty, love or sadness could be expressed in a way that moved the heart and the spirit.

Simply put, the gift of the harp made the Centaurs aware of their own soul – something which definitely set them apart from the Beastfolk tribes, allowing them to evolve into nobler beings. Whereas those Centaurs who mastered the way of the bow became known as *Sagittarians*, those who mastered the way of the harp became known as *Chironians* – from an old Centaur word meaning “sage” and “poet”.

Ever since the revelation of Apollo, there has always been a supreme Centaur lyrist named Chiron, who acts as the counsellor and mentor of the other Chironian Centaurs, always trying to lead their race on the path of wisdom – which is not always an easy task, given the impetuous and unruly temper of their Centaur brethren.

The Brutaurs

But some Centaurs refused the gifts of Apollo. Divorcing themselves from the rest of the Centaur nation, they followed a path opposite to that of their former brethren, rapidly descending into barbarism and beastliness and forever forsaking any hope of intellectual or spiritual development.

These renegade tribes became known as *Brutaurs*. It should be noted that this mythical episode does not only tell us how the Brutaurs came to be; it also explains why they cannot make or even use bows (let alone harps), which remain the sign (and the sacred prerogative) of the true Centaurs.

So you wanna be a Chironian?

Over the last few years, some *Minotaur* readers have ALSO been regularly asking for a Chironian Centaur character class.

While it should be noted that the Chironian's diplomatic duties and devotion to the cause of Centaur unity do not really leave them with a lot of time to go on quests and adventures, this option could be a refreshing and interesting one, especially in an all-Centaur campaign.

If this option is used, Chironian Centaur player-characters should be created as Lyrists, with Grace and Skill (rather than Luck) as their primary attributes – but their *Orphic Voice* should still be calculated as (Grace mod + Luck mod), making them somewhat less adept at Poetic Magic than their human homologues.

Their Centaur anatomy, on the other hand, grants them the *Four-Legged* and *Extraordinary Agility* benefits of the Centaur class (see *Players Manual*, p 10). It should be noted, however, that Chironian Centaurs are not trained to be warriors (giving them, of course, no *weapon of choice*) and respect the same vows of non-violence as human Lyrists, leaving them few opportunities to take advantage of their high Skill score.

Honor & Glory

Along with the Hyperborean Barbarians and (quite ironically) the Amazons, the Centaurs never bowed down before the power of the Autarchs, against whom they waged a constant and often desperate war during the Age of Magic.

It was during these times of turmoil that Centaurs rose to their current stature, gaining the respect and friendship of many humans for their valorous stand against the Autarchs and opening the way for the Age of Heroes.

Many Sagittarians and Chironians acted as mentors for young human heroes in exile; in return, young Centaur warriors were often sent to the Land of the Three Cities to seek adventure alongside human companions – a tradition which is still observed today (and which also explains why, among all the nonhuman Folks of Mythika, Centaurs were the only ones to end up as a player-character class).



Men and Centaurs – a friendship forged in dire times



A typical Aresian Centaur

The Aresian Strife

Most Centaurs worship Apollo, a god who, as we have seen, has played a prominent role in their evolution and mythic history – but as noted in the *Players Manual* (p 16), some of them prefer to follow Ares, the god of war.

These self-styled Aresians form a very limited (and recent) minority, which is not present in all tribes; it is particularly well-implanted among the Ixionids, who now claim that the founder of their tribe was actually a son of Ares. Aresians are even more warlike than other Centaurs and could be described as the neo-conservatives of Centaur society, since their declared goal is to lead their race back on the “path of its true fate”: the path of war – excluding all forms of compromise with the “natural enemies” of the Centaur race, such as the Amazons.

Needless to say, the Aresian Centaurs often come into conflict with the Chironians, who represent and advocate everything they reject in Centaur culture. They also have very tense relationships with the Sagittarians – for Ares, their patron god, views the bow as a “coward’s weapon”; perhaps more than anything else, this contempt for the revered archers has prevented the Aresians from gaining any sort of lasting political power among their kin. That being said, they are becoming more and more influential in some tribes and are actually the main driving force behind the ongoing war against the Amazons.

For the Chironian sages and their allies, Aresians represent the greatest menace to the Centaur race – an inner enemy, which could well lead the equine folk back into barbarism, alongside the accursed Brutaurs. Of course, the Aresians denounce this discourse as Chironian propaganda, urging their compatriots to “forget about the bow and the harp and embrace the bloody glory of Ares”. Although most outsiders are unaware of its existence, the Aresian strife is the greatest conflict to have rocked the Centaur world since the Age of Myth – for its outcome will obviously have a crucial impact on the future fate of the race as a whole.

Centaurs of the Woods, Seas & Skies

The Sylvan Centaurs described in *Minotaur* n°3 (p. 33) are a unique, hybrid branch of the Centaur race; their main territory lies well outside the borders of Sicania, on the other side of the Typhon Sea, in the dense forests located north of the Helicon Mountains; their patron deity is not Apollo but his sister Artemis, the woodsy goddess of the hunt – and a great archer in her own right.

As noted in the *Creature Compendium*, the origins of the Pegataurs and Ichtyocentaurs remain a complete mystery; it should however be noted that, despite what some “true” Centaurs might think, these winged and aquatic hybrids simply share too many distinctive traits with them to be seriously considered as completely separate species.

The question is further complicated by the fact that Centaurs do not have any explanation or etiological myth for their own hybrid anatomy (perhaps because they do not perceive it as ‘hybrid’ in the first place – I mean, do humans need to explain why they only have two legs ?). So far, the most credible scholarly theory seems to be that of the great naturalist Telmon of Seriphos, who theorize that Ichtyocentaurs were created by Poseidon from Tritons and Sea-Horses in the same manner that Centaurs had first been created by Gaia from men and horses, and that Zeus himself is responsible for creating the Pegataurs, perhaps as some sort of reply or riposte to Poseidon’s creation - perhaps the two divine brothers had some kind of contest ?

Friends & Foes

Centaurs usually get on very well with Nymphs, who seem to be easily attracted by the men-horses’ animal nobility and impetuous temper. They do not, on the other hand, look very favorably upon Satyrs, whom they tend to see as capricious, unhealthy and debauched creatures - not to mention the fact that Satyrs are very popular with many Nymphs.

Among Monsters, the Centaurs’ greatest foes are undoubtedly Griffins, who are particularly fond of horse (and Centaur) flesh – but they also have many sworn enemies amongst the nonhuman Folks of Mythika, including Arimaspians (whose mounted hordes constantly encroach on the eastern parts of Sicania), Brutaurs, Lycans, Tragos and other feral Beastfolks; it should also be noted that they do not get on well with quasi-humans such as Wildmen or Ogres or even the nobler Hawkmen (probably because of this race’s closeness to Griffins).

Centaurs also display a particular hatred for the twisted hybrids of their own species - Equinians, Lycocentaurs and Sataurs, whom they usually try to kill on sight, especially if they are encountered in Centaur territory. This hostility does not apply to Onocentaurs and Bucentaurs, whom the Centaurs view as cousins – albeit remote and inferior ones, lacking the proud and noble spirit of true Centaurs.

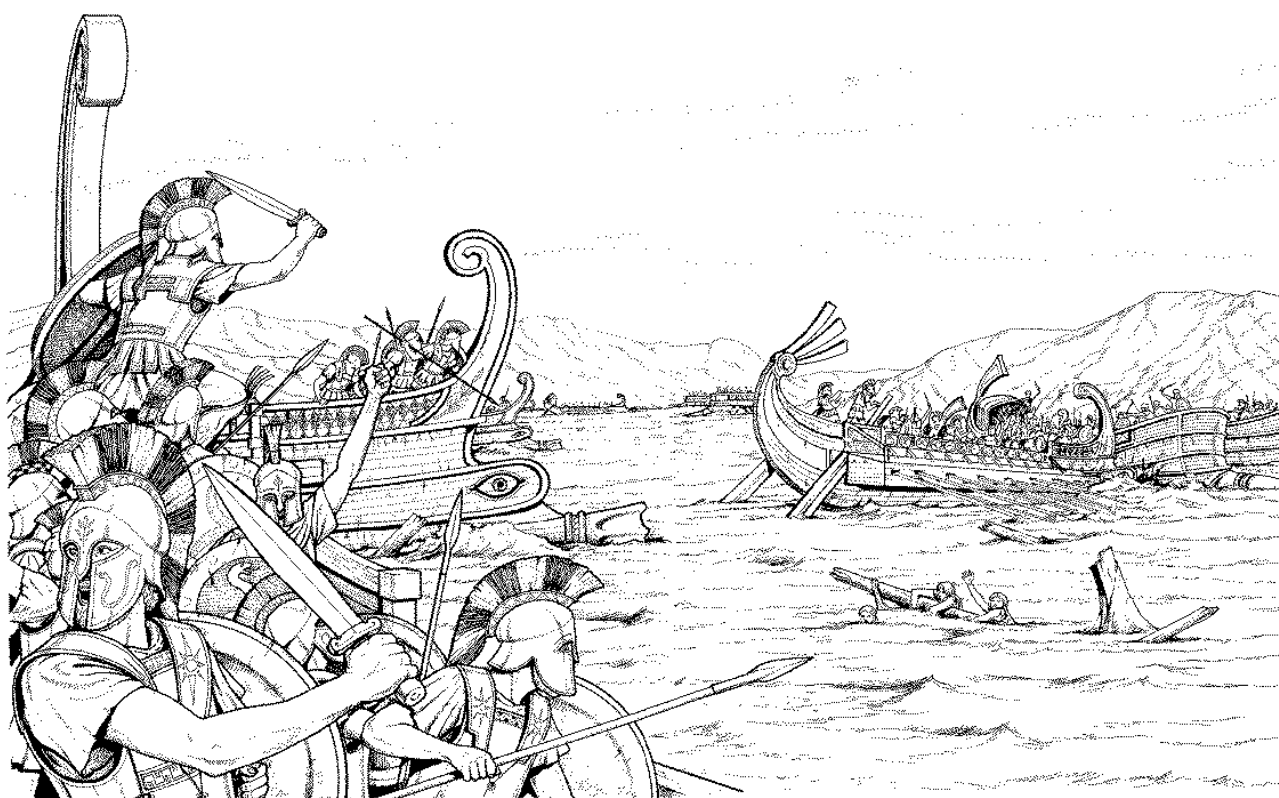
SEVEN DAYS TO WAR!

An epic *Mazes & Minotaurs* adventure set in a hitherto-unknown corner of Mythika

Written by **Andrew Pearce**

There are many, known inhabited islands... there are also hundreds of unknown islands, mysterious locations that may hold treasures, clues, monsters, allies or enemies. There may be secrets, plots, traps, witches and tyrannical kings...

Maze Masters Guide, p 27



The Archipelago

The Archipelago of the Seven Islands (often known by its inhabitants simply as *The Archipelago*) is a new geographical setting for *Mazes & Minotaurs*.

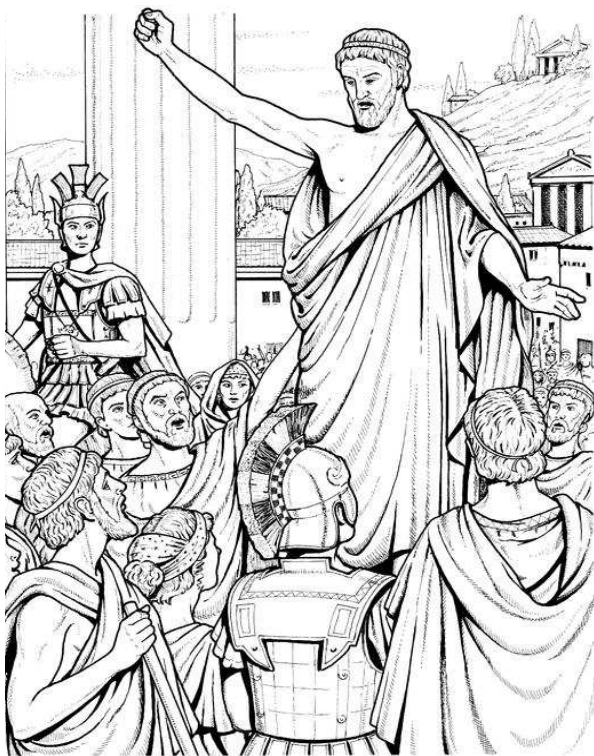
The Archipelago is located somewhere in the Middle Sea. It is fairly remote, situated at some distance from the main shipping routes (if the Maze Master wishes to be more specific, he may of course place it near Umbria, Tritonis, the Three Cities or any other well-established location within the Middle Sea).

As the name would suggest, the Archipelago is made up of seven islands. The two largest and most fertile islands are **Atreon** and **Zankros**. These were first settled towards the very end of the Second Age by a group of Mineans desperately fleeing from the deprivations of the Autarch sorcerers. Over the three centuries that followed, the descendants of these initial

settlers grew in number and prospered. They colonized the other islands of the Archipelago (with the notable exception of the wild and savage island of Belixa). And they began to trade with more distant islands and settlements upon the shores of the Middle Sea.

But then, forty years ago, a terrible war broke out between Atreon and Zankros, and has been fought with varying intensity ever since. Many attempts have been made to broker peace, but without success: even the Thenans long ago gave up hope of helping the two warring sides settle their differences.

Then, a year ago, the unthinkable happened: a truce was finally declared between the two sides! A new, bold king named **Pyribus** had come to the throne of Zankros, and had finally managed to reach out the hand of friendship to the Atreonids, who (privately) were just as exhausted by four decades of warfare as the Zankrosians.



Is the Archipelago on the brink of war – again?

The current monarch of Atreion, king **Leomides**, has agreed to the truce, and has even accepted Pyribus' bold proposition: that he give the hand of his daughter, the beautiful **Callidice**, in marriage to the king of Zankros, in exchange for one of the smaller islands of the Archipelago (currently governed by Zankros). In addition, he has agreed that any son produced by the marriage will one day become king of both Atreion and Zankros – and (by extension) the entire Archipelago.

Unfortunately, there's been a rather major complication. On route from Atreion to Zankros, the ship of the princess Callidice was ambushed, and most of her entourage slaughtered. The princess herself has disappeared – whether captured or dead is unknown. Atreion is blaming Zankros for this outrage, whilst many on Zankros suspect some fiendish Atreionid plot.

The grief-stricken king of Atreion (who, regardless of his many faults, truly loves his daughter) has demanded that Zankros find and return his daughter – unharmed – within just seven days, or the truce will be cancelled, and the Archipelago will be plunged once more into bloody full-scale conflict.

The adventurers (whoever they are) are recruited by king Pyribus (who needs most of his men to prepare for a possible invasion) to join the search for the princess. He feels sure that she's alive, and hidden somewhere in the Archipelago. Can they find the missing princess, deal with her abductors, and prevent a return to full-scale war – and all within the space of seven days?

The search for the missing princess Callidice is a suitable adventure for 3-6 heroes of level 2 or above.

The Seven Islands

Atreion, Isle of the Mighty

The most highly populated (20,000) of the Seven Islands, Atreion has always regarded itself as the foremost island of the Archipelago. Atreion currently has the largest navy, as well as the most highly-trained army, in the Seven Islands. However, whilst blessed with fertile soil, the island has virtually nothing in the way of mineral resources. This has resulted in a generally poorer and less cultured society than its chief rival, Zankros.

In addition to the chief city and port, **Atreopylae**, there are a number of other settlements on Atreion – the most important being the towns of Gatica and Idrecuse. The patron god of Atreion is Zeus, and an impressive temple to Zeus is located near the most northerly point of the island, **Cape Wrath** (so-called because of the unpredictable and changeable nature of the waters around this promontory).

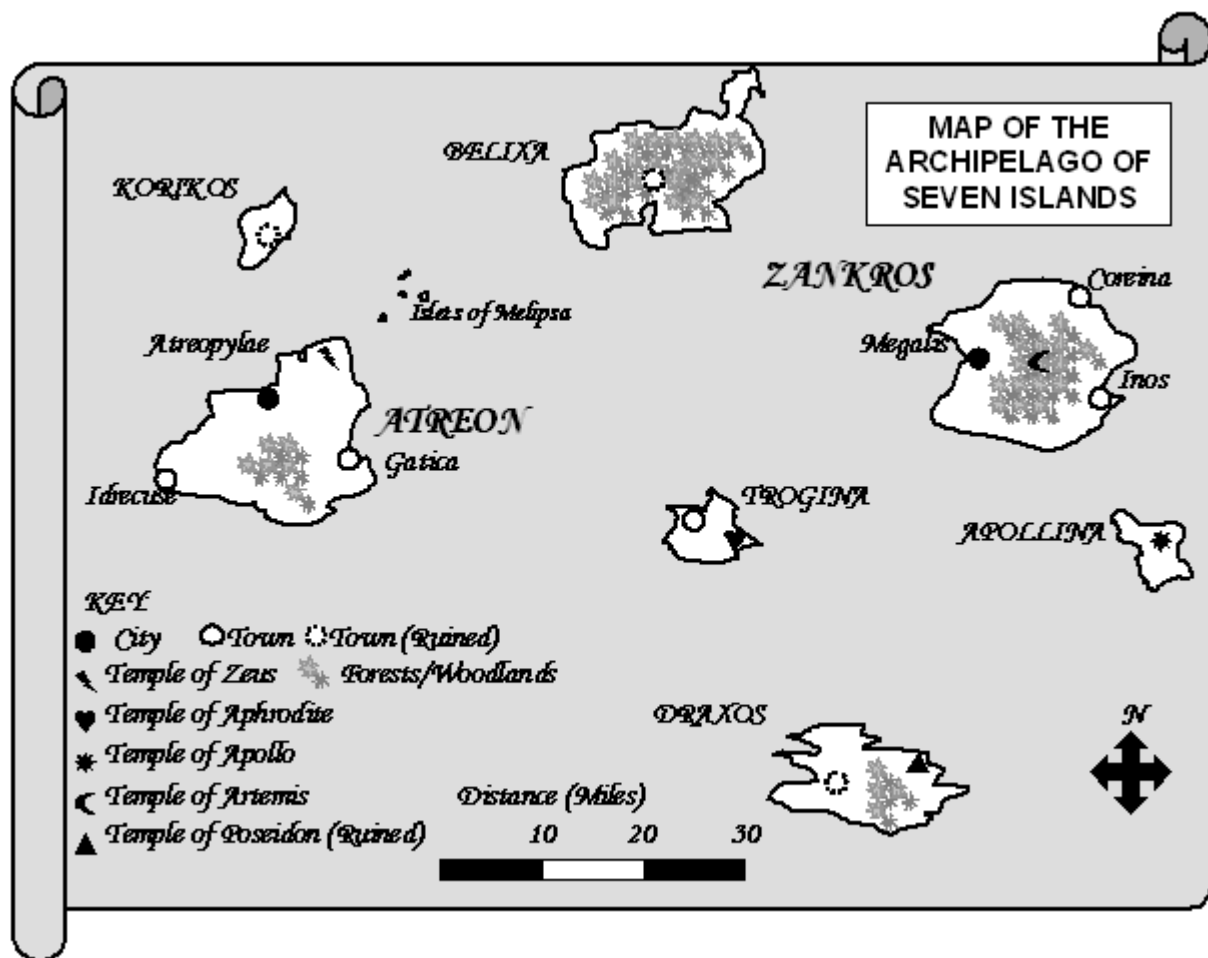
The islets of Melipsa are a group of five small islands off the north coast of Atreion. They are uninhabited by humans (though it is rumored Sirens live on one of the islets) and surrounded by treacherous waters.

The current king of Atreion, **Leomides II**, has reigned for nine years. He is deeply attached to his daughter Callidice (having lost his only son prince Atreos in the last major sea-battle in the Archipelago some four years ago). He has grown weary of the war that started during the reign of his grandfather, and though a proud man, he is also pragmatic. He realizes that Pyribus' visionary diplomatic overture is perhaps the best hope for a lasting peace.

However, not all the nobles of Atreion agree. Prince **Caldamos**, the nephew of Leomides and his nearest male relative, is known to have opposed Pyribus' olive-branch. The proposed peace treaty, if enacted, would deprive Caldamos of what he believes to be his rightful claim as successor to the throne of Atreion – in favor of the future offspring of the union between the princess of Atreion and king of Zankros.

Zankros, Island of Oppulence

Zankros is about the same size as Atreion, but with a somewhat smaller population (about 18,000). Its navy, nevertheless, is only a little less numerically weaker than that of Atreion, and is perhaps more skilled. Its army, however, is definitely inferior, and only because of its slight naval edge over Atreion has Zankros been able to hold its own for so long against its great enemy. Zankros' farming land is as rich as Atreion's – if less extensive. However, the discovery of a silver mine near the town of Coreina fifty years ago has resulted in a richer lifestyle for most Zankrosian citizens than for their Atreionid counterparts. The arts and sciences have also flourished in Zankros over the past half a century and several Zankrosian scholars have even studied at the famed Akademia of distant Thena.



Along with the capital, **Megalis**, the main settlements on Zankros are the towns of Coreina and Inos. The patron goddess of Zankros is Artemis, and her main temple is located deep in the forest of Zankros.

The current king of Zankros is **Pyribus**. Pyribus only became king four years ago, soon after the last great sea-battle off the islets of Melipsa. In his first twelve months, Pyribus had to contend with several assassination attempts, including one orchestrated by his jealous younger brother **Tryphon** and his scheming ally the sorcerer **Xendor**. Tryphon and Xendor fled as soon as their plot was uncovered. They left the Archipelago for parts unknown, allowing Pyribus to finally consolidate his throne. Then, a year ago, Pyribus made his audacious diplomatic overture to Leomides of Atreon. Although his marriage offer was originally a purely diplomatic proposal, Pyribus has since fallen in love with Callidice. He is every bit as enraged as Leomides that she has been abducted – and angry at the prospect of his peace initiative being torn to shreds.

Trogina, Island of the Downtrodden

The small island of Trogina (population 3,000) is almost equidistant between Atreon and Zankros, and was first settled about two hundred and fifty years ago. The Troginans (sometimes contemptuously known as “Trog”) have been ruled by Zankros for more than a century. In recent years an independence movement has sprung up on the island, and has become

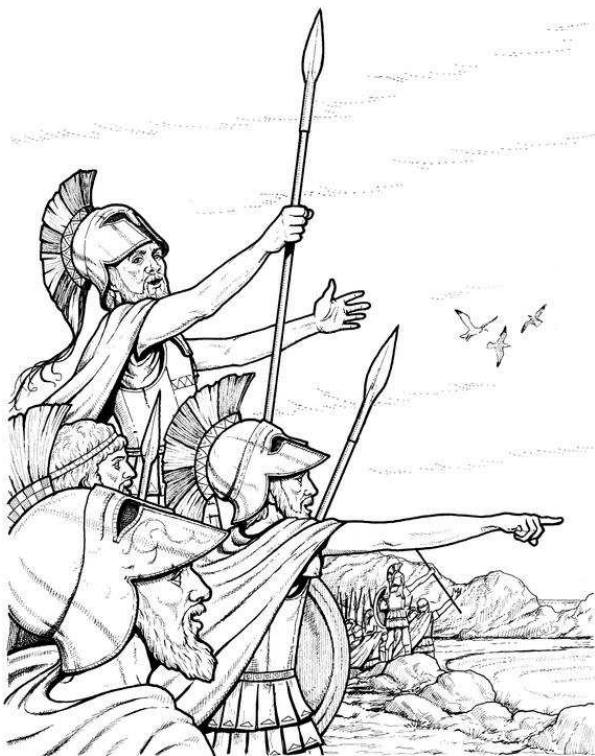
increasingly troublesome. King Pyribus of Zankros proposes to cede Trogina to Atreon as part of the peace settlement (in exchange for princess Callidice's hand): in truth, he'd be quite happy to see the back of the troublesome Trog.

The leader of the Troginan independence movement is named **Corintos**. Rather mysteriously, no-one seems to know what he looks like: rumors abound of a masked vigilante, whose consummate sword-skill is matched only by his fanatical dedication to his cause.

The only important settlement on the island is also known as Trogina. The island's patron goddess is Aphrodite: her main temple is found overlooking Yellow Cliffs Bay on the eastern side of the island.

Apollina, the Blessed Island

Apollina is the smallest island of the Archipelago, and home to a temple of Apollo. This temple is the largest in the whole Archipelago, and its fame has spread even beyond the Seven Islands. No women are allowed to step onto the island (a dire prophecy speaks of disaster for the Archipelago should this ever happen). The island (population 200 – all male) is held in a special reverence by all the inhabitants of the Archipelago, and although under the formal protection of Zankros, the priests of Apollina do not fear attack from the Atreionid fleet. Pirates, of course, are another matter...



*Damocles the Valiant and his companions
Founders of the kingdoms of Atreon and Zankros*

Draxos, the Pirate Island

This middle-sized island was inhabited for more than two centuries by humans, but was ravaged and left deserted early on in the Archipelago War. However, seven years ago it was settled by an unknown number of pirates, who have since used it as base of operations for their raids throughout the Archipelago. Neither Atreon nor Zankros have had sufficient time, energy or ships to spare against this brood of vipers: but both kings have vowed to take action against the pirates once the peace treaty is sealed. Draxos is very much an island of two halves: densely-forested woodland to the east, and craggy rocks and cliffs to the west. A ruined Temple of Poseidon is located on Draxos.

Korikos, the Silent Island

Korikos is a small island, off the coast of Atreon. Once a colony of Atreon, settled nearly three hundred years ago, Korikos came to be noted for certain excesses. However, the island was abandoned as a result of a mysterious and terrifying plague outbreak (known as the **Curse of Drafa**) some one hundred and fifty years ago. No-one has dared visit the place – known now as the Silent Island – since...or so it is commonly believed.

Belixa, the Dark Island

Belixa is the third largest island of the Archipelago, but is little-explored. This island is thickly-forested, and known to be the abode of many foul creatures. Several attempts have been made by humans to settle upon the so-called Dark Island, but without lasting success.

Timeline of the Archipelago

AM = Age of Magic; AH = Age of Heroes

285 AM: Minean refugees, led by Damocles the Valiant, settle in the Archipelago on the principal islands later known as Atreon and Zankros.

27 AH: Death of Damocles: his sons quarrel over the succession. Atreos I, the elder, becomes king of Atreon, whilst Zankrax I, the younger, becomes king of Zankros.

