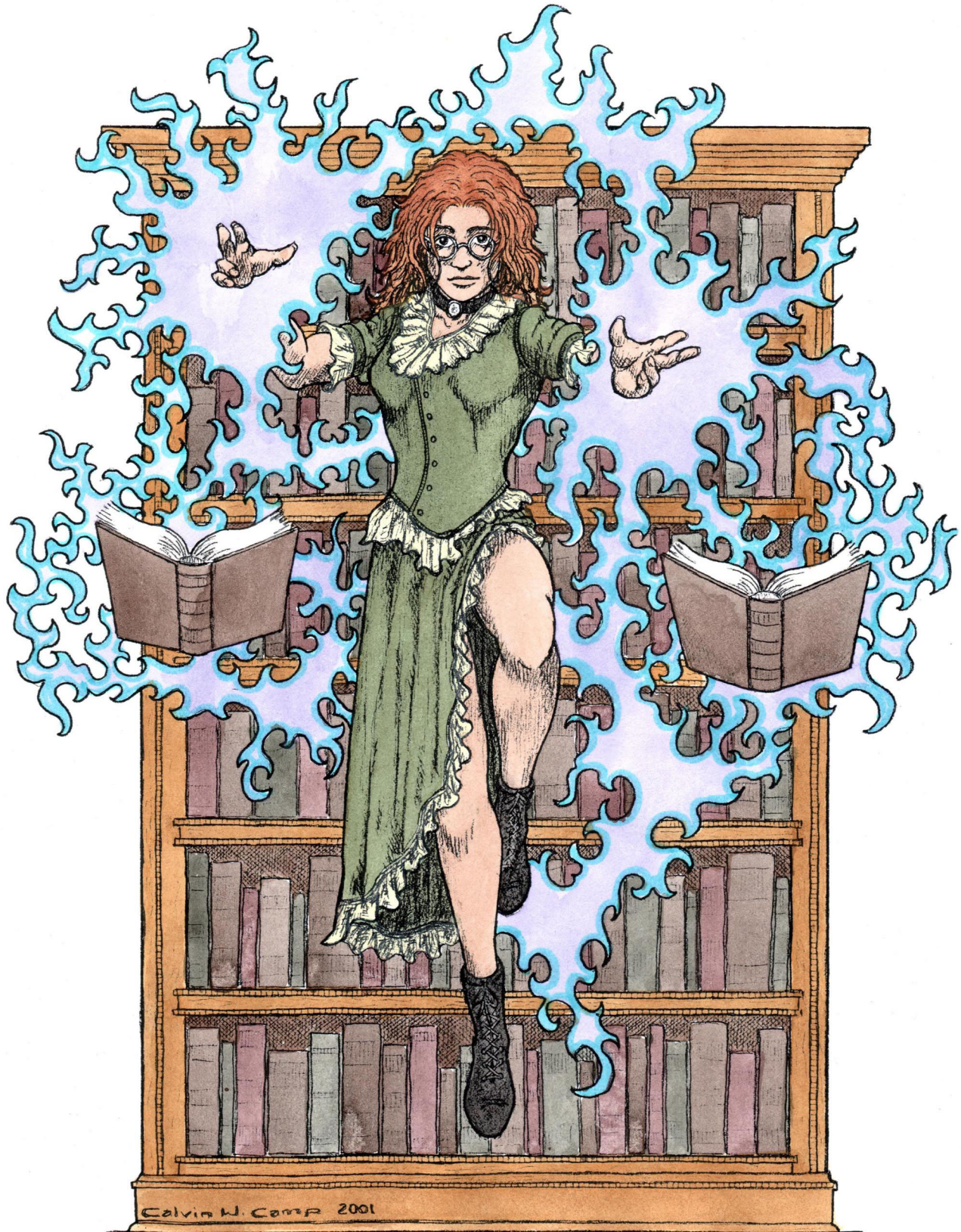


100 Fantasy Adventure Seeds

Ideas, inspiration, adventure



100 Fantasy Adventure Seeds

Credits

Writing, layout, borders, graphics, website, promotion, ulceration, sleepless nights, sixty hour weeks, writers block, RSI and stress related illness all by James 'Grim' Desborough.

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100 Fantasy Adventures – 01/02/2004

Dedication

This one is for my dad. He never balked at my obsession with fantasy games and even went so far as to encourage me. Now it's his money (as well as my elbow grease) that is giving me a real chance to make a living out of what I love to do.

Thanks dad.



Introduction

Foreword

There are masses and masses of role-playing books. Simply tons of them and, with the latest d20 boom, the sheer volume of volumes has become ridiculous. There are books about places, about people, about things about technology. If you want to play a giant purple flying squid called Harold there is probably a specialised player's handbook out there written just for you. If you go a bit further and delve into the murky world of PDF publishing you'll find even more books on even more obscure subjects as well as 'reprints' of old material dating back to the Stone Age of role-playing where we only had the 'd1' and Live-Action consisted of endless games of 'rock'. Yet, amazingly, in this plethora of material you won't actually find a great deal on the Games Master's role, on how to craft these wonderful adventures that everyone is supposed to participate in.

Oh, sure there are Games Master's guides and manuals but most of them are just short little ideas, more detail on things like creatures, special powers or traps that the Games Master needs to know about and the player's shouldn't see. There isn't a great deal of what I'd consider practical ideas or aids in writing or running games and even less in the way, usually, of inspirations.

To me the most useful parts of any book are the, sometimes one-line, adventure ideas or hooks. These can spark the imagination and provide you with enough for a game, sometimes even a whole campaign. These sparks are often more useful than pages and pages of text describing the habits, religion and leading figures of well-described fantasy lands and they're a lot more useful to me than your standard adventure modules.

This book is an expansion on that idea. Not a single book filled up with detailed endless dungeon passages and traps and not a railroading module that doesn't account for player creativity and stubbornness. Not just one line adventure ideas either but 100 separate, developed adventure ideas along with a few hints on how to get some inspiration of your own.

I hope it proves useful to you!

Grim - January 2004

Postmortem Studios

Postmortem