63 AH: Korikos is settled by colonists from Atreon.

69 AH: The sanctuary of Apollo is established on Apollina. The ban on women 'polluting the sacred isle' is instigated.

90 AH: Trogina is settled by colonists from Zankros.

103 AH: Draxos is settled by colonists from Atreon.

136 AH: Aided by Atreon, the Troginans rebel against Zankros, and appoint their own ruling council. The First Archipelago War begins.

141 AH: After five years of fighting the Zankrosians accept Troginan independence.

188 AH: The Curse of Drafa descends upon the island of Korikos. Within three months, all the inhabitants of the island are dead.

190 AH: Zankrax II (also known as Zankrax the Great) becomes ruler of Zankros.

197 AH: The Zankrosians invade Draxos, beginning the Second Archipelago War.

204 AH: Atreon surrenders Draxos to Zankros, ending the Second Archipelago War.

229 AH: Rivalry amongst the oligarchs of Trogina leads to civil war. The Zankrosians accept an invitation to intervene from some of the oligarchs, and subjugate the entire island.

235 AH: Zankrax the Great dies just before the great Armada with which he intends to conquer Atreon, and thereby unite the Archipelago, is due to set sail. His son and heir, Myles II, abandons his father's planned invasion.

285 AH: The last serious attempt to settle Belixa, made by Leomides I of Atreon, ends in disaster.

289 AH: A rich silver mine is discovered near Coreina.

299 AH: The Third Archipelago War begins.

304 AH: Atreon invades Draxos, which becomes the major battleground of the war for the next three years. By the end of this period, the island is left utterly desolate, its settlements in ruins and its inhabitants dead or enslaved.

325 AH: About this time the Troginans, led by the mysterious Corintos, begin a guerrilla campaign against the Zankrosians.

331 AH: Leomides II becomes king of Atreon.

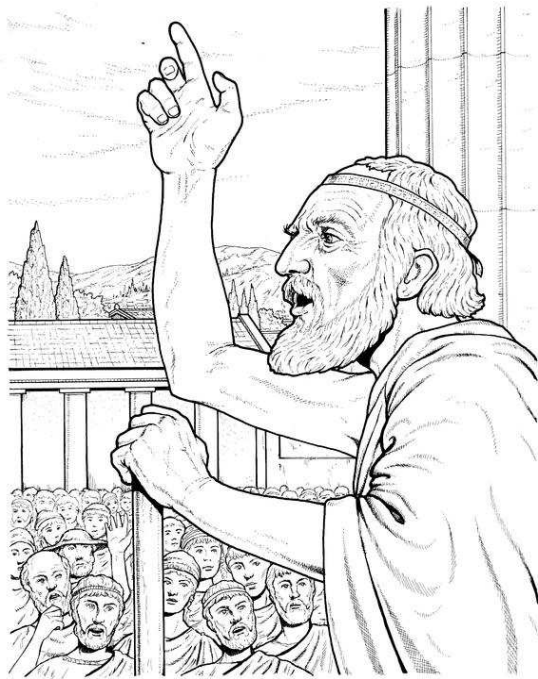
333 AH: Pirates based on Draxos begin operating within the Archipelago.

336 AH: The battle of Melipsa leads to the death of prince Atreos of Atreon. A few months later, Pyribus becomes king of Zankros.

337 AH: Tryphon and Xendor flee Zankros following the failure of their plot against Pyribus.

339 AH: Pyribus' peace initiative leads to a truce.

340 AH: Princess Callidice is abducted...



Citizens of Zankros! People of Megalis! Attend to my words!

The Adventure Begins...

An Ultimatum is Delivered

The adventurers arrive in Megalis, the main port and capital of Zankros, on a day of growing anxiety and tension. Crowds of people throng the streets, and all the whispered talk and wild rumors speak of princess Callidice, the Atreonid bride-to-be of king Pyribus whose arrival in Zankros is now two days overdue.

The adventurers find themselves in the Great Square, before the Royal Palace, near mid-day, just as heralds announce the arrival of prince Caldamos, nephew of the king of Atreon. From their vantage point, the player characters have a clear view as the Atreonid delegation enters the square, and crosses towards the palace steps. Awaiting them is an anxious-looking Pyribus, attended by his chief counselors and household guard.

There are murmurs of disapproval as the grim-faced Caldamos approaches Pyribus and, without the customary diplomatic courtesies, flings at his feet a scroll. Several of the household guards begin to draw swords, but at a sharp word of command from Pyribus, they desist. For a moment, Caldamos stands at the foot of the palace steps, looking up contemptuously at Pyribus: then, abruptly, without a word, he turns on his heel and marches back the way he came, accompanied by his attendants. The crowd draws back and lets them pass in stunned silence. As soon as they have left the square, a babble of noise breaks out, as the disturbed citizens of Zankros ask themselves what this portentous display foretells...

Pyribus picks up the scroll and silently reads it, ashen-faced. He exchanges a few whispered words with his chief counselor, Lord Dauros, and hands the scroll to him: then he ascends the steps and disappears back into the palace.

Lord Dauros raises his arms, and cries out to the crowd: *'Citizens of Zankros! People of Megalis! Attend to my words!'* An uneasy hush falls once more across the square. Dauros pauses for a moment, then continues: *'Pyribus your king commands that I share with you the news contained within this scroll so ominously delivered by the messengers from Atreon. It is a grave communication, but I beg that you listen to it with courage and restraint.'* Dauros carefully unrolls the scroll, and reads its dire message.

To the ruler of Zankros,

Two days ago – as you doubtless know already – the Atreonid ship bearing our beloved princess Callidice, daughter of our most esteemed king Leomides, was attacked without provocation whilst en route to your kingdom. A few hours after the attack, the ships of the noble navy of Atreon reached the burning wreck. There were only two survivors, both gravely injured, who soon thereafter died of their wounds. Both swore with the honest breath of dying men soon to go to Hades that the attack was made by two ships bearing the colours and marks of Zankros. Of our beloved princess there was no sign.

This heinous act of treachery is without equal in the long history of our Archipelago, and your kingdom should deservedly perish in blood in recompense for this wickedness. Yet such is the mercy of the compassionate Leomides for your people – ignorant as they undoubtedly are of your base treachery – that our king offers you one chance for redemption.

If the princess Callidice is returned to us at Atreopylae, unharmed, not later than noon on the seventh day following the delivery of this message – together with the written deed, signed by yourself and your counselors, surrendering the island of Trogina for all time to the jurisdiction of Atreon – then you shall have peace. If not, our war of vengeance will know no end until every town and village of Zankros is reduced to ash, every field is sown with salt, every man of Zankros lies dead, and every woman and child is enslaved. This we swear, before Zeus and all the Great Ones.

The Council of Atreon commands this message be delivered to you in person by Caldamos, prince and heir of Leomides.

The Council salutes our king.

Lord Dauros carefully rolls shut the scroll, and looks out across the assembly. Then, in his slow, deliberate voice, he says: *'King Pyribus grieves the abduction of princess Callidice, his bride-to-be. He pledges that he will search for her until she is found. But he denies all charge of complicity in the attack on her ship. Doubtless there are those who greatly desire that our search for peace should fail, that the war between our people and Atreon should continue, and intensify. It is to such as these – wherever they may be in our Archipelago – that we must look for the perpetrators of this crime.'*

But in the meantime, our king must make all speedy preparation for the defence of this island. We continue to hold out one hand in peace and friendship, but with the other we must make ready for war and bloodshed. Return to your homes. Pray to the gods. Trust in your king. Zankros will prevail.'

An Audience with the King

Despite Dauros' appeal for calm, there is much unrest on the streets of Megalis for the rest of the day (**Day 1**).

The city guard is hard pressed to maintain order on the streets of the city. There is a rush to the docks, as many citizens decide that their best hope of safety lies in getting away from Zankros. Several shops and businesses are looted, drunks cause a nuisance of themselves, and some of the city guard overreact, exacerbating an already tense situation. Roll 1d6 – on a 1, 2 or 3, the adventurers find themselves inadvertently caught up in street disorder of one kind or another.

The adventurers, naturally, will want to offer their services to the king. Unfortunately, getting an audience with the king, or even one of his advisers, is difficult in the current emergency. However, after spending much of the first day dealing with guards and lesser officials, the adventurers are finally able to secure an audience with the king.

Pyribus is in his Council Chamber, surrounded by his closest advisers. Security is tight, and the guards seem more than usually on edge.

The adventurers, naturally, may only enter the royal presence having first laid aside their arms. Pyribus will say nothing at first to the adventurers, leaving Dauros to do the questioning. Only when Dauros is satisfied that the adventurers are genuine and capable in their offer of assistance will the king finally speak.

'So, you would help Zankros in this desperate hour? Your offer seems genuine, and the skills you claim are impressive. In truth, I find that I am in need of assistance. Most of my men are needed here on Zankros, preparing for the threat of invasion, and despite my public pronouncements, I have few to spare for a search that may well prove futile. We have no way of knowing whether or not the princess is alive or dead; or even, of course, whether the Atreonid tale of her abduction is true in the first place. For all we know, her father, or even her duplicitous cousin Caldamos, may have hidden away Callidice themselves, and are using her supposed-abduction as a pretence for war. If that is so, then our hopes for peace are already doomed.'

Pyribus smiles grimly then says: *'But I think not. Leomides is too honorable a man to engage in such duplicity. Caldamos, I judge, is more than capable of it: but I doubt he would dare such a thing himself, without the knowledge of his uncle. Nevertheless, Callidice's abduction has been to his clear advantage. The ultimatum from the Council of Atreon names him now as heir to Leomides. Despite his outward show of anger and contempt today, Caldamos will in truth be quite pleased at this turn of events, I'm sure.'*

'So, if not Atreon itself, where else should we look for the princess?' Pyribus looks down at the map of the Archipelago on the council-table before him. 'Trogina is a strong possibility. The Troginan rebels have fought against us for fifteen years now, and neither side has gained the advantage. They cannot break our hold over the port and coastal villages, but we in turn cannot dislodge them from their mountain hideouts, and from the sway they have over the common people. As long as the war with Atreon continues, we cannot deal effectively with the Trogos. But should peace come... then that masked avenger Corintos might really have something to worry about. There's plenty of reason, therefore, for Troginans to have abducted the princess.'

'Then there's Draxos. That nest of vipers has done well for itself over the last few years. The pirates of Draxos – just like the Trogos – would have little cause to celebrate peace. We'd be free at last to deal with them. In fact, an operation with ships of Atreon and Zankros joining force against the pirates is something I'd already discussed with Leomides. Perhaps the pirates found out about our plans. Perhaps THEY kidnapped the princess.'

'I think we can rule out the priests of Apollina,' continues Pyribus. 'They haven't allowed a woman onto their island for hundreds of years. Even female livestock are banned, lest they "pollute" the sacred isle. And as for the Silent Island' – he shudders and points at Korikos – 'Only a madman would venture there. The Curse of Drafa lingers on after all these years.'

'The possibility of treachery at home cannot be ruled out, my king,' says Dauros, interrupting. 'As I have already advised you, our own island must be searched thoroughly, lest we find we have a conspiracy in our very midst. Remember your brother Tryphon!'

The king winces, and replies, somewhat sharply, *'As if I could ever forget, Dauros. My greatest fear has always been treachery from within, and that is why the greatest effort must go into searching this island.'*

The king looks at the adventurers. *'I have already this day dispatched men to Trogina and Draxos. But you will have doubtless noted that there is one island of our Archipelago I have not yet mentioned?' He looks down again at the map: 'Belixa.' There is a murmur of disquiet from the assembled counselors.*

'Belixa,' repeats Pyribus, 'the Dark Island. An island of hidden terrors, unexplored forests, and lost expeditions. Every attempt to settle the island has ended in dismal failure. The last to try it died half a century ago. No-one goes there now...or so we've been led to believe. But about eighteen months ago, I did receive a report of a ship sighted entering the Cove of Crows – HERE.' He points to a location on the map. 'Curious. It might be nothing. But then again...perhaps we should include Belixa in our search.'

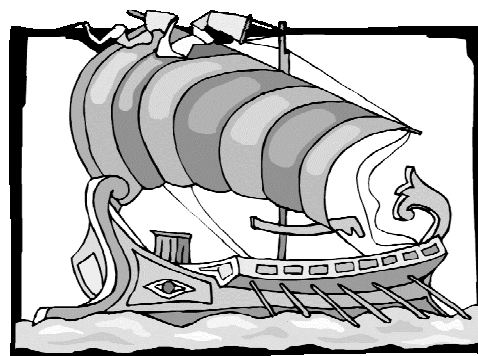
'Unfortunately, I have few men now to spare, and fewer still that have the courage to travel to such an ill-omened island.' He looks at the adventurers and smiles sardonically. 'But perhaps you are the exceptions I need. Will you do this for the sake of my people – and the rewards that a grateful king can bestow?'

Religion in the Archipelago

Should any of the adventurers choose to visit a local temple before setting out on this adventure, they may be surprised to find that even in a reasonably large settlement like Megalis, there are a limited number of deities who are worshipped. Indeed of the twelve Olympian gods and goddesses, only six are venerated widely in the Archipelago: Zeus, Poseidon, Apollo, Hera, Aphrodite and Artemis. According to legend, it was these six deities who guided the ancestors of the Archipelago's inhabitants to safety three and a half centuries ago. The other six Olympian deities are referred to, somewhat disparagingly, as the 'Outsider Gods'.

Each of the six human-inhabited islands of the Archipelago (i.e. excluding Belixa) adopted one of the six accepted gods ('the Great Ones') as a particular patron. However on Korikos the inhabitants in their decadence and immorality turned away from the worship of their patron Hera, and for this impiety – it is widely believed – suffered the Curse of Drafa. Elsewhere in the Archipelago, Hera is customarily described as the 'Goddess of Vengeance', and her priestesses, whilst respected, are also widely feared.

Adventurers from outside the Archipelago who worship of the six 'Great Ones' will be more readily accepted in the Archipelago than those who worship one of the 'Outsider Gods'. This is especially true for priests. Most other adventuring classes are reasonably regarded, with the exception of thieves, sorcerers and elementalists, who are generally viewed with great suspicion.



The *Scarlet Endeavor* is treated as a Merchant Roundship (but one carrying little in the way of cargo). In addition to the captain, it has a crew of fourteen sailors (treat as minor NPC Fighters, p 25 of the *Maze Masters Guide*). They are all loyal Zankrosians, and are clearly devoted to their captain.

The *Scarlet Endeavor* is due to leave within the hour. The adventurers will have time for any minor tasks (e.g. collecting equipment, visiting a local temple etc), but they will be 'accompanied' by royal guards wherever they go – a discrete, but unmistakable presence.

Challenges on the Voyage

The journey to Belixa **should** take a single day (arriving at sunset of **Day 2**). Roll 1d6 on the **Sea Journey Event Table** below to judge what befalls the ship:

Roll	Result
1	Nothing of note happens.
2	Becalmed. The journey to Belixa takes an extra day (arrival on evening of Day 3).
3	Attacked by a Sea Horror (see p 99 of the <i>Creature Compendium</i> for a description). As well as any injury or death to the crew and passengers, the Sea Horror will do 1d6 points of Structure damage to the ship.
4	Attacked by Pirates. The ship is engaged by a pirate vessel from Draxos. The ship is crewed by fifteen pirates (use the profile for Bandits on p 59 of the <i>Creature Compendium</i>).
5	Storm. The ship takes 1d6 points of Structure damage, including serious damage to the rigging, and makes landfall on the isle of Trogina. Repairing the ship's rigging takes a whole day (Day 3), reducing the Structure damage by one point. After setting sail once more, the ship will arrive at Belixa on the evening of Day 4 .
6	Attacked by Atreonids. The ship is engaged by a war galley captained by an impetuous and belligerent Atreonid commander. The ship is crewed by thirty men (use the profile for Soldiers on p 60 of the <i>Creature Compendium</i>).

The Voyage to Belixa

Aboard the 'Scarlet Endeavor'

The adventurers spend the night in comfort in (carefully guarded) rooms near the palace. Early the next morning (**Day 2**), they are brought before Dauros. He introduces them to a taciturn, brawny man in his mid-forties named Idemon. Idemon, explains Dauros, is the captain of a ship named the *Scarlet Endeavor*, which will take the characters to Belixa.

Idemon's Orders

The adventurers may, of course, have their own transport. Even if this is the case, Dauros will insist that Idemon will take them on *his* ship to Belixa. His orders are that he and his crewmen are not to step ashore, but to remain onboard awaiting the return of the adventurers, and, should they find the princess on the island, to immediately transport them and her to the port of Atreopylae. The clear impression that the adventurers will get is that Idemon and his men are to act as 'minders' to ensure that the adventurers go exactly where they are meant to go, and have no contact with anyone else in the meantime.

Belixa – the Dark Island

The Cove of Crows

Arriving at the Cove of Crows, the adventurers find three war galleys moored. The pendants flying from the ships are of unfamiliar color – neither the blood-red of Atreon nor the fresh-green of Zankros, but instead a deep purple. They belong, of course, to prince Tryphon, and form the nucleus of his fleet (alongside several Zankrosian merchant roundships that await only the right signal to hoist the colors of their true paymasters).

One of the war galleys (*Tryphon's Revenge*) is slightly damaged, and is clearly undergoing repairs (it was involved in the operation to capture princess Callidice, and suffered some damage in that engagement), with perhaps half a dozen men on board.

The second war galley (*Tryphon's Glory*) also has a skeleton crew of three or four men.

Only the third (*Tryphon's Majesty*) is fully-manned, with about thirty men on board. It is this third vessel that immediately starts moving towards the *Scarlet Endeavor* to challenge her as soon as she enters the Cove. *Tryphon's Majesty* will not accept any attempted explanation offered by the adventurers as to their presence, and will prepare to board the *Scarlet Endeavor*. Combat cannot be avoided (use the profile for Soldiers on p 60 of the *Creature Compendium* for the thirty sailors on board *Tryphon's Majesty*).

Assuming the *Scarlet Endeavor*, her crew and passengers, defeat the *Tryphon's Majesty*, the *Endeavor* will come alongside the remaining ships. Depending how swiftly the *Endeavor* has overcome her opponent, the ten or so men on board the other ships will stand and fight, or cut and run (perhaps trying to make their back to the City of Belixa to warn Tryphon and Xendor of the unwelcome visitors). If the latter is the case, then the adventurers will need to act quickly if they want to prevent Tryphon from being forewarned. Should the adventurers take any of Tryphon's men captive, they will learn of the route to the ruined City of Belixa; the location of the main entrance to the Under-Deeps of the City; and the identity of some of the creatures that inhabit Belixa.

Captain Idemon and his (remaining) men will not come ashore, but, as per their orders, will remain in the Cove for the return of the adventurers. Idemon will warn the adventurers that unless they return by midday on Day 6, there is no hope of reaching Atreopylae in time.

'If you're not back by then,' says Idemon grimly, 'We won't wait for you. We'll be needed back home to defend our country.'

Journeying through the Jungle

The forests of Belixa are extremely dense, and so truly to warrant the title jungle. Clearly, travelling through such unknown terrain at night-time is inadvisable, and so it is assumed that the adventurers will make camp on the evening of their arrival at the Cove of Crows.



Many perils await in the jungle of Belixa...

The next morning, the adventurers may have difficulty initially finding the trail inland to the ruined city (unless they have at least one amenable prisoner, or they have a Hunter in the party – in which case a single **tracking roll** against a target number of 15 should be made). A successful Hunter tracking roll (or the aid of a prisoner) will reduce the journey time through the jungle from one full day to half a day.

Roll 1d6 on the **Jungle Journey Event Table** below every half-day (i.e. morning and afternoon) to judge what befalls the adventurers:

Roll	Result
1	Nothing of note happens.
2	Malacorn. The adventurers encounter a single Malacorn (use the profile on p 124 of the <i>Creature Compendium</i>).
3	Patrol of Soldiers. The adventurers encounter a patrol of 3+1d3 soldiers loyal to Prince Tryphon (use the profile for Soldiers on p 60 of the <i>Creature Compendium</i>).
4	Tragos. The adventurers encounter 6+1d6 Tragos (use the profile on p 59 of the <i>Creature Compendium</i>).
5	Magical Boar. The adventurers encounter a single Magical Boar (use the profile on p 16 of the <i>Creature Compendium</i>).
6	Giant Bats. The adventurers encounter 3+1d3 Giant Bats (use the profile on p 47 of the <i>Creature Compendium</i>).

The Ruined City

After journeying for several miles through thick jungle, the adventurers eventually emerge into a large clearing which contains the ruins of the ancient City of Belixa. Many of the buildings of the Over-City (as the 'above ground' settlements were known) are now in a perilous state: every time the adventurers enter one of the buildings, there is a 1 in 10 chance of it collapsing (requiring a Danger Evasion roll with a target number of 15 to avoid the falling debris).

Most of the buildings are empty and devoid of interest, the once colourful wall paintings having long-since faded so that the scenes they depict are virtually unrecognizable. Here and there fragments of writing can be detected on some of the walls, but the script is not one that any will recognize (even adventurers with the Scholar talent).

The most noteworthy locations within the Over-City are as follows (numbers refer to map references):

1. Room of Murals

This is the only building where the wall paints are sufficiently vivid for some, at least, of the figures to be recognizable. They depict large, humanoid figures fighting with reptilian beastmen (that any character with the Scholar talent will recognize as Titanians battling against a mix of Lizardians and Troglodytes).

2. Spiders' Lair

This courtyard is covered in cobwebs, and is home to a family of three unpleasant Cave Spiders (use the profile on p 49 of the *Creature Compendium*). Their poisonous sting causes paralysis within 1d6 rounds if the victim fails his Physical Vigor roll.

3. Temple

This building contains the shattered remains of what was once an altar, as well as several shards of broken clay votive vessels. It is unclear what god or goddess was once worshipped here, but there remains a faint air of menace and foreboding about the place that will make most unwilling to linger.

4. Storage Room

Rope, timber, craft tools and laboring implements, and various other assorted supplies, are stored within this building by Tryphon's men.

5. Guard-House

This building contains three of Prince Tryphon's men. In one corner, a stone stairwell leads down to a rough stone-lined corridor, which marks the main entrance to the Under-Deeps of the City of Belixa.

6. Balcony

A wooden walk-way connects the two buildings that stand on either side of the eastern entrance to the City. The sides of this walk-way are covered with long fibrous tendrils that hang down like a thick, dank green curtain. Anyone walking beneath the balcony (or along it) is likely to discover – to their great dismay – that brushing up against these tendrils will instantly awaken them. They are, of course, the tendrils of a Vine of Tantalus (use the profile on p 124 of the *Creature Compendium*).

7. Southern Courtyard

Two Empusae, named Diaphoebe and Asphixea haunt the rooms around this courtyard. They continually wail how much they loathe 'the accursed sorcerer, the one who doomed our sister' – if questioned, they may reveal to the adventurers that Xendor was the one who outwitted their now-lost sister Polymante when he first came to Belixa. Clearly, they both fear and hate Xendor – but he finds them useful, sending them lone soldiers from time to time as 'sustenance' when he suspects them of disloyalty or inefficiency.

8. Northern Courtyard

There is a 50% chance of encountering 3+1d3 Tragos scavenging around this Courtyard – otherwise, they will be in their Lair (see next entry).

9. Tragos Lair

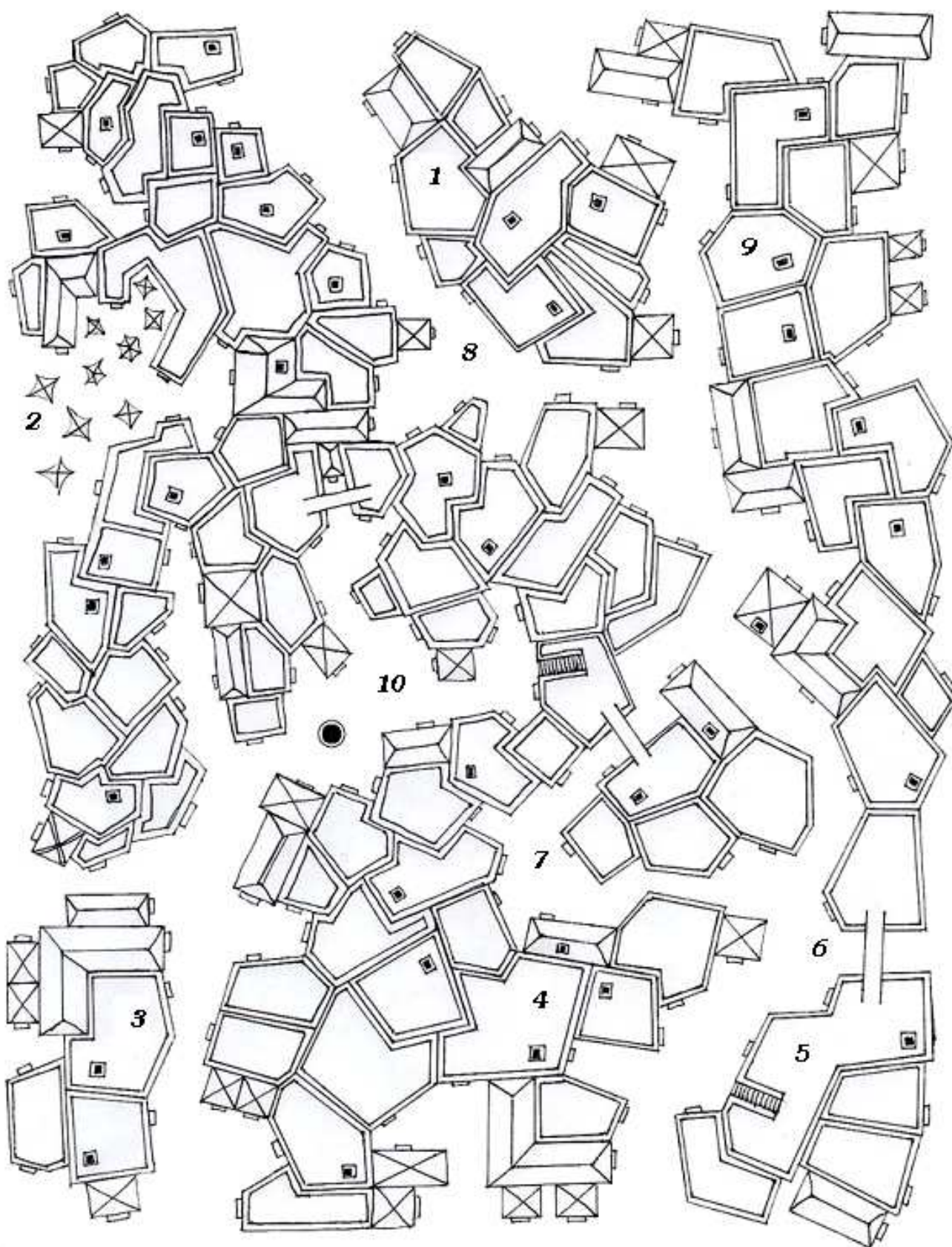
This building is home to 3+1d3 Tragos. There is a 50% chance of encountering them here – otherwise, they will be scavenging around the Northern Courtyard (see previous entry).

10. Central Courtyard

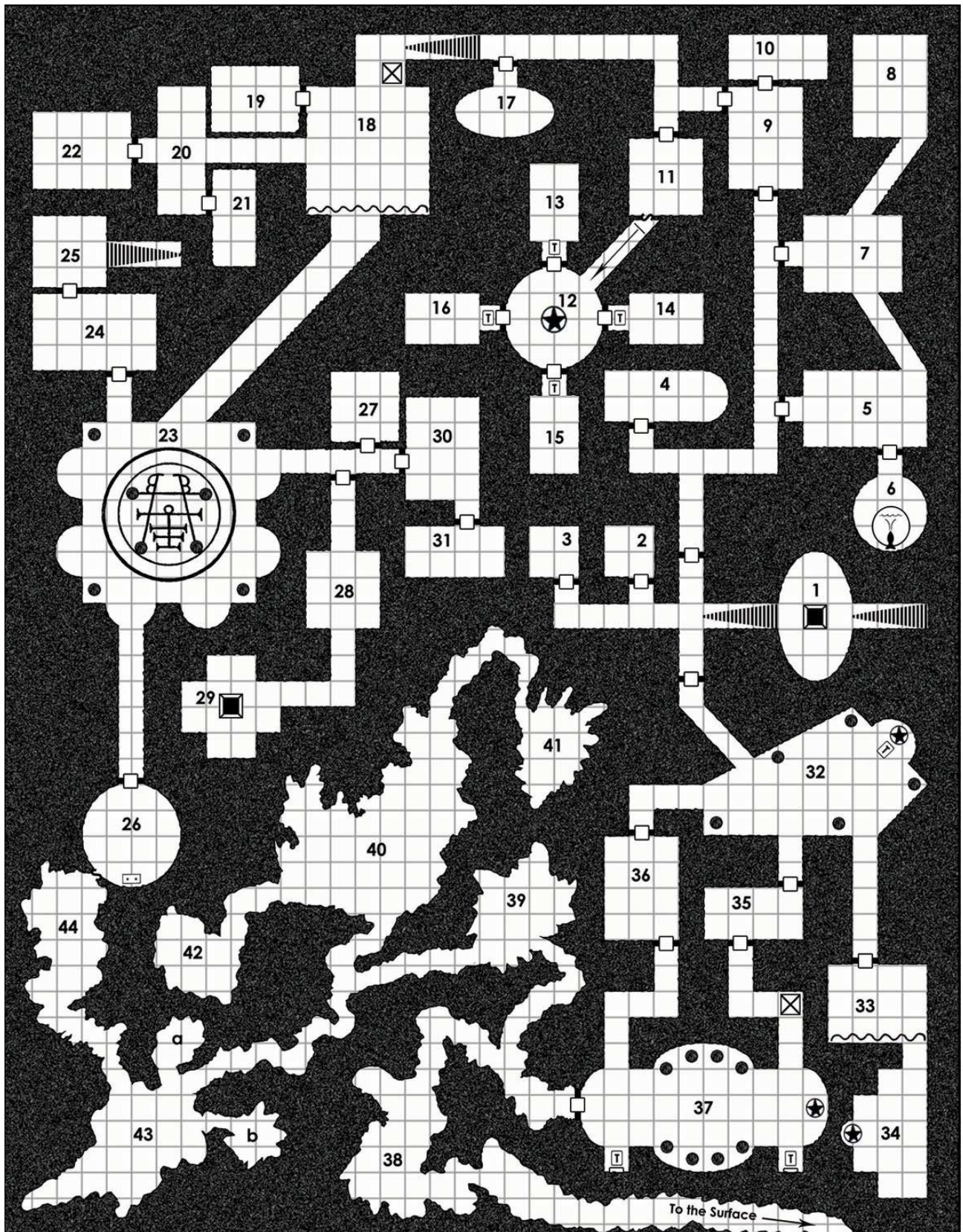
In the middle of this courtyard is what appears to be a covered well. However, in reality, it is the top end of a wide shaft that descends some 100 feet down to the Under-Deeps (to room 29).

The shaft is big enough for any Small, Medium or Large man-shaped being to climb up or down, using the rusting iron brackets that are imbedded in the shaft's stonework (the brackets are too widely spaced out to be used by a Tiny creature, and a Gigantic creature would not fit in the shaft).

There is a 1 in 10 chance that any Medium-sized being (1 in 20 if Small, 1 in 5 if Large) who climbs up or down the shaft – make separate rolls for each individual – will find that one of the brackets will give way when he places his weight upon it (necessitating an Athletic Prowess roll to avoid falling, using the character's Encumbrance total as the target number).



Map of the Over-City of Belixa



Map of the Under-Deeps of the City of Belixa

1 square = 10 ft x 10 ft

Perils of the Under-Deeps

The Main Entrance to the Under-Deeps of Belixa is from the Guard-House (location 5) of the Over-City. The rough stone-lined corridor that leads underground from this location twists and turns several times as it makes its way deeper and deeper into the bowels of the earth. Eventually, after a journey about 300 feet in length, it ends in a flight of carved steps which enter the first chamber of the Under-Deeps.

The various locations within the Under-Deeps are as follows (numbers refer to map references):

1. Guard Chamber

This oval-shaped chamber contains two vigilant guards. In the centre of the chamber is a vertical shaft, surrounded by a rope barrier, which goes down to the **Hidden Depths** - the little-explored level of caves and tunnels beneath the Under-Deeps that were once the domain of the Lizardians and Troglodytes of Belixa.

The upper-most rungs of this shaft (to a depth of at least 50 feet) have been deliberately removed by Prince Tryphon's men to prevent them being used by any remaining Troglodytes from below. No-one knows how big the drop to the next level is - at least 200 feet, it is presumed, and perhaps more. The evil Sorcerer Xendor occasionally punishes unsatisfactory servants by ordering them to be thrown down the shaft.

2. Champion's Chamber

This bed-chamber is the private room of Grun the Barbarian. As well as his sparse private possessions (clothing, furs, a money pouch containing 5 gold coins and 20 silver pieces), the room contains several weapons (three spears, a bow and a quiver with 12 arrows), and a half-full barrel of Hyperborean Beer. Grun himself is not presently in the room.

3. Guest Chamber

This bed-room is modestly but comfortably appointed, and serves as a guest chamber for visitors: usually spies and associates of Tryphon or Xendor, and, on occasion, their chief ally, Prince Caldamos. Currently the room is empty.

4. Armory

The door to this room is kept locked, requiring either a key (possessed only by Tryphon, Grun or Commander Anterinos) or a Feat of Strength to open. Inside, an impressive armory is to be found - swords, spears, javelins, shields, and other weapons and armor besides.

5. Barracks #1

This room contains beds and personal effects (e.g. clothes-chests, stools and gaming-tables) for twelve men. Currently, the room is empty (the men who normally sleep here are 'on duty').

6. Fountain

This room contains a small fish-shaped fountain that provides perpetual clean water: the hidden plumbing that provide this supply is clearly well-designed, and the actual source of the water is unknown. All of the Under-Deep's fresh water is supplied from this fountain.

7. Barracks #2

Identical in most respects to room 5, the twelve occupants of this room are currently present. They are 'off-duty' and are sitting or lying around, idling their time telling stories, playing dice-games, and the like. If the adventurers fight these guards for more than 2 battle rounds, there is a 50% chance each round thereafter that the sleeping guards in room 8 will awaken and reinforce their fellows.

8. Barracks #3

Identical in most respects to rooms 5 and 7, the twelve occupants of this room are present and sleeping.

9. Dining Room

This room contains two long trestle-tables capable of seating up to twenty-four people in total at a time.

10. Kitchen

A brick oven is built into the back wall of this room, and a hearth stands nearby with cooking implements. There is a preparation table to one side, and an alcove containing bedding for the two kitchen-boys on the other. The room is currently occupied by the cook and his two assistants (treat as non-combatant minor NPCs).

11. Pantry

This room contains various food-stuffs: barrels of grain, amphorae of cheap wine, jars of herbs and spices, and the like. It also contains bedding for the cook. Directly behind the cook's bed is a secret door. A successful Detection roll with a target number of 18 is required to discover this well-hidden door. Behind this door, a sloping passage leads down to room 12.

12. Vestibule

This circular chamber is dominated by a statue of an Argusoid (adventurers with the Scholar talent may recognize it as a depiction of Argus himself, the progenitor of his race). Beneath the statue is a text, written in the same unknown language as found in the ruins of the Over-City above (If it could be translated – which alas it can't be – the inscription warns the wary traveler to 'keep all his eyes open' as he passes through the surrounding doors).

These four doors, which are spaced at 90 degrees to one another, are all floor-trapped – (Type: indoor; Effect: direct damage – swinging blade; 1d6 Hits; Concealment Rating 16; Danger Rating 16). However, the Concealment Rating and Danger Rating are both reduced by 2 each time as the adventurers become more familiar with each trap which, while not identical, are very similar to each other in design and layout.

13. Treasure Chamber #1

This room contains several chests filled with rich clothes (now rotten), coins (200 gold coins and 2,000 silver pieces) and semi-precious gems (to the value of 100 gold coins).

14. Treasure Chamber #2

This room is empty.

15. Treasure Chamber #3

This room contains a chest containing 40 gold coins, as well as the following mythic items: Boar Helmet (made of titanite), Tunic of Nessos, Phial of Styx Water, and a Staff of Power.

The Treasury of the City

This Vestibule, and the four associated treasure chambers, form the ancient and long-lost Treasury of the City of Belixa. Neither Tryphon nor Xendor know of its existence, and even the last few Titanians of Belixa have lost the knowledge of its location.

However, many of the mythic items found within are made of an ancient metal, Titanite, which has a distinctive reddish tinge. This will be instantly recognizable to the Titanians should they see them – and will instantly arouse their interest and, probably, their anger, should they question the adventurers as to how they came by them. The script found upon the statue of Argus is written in Titanian, the ancient, virtually forgotten language of the Titans and their Titanian descendants.

16. Treasure Chamber #4

This room contains the following mythic items: Spear of the Dragon, Sword of the Underworld (made of titanite), Staff of Water, Ring of Missile Deflection (made of titanite), Blade of Treachery (made of titanite).

Note: all the mythic items noted in this room and room 15 are detailed in the *Maze Masters Guide*, with the exception of the *Ring of Missile Deflection* (see *Minotaur N° 6: Pandora's Box*) and the *Blade of Treachery* (see *Minotaur N° 4: Pandora's Box*).

17. Empty Chamber

This oval-shaped chamber contains nothing of interest. Just past the entrance to this room descending steps lead down to room 18.

18. Guard Chamber

At the entrance to this room there is a cunningly-hidden pit trap (Type: indoor; Effect: falling + direct damage from stakes; 2d6 Hits; Concealment Rating 16; Danger Rating 16). Inside the room itself are three not particularly attentive guards, sat around a table playing a board game.

If the adventurers fight these guards for more than one battle round, there is a 2 in 3 chance each round thereafter that the guards in room 20 will reinforce their fellows.

At the far end of the room is a rich tapestry which, though faded, can still be recognized as a depiction of the world-shaking struggle between Gods and Titans that inaugurated the Age of Myth. Unusually, the Titans are depicted as graceful, majestic beings whilst the Gods are depicted as brutish, ugly and malevolent.

19. Torture Chamber

This grim room reeks of blood and foulness, and is filled with all manner of instruments of torture: saws, thumb-screws, eye-gouges, a torture-rack, various sinister instruments with long wicked blades, chains hanging from the roof, and the like.

20. Guard Chamber

This chamber contains two vigilant guards.

21. Cell #1

This door to this chamber contains a barred window, allowing the guards outside to view the interior. The door itself is locked (the attendant guards having the only key). Inside the room are two badly injured men, captured alongside princess Callidice.

Both men bear the marks of severe torture. One of them is so badly injured that he will expire within moments of being rescued. The other, however, will revive a little if given water, and will be capable of moving and, if necessary, fighting, if the adventurers put a sword or spear into his hands (treat him as a Fighter Minor NPC, p 25 of the *Maze Masters Guide*, with just 4 Hits left).

22. Cell #2

Similar to room 21, though with certain rough furnishings that give a modicum of comfort. As with the other cell, the only key is held by the attendant guards. The only occupant is princess Callidice.

23. Summoning Chamber

This large, impressive room contains four pillars, each of which is carved so as to resemble one of the four types of Infernal Archfiends: the Balotaur, the Dracodemon, the Thanator and the Hellazon.

Standing at the far end of the room is the Sorcerer Xendor: he is just coming to the end of the summoning incantation, spoken in the ominous-sounding dark tongue of Stygia, whilst finishing the inscribing of the magical Circle of Summoning – a series of glowing lines of eldritch power – upon the floor of the chamber. Hovering in the air above the Circle, a dark hazy shape is rapidly taking more solid form – the Archfiend that Xendor has successfully summoned. It is a Balotaur!

See *Minotaur* N° 3 p 34 for the Balotaur's detailed stats. Xendor's profile can be found in the Appendix to this adventure – including the description of his magical *Amulet of Acheron*, which allowed him to summon the Archfiend.



Behold the might of the dreadful Balotaur!

Fighting Xendor and the Balotaur

The Balotaur will operate independently of Xendor, but in accordance with his summoner's general wishes (e.g. to attack the adventurers). The Archfiend will remain for 2d6+4 rounds (or until it is destroyed, or Xendor is killed).

Xendor will fight until his Hits are reduced to 6 or less, and/or the Balotaur is destroyed – at which point he will use his Armlet of Janus to retreat either to his Temple (and from there to the caverns beyond, in search of help from the Ogres that live there), or to the Titanians' quarters (where he will seek their aid). Although power-crazed, Xendor has a strong survival streak, and if possible will turn to flight rather than fight to the death.

24. Xendor's Chamber

This room is Xendor's private room. It is simply furnished, and contains little of interest, other than a small chest underneath Xendor's bed. This chest is locked (only Xendor has a key), though it could be opened easily with a successful Feat of Strength.

However, the chest is trapped (Type: indoor; Effect: poison – needle trap: death in 1d6 rounds if the victim fails a Physical Vigor roll; Concealment Rating 17; Danger Rating 15). The chest contains 25 gold coins, gems to the value of 20 gold coins, and several of the Scrolls of Thessalia (Scrolls I-III).

25. Empty Chamber

Behind a locked and heavily-barred door (which can, however, be opened by a Feat of Strength) lies this empty, draughty room. A flight of steps leads down to a rough-hewn tunnel – for this marks one of the entrances to the Hidden Depths – the little-explored maze of tunnels, fissures and caverns beneath the City of Belixa. Long ago the Hidden Depths were home to the Lizardian and Troglodyte foes of the Titanians of Belixa. It may well be that remnants of these reptilian races remain, but reported sightings have been few and fleeting. Xendor prefers to keep the door to this entry-hall firmly barred. The door itself is carved on both sides with images of Titanians battling their reptilian foes.

26. Temple

This small shrine contains that incredibly rare thing – an altar to Hades. That Xendor should have decided to embrace the worship of Hades is extraordinary, even given the obviously unbalanced state of his mind. There is a strong atmosphere of gloom and foreboding within this room. Located just to the right of the altar is a secret door (a successful Detection roll with a target number of 15 is required to locate it). This door leads to the caverns (rooms 38-44) beyond.

27. Titanian Chamber #1

This room (currently empty) is the private chamber of Molicon, younger brother of Adastrix, and one of the five remaining Titanians of Belixa.

28. Titanian Chamber #2

This room (currently empty) is the private chamber of Gymnauris, son of Adastrix, and one of the five remaining Titanians of Belixa.

29. Titanian Chamber #3

This is the private chamber of Adastrix, the Lord of the Titanians, and his wife, Solepsa. In the centre of the ceiling is a shaft that leads up to the Over-City (emerging at location 10 on the Over-City map). Currently only Solepsa is in the room, sleeping.

30. Titanian Chamber #4

This room contains the few remaining treasures possessed by the Titanians of Belixa: beautiful couches and tables; faded manuscripts depicting the Titanian's forgotten history, written in a language that even the remaining members of this race now find hard to read; tattered tapestries and rusted armor from their days of glory. There are no mythic items of note to be found here.

Currently Adastrix, his son and his brothers are all in this room. All have the usual stats of Titanians, as found on page 116 of the *Creature Compendium* – but see also *The Titanians of Belixa*, next page.

31. Titanian Chamber #5

This room (currently empty) is the private chamber of Pardicos, youngest brother of Adastrix, and one of the five remaining Titanians of Belixa.

32. Outer Audience Chamber

This large room is attended by five guards – each standing before one of the five tall, richly-adorned pillars found in this room. If the adventurers fight these guards for more than 2 battle rounds, there is a one in three chance each round thereafter that Anterinos and Tryphon (currently both in room 36) and/or Grun (in room 33) will reinforce their fellows (make two separate rolls).

In an alcove at one end of the room is a large, 20 foot statue of Kronos, Lord of the Titans. Kronos is depicted as an austere cloaked figure, holding a great scythe – the Scythe of Time.

The floor immediately before the statue is trapped – any-one standing there will activate a cunning mechanism which causes the statue's sharp scythe to swing down upon the hapless victim (Type: indoor; Effect: direct damage – swinging blade; 1d6 Hits; Concealment Rating 17; Danger Rating 15).



A proud, undefeated Titanian warrior

33. Tryphon's Reception Room

Here prince Tryphon spends much of his time, amusing himself with the finely-tuned harp that stands in the middle of the room, or sometimes playing chess with Anterinos, the commander of his guards. The room is decorated with rich fixtures and furnishings, including a particularly stunning tapestry that hangs across the entire rear wall of the room. This depicts the arrival of Damocles and the Minean refugees in the Archipelago more than three centuries ago. It is clearly a work of great craftsmanship, and was brought to Belixa by Tryphon when he fled Zankros three years ago.

Currently standing on duty before the tapestry is Tryphon's personal champion, Grun the Barbarian. See the Appendix for Grun's profile.

34. Tryphon's Chamber

Tryphon's bed-chamber (the entrance to which is hidden behind the great tapestry of Damocles) is just as lavish as his reception room. To one side there is a small household shrine to Aphrodite – Tryphon's personal patron. Adventurers who take the opportunity to explore this room will find that there is a small desk bureau in the far corner: amongst the more interesting items to be found there are several letters from Caldamos which implicate him in the kidnapping plot, and a small pouch of gems (with a value of 60 gold coins).

The Titanians of Belixa

The Titanians of Belixa were once a proud and noble civilization, responsible for great feats of architectural engineering, and for building both the Over-City and the Under-Deeps of Belixa sometime in the Age of Myth.

Unfortunately, the Titanians were not the only inhabitants of the island, and for hundreds of years, during the Age of Magic, they fought a bitter war against their reptilian rivals, the Lizardians and Troglodytes.

The long conflict led to the ruination of the Over-City. The dwindling remnants of the Titanian race eventually overcame their reptilian foes (though it was rumored that some of the Lizardians and Troglodytes survived in the Hidden Depths below the Under-Deeps).

The Titanian race never regained their vigor, and now just five members of this most ancient civilization of the Archipelago remain. However, they have agreed to ally with Xendor and Tryphon – and to share their empty halls with them and their servants – in return for two pledges: firstly, that Xendor and Tryphon, once they have returned to power in Zankros, will help the Titanians finally cleanse Belixa of all remnants of the foul Lizardian and Troglodyte races; and secondly, that they will procure wives for the three younger Titanians, so that something of their race – however diminished or half-bred – will survive into the future.

The profile for the Titanians of Belixa is identical to that found on page 116 of the *Creature Compendium*. The Titanians will fight the adventurers without hesitation – if even one of them is killed, the others will become *enraged* (add +1 to their Melee but -1 to their Defense Class). All the Titanians fight with shields (even Solepsa). They will fight to the death.

35. Anterinos' Chamber

This bed-chamber is the private room of Anterinos, the commander of Tryphon's guard. It is simply but tastefully-furnished, with everything neatly and precisely ordered.

36. Dining Room

This well-appointed chamber is where Tryphon, Grun Anterinos and, occasionally, Xendor, take their meals. Anterinos and Tryphon are both currently in this room (see the Appendix for their profiles).

Tryphon and Anterinos will both fight to the death, as they know that no mercy will be shown to them for their involvement in the abduction of Callidice.

37. Inner Audience Chamber

This large room serves as the main planning and conference room between Tryphon, Xendor, Anterinos and visiting allies such as Caldamos. The floor is dominated by a large map of the Archipelago, with various models representing ships, troops, settlements and agents. On either side of the room are a series of imposing pillars, each carved so as to resemble one of the Titans.

At the eastern end of the chamber is a large statue of Atlas, one of the foremost of the Titans, who is depicted in such a way as to suggest that he is holding up the roof of this chamber (in reality, this statue, running from floor to ceiling, **is** playing a significant load-bearing roll – should it be seriously damaged, requiring a Feat of Strength, then over 1d3 rounds the ceiling of not just this room but also rooms 33 and 34 would come crashing down).

At the western end of the chamber is a locked door (only Tryphon, Xendor and Anterinos hold the key to it), beyond which there is a series of caverns (rooms 38-44). This door can be broken open by a Feat of Strength. On the southern wall there appears to be two doors which are actually false, and which are trapped (Type: indoor; Effect: direct damage – falling boulders; 2d6 Hits; Concealment Rating 15; Danger Rating 15). Additionally, there is a pit trap in the connecting corridor between this chamber and room 35 (Type: indoor; Effect: falling; 1d6 Hits; Concealment Rating 16; Danger Rating 16).

38. Cavern #1

This cave is home to 6+1d6 Tragos. A tunnel leads from this cavern to the surface, emerging after a long, winding journey into a cave about a quarter of a mile to the south of the City of Belixa.

39. Cavern #2

This cave is home to 3+1d3 Tragos.

40. Cavern #3

This cave, the Cavern of Crystals, is filled with hundreds of crystalline structures of different sizes and in various bluish hues: indigo, violet, cerulean and the like. Crossing the floor of the cave is difficult (requiring Athletic Prowess rolls, which, if failed, result in 1d6 of damage from slipping onto particularly sharp crystalline rocks).

41. Cavern #4

This cave is home to a pair of ravenous Cave Spiders (use the profile on page 49 of the *Creature Compendium*). Their poisonous sting causes paralysis within 1d6 rounds if the victim fails his Physical Vigor roll.

42. Cavern #5

This cave is home to a malevolent Shadow (use the profile on p 103 of the *Creature Compendium*).

43. Cavern #6

This cave is home to 6+1d3 Ogres.

43a. This cave is inhabited by a Giant Blood-Bug (see the profile below).

43b. This cave is home to a small shrine dedicated to Gorgora, the Ogre goddess. It is filled with bones of humans, Tragos, and other creatures that have been sacrificed or eaten by the Ogres.

Giant Blood-Bug



Taxonomy: Monster

Description: The Giant Blood-Bug appears to be distantly related to the leech, and has similar foul blood-sucking habits. However, it is surprisingly agile and alert - and very skilled at ambush, lurking in darker corner, ledges or on ceilings, and dropping onto its victims as they pass by. It drains blood from its victims via the multiple-toothed suckers that cover the underside of its body, and the pseudopodia-like tentacles it is able to extrude. Although usually dark red or purple in hue, it is capable of altering its appearance so as to blend into the background better. They are usually found in dark and dank places beneath the earth.

Size: Large

Ferocity: Dangerous

Cunning: Alert

Mystique: Weird

Movement: 90'

Initiative: 15

Melee Attack: +7

Damage: 2d6

Defense Class: 15

Hits Total: 24

Detection/Evasion: +2/+4

Mystic Fortitude: +2

Special Abilities: Camouflage (18), Entangle (20', Might 20), Regeneration (2 Hits / round), Stealthy (14), Uncanny Agility, Wallcrawling.

Awards: Glory 280, Wisdom 10

44. Cavern #7

This cave is home to 3+1d3 Ogres.

Back to the Ship

If the adventurers succeed in rescuing the princess (and, in all probability, killing Tryphon and perhaps Xendor, as well as acquiring proof of Caldamos' involvement in the plot), then they must journey as speedily as possible back to the Cove of Crows.

However, should they emerge above ground at night-time, then they are unlikely to want to travel until it is light (unless time really is short, in which case the Maze Master should be prepared for additional, nocturnal encounters with the dangerous creatures of Belixa).

The adventurers may have just as much difficulty as before finding the trail from the City to the Cove (unless they have at least one amenable prisoner, or they have a Hunter in the party - in which case a single tracking roll against a target number of 15 should be made). A successful Hunter tracking roll (or the aid of a prisoner) will reduce the journey time through the jungle from one full day to half a day.

Roll 1d6 on the **Jungle Journey Event Table** (see p 13) every half-day (i.e. morning and afternoon) to judge what befalls (if anything) the adventurers.

If the adventurers get back before mid-day on **Day 6**, they will find the *Scarlet Endeavor* awaiting them. However, should they be late, then Idemon will have been true to his word, and will have departed. In this case, the characters could, of course, commandeer one of prince Tryphon's own ships: but - unless there is a Mariner in the party - *at least* two of them must have the Sailor talent. Otherwise, short of a Divine Intervention, they must admit defeat...

The Final Gambit

Countdown to the Seventh Day

Assuming they have some time left, the adventurers (on board the *Scarlet Endeavor* or one of Tryphon's ships) will now sail as fast as they can towards Atreon. The journey from Belixa to Atreopylae should take a single day.

Should the Maze Master wish to raise the stakes (and make for a more nail-biting conclusion), it is suggested that he lengthen the journey by any means he deems appropriate (e.g. becalmed waters; storms blowing the ship off course; rough seas making necessary the longer passage outside rather inside the islet of Melipsa; an encounter with sirens, sea serpents or other creatures that befuddle, delay or damage the ship and/or the adventurers; etc.). However, the Maze Master should refrain from adding additional complications or delays if these cause the characters to be late....

Beyond Cape Wrath

As the adventurers round Cape Wrath (preferably on the morning of **Day 7**), just a couple of hours away from their final destination, they find a single Atreonid war galley awaiting them. It is the *Chimera's Heart*. On board is prince Caldamos and forty Atreonid soldiers (use the profile for Soldiers on p 60 of the *Creature Compendium*). Caldamos does not believe in taking chances. Just in case the Zankroseans somehow find and liberate Callidice, he stands ready to intercept any ship that may be bringing her Atreopylae. As soon as he spies the characters' ship, he gives orders to intercept it.

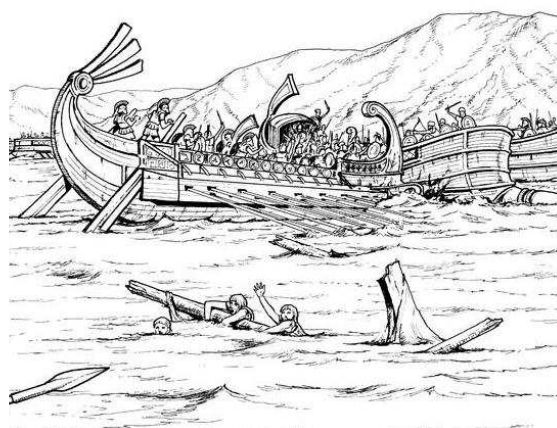
If the adventurers overcome Caldamos and his men, they will have an incident-free journey for the rest of their voyage, arriving at Atreopylae in the very nick of time. The harbour is filled with war galleys, and preparations for war are almost finalised: but the adventurers' ship will be admitted, and allowed to berth, where amazed and awe-struck guards will immediately form an impromptu escort around the princess and the adventurers. Together, they will make their way to the city plaza, where a disbelieving king Leomides awaits...

The quest is achieved: on the seventh day, war is averted. The Archipelago will know a new age of peace and prosperity...

Final Rewards

The exact rewards (apart from all the Glory!) that will be received by the adventurers are left to the Maze Master's discretion. However, if they succeeded in getting Callidice to Atreopylae in time, it is likely that these will be substantial. Possible honors may include noble titles (or at least honorary 'freedoms' of the cities of Atreopylae and Megalis); grants of land, or treasures of gold, silver or precious gems; and, of course, invitations to a royal wedding! Mythic items are not likely to be awarded (although the adventurers will be allowed to keep any they acquired on Belixa, with the exception of Tryphon's Sword of Ruse – an heirloom of the Zankrosean royal house that Pyribus will want returned). Both Pyribus and Leomides are likely to want to reward the adventurers. Finally, Lord Dauros will want to make a personal gift of the first three of his Scrolls of Homeros to any Lyryst in the adventuring party – 'a personal thank-you from one retired adventurer to one still creating new legends,' he will explain.

If, however, the adventure ended less successfully (i.e. after a sea-battle) because the characters failed to meet the deadline, then the rewards are likely to be less generous. Granted, they rescued the princess: but many have died in a terrible battle that could have been avoided. The royal wedding will take place, but in more muted circumstances: and the characters will *not* be invited. And what if they failed to rescue the princess? Well, let's just say that the word 'reward' may acquire a new and unpleasant meaning for our hapless adventurers.



Beware Caldamos' last treachery!

Alternative Scenario The Last Sea-Battle?

What if the adventurers succeed in rescuing the princess, but fail to get her to Atreopylae in time? What will await them? The adventurers are likely to encounter the Atreonid fleet, already amassed and sailing towards Zankros, with the *Chimera's Heart* serving as flagship. Although this is an unpromising scenario, it is suggested that there should still be hope.

The adventurers are fortunate in being able to rendezvous with a Zankrosean force that the wise Pyribus has sent on ahead.

Although outnumbered (12 Zankrosean ships, including the adventurers' vessel, to 20 Atreonid ones), there is hope that the Zankroseans will at least be able to buy the adventurers time to intercept the *Chimera's Heart* and to present princess Callidice to king Leomides, who has taken command of the Atreonid fleet on board the flagship.

Of course, prince Caldamos, who is also on board the *Chimera's Heart*, will do everything in his power to prevent the reunion of father and daughter, or the revelation of his treachery.

If the adventure does culminate in this final sea-battle, Maze Masters are advised to use the Naval Combat rules found in *Minotaur* N° 1, pp 30-31. Although individual Zankrosean ships have better combat capabilities to their Atreonid counterparts, it is suggested that the combined strength of the Atreonids be somewhat greater (in view of their superior numbers).

Other things being equal, the Zankroseans will lose this battle, unless the adventurers can get to king Leomides with the princess...

Appendix: Major NPCs

King Pyribus



Level 3 Noble, age 31, ruler of Zankros.

Personality & History: Imaginative, scholarly, and determined, Pyribus has vowed to end the long war between Zankros and Atreon. Originally, his proposal of marriage to princess Callidice was motivated purely by expediency – but now he realises that he loves her. Her abduction leaves him angry but also uncharacteristically uncertain – fearful that his personal feelings for Callidice may cloud his judgement, as he ponders the best cause of action for the sake of his people...

Attributes: Might 13, Skill 10, Wits 18, Luck 17, Will 13, Grace 13.

Combat: Initiative 16, Melee +6**, Missile +6, EDC 17* (Helmet, Shield & Breastplate), Hits Total 21.

Weapon of Choice: Spear. Also carries a sword and a dagger.

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +4, Danger Evasion +7*, Mystic Fortitude +9*, Physical Vigor +5.

Personal Charisma: +5 (+8 to fellow Zankroseans).

Background Talents: Equestrian & Scholar.

Mythic Items: Breastplate of Apollo, Spear of Conquest.

** These scores take into account the +1 bonus to EDC, Mystic Fortitude & Danger Evasion granted by the Breastplate of Apollo.*

*** This score takes into account the +2 bonus to Melee granted by the Spear of Conquest.*

Lord Dauros

Level 5 Lyrist, age 67, chief counselor of Zankros.

Personality & History: Wise and authoritative, Dauros left his native Argos in search of adventure half a century ago. In his younger days, he was a well-renowned venturing Lyrist. For the past twenty years, however, he has lived in 'retirement' in Zankros, having previously saved the life of Pyribus' father, king Xanippus. Despite his 'foreign' origins, Dauros has become Pyribus' most valued counsellor. Dauros married late, to a Zankrosean noble-woman of great charm and beauty, who sadly died in childbirth eleven years ago. Dauros is determined to help Pyribus secure his legacy of peace – not least for the future of his beloved young son, Galimos.

Attributes: Might 8, Skill 12, Wits 17, Luck 20, Will 17, Grace 15.

Combat: Initiative 13, Melee +3, Missile +7, EDC 16 (no armor), Hits Total 15.

Magic: Orphic Voice +6, Mystic Strength 18, Power points 22.

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +3, Danger Evasion +7, Mystic Fortitude +10, Physical Vigor +6.

Personal Charisma: +9 (+14 to other Lyrists, Nymphs and followers/priests of Apollo & Athena).

Background Talents: Musician & Orator.

Mythic Items: Six Scrolls of Homeros (I-VI).

Captain Idemon

Level 2 Mariner, age 45, captain of the *Scarlet Endeavor*.

Personality & History: A man of few words, Idemon is an experienced sailor who knows the waters of the Archipelago well. He is unswerving in his loyalty to Zankros. He is well-regarded by his crew.

Attributes: Might 12, Skill 16, Wits 10, Luck 16, Will 15, Grace 10.

Combat: Initiative 12, Melee +4, Missile +4, EDC 14 (no armor), Hits Total 12.

Weapon of Choice: Sword. Also carries a dagger.

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +6, Danger Evasion +4 (+8 on ship), Mystic Fortitude +4, Physic. Vigor +4.

Personal Charisma: +4 (+6 to other Mariners – not Pirates – and followers/priests of Poseidon).

Background Talents: Sailor & Wrestler.

Mythic Items: None.

Grun the Barbarian

Level 2 Hyperborean Barbarian, age 29, personal champion of Prince Tryphon.

Personality & History: Brutal, but not particularly bright. Exiled from Hyperborea for unknown reasons.

Attributes: Might 18, Skill 16, Wits 10, Luck 14, Will 14, Grace 10.

Combat: Initiative 12, Melee +6, Missile +3, EDC 13, no armor (14 versus melee attacks unless surprised), Hits Total 19.

Weapon of Choice: Sword (Barbarian weapon), does 1d6+3 damage. Also carries sling, stones and dagger.

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +6, Danger Evasion +3, Mystic Fortitude +2, Physical Vigor +5.

Personal Charisma: +2, +4 to fellow Hyperboreans

Background Talents: Woodsman & Wrestler.

Mythic Items: None.

Commander Anterinos

Level 2 Spearman, age 34, commander of Prince Tryphon's forces.

Personality & History: Capable fighter, who fancies himself (without much justification) as something of a 'ladies' man', Anterinos hopes that when Tryphon ascends to the throne of Zankros, he will be made commander of the Zankrosean guard.

Attributes: Might 17, Skill 17, Wits 15, Luck 16, Will 15, Grace 13.

Combat: Initiative 15 (17 when fighting with spear), Melee +8, Missile +7, EDC 22*, includes Helmet, Shield & Breastplate (25* versus melee attacks when fighting with spear & shield), Hits Total 19.

Weapon of Choice: Spear. Also carries a sword and a dagger.

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +8, Danger Evasion +7, Mystic Fortitude +6, Physical Vigor +7.

Personal Charisma: +5 (+7 soldiers loyal to Prince Tryphon only).

Background Talents: Sailor & Tactician.

Mythic Item: Spear of Defence.

** These scores take into account the +2 bonus to EDC granted by the Spear of Defence.*



Prince Tryphon

Level 2 Noble, age 28, exiled younger brother of King Pyribus.

Personality & History: Brooding, cunning and paranoid, Tryphon is convinced that his destiny is to return to Zankros in triumph, where he will be welcomed back by a desperate people once Pyribus' peace initiative has been comprehensively wrecked. He has lived on Belixa for the past three years, slowly building up his forces, and recruiting as allies the last of the Titanians of Belixa. However, he does not fully trust the Titanians, nor his Acteonid ally Caldamos. Indeed, his only true friend is the sorcerer Xendor, who exercises a powerful influence over this bitter Zankrosean nobleman.

Attributes: Might 13, Skill 14, Wits 19, Luck 19, Will 12, Grace 11.

Combat: Initiative 19, Melee +10*, Missile +9, EDC 22 (includes Helmet, Shield & Breastplate), Hits Total 17.

Weapon of Choice: Sword. Also carries a dagger.

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +6, Danger Evasion +9, Mystic Fortitude +8, Physical Vigor +5.

Personal Charisma: +4 (+6 to Zankroseans loyal to Tryphon only).

Background Talents: Musician & Sailor.

Mythic Item: Sword of Ruse.

** This score takes into account the +4 bonus to Melee attack rolls granted by the Sword of Ruse.*



Xendor the Sorcerer

Level 4 Sorcerer, age 55, the power behind Prince Tryphon's plot.

Personality & History: Gaunt, austere and fanatical, Xendor dreams of never-ending conquest: first Zankros, then the Archipelago, then...who knows? Xendor first came to Zankros nine years ago from Seriphos and soon insinuated his way into the affections of the young Prince Tryphon. It was Xendor who cunningly prepared the false trail that suggested he and Tryphon had fled the Archipelago when their first bid for power failed. In truth, Xendor had discovered the Belixan Under-City some years earlier, and had already begun to prepare it as a 'bolt-hole' should the assassination attempt on Pyribus prove unsuccessful. Xendor has dabbled in various dark arts for many years. The resulting corruption of his soul has left him as a man who is utterly devoid of conscience.

Attributes: Might 13, Skill 16, Wits 20, Luck 16, Will 19, Grace 12.

Combat: Initiative 16, Melee +5, Missile +8, EDC 14 (no armor), Hits Total 15. Carries a dagger (which he rarely uses)

Magic: Psychic Gift +8 (+10 using Psychic Attack*), Mystic Strength 20 (22 using Psychic Attack*), Power Points 20.

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +5, Danger Evasion +8, Mystic Fortitude +10, Physical Vigor +7.

Personal Charisma: +6 (+10 to minor NPCs).

Background Talents: Scholar & Orator.

Mythic Items: Ruby Ring of Sorcery, Silver Lotus Dust, Armlet of Janus, Amulet of Acheron.

Silver Lotus Dust. Xendor has only recently started using this dangerous substance. At present, his SLD usage score is 13 – some way below the dangerous addiction level for some-one with a Will of 19. Xendor keeps the SLD in a small pouch on his person that currently holds 6+1d10 doses.

** This score takes into account the +2 bonus granted by the Ruby Ring of Sorcery.*

Amulet of Acheron

This very rare item of Stygian provenance allows a Sorcerer to summon an Infernal Archfiend of his choice (see pp 33-35 of *Minotaur* N° 3 for details).

The Archfiend must appear within a 25' radius Circle of Summoning (which takes 3 rounds to magically inscribe, during which time the Sorcerer can take no other actions). Once summoned, the Archfiend may move outside this Circle. It will operate independently of the Sorcerer, but in accordance with the Sorcerer's general wishes (e.g. to attack the Sorcerer's enemies). The Archfiend will remain for (2d6+Sorcerer's level) rounds (or until it is destroyed, or the summoning Sorcerer is killed).



Princess Callidice

Age 19, bride-to-be of King Pyribus.

Personality & History: Raised in a royal court where she was indulged by a doting father, Callidice is more than a little spoilt. Beautiful, charming, but easily scared, Princess Callidice is likely to be as much a hindrance as a help to any would-be rescuers – liable to scream at the slightest hint of danger, and liable to make unreasonable and irrational demands. Adventurers need to be patient with her – and to remember that the lives of many in the Archipelago depend upon her safety.

Profile: As far as stats are concerned, Callidice should be treated as a Minor non-combatant NPC (see *Maze Masters Guide*, p 25) – but with a Grace of 18 and a Personal Charisma of +6.

Since Callidice is a Minor non-combatant NPC, she automatically fails all saving rolls – which means her fate is entirely in the hands of her abductors (the bad guys) or liberators (the adventurers!).



King Leomides II

Level 4 Noble, age 46, ruler of Atreon.

Personality & History: A formidable warrior who is well-loved by his people, Leomides is a man who still grieves the loss of his only son. This has made him highly-protective towards his daughter, and it is with great reluctance that he has finally agreed to marry her to King Pyribus. His wrath, therefore, at her disappearance is enormous. However, at the urging of several of his counsellors – and hoping against hope that she is still alive – Leomides has given Pyribus seven days in which to return her. Leomides does not particularly like his nephew Caldamos – whose ambitions to succeed him as king have been a little too obvious for his liking – but neither does he suspect him of treachery. Instead, Leomides has ordered Caldamos to ready the Atreonid fleet for a full-scale assault upon Zankros.

Attributes: Might 17, Skill 20, Wits 11, Luck 19, Will 14, Grace 18.

Combat: Initiative 18, Melee +12** (+16 once per day**), Missile +8, EDC 23* (includes Helmet, Shield & Breastplate), Hits Total 27.

Weapon of Choice: Spear. Also carries a sword and a dagger.

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +11, Danger Evasion +9*, Mystic Fortitude +7*, Physic. Vigor +8.

Personal Charisma: +8 (+12 to fellow Atreonids).

Background Talents: Sailor & Orator.

Mythic Items: Amulet of Protection, Spear of Striking.

** These scores take into account the +1 bonus to EDC, Mystic Fortitude and Danger Evasion granted by the Amulet of Protection.*

*** This score takes into account the +1 bonus to Melee (and +4 once per day) granted by the Spear of Striking.*



Prince Caldamos

Level 3 Noble, age 26, prince of Atreon.

Personality & History: Haughty and overbearing, Caldamos cannot face the prospect of peace with the sworn enemy of his people. The 'peace plan' also proposes to deprive him of the kingship that he believes, one day, should rightfully be his. For several months, as his uncle has negotiated with Pyribus, Caldamos has been plotting with Tryphon and Xendor to wreck the peace initiative. He has insisted, however, that Callidice not be harmed by his allies – for unknown to virtually anyone, Caldamos secretly lusts after his cousin. This, of course, only increases his hatred towards the Zankrosians and their king. Only Callidice herself suspects Caldamos' true feelings for her – feelings that she most certainly does not reciprocate.

Attributes: Might 13, Skill 20, Wits 14, Luck 18, Will 12, Grace 8.

Combat: Initiative 18, Melee +8, Missile +8, EDC 23* (includes Helmet, Shield & Breastplate), Hits Total 21.

Weapon of Choice: Sword. Also carries a dagger.

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +8, Danger Evasion +10*, Mystic Fortitude +6*, Physical Vigor +4.

Personal Charisma: +2 (+5 to fellow Atreonids).

Background Talents: Sailor & Tactician.

Mythic Item: Aegis.

** These scores take into account the +2 bonus to EDC, Mystic Fortitude and Danger Evasion granted by the Aegis.*

Adventure maps designed by **Tim Hartin**.

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<http://paratime.ca/cartography/>

MYTHIK BESTIARY

SOMETHING REALLY SPECIAL

New Optional & Unusual Abilities for Creatures, by **Marcus Bone & Olivier Legrand**

Even the greatest scholars of Mythika are continually astounded by the ever growing assortment of creatures, folk and monsters that travel the land, ocean and air of the world. Many have hypothesised that this collection of sentient creatures points towards a great change to come; others say that this reflects nothing more than the mighty powers of the Gods themselves. Whatever the truth, there seems always to be new beings to meet... and new horrors to fight.

Xenon of Seriphos, On the Subject of Monsters

All the World's Monsters

Players always like coming up against new and interesting creatures – be they towering giants, fell beasts or hordes of diminutive warriors. To help replicate the fantastical array of abilities and powers available to the supernatural denizens of Mythika, the Maze Masters Guide describes various special abilities. The present article expands these possibilities even further, with five new optional and quite unusual special abilities - and since nothing beats a good example, each of these new abilities comes with the full description of a new creature.

Blinding Attack

Creatures with this special ability are able to blind their victims or opponents. Depending on the type of the creature, this may take the form of a blinding flash of light, some sort of missile that covers a target's face in goo, acrid saliva that irritates a target's eyes etc.

Whatever the method being used, the effects are the same in game terms. This special attack counts as one of the creature's regular attacks but requires no die roll. It takes effect during the missile phase of the battle round, according to the creature's regular Initiative score. It has a maximum range equal to 5' for Small creatures, 10' for Medium ones, 20' for Large ones and 30' for Gigantic ones.

The chosen target must succeed at a Danger Evasion saving roll (target number 15) or go blind for 1d6 battle rounds. The effects of temporary blindness are the same as for the *Aura of Helios* power detailed in the *M&M Companion* (p 19): the victim suffers a -4 penalty to Melee, EDC and Danger Evasion and cannot make missile attacks; if the blinded victim moves faster than at half-speed, he must make a Danger Evasion roll (target number 15) or fall over and be prone.

The *Blinding Attack* special ability adds 10 to a creature's basic Glory award.



Triffid

Taxonomy : Animate

Description : Triffids are highly venomous, man-sized carnivorous plants which can move and spit a very potent blinding acid.

Size : Medium

Ferocity : Dangerous

Cunning : Average

Mystique : Weird

Movement : 30'

Initiative : 12

Melee Attack : +4

Damage : see below

Defense Class : 13

Hits Total : 12

Detection / Evasion : 0

Mystic Fortitude : +2

Special Abilities : Blinding Attack (sap, 10'), Camouflage (vegetation, 16), Mindless, Poison (sting, death in 1d6 rounds), Regeneration (1 Hit / round), Stealthy (12).

Awards : Glory 75, Wisdom 20.

Triffids move by crawling, which halves their basic movement rate. They attack by Blinding their prey before striking it with its Poison sting, which does no damage but carries deadly venom.

Blinking

This very unnerving special ability is a limited form of teleportation which allows a creature to “blink away” from an oncoming attack or take even the most vigilant victims by surprise.

In game terms, this ability can only be used once per round, either offensively or defensively.

When used offensively, it can be used to gain *surprise* against any target within 10 feet, even if the creature was standing in plain sight a moment before, unless the target succeeds at a Danger Evasion roll vs a target number of 20.

When used defensively, it can be used to avoid any melee or missile attack by teleporting a few feet away from the intended point of impact; this requires an Evasion roll made before the attack roll itself against a target number of 15. If this roll succeeds, the attack is automatically avoided; if this saving roll fails, the attack roll can be resolved normally. This form of defense is completely useless against surprise attacks or magical attacks of any kind.

Blinking has a range of 10' and cannot be used to teleport in a location that the creature cannot see (such as on the other side of a wall).

This powerful ability adds 20 to a creature's basic Glory award and 20 to its Wisdom award.

Defensive Spikes

This ability can only be possessed by creatures with Natural Armor or Invulnerability. It takes the form of viciously pointed spikes, barbs or other similar extrusions on their body. Creatures with this ability always have Tough Skin or Natural Armor.

Anyone attempting a wrestling attack against such a creature automatically suffers damage from its defensive spikes, before the Melee roll for the wrestling attack can be made. The damage roll corresponds to the Size category immediately below the creature's; in other words, Defensive Spikes do no damage if the creature is Tiny (but may deliver poison - see below), 1pt of damage if Small, 1d3 if Medium-sized, 1d6 if Large and 2d6 if Gigantic.

Attackers who make a successful Bashing attack (see *M&M Companion*, p 14) against the creature will also suffer such damage, unless the attack is made with a shield.

Note that this ability can be combined with Poison for a truly lethal defense. In this case, no Poison attack is needed: the poison is simply an additional effect of the damage from the spikes.

This ability adds 5 to a creature's basic Glory.



Dimensional Hunter

Taxonomy : Monster

Description : Blue-skinned humanoids with huge bulging eyes, scaly skin and nasty claws. These vicious beings from another plane of existence are sometimes used as guardians and assassins by powerful evil Sorcerers.

Size : Medium

Ferocity : Dangerous

Cunning : Clever

Mystique : Weird

Movement : 60'

Initiative : 18

Melee Attack : +5

Damage : 1d6 (claws)

Defense Class : 17

Hits Total : 16

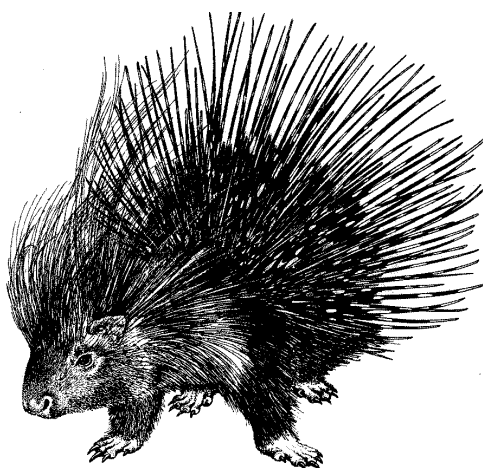
Detection / Evasion : +8 / +8

Mystic Fortitude : +6

Special Abilities : Blinking, Magic Resistance, Sixth Sense, Stealthy (16), Supernatural Vigor, Tough Skin, Uncanny Agility.

Awards : Glory 200, Wisdom 60.

Additional Lore : The ritual needed to summon a Dimensional Hunter on Mythika can only be found in some ancient scrolls of eldritch forgotten lore. The Sorcerer is advised to Enslave the demonic creature as soon as it appears – and if he fails to do so, the Dimensional Hunter will most likely turn on him...



Beast of Abaset

Taxonomy : Monster

Description : The Beast of Abaset looks like a rhino-sized porcupine but is actually carnivorous and surprisingly nimble and devious. Its quills are covered with a nasty poison which it uses to paralyze its victims before eating them.

Size : Large

Ferocity : Dangerous

Cunning : Alert

Mystique : Weird

Movement : 90'

Initiative : 13

Melee Attack : +6

Damage : 2d6

Defense Class : 15

Hits Total : 30

Detection / Evasion : +6 / +4

Mystic Fortitude : +6

Special Abilities : Defensive Spikes, Magic Resistance, Poison (paralysis, on quills), Sixth Sense, Supernatural Vigor, Tough Skin.

Awards : Glory 300, Wisdom 40.

Additional Lore : These creatures live in some remote parts of the great Charybdian Jungle; they are said to be the spawn of an ancient, forgotten deity known as Abaset, who was once worshipped by an equally forgotten race of beastmen known as the Porkupios, who were apparently conquered by the Orycters sometime during the Age of Magic.

Tail Lash

This special ability can only be possessed by Large or Gigantic creatures with a tail. It allows them to use their tail in melee for an extra special attack, just before one of their regular melee attacks (and at the same Initiative).

This tail lash does not require a Melee attack roll but can be avoided with an Athletic Prowess saving roll (target number 15 if the creature is Large or 20 if it is Gigantic). The tail lash does no actual damage but has the same effects as a Bashing attack (see *M&M Companion*, p 14).

This ability adds 5 to a creature's basic Glory award. At the Maze Master's discretion, it could be added to the repertoire of some existing Monsters, such as Capricorn Horrors, Dragons, or Hydras.



Reptosaur

Taxonomy : Monster

Description : Rhino-sized but surprisingly agile and stealthy carnivorous lizards with very powerful tails and a highly venomous bite; they inhabit the rocky parts and caverns of some Mysterious Islands.

Size : Large

Ferocity : Dangerous

Cunning : Alert

Mystique : Normal

Movement : 90'

Initiative : 15

Melee Attack : +7

Damage : 2d6

Defense Class : 18

Hits Total : 24

Detection / Evasion : +2 / +4

Mystic Fortitude : 0

Special Abilities : Natural Armor, Poison (bite, death in 1d6 battle rounds), Stealthy (14), Tail Lash, Uncanny Agility, Wallcrawling.

Awards : Glory 280.



Bird of Hera

Taxonomy : Monster

Description : Giant magical peacocks blessed by the goddess Hera – the goddess' answer to her husband's Olympian Eagles. Birds of Hera are often found guarding ancient sites which are sacred to their divine mistress. They can distract opponents with their magical, many-colored feathers... and turn them to stone with their piercing gaze !

Size : Medium

Ferocity : Dangerous

Cunning : Alert

Mystique : Eldritch

Movement : 60'

Initiative : 13

Melee Attack : +4

Damage : 1d6 (beak)

Defense Class : 14

Hits Total : 16

Detection / Evasion : +6 / +4

Mystic Fortitude : +8

Special Abilities : Magic Resistance, Petrification (40'), Sixth Sense, Supernatural Vigor, Visual Distraction (13, magical)

Awards : Glory 220, Wisdom 90. Killing a Bird of Hera is also a sure way of attracting the goddess' wrath on oneself.

Birds of Hera do have wings but are not able to fly and thus do not have the Winged ability.

Visual Distraction

This special ability allows a creature to actively distract and disorient its opponents using some special visual effect. Depending on the type of creature, this visual effect could be a natural feature (like a peacock's feathers) or some sort of magical illusion (like a shimmering halo, a slightly distorted or displaced image etc). Since the creature must be fully aware of the attacker's presence to use this ability, its effects do not apply to *surprise* or *rear* attacks.

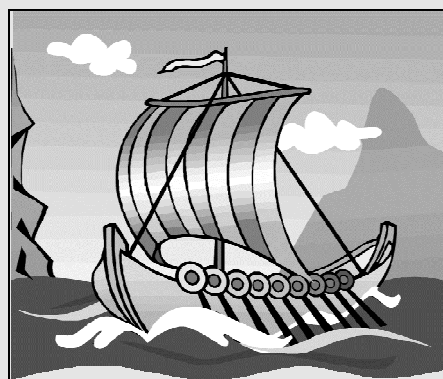
In all other circumstances, anyone attempting a Melee or Missile attack against the creature must make a saving roll to avoid being distracted by this visual effect. This roll has a target number equal to 10 plus the creature's Cunning and Mystique modifiers and must be made before each attack roll; it uses either the character's Danger Evasion (if the distracting visual effect is natural) or his Mystic Fortitude (if the visual effect is magical or supernatural).

If this saving roll is successful, the character will be able to attempt his attack normally, as per the usual rules; if the roll is failed, the character will be so affected by the distraction that he will be unable to attack.

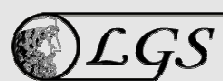
This special ability adds 10 to the creature's basic Glory award and to its Wisdom award.

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ALMANAC OF MYTHIKA

MYTHIC SKIES

by *Anagnosis of Thena*, translated (and annotated) by **Andrew Pearce**

'The fires that arch this dusky dot –
Yon myriad-worlded way –
The vast sun-clusters gather'd blaze,
World-isles in lonely skies,
Whole heavens within themselves,
Amaze our brief humanities.'

(*The melancholic Lyrist Tennyson*¹)

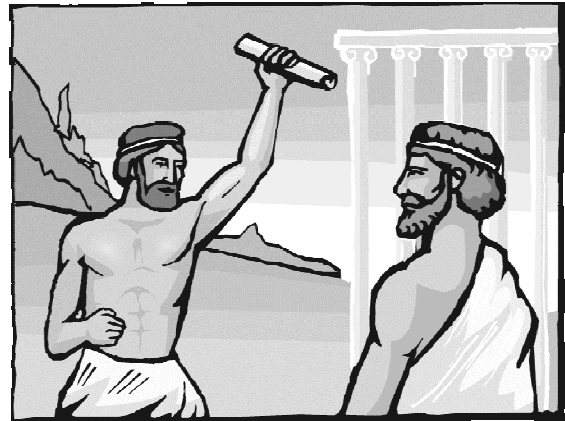
How the celestial spheres have entranced us and terrified us in almost equal measure! For as long as Man has existed, wise sages have looked up to the heavens above, and pondered how the stars in their courses might speak to our earthly existence below. In their stately journeying through the cosmos, can the stars offer us guidance, counsel or warning? Is our destiny writ large in the skies above?

Stories and legends about the heavenly lights have been passed down since the Age of Myth. Over many centuries, our knowledge and understanding of the skies above has steadily progressed.

There is no doubt that many of the most important early observations and discoveries were made not by Mineans, but rather in the Desert Kingdom and the Land of the Sun. The ancient Hazirians are believed to have had extensive star catalogues of the heavens. The pyramids of the Middle Kingdom of the Khetim were aligned towards the Pole Star. And one of the greatest past observers of the celestial heavens came from the time of the Middle Kingdom, Amenhop the Farsighted. His *Catalogue of the Universe* (tragically lost soon after his death) reputedly contained the fruits of a lifetime of painstaking observations.

There is also some evidence of a surprisingly advanced understanding of celestial motions, especially of the Sun and the Moon, amongst cultures that many would normally dismiss as primitive, such as the Amazons, and the Galleans of Hyperborea. Nevertheless, most of the more recent discoveries have been made by Minean scholars, such as Callippus of Cyrenos, Demosthenes of Pylene, Eudoxus of Argos, and, last but not least, Ptolemeos of Thena.

¹ Or, in our own reality continuum, please refer to 'The Charge of the Heavy Brigade' by the English poet Alfred Lord Tennyson.



-At last! The second part of the Almanac of Mythika!

The Celestial Sphere

Regardless of the extraordinary theories recently propagated by Aristarchus of Heraklia (see next page), It is almost universally accepted that our world of Mythika stands at the centre of the **celestial sphere**.

The stars are emblazoned upon the celestial sphere, and as the sphere rotates, so the stars rise and set, carrying them from east to west. All the stars move around two points on the celestial sphere, the north and south celestial poles. Only the north celestial pole is visible from the skies above the Three Cities – the south celestial pole and the stars of the farthest southern skies are never visible from the lands around the Middle Sea (but perhaps wayfarers who travel southwards beyond Charybdia and the Desert Kingdom might be able to see stars previously hidden from our view).

Three types of star are found in the heavens above:

- the fixed stars
- the moving stars, or planets;
- the bearded stars, or comets, whose appearances are unpredictable.

We will look at each of these in turn. By far the most numerous grouping is that of the fixed stars.



Hey – haven't we used this illustration twice, already?

Fixed Stars and the Constellations

Few individual stars have names of their own, save the very brightest. Notable stars include **Sirios** (called **Sothis**, or the Dog Star, by the Khettim), which is the very brightest; and the **Pole Star**, which is almost directly in line with the north celestial pole, and is therefore an important navigational marker for sailors).²

Rather more important than individual stars are the groups into which they are organized. The hundreds of fixed stars are grouped into patterns known as **constellations**. In these patterns the imaginative and the perceptive are able to discern the form of gods, heroes and monsters, creatures and beings that have directed or obstructed the destiny of Men on earth in the past, and which the wise and the pious know have power to shape our destiny still.

Different cultures have given different names to their constellations (although it is interesting to note how many similarities there are – the Minean constellation Aphrodite is, for example, identical to the ancient Hazirian constellation of Ishtar, whilst the constellation of Minotaurus is virtually identical across almost all Mythikan societies). The forty-eight constellations³ recognized by the Mineans today were definitively codified, it is believed, by the great

² Because of a phenomenon known as 'precession', the Earth wobbles on its axis over the course of 26,000 years or so. This causes the position of the celestial poles to shift, and therefore the nearest star to the poles alters over time. The Pole Star of today (Polaris) has actually been the nearest visible star to the north celestial pole since about 500 AD. Other stars that have previously acted as the Pole Star include the stars we know as Kochab (Pole Star from 1900 BC to 500 AD) and Thuban (4000 BC to 1900 BC). We can perhaps be non-specific as to whether or not the Mythikan Pole Star to be equated with Polaris or any other star in the 'real world'.

³ Not all the 48 constellations are 'name-checked' in this article – deliberately so as to encourage Maze Masters to be inventive with constellation names of their own. Notice that the constellations named by Anagnosis include ones that may well be identical to 'real world' ones, such as Draco, Hydra, Monoceros and Pegasus, whilst others, such as Cerberus and Orpheus, do not have 'real world' counterparts – though the Greeks, of course, could easily have included them in the heavens.

Ptolemeos of Thena⁴, about one hundred and twenty years ago (although most of them, of course, long predate his time). Ptolemeos classified them into three groups: the twenty-four constellations of the northern skies; the twelve constellations of the equatorial skies; and the twelve constellations of the southern skies (remember that the skies of the furthest south remain hidden from our view).⁵

The **northern constellations** were all named after the monsters of Mythika. They include such groups as Basiliskos (the Basilisk), Cerberus (the three-headed hound of hell), Draco (the Dragon), Hydra (the largest of all the constellations), Minotaurus (the Minotaur), Monoceros (the Unicorn) and Pegasus (the Flying Horse).

The **southern constellations** were all named after important legendary heroes and heroines, mostly from the Age of Myth. They include such luminaries as Antianera (first Queen of the Amazons), Orpheus (greatest of all Lyrist), Pandora (of the legendary Box), and Prometheos (the Stealer of Magic).

Finally, the twelve **equatorial constellations** are named after the twelve Olympian gods and goddesses; Apollo, Athena, Hera, Zeus and the rest. The equatorial constellations are accounted the most important, because the seven moving stars, the planets, all travel along their paths through these twelve constellations – and none other. These constellations form a band that is collectively referred to as the **theodiac**.⁶ The constellations of the theodiac (or 'houses' as they are also called) have always been regarded as the most important star patterns, partly because they are named after the gods, and partly because the movement of the planets (representing mortals) through the divine constellations is regarded as being a particular indicator of human destiny.

The study of the stars, and in particular the movement of the planets through the divine constellations, is variously known as **astronomy** ('law of the stars') or **astrology** ('study of the stars'). The two terms are interchangeable.⁷

⁴ Ptolemeos of Thena is based upon the famous Ptolemy of Alexandria, who in his book **The Almagest** (c. AD 150) did indeed list the 48 constellations associated with classical times. Others were added later, making the modern total 88 – including such unmythical-sounding additions as Caelum (the Chisel), Musca (the Fly), and Pictor (the Easel)!

⁵ Don't forget, if adventurers travel (whether by land or sea) into the far south, they may well observe and therefore 'discover' (at least as far as the Three Cities are concerned) new stars and new constellations!

⁶ The term **theodiac** parallels the **zodiac** in the 'real world'. The term 'zodiac' is an abbreviation for 'zodiakos kuklos' meaning 'circle of animals' – appropriate given that eight of the twelve signs are either animals or mythological creatures. Given the divine associations of the Mythikan equatorial constellations, the term 'zodiac' seems inappropriate – hence 'theodiac', suggested as an abbreviated term for 'circle of gods'.

⁷ As indeed they were in our world until the 17th century.

The Moving Stars, the Planets

Since ancient times, sages have recognized seven **planets**, or 'wanderers' – stars that travel on their own particular courses through the heavens, each passing through the twelve houses of the theodiac. The two greater planets, the lights that govern day and night, are **Helios** (also called Sol, or the Sun) and **Selene** (also known as Luna, or the Moon).

Heavens Above!

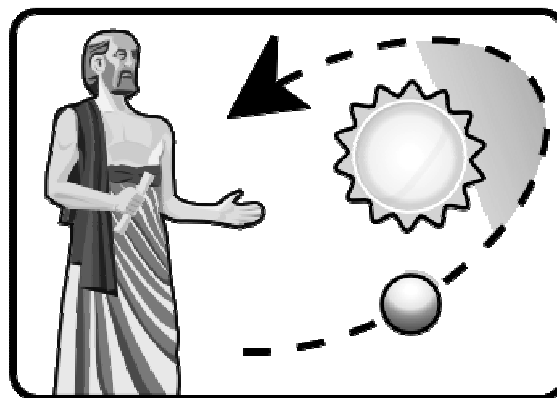
Controversies and Heresies

Many of the theories about the heavens above, the world of Mythika below, and their relationship to one another have been the subject of much controversy among philosophers and scholars.

Opinion remains sharply divided, for instance, as to whether the world of Mythika is a flat world (as maintained by most sages in the past, and strongly defended in recent times by Callippus of Cyrenos, amongst others) or a spherical one (a view first put forward, it is believed, by Eudoxus of Argos, and further supported by Ptolemeos of Thena). The latter view is one that seems to be gradually gaining in ascendancy. Of course, few mariners are willing to sail any great distance beyond the Bronze Gates to test the 'flat Mythika' theory (the perils of the Great Ocean, from marauding Atlanteans to terrifying sea monsters, are formidable enough without vainglorious quests for the edges of the world!) – and so, for the moment, there is no conclusive proof one way or another.⁸

Much more controversial is the recent idea put forward by the brilliant but erratic scholar **Aristarchus** of Heraklia.

Aristarchus has presented a model of the universe that places the Sun, not Mythika, at the centre. This so-called *heliocentric* model has been condemned as heresy in all of the Three Cities, and as a result Aristarchus – although regarded as perhaps the most original and inspired intellect of his generation to have come out of the normally non-scholarly Heraklia – has been forced to live in exile for the past fifteen years in the Midian city of Solus. Needless to say, his heretical views have not attracted much in the way of support.⁹



Aristarchus' extravagant theories

Long ago (as I observed in the first part of the Almanac of Mythika), it was noted that the Sun takes 365¼ days to complete his transit through the heavens. During the month of Hereon, the first month of the year, the Sun rises in the House of Hera; in the following month of Areson, he rises in the House of Ares; and so over the course of the year. Helios is an associate of the Olympian Apollo, and the power of the Sun is at his greatest during the month of Apolleon.

The other planets move at widely different rates through the heavens, waxing and waning in brightness as they do so; most notably so in the case of the Moon, as she passes through extreme phases of greater and lesser luminosity – the Full Moon and the New Moon – over the course of 29½ days. Selene is an associate of the Olympian Artemis, and the most important Full Moon of the year, to Amazonians and other devotees of Artemis, is the Full Moon that falls in the month of Artemiseon – the Hunter's Moon, as is often known.

The five lesser planets are **Heraklon**, **Argo**, **Seriphon**, **Thenos** and **Proteon**. These give their names to five great Minean or proto-Minean cultures, namely those of the Three Cities, Seriphos and Proteus (for a discussion of the relationship between the names of these planets and cities, see the first part of this Almanac (in *Minotaur N7*)).

Heraklon is often known as the 'Red Planet', and is regularly identified with war and destruction. He is, appropriately, the patron planet of the city of Heraklia, and is often associated with the god Ares. It is possible that the older name for Heraklon, dating back to the Age of Myth, was **Pyroeis** (meaning 'fiery one'). The advent of Heraklon is often believed to be a portent for bloodshed and war.

Relatively faint and often overlooked, **Argo** moves across the sky faster than any other planet, and so came to be associated with the messenger god, Hermes. He is the patron planet of the city of Argos, and his advent is believed to be a powerful portent within the spheres of commerce and diplomacy.

⁸ Pythagoras, in the 6th century BC, may have been the first 'real-world' philosopher to propose the idea of a spherical Earth. Although the idea took several centuries to take hold, by the 3rd century BC it was widely accepted by all serious thinkers. Contrary to common thought, belief in a flat Earth was **not** widespread in medieval Europe.

⁹ Aristarchus of Heraklia is inspired by the 'real-world' astronomer Aristarchus of Samos who in the 3rd century BC – 1,800 years before Copernicus – first proposed the heliocentric model of the Solar System. Needless to say, the idea took a very long time to catch on...

By the Mineans, radiant **Seriphon** has always been associated with Zeus. This may be because Seriphon takes twelve years¹⁰ to pass through the theodiac, spending an entire year, as guest or as lord, in each House. He is the patron planet of the island of Seriphos and the city of Minea, and his advent is seen to be a sign of kingship and authority, as also joy and abundance.

Thenos is the very brightest of the five lesser planets. In some cultures, this has caused this planet to be associated with the goddess of beauty or love. However, amongst Mineans, the divine association appears always to have been with Athena, in her aspect as bringer of truth, justice and wisdom. She is the patron planet of the city of Thena¹¹. It is possible than the original name for Thenos in the Age of Myth was **Phosphoros** (meaning 'light-bringer').

The final planet, **Proteon**, is named after the island Proteus, home of the ancient culture that was the precursor of the Mineans (though whether or not they truly thought of Proteon as a 'patron planet' is now unknown). Curiously, there is no Olympian association with this planet (though some associate the planet with the Titans, the precursors to the gods of Olympus, and in particular Kronos, father of Zeus). The sluggish Proteon takes longer than any other planet to pass through the twelve Houses of the theodiac (thirty years in all)¹², and his advent is seen as a portent for chaos, darkness, disease, decay and death.

As the planets (with the exception of the ever-radiant Helios) vary in luminosity, so their 'influence' upon the destinies of men is believed to ebb and flow. Conjunctions (or meetings) of planets are believed to be especially auspicious, and particularly so if they take place in a House which has an association with that planet (for example, a conjunction between Proteon and Heraklon in the House of Ares is believed to be a particularly bad omen, perhaps signifying a time of war or conflict that will result in disaster and great suffering).

The Bearded Stars, the Comets

The final category of stars is collectively known as the bearded stars, or comets (from the Minean **cometes**, meaning 'stars with hair'). Bearded stars are so called because they leave a long wispy trail of starlight in their wake. Their appearances are completely unpredictable, and are regarded by the wise as harbingers of doom and as omens of world-

¹⁰ Actually, Seriphon's equivalent Jupiter takes more like 11.86 years to traverse the heavens. But a nice round twelve years does sound better, doesn't it?

¹¹ In the 'real world', of course, the equivalent of Thenos is Venus – named after the Roman goddess of love, Aphrodite being the Greek equivalent. But remember, the Mythikan world is not intended to exactly mirror the 'real world'.

¹² More precisely 29.46 years for Proteon's equivalent in the 'real world', Saturn.

altering change. It is believed that the birth or the death of significant individuals often coincide with the appearance of a bearded star.

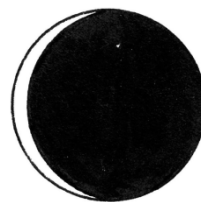
Past examples of bearded stars accompanying momentous events upon the earthly plane include the comet of 215 AH, which appeared in the skies as the Tritonians sailed hubristically against the Sea-lords of Atlantis; and the triple-tailed comet of 156 AH, which many regard as a presage of the terrible Yellow Plague that caused much misery across the lands of Mythika in the following year.

Conclusion

When he looks up into the skies, and beholds the marvels of the heavens, the man who is both wise and humble is surely made more and more conscious of how small we frail mortals truly are.

How insignificant our petty concerns are, he must think, compared to the mysterious designs of the gods, to which the heavens bear ineffable witness!

The Great Eclipse: Sky-Demon or Divine Wrath?



Perhaps the greatest, and the most terrifying, of celestial occurrences, is the unpredictable phenomenon known as the eclipse (from the Minean **eklipsis** 'to cease to exist'). There are strictly speaking two types of eclipse, namely that of the Moon and that of the Sun. But it is the eclipse of the Sun that, not surprisingly, tends to be the focus of most fear and wonder.

Many people believe that an eclipse, much like a comet, is an omen of some natural disaster or the death or downfall of a ruler. One pervasive story involves an invisible dragon, or perhaps a sky-demon, who devours the Sun during an eclipse. For others, an eclipse is but a foreshadowing of the final conflict between light and darkness that will come at the end of time. For Mineans, of course, an eclipse represents the most powerful assertion possible of the supremacy of the gods, and above all Zeus.

The most famous solar eclipse catalogued in the history of Mythika was probably the one that occurred in 300 AM, seven days before the Days of Wrath, as a final warning (it was later believed) from Zeus to the proud Autarchs as they prepared to march against the Olympians. The stiff-necked Autarchs ignored the warning, and thus brought upon themselves the vengeance of the gods in the closing drama of the Age of Magic.

SPECIAL BONUS FEATURE

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

M&M Creatures by Habitat, by **Colin Chapman**, with assistance from **Lyzi Shadow & Olivier Legrand**

The following pages list the most common habitats for the various creatures of the vast **Mazes & Minotaurs** bestiary. These are only guidelines, however; a Maze Master should feel free to place any creatures anywhere he chooses, especially if this makes the adventure more interesting for the players (and more challenging for the adventurers). Each creature is listed with its corresponding page number from the **Creature Compendium** – or, in the case of the various new creatures detailed in past issues of the **Minotaur**, with the letter M followed by issue and page number This article also gives us an excellent excuse to reprint some of our friend Croquefer's wonderful artwork from the **Creature Compendium**.



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Bronze Minotaur	77
Brown Bear	12
Cave Bear	12
Cave Spider	49
Cockatrice	28
Common Giant	45
Dancing Minotaur	77
Daughter of Arachne	34
Empusa (during day)	39
Giant Bat	47
Giant Rat	47
Gigantic Spider	49
Gorgon	51
Hag	54
Harpy	54
Minotaur	76
Ogre	86
Psychotaur	80
Ratling	93
Red Minotaur	80
Silver Minotaur	81
Stone Titan	110
Troglodyte	120
Twinotaur	81
Two-Headed Giant	46
Wildman	125

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Giant Snake	49
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Common Eagle	38
Common Fox	42
Common Giant	45
Common Stag	108
Common Wolf	125
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Hyperborean Wolf	126
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Lycan	70





Forests (cont.)

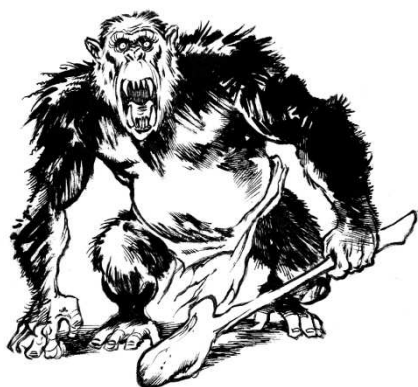
Magical Boar	16
Magical Fox	43
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Peryton	90
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Bronze Horse	19
Catoblepas	23
Chimera	28
Common Giant	45
Crushing Woman	M6-37
Dragon	37
Gigantic Cyclops	31
Golden Ram	51
Gorgon	51
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Common Eagle	38
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Gigantic Spider	49
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Tetrax	115
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Giant Rat	47
Giant Snake	49
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Bronze Bull	18
Bronze Colossus	18
Bronze Minotaur	77
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Giant Rat	47
Golden Ram	51
Gorgotaur	78
Iron Warrior	64
Mechanical Archer	74
Megataur	79
Minotaur	76
Minoton	82
Psychotaur	80
Red Minotaur	80
Rocky Python	95
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Common Ram	92
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Tombs (cont.)

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HERE COME THE VIKINGS!

Twelve Questions about VIKINGS & VALKYRIES



1) What is *Vikings & Valkyries*?

Vikings & Valkyries is a 50-page PDF supplement for the Revised Mazes & Minotaurs RPG; it presents a whole new setting, the world of Midgard, inspired by Norse sagas, pulp fantasy and Hollywood Viking movies, along with all the rules you need to play in this alternate setting.

2) So is it a supplement or a whole new game?

Well, as far as actual play is concerned, it IS a different game, since the world of Midgard is obviously very different from the classic M&M world of Mythika – but it is not a standalone product, so you still need the M&M core rules to play.

3) What character classes are available?

Players can choose between five warrior classes (Berserker, Half-Giant, Prince, Valkyrie and Viking), five magician classes (Elementalist, Elf, Priest, Skald and Sorcerer) and the two specialist classes of Thief and Hunter. Some of these classes are simply M&M classes under another name or with some minor adjustments: Berserkers, Princes and

Skalds, for instance, are the exact Norse equivalent of Barbarians, Nobles and Lyrists (respectively), while Elves share many similarities with Nymphs (but can be either male or female, with special rules for males); Valkyries, on the other hand, are closer to Spearmen than to Amazons in terms of abilities.

The book also details two entirely new classes: the big, bad, dumb Half-Giant and (of course) the Viking, an all-purpose warrior-adventurer with no real equivalent in classic M&M.

Lastly, the book also includes additional character options, allowing players to create adventurers from mythic folks such as Dwarves, Nixies or Merfolk.

4) What are the new rules about?

Vikings & Valkyries offers additional rules on a variety of topics specifically tied to its Norse setting – or to what we might call “Viking spirit”: some new combat options, a few things about magic (including two new divine gifts and the new elemental power of Ice!), as well as rules for various types of Viking games (you know, arm wrestling, shield running, braid cutting etc) and, of course, heavy drinking.

5) What are the new combat options?

Well, let's see... We have rules on berserker rage, breaking shields, throwing axes and some nifty optional rules which allow you to sever an opponent's hand, pierce one of his eyes, disfigure him or even decapitate him in a single blow, for some good old-fashioned, maximum Viking bloodshed! Ah yes, believe it or not, we also have about going to Valhalla after a heroic death.

6) Do we finally get some REAL sailing rules?

Next question, please.

7) What are the new creatures and mythic items?

The Vikings & Valkyries bestiary includes detailed notes on all the regular M&M creatures which can be transposed in the world of Midgard, as well as complete stats for a variety of new creatures, including Trolls (five different kinds!), Giants (Frost, Fire, Storm, you name it!) and some new, nasty mythic monsters, from Sea Hags and Fenrir Wolves to Frost Wyrms and Fjord Serpents (not to mention the Six-Armed Berserker – ah, perhaps we shouldn't have mentioned THAT).

On the mythic items front, the book includes a new assortment of Norse-flavored weapons, amulets, rings and other magical treasure, including some unique artifacts – like Mjolnir, the mythic hammer of Thor, the mighty god of thunder!

8) Is the world of Midgard covered in detail?

The world of Midgard is covered in a 10-page chapter, along with the surrounding otherworldly realms of Outgard, Asgard, Jotunheim and other mythic lands. Just like the first chapter of the Maze Masters Guide (which detailed the world of Mythika), this chapter covers topics like geography, deities, mythic and more recent history, as well as the most salient aspects of Viking culture. It also includes a nifty map of Midgard.

9) How close is this new game setting to Norse myth and sagas?

Of course, our version of Midgard is based on Norse myth and sagas - but it is a *fantasy* world, with its own reality. It differs from legendary Scandinavia in the same way as M&M's original world of Mythika differs from mythic Greece, with a similar mix of mythical elements and pop culture tropes – which is why, for instance, our Vikings (unlike their real-world counterparts) wear those cool horned helmets we've all come to associate with the Viking stereotype.

Vikings & Valkyries can ultimately be described as "M&M gone Viking": it encourages the same style of play, the same "spirit of adventure" mentality – but in a different world, with different challenges (and, of course, different helmets).



- Hey, what's wrong with our helmets?

10) Is there anything in this book that could be of interest to a standard (i.e. Mythika-based) Mazes & Minotaurs campaign?

That's a fair question – and the answer is YES. The rules on Viking games, for instance, could easily be adopted by Mythika's own Hyperborean Barbarians, while the new combat options are ideal for Maze Masters who wish to give a bloodier, grittier (but still heroic) feel to their Mythika campaign. As for the rules on heavy drinking, well, let's say they work equally well with Minean wines.

Some of the new creatures could also find a niche in a Mythika campaign – including the new breeds of Giants or even, perhaps, the Six-Armed Berserker (who knows?). The same reasoning can be applied to some of the new mythic items (although Mjolnir would probably feel a bit out-of-place in Mythika).

11) Will the MINOTAUR webzine support Vikings & Valkyries in the future?

The issue you are currently reading includes quite a fair amount of *Vikings & Valkyries* material: new mythic items in *Pandora's Box*, game-mastering advice by Peter Larsson on adventuring in Midgard, a *Maze Master's Lore* article on Nordic runes and even a complete adventure! Future issues will definitely include some *Vikings & Valkyries* stuff – but on a more occasional basis: standard *Mazes & Minotaurs* and the world of Mythika will always remain the main focus of the webzine.

12) Where can I find this wonderful supplement?

You can download the *Vikings & Valkyries* PDF from its own webpage or from the usual Revised *Mazes & Minotaurs* website:

<http://mazesandminotaurs.free.fr/VIK.html>

<http://mazesandminotaurs.free.fr/revised.html>

And remember – this e-book, like all other *Mazes & Minotaurs* material, is 100% FREE!

Each issue, **Griffin Archives** unearths an old Griffin article from the glorious 80s or 90s

PLACES TO PLUNDER, MONSTERS TO SLAY!

Creating Epic Adventures for **Vikings & Valkyries**, by **Peter Larsson**

Midgard... and Beyond!

Vikings & Valkyries draws most of its inspiration from the heroic tales of the Norse sagas as well as from modern adaptations of these tales, such as the classic comic book series *Prince Valiant*.

A typical *Vikings & Valkyries* campaign will involve bloody battles against horrible monsters, exploration of caves deep underground and lightning raids on coastal settlements.

Vikings & Valkyries adventures can be divided into two broad groups: those that take place in Midgard, and those that take place in Outgard. Of the basic scenarios outlined below, the first three detail typical adventures that may take place in Midgard (but they may also bring the adventurers across the borders to more terrible lands). Finally there is a section on adventuring in the weird wilderness of Outgard.

Gathering the Heroes

But before play begins, the Maze Master and the players should decide *where*, *how* and *why* the heroes begin their adventures. Here are a few typical possibilities:

Defend the Land: The adventurers are the brave retainers and warriors at the hall of a King or Lord, or stalwart champions of a region. The people look to them to defend the land from curses, gods, monsters, raiders and other dangers. If the heroes succeed, lavish rewards, or the gratitude of the people, await them.

Follow A Leader: The adventurers are the loyal friends of a lord, ruler or prince who has been exiled and now wanders across the world trying to find some way to regain his throne. As his closest allies, they carry out all kinds of dangerous quests and heroic challenges to aid him in this daunting task.

The Gods Command It! : The adventurers have been chosen by a god (or Odin, king of the gods himself) to carry out a series of quests and challenges, which they cannot refuse. Perhaps the heroes have angered the god in the past or committed a crime. Sometimes the god selects an earthly king to hand out the god's requests and orders. Sometimes the god personally appears to heroes between adventures.



Monster Slaying

Norse myths are full of terrifying monsters and savage beasts. Dragons, wolves, trolls and other terrible creatures need to be slain for the good of men and the defense of the land.

Sometimes the monster is just a large and more dangerous version of a normal animal (like the Fenris Wolf) and the adventure takes the form a proper hunt. In other cases the monster is an unnatural beast, and the adventure must make a perilous raid on its underground lair.

There are many reasons to kill a monster. Perhaps the hellish creature is terrorizing the great hall of a king or lord, or perhaps it is guarding some valuable treasure. The death of the beast itself might actually be the prize; perhaps some part of its body is valuable – dragon scales or venom, or a magic pelt. A simple monster hunt might be a quick and easy task, especially if the lair of the beast is well known. Sometimes killing an unnatural beast might be truly heroic task (such as when Beowulf slew Grendel) that requires the full ingenuity of the slayer.



Treasure Quests

Vikings are always hungry for loot, and they are especially keen on legendary artifacts and weapons. A treasure quest could be for the silver of the Fir, for the gilded statues of the Golden Cities or for legendary items such as the divine bracelet Draupnir or Siegfried's famous sword Balmung. The steps to finding these artifacts can be many and varied. The quest will often involve traveling to exotic locations in distant parts of the world: mysterious islands, lost mountains, strange lands. Such epic quests may require information to be discovered, enemies and guardian monsters to be defeated, puzzles to be solved, and traitors to be uncovered. Sometimes the "treasure quest" is more mundane: overpowering guards, stealing into treasuries and ambushing caravans.

Whatever the nature of the quest, the heroes should be ready for surprises such as cursed artifacts and crafty ambushes. Often a treasure quest will spiral out of control – a sacred artifact may be guarded by the gods or be of symbolic rather than actual value. If a wealth-laden caravan is under the protection of a mighty lord, the plunderers may find themselves outsmarted, defeated or even enslaved. They then may need to rescue their comrades or to break free themselves. As warrior-slaves in a far flung corner of Midgard they could rise to fame and influence in the armies of the Golden City. A resourceful Viking will see an opportunity in any twist of fate.

Heroic Wars

Wars are common in the world of *Vikings & Valkyries*, both skirmishes and great battles leading up to the greatest battle of them all, Ragnarok. Heroes can get embroiled in warlike adventures very easily. The player-characters are the elite hird (retinue), the leaders, commanders and commandoes of any battle that they take part in, and combat hinges on them. They are the heroes mentioned by name in the sagas and in the Eddas.

Where is the war? Why is it occurring? Who are the participants? Who are the allies? Are there any crucial situations that may arise in the fighting to turn the tide? How will the PCs stop them or encourage them? What are each side's weaknesses, and can they be exploited or protected? Heroes may be following a leader into the war, or fighting for their city or even their god. Lesser folk, spear-armed commoners, can follow the heroes' lead, and mop up afterwards.

Raids

What would Viking adventuring be without lightning attacks on mysterious islands, well defended villages, and coastal keeps? An important part of a raid is the sea journey. Looking for plunder and adventure, the adventurers must cross churning, uncharted seas using ancient maps and word of mouth. Upon landing they'll encounter secrets, plots, traps, witches and tyrannical kings.

A single location might form the focus of the adventure or it can be a stopping point or episode on a longer journey. The differences between voyaging in Outgard and Midgard are clear. The seas of Midgard are frothy and challenging; those of Outgard are pitch black and torrential. Islands in Midgard harbor cunning pirates and other human foes in addition to the odd supernatural being. Outgard isles are more likely to contain lost or cursed cities, wraith-kings, and chained gods.

Outgard

Vikings & Valkyries adventurers are driven by the lust for gold and the lure of the unknown. No place is more packed with adventure, more ripe for exploration than the many realms of Outgard. Men think of Outgard as a single elemental wasteland. These vast lands actually hide secret kingdoms and pocket dimensions outside the laws of nature and order that the Aesir have imposed on Midgard. Heroes who venture there had best be prepared for anything.

Outgard can be reached by crossing the frothing western seas or by travelling east or north or south over land and across mountains or glaciers. It can also be reached through the deep chasms that leads down to Hel and the underworld.

Adventures in inhospitable Outgard are similar to raids in that the journey is an important part of the story. In addition to the usual uncharted territories – ruins, misty islands, lost valleys and hidden caves – voyagers will encounter enchantments and powerful mystical creatures. They'll discover that often wit is as important as brawn when facing clever giants or ancient worms (*Jack and the Beanstalk* might be apt inspiration). Even more than in the realms of men, a wrong turn can result in a horrible fate.

Finally, there are many places scattered throughout Midgard that function as gateways to Outgard. An oddly shaped rock arch might lead to the land of the Frost Giants, and a deep well might lead to watery graves filled with serpentine monstrosities. The chaotic realm of the giants is full of rocky crags, acid seas, lakes of fire, massive keeps and fortresses, magical rivers, oddly shaped rocks, giant footprints, haunting enigmas inexplicable noises, and bizarre wildlife. The geography of the place does not make sense and may not stay consistent; an island easily hailed on the outward trip may not be there on the return journey. The adventurers should clearly feel that they "*aren't in Beornia anymore*"...

SOMETHING ROTTEN IN NOVGORBY

An introductory **Vikings & Valkyries** adventure for first level characters, written by **Gabriel Hunter**



Introduction

This short *Vikings & Valkyries* adventure was designed with first level characters in mind. It also happens to correspond to the following rolls on the Adventure Plot generator given in the *Maze Masters Guide* (p 34-35):

Patron = 4, populace of a village.

Main Location = 4, a dangerous forest.

Secondary Location = 5, perilous mountains.

Adventure Goal = 5, rescue important captive.

Complication = 2, two parts, roll another location.

The location of this scenario has been deliberately kept vague so it could be placed anywhere suitable for the Maze Master, either in *Beornia*, *Havmark* or *Vedland* (see *Vikings & Valkyries*, pp22-24 & 28 for more details about the Norse lands).

Welcome to Novgorby

Over the course of their travels through the Norse lands, the adventurers happen to stay for a few days (or at least for a single night) in the village of Novgorby; if the characters do not know each other, they could meet while attending Novgorby's renowned Winter Meet, a large annual fair where many Norse men and women gather to trade all sorts of goods and services.



- Mmmh... There's something rotten in Novorgby...

If the party includes at least one Prince, the characters could stay as guests of the local chieftain, Ulfgar the Grim, allowing the Maze Master to start the adventure with a typical Viking evening of feasting, mead drinking, arm-wrestling, axe-throwing and other typical Viking games (as detailed in *Vikings & Valkyries*, p 15-16).

If the Maze Master is planning to use this adventure as the start for a campaign, do feel free to incorporate each player's background into the region (e.g. born in *Novorgby* or a nearby village; family, friend or love interest in the village; etc.) so as to make it an important place to get back to or start from, rather than being just a name on a map.

Being at a crossroads, the village has always benefited from the attention of many passers-by (travelers and merchants alike), but never enough to become a full fledged city due to its wilderness location. However, the Winter Meet (an idea of a previous Chieftain to attract people to the village in the less frequented winter months) has rapidly grown in popularity and is now a regional event of importance, spanning a full week of trade, barter and feasting. During that time, the local population of 100 goes up to nearly 300! Merchants and craftsmen of all types will also peddle their wares in the covered marketplace built for the occasion.

Lodging can be found at the *Hovedhallen* (Main Hall), for *Princes* and their following; the local inn, the *Golden Axe*, can hold up to 50 people (at 4 to a small room); the local tavern, the *Red Horn*, another 30 sleeping on the floor; whilst the rest seek bed and board at villagers' homes.

Most villagers take much pride from housing a renowned adventurer (not least because it's also customary to share one's wealth with one's host, which has led to some battles for the hosting of returning heroes among the villagers).

The people of *Novorgby* are typical Norsemen, valuing hospitality and bravery, as well as a good time, but being wary of magic and quick to anger.

A couple of NPCs are described more fully below, but the Maze Master is encouraged to flesh out a number of other denizens of *Novorgby* to add color to the village and bring out that Viking way of life (whether it be it a burly innkeeper with battle-scars; rowdy city guards trading tall stories and mead mugs; an aloof warrior maiden; a brooding smith; or a suspicious Chief's counselor).

Even if most of *Novorgby* welcomes the influx of money and reputation brought about by the *Winter Meet*, seeing it as a wonderful opportunity for trade and commerce, some could do without the crowds and the bad elements it also brings each year. The events unfolding in this adventure will surely make these critics rather more vocal.

Basic Storyline

One night, when almost everyone is sleeping, the alarm horns will sound, abruptly waking the adventurers, as a monster is sighted just outside the village.

Quickly dealt with by the local chieftain's huscarls, this seemingly-resolved matter will take a dire turn as it is discovered that, at the same time, a fair damsel was kidnapped by another group of monsters (Trollmen) who have since fled with their victim into the woods.

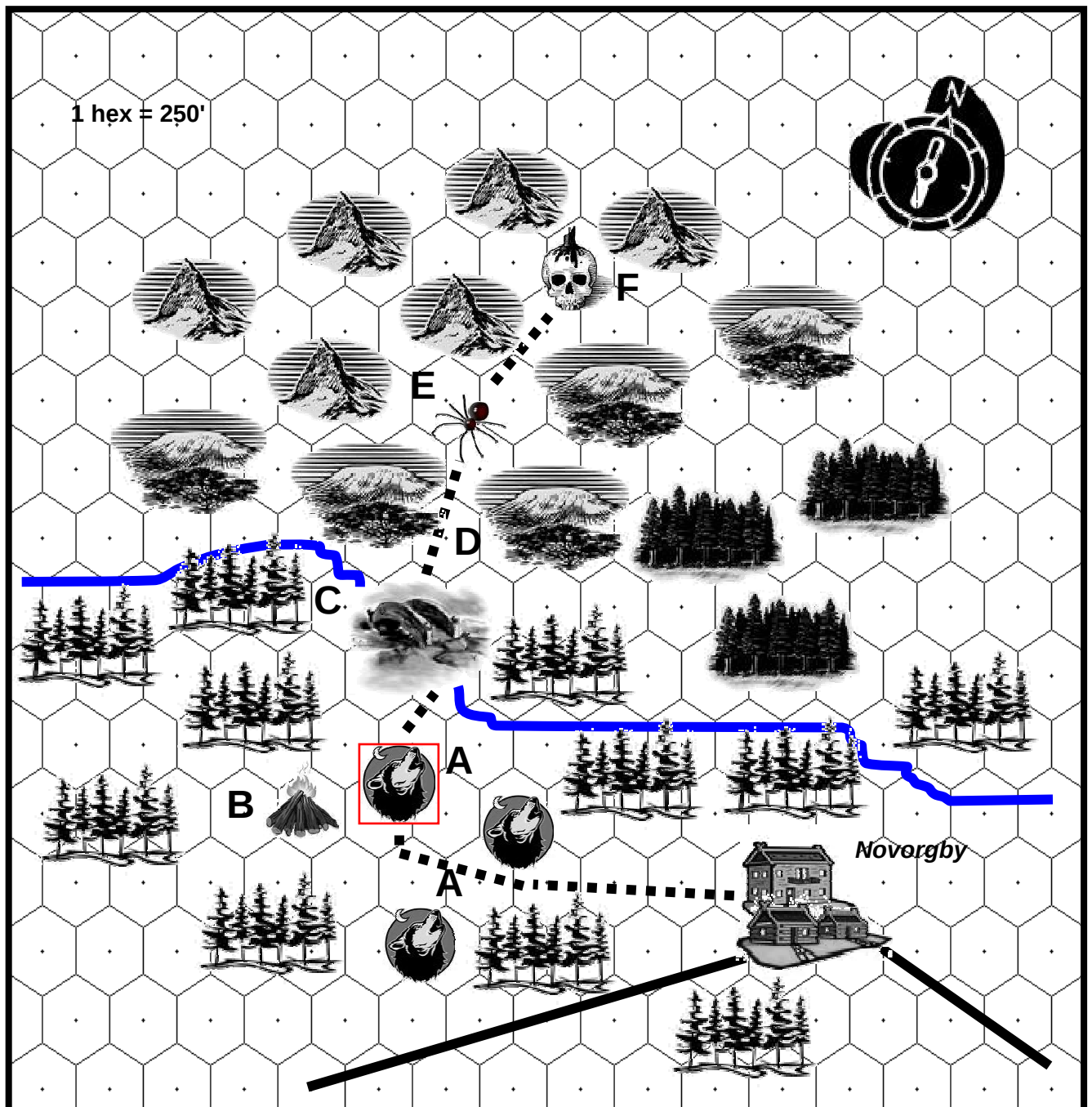
Asked to lead a search party for the missing girl, the adventurers must follow the trail of the captors before the incoming snow storm erases their tracks and any chances of finding her alive and well. In their hurried race through the nearby forest to rescue the unfortunate maiden, the party will first have to confront or evade a pack of wolves and their surprisingly-cunning leader, a red-eyed *Dire Wolf*.

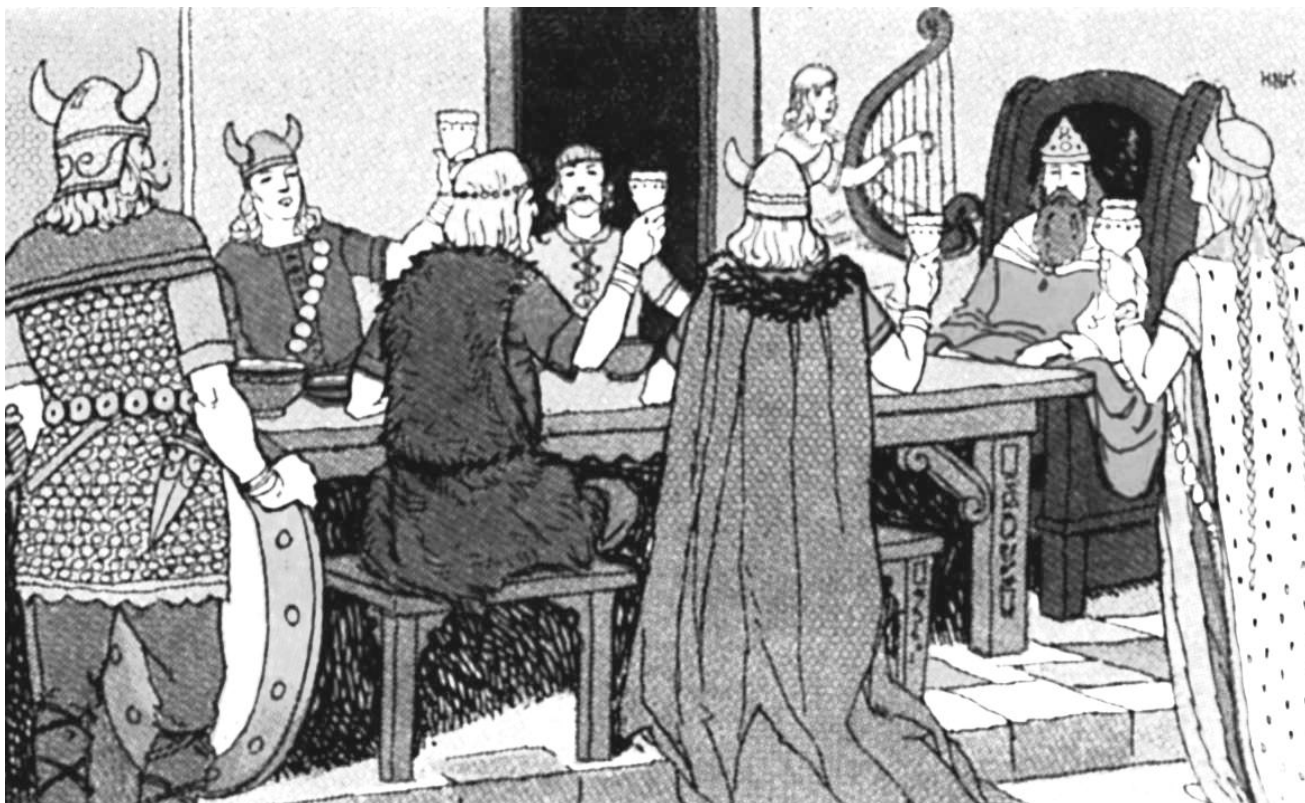
Then, climbing the treacherous mountain path which will hopefully lead them to the captors' hideout, they will face the icy breath of a monstrous *Ice Spider* (new monster) who is blocking their path.

Finally, upon arriving at a strangely-warm cavern, the adventurers will join battle against a band of *Trollmen* and their brutish commander, Grodd the *Half-Giant*.

During the ensuing feast in honor of the new heroes, a malevolent illusion will give a chill to the villagers and the adventurers as the hidden mastermind behind the events is finally revealed as a *Dark Elf* – an ill omen for the future of *Novorgby*...

Adventure Map : Novorgby Area





Celebrating the Winter Meet in the grand Viking tradition

The Gathering

The Winter Meet is one of the best times for adventuring Norsemen and women to either recruit henchmen, find a part-time or full-time employer, as well as buy, sell or trade goods, ranging from the mundane to the exotic, or simply renew contacts with old friends and make new ones.

Prospective patrons and job-hunters usually meet at the inn, the tavern or the main hall to discuss their needs and qualifications all weekend.

Outside, in the marketplace, goods of all types, but mostly weapons and 'magical' charms (with no real power in game terms), are offered, bought or traded amid the same cacophony of voices and sounds.

Of course, such a large gathering of Norse men would not be complete with the mandatory drinking contests and other typical Viking games (arm wrestling, shield running, axe throwing etc) – along with some more refined entertainment, allowing Skalds to demonstrate their musical, poetic and storytelling skills.

The Storm and the Hunt

After the news hits that someone has actually been kidnapped by a band of foul monsters, the Chieftain will quickly marshal a small rescue party (no more than 1d6 huscarl NPCs, because he dares not leave the village undefended, especially with a snowstorm starting), and he will ask for the aid of the adventurers if they are present (or readily accept their help if they offer it).

Tracking the kidnappers will use the rules set in the *Mazes & Minotaurs* Players Manual p45, but using a base of 10 instead of 15 (easier to track in the snow), but increase this difficulty by 2 per hour once the snowstorm hits, bringing with it high winds and deteriorating visibility. If the adventurers are having trouble following the trail, or get lost, the Maze Master should have them meet *Eirik the Bold*, a hunter who can provide assistance and/or shelter. See p XX at the end of the adventure for Eirik the Bold's statistics.

While the snowstorm rages (it will start at the beginning of Part Two and last for 2d6 hours), use the rules given below for *Snowstorm Exposure*.

Snowstorm Exposure

Each full hour without proper protection (fur boots, mittens, hats, coats etc) from cold requires a *Physical Vigor* saving roll: the first roll has a target number of 5, the second one a target number 10, the third one a target number of 15, and so on.

Failure on any of these rolls will mean that the character suffers 1d3 Hits of damage.

Furthermore, each hour in the storm also requires a *Danger Evasion* Roll (plus any *Hunting* bonus) at the same target numbers to avoid getting lost.

Also, keep in mind that snow is considered *difficult terrain* for movement (*Players Manual*, p20).

The Scenario

Part One: Meeting in Novorgby

Having traveled, together or apart, from their respective «starting points», the adventurers finally make their way to the somewhat remote village of *Novorgby*, where they are to attend its renowned Winter Meet (see

The crowd of adventurers, merchants and travelers is filling the streets and public places of the small community, with lineups in front of the local inn, the Golden Axe, the tavern and the main hall. If the party includes a *Prince*, they will be the guest of the local chieftain, *Ulfgar the Grim*, at the Main Hall. If not, they may be lucky enough to acquire a room at the inn or the tavern or they may end up at a villagers' house.

During the night, the adventurers are suddenly wakened by shouts and screams coming from outside. Quickly putting on clothing and grabbing weapons, they follow the running guards toward the village's gate where a small crowd is already present. Outside, while a snowstorm is slowly starting to take hold, a battle is raging between a seemingly mad Cave Bear, the chieftain and a couple of guards.

The Maze Master can either describe the outcome of the combat as a cut-scene, where the combined strength of the assembled warriors wins the day over the fearsome red-eyed beast, or actually play it out, with or without the adventurers' intervention, making sure the animal is slain in the end.

A close examination of the bear carcass will reveal a strange fire-like mark on its forehead.

Part Two: To the Rescue

The sighs of relief after the victory over the crazed bear quickly turn to gasps of dread as new shouts and screams erupt from the other end of the village. Quickly following the chieftain and his huscarls to the latest trouble spot, and expecting to find another beast assaulting the walls, the gathering crowds are taken aback to learn that another group of monsters has seemingly kidnapped a helpless woman.

After gathering vital information from witnesses, it appears that *Sigrid*, the daughter of the village's recently-deceased priest of Frey, was taken by a small group of monsters, who promptly left with her. From the descriptions given by the witnesses, the adventurers should be able to identify the creatures as Trollmen.

Deciding to send a rescue mission, the chieftain dispatches them (and hopefully the player characters) on the monsters' trail before it disappears under the increasingly heavy snow.



A treacherous Trollman

This part of the scenario uses the **Novorgby Area** map (see p 55). Assume that it takes 1 hour to cover a 1-mile hex in this difficult terrain on foot.

A: Wolf Territory

Hurrying in the snow, trying not to lose the tracks, you suddenly see gray shades coming out of the woods, a faint growl coming from their open maw as they leap into attack.

A pack of **Common Wolves** is hunting in the area and the adventurers (and/or Ulfgar's Huscarls if they are apart) will have to confront them while tracking the *Trollmen*. See *Handling the Opposition* next page for some suggestions. Stats for Wolves can be found in the *Creature Compendium* (p125).

As you stumble upon the wolves' den, a dark knot of tree trunks, you immediately notice that their leader is bigger and stronger-looking than the others, his fur more whitish than gray, made even more menacing by the eerie red glow of his eyes.

The last encounter will also feature the pack leader, a **Dire Wolf** (*Creature Compendium* p126) with glowing red eyes. After the combat, a close examination of the wolf's body will also reveal a strange fire-like mark on its forehead.

Searching their den will unearth a small horn-like vial, probably lost by a previous victim, bearing a rune which magicians will recognize as the rune of Loki and holding some hot reddish liquid.

See *Loki's Draught* next page for a description of this magical potion.

Loki's Draught

Drinking one of the 1d6 doses will give its user protection from the effects of normal cold and add a +4 bonus to *Physical Vigor* saving rolls against supernatural cold for 1 hour.

However, the heat from the magic will force the removal of outer clothing, including armor, unless the drinker succeeds at a *Mystic Fortitude* roll versus a target number of 10.

B: Hunter Cabin

As you come across a clearing in the woods, you see a small cabin in its center, the axe stuck in a log and the pelts half finished outside, betraying the probable presence of a local hunter.

This is the hangout of *Eirik the Bold* (see below for full description), who could also be encountered in the forest nearby looking for game or roaming wolves.

C: Old Bridge

At the end of the woods, crossing the half frozen river beneath it, lies a small stone bridge in obvious need of some repairs, but still safe enough to support travelers, if not a horse and carriage.

D: Mountain Path

Beginning in the rolling hills at the foot of the daunting mountains ahead, a small and sinuous-looking path climbs up rather rapidly, disappearing into the shadows of the rocks forming the peaks blocking the way.

An *Athletic Prowess* roll vs the usual target number equal to the character's *Encumbrance* (plus applicable snowstorm modifiers +2/hr) is required to avoid a 2d6' fall off the treacherous path.



Watch out, there's a Dire Wolf about!

Handling the Opposition

The adventurers will have to face a number of opponents in this adventure, including a pack of *Common Wolves*, their *Dire Wolf* leader, an *Ice Spider*, and finally a small gang of *Trollmen* and their *Half-Giant* leader, all of which can spell doom for the party if the Maze Master isn't prepared.

At the Maze Master's discretion, the villagers sent on the rescue mission can act as either backup, if the adventurers have problems, or as quickly-killed "expendables" to show "how the monsters work". If the group splits to cover more ground or because they would be too numerous for the planned monsters, the Maze Master can also use cut-scenes involving the local chieftain's Huscarls (Minor Soldier NPCs) to foreshadow the trouble ahead.

The first encounter (**Wolves & Dire Wolf** pack leader) should not be too difficult (say at one wolf per two party members) which the Maze Master can then double (i.e. up to one wolf per party member) if all goes well for the second brush with the wolves, finally adding the pack leader for the last encounter. An injured or less battle-ready party could also easily «miss» that last encounter in order to avoid crippling them.

The **Ice Spider** should at least scare the party a bit, so if they dealt with the wolves relatively easily, have the spider sneak on the least dangerous party member first and use its *Entangle* ability on him (Target number 19 instead of 15 due to surprise). Make effective use of its size to knock the adventurers about (*Danger Evasion* roll at 19 to avoid being displaced 10' away) instead of simply attacking them.

As noted in the description of this new creature, any adventurer using fire (natural or magical) upon the spider will immediately get its undivided attention until that particular threat is dealt with. If the party is weaker, however, the Maze Master should give them a chance to sneak up on it first, or – if you really feel generous – roll a boulder on its head (treat as a 2 or 3d6 *Crushing Missile* attack, requiring a *Feat of Strength*).

The **Trollmen** represent a rather stronger menace than the wolves but should receive a similar treatment (if the party hasn't so far been overwhelmed, two *trollmen* per member is suggested). However, if he is not sure about the level of danger, the Maze Master can subtract one or two from the total – e.g. six or seven trollmen for an adventuring party of four).

Grodd the Half-Giant is the big boss of the adventure and as such fighting him should be suitably challenging. If the party is weaker, the Maze Master should have him unable to *Charge into Battle* because of *Close Quarters* due to the cave's tunnels. Maze Masters wanting to give a more serious challenge to their party (either because they had an easy time of the earlier parts of the scenario, or are of a higher level) can even go so far as to replace the *Half-Giant* with a suitably taxing *Troll* (*Common, Cave, Green, Shadow or Stone*).

Do not forget that Norsemen live for the battle, so don't make it too easy, and keep it bloody!

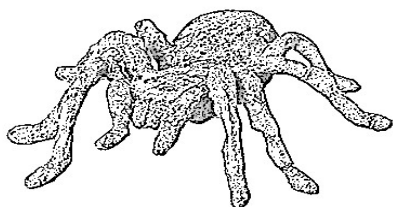
E: Ice Spider Lair

Struggling against the increasing snow and winds, you suddenly spot a large unmoving form ahead. Squinting, your heart skips a beat as you realize there's an enormous white and blue spider in the middle of the trail, waiting to attack.

This is the lair of the *Ice Spider* (see details below and the **Handling the Opposition** section above for some guidelines on this encounter).

Probing around will reveal its hiding place (Detection roll vs a target number of 15 plus applicable snowstorm modifiers +2/hr), and searching it will uncover an *Amulet of Thor* (see *Vikings & Valkyries*, p48).

Ice Spider



Taxonomy: Monster

Description: Rumored to have been magically created, these huge white and light blue spiders can attack two medium-sized opponents at the same time, and usually live in the colder climates of the north or on top of icy mountains.

Size: Large

Ferocity: Aggressive

Cunning: Alert

Mystique: Weird

Movement: 90'

Initiative: 14

Melee Attack: +5

Damage: 2d6 (hooked legs)

Defense Class: 17

Hits Total: 24

Detection / Evasion: +2 / +4

Mystic Fortitude: +2

Special Abilities: Camouflage (Detected on 19), Entangle (Icy Breath, 20' range, Might 20), Stealthy (12), Supernatural Vigor, Tough Skin, Uncanny Agility, Wallcrawling.

Awards: Glory 130, Wisdom 20.

Like Frost Giants (see *Vikings & Valkyries*, p 37), Ice Spiders are completely immune to all cold-based damage – but they also suffer double damage from all fire-based attacks. There is no additional Glory or Wisdom award for this ability/weakness.



Can Grodd really be the BRAINS behind all this?

F: Half-Giant Cave

Finally reaching the end of the Trollmen's trail, despite the now heavy snowing and the winds, you manage to spot the kidnappers' hideout, the entrance to a small cave in the side of the mountain where they have taken the poor girl.

As you approach and make out shadows on the walls made by the fire burning inside, you steel your resolve and prepare to face a last challenge as a great roar echoes from within the cavern, making you wonder what you are about to confront...

This is the hiding place of the *Trollmen* and their monstrous leader, *Grodd*, the *Half-Giant* (see *Vikings & Valkyries*, pp38 & 40 and *Handling the Opposition* above for some guidelines on this encounter). If they can sneak in, the party can take on the two *Trollmen* guarding the entrance before the others join in.

The captured girl, *Sigrd the Fair*, is huddled in fear in one corner of the cave.

Searching the cave after defeating the kidnappers will turn up a *Sword of Tyr*, a *Belt of Protection*, an *Amulet of Horsemanship* and a *Perpetual Drinking Horn* (see *Vikings & Valkyries* pp47-49)

A close examination of the half-giant's body will reveal the same strange fire-like mark as before on its forehead. Inquisitive adventurers may also notice that even allowing for the fire within, the warmth in the grotto is unnaturally high, and seems to be coming from the reddish-tinted walls.

Aftermath

The snowstorm ended, the return to Novorgby is much easier, and the adventurers are greeted as heroes by the villagers and attend a special banquet in their honor where they are asked to recount their courageous deeds against the foul beasts that dared to kidnap the poor Sigrd.

Abruptly interrupting the loud merriment, the ghostly head of a Svartalf suddenly appears, hovering over the table amid gasps of surprise, and laughing evilly before shouting: "Fools, enjoy your pitiful feast while you can! You may have defeated those pathetic trolls, but you have not heard the last of Amaroq the Black!" and disappearing just as quickly, his wicked laughter still echoing around the walls of the now silent main hall.

With the safe return of *Sigrid* to the village, the Winter Festival can continue where it was interrupted, although not with the same enthusiasm as before. People will talk about the rescue, but also about the ominous threat of the Svartalf. Some will leave the village early, maybe never to return; and by the following spring, despite *Ulfgar the Grim*'s best efforts to play things down, *Novorgby* will have gained a reputation in the surrounding neighbourhood as a place to avoid.

Rewards

The adventurers will receive the equivalent of 5 gold coins each in ornamented equipment (worth twice the usual price) from *Ulfgar the Grim* if they manage to save *Sigrid*.

Warriors will also receive 10 Glory each for that action, and 75 Glory each if they vanquish all monsters in the adventure without outside help.

Magicians will receive 30 Wisdom each for finding at least two of the fire-like marks on the monsters and noticing the unnatural warmth of the *Half-Giant* cave.

Hunters will gain 50 Experience Points for successfully tracking the *Trollmen* to their lair or preventing the party from getting lost in the snowstorm (**Thieves** can also get 50 Experience Points for that action).

Loose Ends

While not apparent at first, the kidnapping of young *Sigrid* is anything but coincidental and has been, in fact, entirely engineered by *Amaroq the Black* to gain possession of one of the 9 pieces of the *Krown of Kommand*, a dread artifact used to control giants.

Unknown to her, the medallion she inherited from her father (who incidentally, was killed by a *Dire Wolf* while investigating the source of a mysterious corrupted energy close to the village) was imbedded with a stone from the terrible magic item. Those who know her well will notice she no longer has the medallion she wore before her abduction (she will say that she probably lost it during the struggle of her journey to the cave). It would be even more upsetting if anyone were to know that a fire giant is held in a magical sleep deep under the village, and that *Amaroq* intends to use the *Krown* to wake him up and wreak havoc on the region.

Ulfgar the Grim



Level 3 Prince, age 35, Chieftain of *Novorgby*.

Personality: Stern and stubborn, courageous in combat and in his political duties; Ulfgar believes that the needs of the many outweighs the needs of the few.

Attributes: Might 14, Skill 15, Luck 19, Wits 13, Will 17, Grace 11.

Combat: Initiative 17, Melee +7 (+9 w/Great Axe), Missile +7, BDC 16, EDC 18 (22 w/Helm), Hits Total 21.

Weapon of Choice: Great Axe.

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +7, Danger Evasion +7, Mystic Fort +8 (+9 w/Helm), Physical Vigor +8.

Personal Charisma: +7 (+10 with Reputation bonus).

Background Talents: Sailor, Warlord.

Languages Known: Norscan, Firian

Patron Deity: Tyr.

Mythic Items: *Helm of Protection* (+4 EDC, +2 MF), *Axe of Conquest* (+2 Melee).

Ulfgar is an illegitimate son of King Rothgar of Beornia. He was sent away with his mother while still a young child, to avoid "political complications" and has never claimed his heritage. He is still angry at his "father", and settled in *Novorgby* some years ago, after roaming the seas in search of adventure, where his leadership and prowess have led him to become a celebrated chieftain.

Sigrid the Fair



This beautiful girl is the daughter of the village's priest of Freyr and its most eligible maiden, even though her obvious intelligence has stopped many from courting her. As far as stats are concerned, she should be treated as a noncombatant Minor NPC (see *Maze Masters Guide* p25).

Amaroq the Black

As a Dark Elf, Amaroq the Black has the same stats and special abilities as an Alseid (see *Creature Compendium*, p 5).

Having found an entry to *Midgard* from *Svartalfeim* via a cave near *Novorgby*, Amaroq was plotting to take over the local trolls in the region when he spied the village priest's frequent travels to the nearby river. Curious, he soon discovered a portal of power leading deep underground where he found a sealed chamber protected by powerful magic. Searching his arcane lore-books, he learned of an ancient battle from the *Age of Legend* during which the gods trapped a ferocious lieutenant of *Surtur* deep under the earth. Wanting to keep that secret all for himself he used a magically enslaved *Dire Wolf* to dispatch the nosy priest, but not before noticing the glow of his medallion when near the portal.

Madly seeking the answer to this new discovery, he finally recognized the jewel from a picture of the *Krown of Kommand*, an ancient artifact used by *Surtur* to insure the loyalty of rebellious giants, which was rumored destroyed by the gods during their last battle with the Jotuns. Amaroq has devised a cunning plan to take it back from the villagers...and will continue his search for the remaining pieces.

Eirik the Bold



Level 2 Hunter, age 23, Free Hunter.

Personality: Cheerful and unruly with people, watchful and disciplined in the wilderness; Eirik loves the great outdoors and especially despises "unnatural" creatures.

Attributes: Might 13, Skill 15, Luck 13, Wits 15, Will 13, Grace 13.

Combat: Initiative 14, Melee +4, Missile +5 (+2 dmg vs Beasts or Monsters), BDC 12, EDC 13, Hits Total 13.

Weapon of Choice: Bow

Saving Rolls: Athletic Prowess +4, Danger Evasion +5, Mystic Fortitude +4, Physical Vigor +3.

Personal Charisma: +2 (+4 w/ Reputation bonus)

Special Ability: Hunting Bonus +4.

Background Talents: Woodsman, Mountaineer.

Languages Known: Norscan, Kvenish, Alfian

Patron Deity: Uller.

Mythic Items: *Bow of the Elves* (no penalty while moving, 600' range)

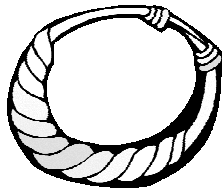
The hunter known as *Eirik the Bold* is a well known character in the region, who lives in a cabin in the woods near *Novorgby* and trades furs and meat for other goods. He has acted as a guide for a number of travelers seeking to reach hard-to-find places and is rumored to have saved many from an untimely demise, including a *Wood Elf* who has since become a friend.

PANDORA'S BOX

A regular selection of mythic items for Mazes & Minotaurs

TREASURES OF THE VIKINGS

This issue, **Pandora's Box** goes all **Vikings & Valkyries**, with a collection of new mythic items inspired by Norse myth and sagas, brought to us from the perilous shores of Midgard by our friend **Andrew Pearce!**



Armlet of Draupnir

Every ninth night, eight gold arm rings drop from Draupnir, the gold arm-ring of Odin. These copies of Draupnir are given by Odin to brave warriors and princes, and many have found themselves into the treasure-hoards of kings and rich jarls. Wearing an *Armlet of Draupnir*, as these rings are called, adds +2 to the wearer's EDC against all attacks, as well as to his Mystic Fortitude and Personal Charisma.

Book of Eddas

The Book of Eddas is a compendium of myths and legends in poetic verse, compiled by Snorri Samundson, one of the greatest of Midgard's Skalds, in the early part of the Age of Adventure. Three of the poems were written by Snorri himself.

The *Book of Eddas* is inscribed on sheets of thick vellum parchment, with each chapter taking up several double-sided sheets. A complete set of the Eddas is made up of seven chapters, but most Books are incomplete, and are made up of only a few chapters. Snorri's work is written in runes, and can therefore be read by any magician - but only Skalds will gain inspirational benefits from them. Any Skald reading portions of this work will receive 100 Wisdom points per chapter for the first four and 200 Wisdom points for each one of chapters V to VII (which deal with the Story of Creation, the Death of Baldur, and Ragnarok, the most important tales concerning Midgard's past and future).

The *Book of Eddas* is a far rarer work than its Mythikan equivalent (the Complete Works of Homeros), and it is a very rare Skald indeed who has ever caught sight of a complete copy of these epic tales. If a Book of Eddas is to be found, a 1 D6 roll is made to find out how many chapters it contains (thus a roll of 4 means chapters I to IV): if a roll of 6 is made, make a second 1D6 roll (on a roll of 6, the Book is made up of chapters I to VII, otherwise chapters I to VI). (Enc 1 for each chapter).

Book of Runic Lore

The Book of Runic Lore is an extraordinary work that contains arcane magical knowledge that is only of benefit to Sorcerers. They are identified by their chapter numerals (I to VII). Any Sorcerer reading portions of this work will receive 100 Wisdom points per chapter for the first four and 200 Wisdom points for each one of chapters V to VII. It is as rare a work as the *Book of Eddas*; use the same system to to ascertain the composition of any copy found.

Chains of Laeding

The monstrous wolf Fenrir is bound until Ragnarok by the silken fetter Gleipnir. Before successfully binding him with Gleipnir, the Aesir unsuccessfully tried to shackle him with two incredibly mighty - though lesser - chains, one of which was named Laeding. Fenrir shattered Laeding into a hundred pieces, each of which is made up of a hundred links. Each of these fragments is absolutely unbreakable (except by direct Divine Intervention) - and can be used to chain *anything*, including most gigantic monsters (provided they have been subdued first...) but not unique, semi-divine creatures like Fenrir, Jormungand the Midgard Serpent etc.



- Yes, m'lord, these are authentic Chains of Laeding!



Chess Pieces of the Aesir

Originally a set of 32 chess pieces, the chess pieces of the Aesir were stolen by Loki, playing one of his characteristic tricks on the gods, and were hidden, a piece at a time, in the chess sets of princes and wealthy jarls of Midgard.

Made of walrus ivory (like most of the chess sets of the Norse lords), they are not immediately obvious as anything other than ordinary playing pieces.

However, if thrown into a hot fire, a divine chess piece will spring out of the flames, greatly enlarged, with the same characteristics and special abilities as a Bronze Colossus (*Creature Compendium* p 18).

The chess piece will stay animated as long as its master (the person who threw it into the fire) wishes (or until it is 'killed', i.e. reduced to zero Hits, at which point it will shrink back to normal size, ready to be re-animated by the next person who picks it up and throws it into a fire. It is said that only after Ragnarok will Baldur and the new gods of Asgard recover the lost chess pieces of the Aesir, and play once more on golden boards in Gimli, the hall that will replace Valhalla. (Enc = 1 for each piece).

Glove of Grid

These magical iron glove allows the wearer to inflict (1d3 + Might mod) Hits of regular damage using only his fists. Such attacks are delivered as regular pugilistic attacks (see *Players Manual*). (Enc =1)

Lock of Sif

As a prank, Loki the trickster god once cut off the golden tresses of Sif, the wife of Thor. Later, Loki made recompense by arranging for some Dwarfs to made for Sif a new head of hair made of pure gold.

However, locks of Sif's original hair have survived down the ages, and still retain considerable magical power. Any woman who braids a golden lock of Sif into her own hair will gain 2 points of Grace (up to a maximum of 18) for as long as she wears it – but she will also incur the wrath of any Priest of Thor

whom she encounters, and who spots the lock. The Priest will demand the lock, in order to burn it as an offering to Thor and Sif (and to remove any physical evidence of Sif's shame). Failure to comply is likely to have unfortunate consequences. (Enc = 0).

Mead of Kvasir

Kvasir was the wisest man of the Age of Legends and his learning was appreciated even by the gods. Unfortunately, the greedy dwarves Falar and Galar murdered him and filled a large jar with his blood. Mixing Kvasir's blood with honey, they created the magical drink known as the Mead of Kvasir. The foolish dwarves lost their prize after boasting too much of it, and the Mead was eventually recovered by Odin, who from time to time graciously offers a draught to those who especially please him.

Drinking of the Mead of Kvasir will add 1d3 points of Wits permanently (up to a maximum of 18). The Mead can only be drunk once in a lifetime.

Skis of Uller

These allow the user to move at up to 240' per battle round over snowy terrain and also adds +2 to his Defense Class (against all attacks) and +4 to his Danger Evasion; however, characters cannot perform any other actions whilst using them. When not worn, they have an Enc of 4 (2 per ski).

Staff of Skirnir

This is named after the magical staff used by Skirnir, the servant of Freyr, which helped him to 'persuade' the giantess Gerd to marry the love-sick Freyr. This staff, made from enchanted ash, gives a +2 Mystic Strength bonus to any Sorcerer using it. (Enc = 2)

Sword of Maiming

This magical sword, of Dwarfish origin, has a very nasty knack for severing hands, piercing eyes and inflicting similar mutilations. It inflicts the usual d6 of damage – but every time a natural 6 is rolled on its damage die, it also inflicts a maiming effect (which normally requires a critical hit, as detailed on p 13 of the *Vikings & Valkyries* book). This maiming effect cannot be the dreaded Decapitation Option (see *Vikings & Valkyries*, p 14), which still requires a critical hit. Scoring a critical hit with this weapon brings no extra benefit. (Enc = 1).



MAZE MASTER'S LORE

RUNES OF MIDGARD

An in-depth look at the sacred script of the Norse realms, by **Andrew Pearce**



- So you wanna be a rune master, eh ?

'Literacy is far rarer in the Vikings & Valkyries world of Midgard than in the classic Mazes & Minotaurs world of Mythika. In this world...writing takes the form of Runes, an ancient sacred script which is only taught to (and is used by) magicians...'

(Vikings & Valkyries, p.7)

Who uses the Runes?

In the world of *Vikings & Valyries*, oral traditions are generally far more valued than written ones. No self-respecting warrior or hunter would ever show the slightest interest in learning how to read, whilst the only value of a book to a thief is the price that some magician might pay for it.

And even magicians are very careful about how and when they exercise this talent. Skalds, for instance, pride themselves in their great recall of memory, and the skill which they employ in conjuring forth images with words, rhymes and kennings. To be called a 'book-learn't Skald is a pretty damning insult. Even the great Snorri Samundson, author of three of the epic poems recorded in the *Book of Eddas*, is remembered more for his ability to enthrall an audience with his charismatic presence and verbal dexterity, than for the undoubtedly literary skill he exhibits in the *Eddas*.

This is not to say that written records are completely scorned, of course. Indeed, the Norse peoples believe that the runes which are used in writing are of divine origin. They were first

'discovered' by Odin, who sacrificed one of his eyes in order to gain insight into their use. Odin shared his discovery with his fellow gods, and with the Elves, and later still with the priests and skalds of the Norse.

Sorcerers and Elementalists are a different matter, and there are several, conflicting tales as to how these magicians gained access to the secrets of the runes. The most widely accepted belief is that the trickster god Loki impetuously shared this knowledge within them, to the intense annoyance, it is said, of Odin (Odin later came round, of course, and many Sorcerers and Elementalists today follow Odin rather than Loki).

The Runic Script

The runic script of Midgard is made of 24 different letters, including both vowels and consonants. It is an austere, angular one (in strong contrast to the rounded, flowing script of the Imperial alphabet of the South). It is ideally suited to inscriptions on wood, bone and stone: indeed, it is only in the last century or so of the Age of Adventure that writing on animal skins (vellum) has become more common.

Each of the runes is named after a being, object, or occasionally an abstract state, usually one that begins with the same sound as that which the rune represents. So, for example, the first rune of the runic script is called **Fyr** (meaning 'cattle') and represents the letter 'f'.

The Power of the Runes

'Priests of the Norse deities need to use specially-made runesticks to call a Divine Vision. This is known as casting the runes.'

(Vikings & Valkyries, p.19)

In addition to their linguistic representation, each rune has a mystical meaning. These mystical meanings are well-understood by magicians, and are used as part of their spell-casting. However, the most significant magical function of the runes is in the form of the rune-sticks used by Norse priests when calling a *Divine Vision*.

Each of the twenty-four runes has a variety of meanings, ensuring that any *Divine Vision* (especially of future events) will have a degree of uncertainty about its interpretation. The following list gives the most common symbolic associations of the various runes:



Fyr (f), meaning **'cattle'**. Cattle are the livelihood of most Norse clans and families, and so this rune generally symbolises wealth and success; but it can also, negatively, stand for greed or excess. This rune is also associated with the Vanir Freyr, the god of wealth and plenty, and also with the Dwarves.



Ur (u), meaning **'auroch'**. The rare and majestic auroch requires great skill to hunt, and so this rune symbolises strength, speed and survival. This rune is also associated with the Aesir Uller, the god of hunting.



Thuris (th), meaning **'thorn'**. Thorn-bushes represent obstacles, and so this rune symbolises difficulty, struggle, anger and pain. This rune is also associated with storm giants and trolls, with the giant god Ymir, with Jotunheim and Trollheim, and with the East.



Ansuz (a), meaning **'mouth'**. This rune governs communication, and symbolises signs, intellect, insight and inspiration, especially of divine origin. This rune is associated with the Aesir god Bragi, the patron deity of skalds, and also with Odin, the patron of wise sorcerers and many rune-masters.



Raedo (r), meaning **'rider'**. This rune symbolises change, discovery, riding and journeys. This rune is associated with the Aesir god Odin in his aspect as the One-eyed Wanderer.



Kaen (k), meaning **'torch'**. This rune symbolises passion and wildfire. As both can be difficult to control, it can also symbolise chaos. This rune is associated with both Freya, the goddess of passion, and Loki, the trickster god of fire. It is also associated with the fire giants, with Muspellheim, and with the South.



Gyfu (g), meaning **'gift'**. This rune symbolises not only gifts, but also the spirit of openness, generosity and hospitality itself. Sometimes known as the friendship rune, it is also associated with the Aesir god Baldur.



Vyn (v), meaning **'happiness'**. This rune symbolises joy, fulfilment and harmony. It is associated with the blessings of the realm of Asgard itself.



Haegal (h), meaning **'hail'**. Sometimes known as the weather rune, this rune can symbolise disruption but also cleansing. It is also associated with the Aesir god Thor, the god of storms.



Nyd (n), meaning **'need'**. This rune symbolises necessity, purpose, doom and duty. It is associated with the three Norns, the goddesses of destiny.



Isa (i), meaning **'ice'**. This rune can symbolise clarity and truth, or alternatively inaction and stubbornness. It is associated with the frost giants, with winter, with Nifellheim, and the North.



Jera (j), meaning **'harvest'**. This rune symbolises autumn, reaping and reckoning, the earning and receiving of rewards, endings and beginnings. It is associated with the Aesir goddess Frigg.



Yr (y), meaning **'yew-tree'**. The yew-tree is an ancient keeper of knowledge, but is also known for its poisonous berries. This rune symbolises many things, including dangerous sorcery, dark desires and even death. It is also associated with darkness, monstrous creatures, Dark Elves, and Hel, the goddess of the dead. It is generally regarded as the rune of ill-fate.



Pyrth (p), meaning **'cup'**. This rune depicts the dice-cup used in games of chance, and represents changing fortunes, uncertainty and unpredictability. It is, not surprisingly, also associated with the Aesir god Loki.



Algiz (z), meaning **'elk'**. This rune is a pictorial representation of an elk, with its massive antlers. It is seen as a rune that symbolises shielding and protection. It is also associated with Heimdall, watchman of the gods.



Sigel (s), meaning **'sun'**. This rune symbolises summer, light, health, wholeness, happiness and good fortune. This rune is associated with the Aesir god Baldur.



Tyr (t), meaning **'Tyr'**. This rune, the warriors' rune, is named for, and associated with, the Aesir god Tyr. It symbolises fame, honor, heroism, sacrifice, justice, and victory in battle.



Berk (b), meaning **'birch-tree'**. Named for the birch-tree, which is noted for its ability to survive fire and regenerate quickly, this rune symbolises protection, fertility, spring, growth, nurturing and motherhood. It is associated with the Aesir goddess Frigg.



Ehwaz (e), meaning **'horse'**: Named for one of man's closest allies in the animal kingdom, this rune symbolises loyalty, partnership and progress. It is associated with Odin, via his faithful steed Sleipnir.



Man (m), meaning **'mankind'**. This rune symbolises humanity and friendship, and can also represent a person's individual destiny, the self. It is also associated with the Aesir god Heimdall, in his aspect as defender of the human race. This rune can also represent Midgard, the world of men.



Lagu (l), meaning **'water'**. As well as the obvious representation, this rune symbolises emotion, fertility, intuition and womanhood. It is associated the Vanir Njord, the god of the sea, but can also represent the fertility goddess Freya, his daughter. It can also represent the West.



Ing (ng), meaning **'Ing'** (an obscure name for the Vanir god Freyr). This rune symbolises growth, change and creativity. As well as Freyr himself, this rune is also associated with the Light Elves, and their realm of Alfheim.



Othila (o), meaning **'home'**. This rune symbolises family and home. It can also represent ancestry or lineage. This rune is associated with both Odin and Frigg, as joint heads of the household.



Daeg (d), meaning **'day'**. This rune symbolises clarity and purpose, honesty and hard work. It is also associated with the Aesir god Thor, as patron of the labouring classes.

Using Runes in Adventures

Although the 24 Runes of Midgard are based upon the 24 runes of the *Elder Futhark*, the earliest runic script used by the Germanic peoples, some of the names, values and mystical associations are somewhat different. There is, in any case, no universally agreed interpretation of the supposed mystical value of the Norse runes – be it historic or modern-day.

There are many possible ways in which Maze Masters may use rune-sticks in V&V adventures. One possible way is the **Rule of Three**: i.e. to give a rune-casting reading of three runes whenever a priest casts *Divine Vision*. It is suggested that the Maze Master chose three runes that he feels may accurately reflect aspects of the adventure ahead (or, alternatively, a past event, or a present dilemma), and that he offers a single line **possible** interpretation (emphasis on the word 'possible'). He may allow the priest casting the *Divine Vision* to 'ask' up to three questions of his deity, to further refine the possible meaning of the runes – the answer given will always be truthful, but not necessarily clear or complete.

Although most thoughtful Maze Masters will 'prepare' a set of runes in advance should his adventuring include a priest, particularly daring Maze Masters may allow a player character using *Divine Vision* to make a rune-casting reading for themselves (using a previously prepared set of runes – marked pieces of card will be perfectly sufficient). The Maze Master must then try to ensure that subsequent events can fit some kind of reasonable interpretation of the runes cast. This requires some skill, and is recommended for confident and flexible Maze Masters only, but could bring an added dimension of atmosphere to a *Vikings & Valkyries* campaign.

Remember, the interpretation of rune-sticks will always be rather uncertain, given the many possible meanings attached to each rune. Take the following three runes, for example:



One possible interpretation might be: 'Shield yourself against a friend who will cause you great pain'. Another possible interpretation might be: 'Heimdall will protect you on your journey to Jotunheim.' Two very different interpretations: but both consistent with the runes. So beware against over-confidence in casting the runes!

A TWIST IN THE MAZE

RULES OF FLYING

A Closer Look at Winged Creatures, by **Lyzishadow** – with a little help from **Luke G. Reynard**



How Ideas Get their Wings

It all started with the *Griffin*. I'm sure every reader of the late magazine still remembers *that* letter – you know, the one about flying creatures in M&M, which contained such unforgettable lines as:

"I am afraid that Griffins, Hawkmen and other aerial beings are nearly completely useless in the absence of detailed rules for aerial combat. Here are my own house rules on the subject. Flying creatures can be grouped in five Aerial Maneuverability classes, which, for simplicity's sake, are called Q, R, S, T and P. Within each Aerial Maneuverability class, several specific categories..."

I am also sure I wasn't the only reader annoyed by the arrogant tone of the author – not to mention the sheer absurdity of his proposed optional system, which simply overcomplicated things for the sake of complexity, without adding anything to the game.

That being said, that letter did raise some valid questions, which this article attempts to answer in a simpler manner: how can a Maze Master make Winged creatures more challenging in his games and, above all (ah!), how can he make his players feel that they are facing an aerial, flying opponent?

So without further ado, let's take off!

Reading the Ability – Again!

The description of the *Winged* special ability in the *Maze Masters Guide* reads as follows:

The creature can fly. When using full movement, a flying creature's movement rate is quadrupled, it cannot be hit by Melee attacks and all Missile attacks against it are made with a penalty of -2. This ability also adds +2 to the creature's Evasion.

So what do we make of it? The main purpose of *Winged* seems to be to increase the movement rate of the creature. As such, it can be seen as a variation of *Gallop / Cruise* and maybe *Lightning Fast*. Like the latter, *Winged* also grants bonuses. A permanent +2 bonus to *Evasion*, and what basically amounts to a +2 bonus to *EDC* against Missiles, restricted to full movement only.

Taking only this into account, *Winged* is little more than a movement-boosting ability - there is no sense of height, flight or anything three-dimensional here: it's only another way to improve movement and grant side-bonuses. And the actual usefulness of movement abilities in combat is not *that* significant. Sure, having a high movement rate allows you to flee from battle (and out of missile range) faster – but it does not grant you any substantial advantage in an actual combat situation.

That being said, there is more to the *Winged* special ability than a mere movement boost and a few bonuses: the fact that a flying creature using full movement *cannot be hit by Melee attacks* - yes, that's right, a complete immunity, something none of the other abilities described in the rules can provide, with the exception of *Insubstantial*.

And this, of course, is the most interesting tactical advantage of this ability, one which *Maze Masters* can use in clever ways to bring more fun and surprise to the table. It is also the only feature of this ability that really gives a feel of actual flight: the implied idea is that the creature is flying high enough to be just out of reach of characters' weapons. As per the standard full movement rules, the creature *"forfeits all actions"*, therefore won't use *Melee* attacks either. In this specific case, it can be seen as the creature flying out of *melee* reach – and out of reach of its own natural weapons. Yet, one should keep in mind that this immunity against *Melee* attacks won't matter that much, since full movement is seldom used during regular battles.



- Mr. Maze Master, I've got these really neat ideas...

Apart from this tactical advantage, the Winged special ability is not really different from land-based abilities such as *Lightning Fast*. Let us now see how we can make combat with flying creatures different, and how we can allow Winged creatures to make a more advantageous use of their unique ability

Tricks & Tactics

Here are some genre tropes and personal ideas that could be used as tactics for *Winged* creatures. Some of them might require a bit of tampering with the official rules – but nothing any Maze Master worth his salt would not consider.

Death From Above

The adventurers are traveling through a pass between some mountains. They have an open view in front of them, to their rear, and even below. Above them, the cliff is impassable on foot. There is no way someone can sneak up on them, and if they Randomly Encounter some ogres or other monsters those can be slain with ranged weapons before they can even reach the characters.

Then, suddenly, the pass resounds with horrible shrieking. Before the characters can even react, winged creatures appear out of nowhere, and descend on them in a surprise attack.

Creatures with the ability to *Dive into Battle* would be especially fitting with this kind of trope, especially Bronze Birds, Giant Eagles, Harpies, Klaatakaa'rr, Pterodactyls and Tricephalous Vultures (and maybe Dragons if you really feel sadistic).

Such creatures should be allowed to use their full movement to enter melee “out of nowhere” in the first round, and deal a first melee attack with their increased Initiative and Melee. Theoretically, the rules make this impossible, since full movement cannot normally be combined with any other form of action) – but since *diving* from the sky is hardly the same thing as *charging* on land, it seems only logical to make an exception here, for the first round of combat. Combined with the possible effects of surprise, this would make a very deadly (and memorable) entry into combat.

I'll Be Back!

This situation works best when the main quest of the characters is to kill a Monster which has been terrorizing the local populace or attacking travelers going through its territory. The party first encounters the creature while journeying – maybe already heading for its lair. The powerful Monster attacks, like it did with everyone else before the adventurers' involvement, and causes some damage to the characters, maybe killing most of their followers. When the creature has taken some wounds, it breaks combat, flies out of reach, and disappears in the distance while shrieking an awful sound that is unmistakably interpreted as a vicious “I'll be back!”

Of course, the characters cannot immediately catch up with it. The final fight will take place at the end of the scenario, when the characters have the Monster cornered in its own lair, after having vanquished many perils to get there in the first place.

Note that this would be an exception to the affirmation that Monsters always fight to the death. So okay, Monsters obviously do not rout and never surrender, but we can make them retreat from time to time, for the sake of storytelling, can't we?

Creatures that fit this trope need to be powerful enough to justify a quest, as well as survive an attack against a group of heroes. They also need a high Defense Class, so they will have a chance to *disengage* from combat. This trope works best with Large Winged Monsters, such as the Winged breeds of Chimeras, Sphinxes and Manticores (not to mention the Gigantic Dragons!), which all have high-to-very-high Defense Class and Hits Total.

With some changes, this trope could also fit to an evil Sorcerer or a Stygian lord riding a flying mount, such as a Bronze Bird, a Hippodrac, a Hippogriff, a Tricephalous Vulture or even a Wyvern.

Hit & Fade

The creature, or swarm of creatures, is harassing the adventurers. They Dive into Battle, make a Melee attack, *disengage* as soon as possible (which can only happen if all the creature's opponents have missed their attacks against it this round), move out of reach for one round (effectively *retreating*), then Dive into Battle again.

Remember that you don't have to forfeit your attacks to try to *disengage*: this is only required when you start retreating (see *Players Manual*, p 21). During the retreating round, the creature forfeits all of its attacks but can only be hit by missile fire (or magic).

This tactic can be devastating (as well as quite infuriating) against warrior characters who rely exclusively on melee combat – but that is precisely the point! Since it does require (or reflect) a certain amount of viciousness, it should only be made available to Winged creatures who have a Clever or Crafty Cunning (in addition, of course, to the Dive Into Battle special ability).

Aside from rushing inside the nearest building, cave or densely covered forest, the only viable defense against this tactic would be the trick used by Jason and the Argonauts against the Harpies in the famous Ray Harryhausen movie: to trap the Winged creatures below a "roof" of nets.

Grab & Drop!

Of all the Winged creatures detailed in the *Creature Compendium*, only the Klaakataa'rr are said to be fond of the "grapple and drop" trick, but there is no reason why this trick couldn't be used by other flying creatures with the Grapple ability, such as Griffins or Olympian Eagles. Maze Masters may choose to restrict it to creatures of Alert Cunning or better, leaving Pterodactyls and other flyers of Average Cunning out of the picture.

Two-Dimensional Logic

The flying movement rules as they stand only cover horizontal movement, treating vertical movement as negligible, for the usual reason of "simplicity's sake". Yet, some Maze Masters (or players, for that matter) might wonder *how high* flying creatures can actually fly – a tricky question which may not be as purely academic as it first seems: how do we know, for instance, whether or not a Winged creature flying "high in the sky" is out of arrow range?

Well, let's face facts: the M&M rules were designed for a 2D (that's 'two-dimensional', not 'two dice!' – Ed) resolution and trying to change this will most likely result in the kind of unnecessary complexity and computational headaches we want to avoid.

That being said, it might be worth knowing a thing or two about how high real-world birds can fly. Small resident birds usually do not fly very high – firstly because they lack the strength to gain as much as altitude as larger, stronger birds, and secondly because they do not *need* to. Migrating birds, on the other hand, can reach much higher altitudes. On short-distance migrations, they usually fly below 150 meters (450 feet). On long-distance migrations, they start at 1500 meters (4500 feet) and progressively rise to 6000 meters (18,000 feet). Swans have been known to reach 9000 meters (yes, that's 27,000 feet). So, basically, if we decide that Winged beings can reach the same heights as birds, they too can stay well out of missile range as long as they please (and can easily fly over any man-made buildings).

In a typical M&M combat situation, trying to locate a creature in a 3D environment at a height of several miles is simply pointless (and a pretty good way to get a migraine too): either the flying creature is within missile range or it is not. It's as simple as that... as long as player-characters are on foot (or riding on horseback). But what happens if, say, an adventurer happens to ride a Pegasus, a Hippogriff or some similar mount? That's where some aerial combat rules may come in handy...



- I say, do you have any idea how high we're flying?

But where do we start? There are not many models of aerial combat. I don't know of any great example of aerial fight in *swords and sorcery* settings. The closest thing to it in a Ray Harryhausen's movie would be Perseus riding Pegasus to attack the gigantic Kraken in *Clash of the Titans*: here, the hero was airborne, and the head of the big creature he was fighting highly elevated. But even that didn't last long, since (as you all remember) Perseus and his mount were quick to fall into the sea.

It would NOT be good idea to take inspiration from real-life WW1 or WW2 aerial warfare – I mean, just take a look at aerial combat simulation games: even the simpler ones involve a degree of complexity far higher than the M&M system - and we wouldn't want that, would we? Aerial combat in M&M should be resolved as if occurring in the same two-dimensional environment as ground-based battles. Do not bother about keeping track of relative altitudes and such intricacies: just assume that all flying creatures are on the same level – or that they can catch up with each other if needed, so that it does not really matter whether they are fighting at 20, 200 or 2000 feet above the ground. Why would any creature fly further up if the other one can catch up anyway? In other terms, just forget about the Z axis.

Aerial Combat Rules

Aerial Melee

Let's start with a common-sense clarification of the *Winged* special ability. According to its description in the *Maze Masters Guide*, a flying creature using *full movement* cannot be hit by Melee attacks.

This, of course, was written from the point of view of ground-based attackers. A flying creature using full movement CAN be attacked in Melee by another flying creature - as long as the attacker actually catches up with its intended target: all things being equal, a faster creature will always be able to outfly a slower one – but hey, that's how movement works in M&M, aerial or otherwise.



- Hey, do I look like a two-dimensional monster?

Movement & Distances

As far as game mechanics are concerned, all aerial movement in M&M is treated as horizontal, standard (i.e. ground-based) movement.

This applies to all matters where distances come into play – including missile fire. In such cases, the movement rate of the flying creature allows the Maze Master to determine an abstract distance between the shooter and his flying target – whether this distance is horizontal, vertical or a mix of both is NOT relevant in a game like *Mazes & Minotaurs*.

Ranges for such attacks should be calculated normally, taking only this overall abstract distance into consideration, without worrying about height, angles and other complexities.

Keep in mind that flying beings using *full movement* can cover great distances in a single round, which allows them to get out of missile range very quickly. Whether they manage to do this by flying away or upwards does not really matter. A Winged Chimera, for example, can move up to 480' in a single round of full movement - and since the *maximum* range for a bow in M&M is 600', our Chimera only needs two rounds of full movement to fly out of arrow range.

Also remember that, as mentioned in the description of the *Winged* special ability, flying creatures using full movement impose a -2 penalty on all Missile attacks aimed at them, regardless of actual range.

Dive Into Battle

In the regular M&M rules, *Dive Into Battle* is simply defined as the aerial version of *Charge Into Battle*. Within the context of these optional rules, this ability should also allow a flying creature to enter melee combat right after a *full movement*, delivering a melee attack with the usual Dive/Charge bonuses.

Obviously, this is an exception to the general rule which normally prevents creatures from using full movement and performing another activity during

the same battle round. This, of course, only applies to the creature's first attack; once *engaged* in melee, the creature will not be able to use full movement – and will need to *disengage* to do so, as per the usual rules.

Aerial Riding 101

As far as game terms are concerned, riding a flying mount is no different from riding a horse – the regular horsemanship rules described in the *Players Manual* (p 46) can be used equally well with Pegasi, Hippogriffs and other winged steeds. The only difference is the amount of damage suffered by the rider if he falls to the ground...

But how do we determine this damage, you ask, in a system which does not take vertical distances (also known as "heights") into account? Well, again, by keeping things as simple as possible.

If, for some circumstantial reason, the Maze Master happens to know exactly how high the mount is at the time, the usual amount of 1d6 Hits of damage per 10 feet fallen should be used – with an extra d6 if the creature was using *full movement*.

Most of the time, however, the Maze Master will not know the exact height at which the mount was flying. In such cases, simply calculate damage as if the character had fallen from (1d6 x 10) feet – or, in other words, roll a first d6 and then roll that number of d6s to calculate the falling damage. Add an extra d6 of damage if the mount was using full movement at the time of the fall. Thus, a Pegasus-rider falling from his winged horse while on full movement will suffer from 2d6 to 7d6 Hits of damage – probably more than enough to kill him.

In all cases, assume the falling character will hit the ground at the end of the current round; if another flying (and friendly) creature happens to be nearby, a generous Maze Master might allow a dramatic aerial rescue attempt, if the intervening creature is (a) not currently engaged in melee and (b) within its own full movement rate of the falling character. Such a daring stunt should be resolved as a perilous horsemanship maneuver, requiring Danger Evasion roll from both the rider and his mount.



- Thanks for making aerial archery easy, guys!

Aerial Maneuverability Classes

Ah ah, sorry, I couldn't help myself. I really HAD to use this phrase somewhere in this article.

Seriously, though, the M&M system does not need things like "aerial maneuverability classes" – simply because flying creatures in M&M already have a score which reflect their aerial mobility and alertness in game terms: the Evasion modifier (which, as you all know, is based on Cunning and modified by abilities like *Lightning Fast*, *Sixth Sense*, *Uncanny Agility* and, of course, *Winged*). And this Evasion modifier is even more important for flying creatures than for anybody else – as detailed below.

Aerial Evasion

This special action can only be attempted by a Winged creature in flight using full movement. It allows the flying creature to evade attempts by other flying creatures to engage it in aerial melee.

Since it must be combined with full movement, *aerial evasion* cannot be attempted once a creature has already been engaged in melee: it is primarily a way to avoid being engaged in melee by another flying creature – by using all the possibilities of aerial, three-dimensional movements to evade its attempt to close in.

Aerial Evasion - Exempli Gratia.

If a flying Griffin (Initiative 19, Evasion +10) attempts to Evade another flying Griffin, he will have to roll 19 or more on 1d20+10 (a 60% chance of success) – but if the aggressive Griffin is Diving Into Battle, the target number will be raised to 21 (50% chance of success). If, on the other hand, a Pegasus (Evasion +14) is trying to Evade a Griffin, he will have to roll 19+ on 1d20+14, giving him a 80% chance of success (or only 70% if the Griffin is Diving). If the attacking creature was a Gryphon (Initiative 19 – but Large Size), the target number for evading its diving attack would be raised to 23, giving our Pegasus a 50% chance of success.

These high chances of success means that aerial melee will actually be quite rare between such creatures – and will probably not occur before at least a few rounds of aerial evasion.

Let us now see what happens with a significantly less-agile flyer –the Bronze Bird. With its Evasion of +2 and Initiative of 10, the Bronze Bird has almost no chance of Evading an attacking Griffin (rolling 19+ on 1d20+2 means a 15% of success) and that its own attempts at aerial melee will be quite easy to avoid: a Griffin trying to Evade a Bronze Bird, for instance, would automatically succeed (since it would theoretically need to roll 10+ on 1d20+10), unless the Bronze Bird was Diving Into Battle, in which case the Griffin would only have to roll 14+ on 1d20+10 – yes, that's a 85% chance of success.



- Hey, Mr Reynard, got any rules for THIS?

While making its full movement, the creature must make a special Evasion saving roll, against a target number equal to the would-be attacker's Initiative score. If the attacker is trying to *Dive Into Battle*, its Initiative bonus is also applied to the target number. This Evasion roll is made during the Melee phase of the ongoing round, just before the intended attack.

If the Evasion saving roll is successful, the evading creature has managed to avoid being engaged in melee for this round; if the saving roll fails, melee is inevitable and will be resolved normally.

If several attackers are trying to engage the evading creature at the same time, only one Evasion roll must be made, against a target number equal to the highest Initiative score in the group.

That's how it works. Let's now take a quick look at the reasoning behind all this. The use of the potential attacker's Initiative as the target number means that more ferocious, cunning and quick attackers will be harder to evade. In addition, the Initiative bonus granted when Diving makes such attacks harder to evade - especially if they are made by Large or even Gigantic creatures, since they receive a higher Charge/Dive bonus.

As for *Dive Into Battle* above, this maneuver is a blatant exception to the general rule which normally prohibits the combination of full movement with any other type of activity. In both cases, making this exception allows us to reflect the tri-dimensional nature of aerial mobility in game terms in a simple and abstract way, without having to worry about vectors, aerodynamics, trigonometry and other sources of computational headaches.

May the Gods of Simplicity and Fun watch over your aerial adventures!

OFFICIAL ORACLE

MOVE, FIGHT, RETREAT!

Official Oracle is a semi-regular department offering answers to questions on the **Mazes & Minotaurs** rules and how they can be interpreted in situations which are not explicitly covered in the various M&M rulebooks. As its title implies, all the answers given in this column can be treated as official rulings (if such things really matter to your gaming group.) This issue, we bring you some welcome rule clarifications about movement, combat and actions.



Tactical Movement

Why is 'tactical movement' called so? What is so 'tactical' about it?

Back in the days when M&M was first designed, the term "tactical movement" was supposed to convey the idea that this type of movement was the one most often used in combat situations (since it can, under some circumstances, be combined to a combat action). If your players find this terminology misleading or confusing, feel free to use an alternate term – such as *standard movement*.

Movement & Melee

I find the rules on movement and melee combat somewhat confusing. The rules on Sequence of Action (Players Manual, p 20) state that tactical movement can be combined with a combat action – and I quote: "usually a melee or missile attack". Does this mean that characters engaged in melee can move at 60' per battle round while fighting? How does this make sense?

This section of the rules should indeed really have been clarified (but hey, better late than never!). Characters who are engaged in melee combat are assumed to be "locked in battle" and cannot move away from their opponents as long they remain engaged - which is why they need to *disengage* before being able to *retreat*. Characters may only use tactical movement and then make a melee attack in the same battle round when they are *entering melee*, i.e. on the first round of combat. This "first round" clause also applies to the *Charge Into Battle* maneuver, which can only be used when entering melee combat.

Movement & Missile

The Missile Combat Modifiers (Players Manual p 26) list a -2 penalty for using tactical movement: does this mean that a character making a missile attack and using tactical movement in the same round will suffer a -2 penalty to his Missile attack roll, even though missile attacks are resolved BEFORE movement?

Yes. It means exactly that.

Retreating

Once a character has managed to disengage from melee in order to retreat, when does his retreating movement take place? At the end of the round in which he disengaged or during the movement phase of the next battle round?

Retreat takes place during the movement phase of the next battle round, just like any other movement. Otherwise, retreating characters would be "whizzing away" from battle before anyone else can react (and would also be immune to missile or magic while retreating, which would simply make no sense).

Initiative & Decision

Can combat actions be aborted or changed once they have been declared in the Decision phase – in order to react to an enemy's own action, for instance? In my games, I've had characters declare their action during the Decision phase in reverse order of Initiative (i.e. from lowest to highest), so that characters with a high Initiative score can always take into account the intended actions of those with a lower Initiative, which works well enough - but some official ruling or clarification would be greatly appreciated.

The "reverse Initiative" house rule you suggest for the Decision phase is indeed used by many Maze Masters, either as standard procedure or as a quick way to solve conflicting declarations of action when they occur. Many Maze Masters also simply ignore the Decision phase in order to make combat more dynamic and fast-paced: in this variant approach, characters do not have to declare their action as the start of each round and simply act when it is their turn to do so, during the Missile, Movement or Melee phase. Magic use, however, must still be declared at the start of the round, before any other action is carried out. And speaking of magic...



- What? No tactical movement?

Movement & Magic

The Sequence of Action (Players Manual p 20) section states that any "combat action may be combined with a tactical movement" and that a "combat action may also be replaced by another activity (such as magic use)." This seems to imply that it is possible to use magic while using tactical movement, but the wording is somewhat ambiguous. The matter is further confused by the section on Using Magic (p 29), which states that "using magic normally requires one full battle round of full concentration, during which no other action can be performed." There really seems to be some contradiction here. Could you please tell us in clear and unambiguous terms, whether or not a magician can use magic and make a tactical movement in the same round?

You are right about the bit in the Sequence of Action section: it is extremely confusing and should really have been clarified when the rules got Revised. But hey, better late than never... So here is our clear, official and unambiguous answer: **the use of magic cannot be combined with tactical movement.**

The total concentration required by the use of magic is simply incompatible with tactical movement. In the case of powers with a duration measured in battle rounds, minutes or hours, this only applies to the round during which the magic is activated (and the Power points expended): once the Power has been expended and the effect has been activated, the magician can move and act freely.

Poetic Magic powers are a special case, since they either require one full minute of singing and playing the lyre before taking effect (Songs of Inspiration, Freedom and Comfort) or are only active while the Lyryst is singing and playing. In all cases, the rule is the same: Lyrists cannot use tactical movement while playing music and singing

Official or Optional?

Over the last four years, various rule modifications, options and variants have been published in the pages of the *Minotaur*. With our tenth issue looming on the horizon, we thought it was a good time to take a look back at all those new rules – and classify them in two categories:

Official rules include rules which cover topics left untouched by the core books (such as curing poison or naval warfare) as well as "variants" which must now be considered official changes to the Revised M&M game system – such as Luke G. Reynard's popular variant formulas for Danger Evasion and Mystic Fortitude (originally found in issues 2 and 3), which are now the official standard for all Revised M&M characters; starting with this very issue, the Danger Evasion and Mystic Fortitude scores of NPCs will now be calculated according to Luke's rules (Ah! Triumph! – Luke)

Optional rules include all the rest – alternate or additional rules and stuff which every Maze Master is free to adopt, ignore or alter as he sees fits.

Official

Alternate formula for Danger Evasion (issue 2, p 35)

Alternate formula for Mystic Fortitude (issue 3, p 37)

Renovated Noble class (issue 2, p 23)

Alternate repertoire for Lyrists (issue 4, p 33)

Curing poison (issue 3, p 44)

Staff-fighting and knife-throwing (issue 4, p 49)

Elementalism clarifications (issue 8, p 61)

Clarifications on movement (issue 9, pp 74-75)

Naval warfare (issue 1, p 30)

NPCs & Glory awards (issue 5, p 56)

Optional

Alternate Amazon class (issue 3, p 6)

Alternate Armaments (issue 5, p 55)

Fate points and Destiny (issue 6, p 21)

Tricks and stratagems (issue 4, p 27)

Expanded unarmed combat (issue 8, p 44)

Wrestling for blood (issue 5, p 56)

Magicians, armor & concentration (issue 4, p 44)

Elemental tricks (issue 8, p 51)

Feats of Strength (issue 8, p 45)

Alternate advancement rules (issue 6, p 38)

Creatures & Size (issue 6, p 45)

Minotaur options (issue 7, p 47)

All new classes (various issues)

Minotaur Play Nymph n°9



Andromeda, by Gustave Doré (1832-1883)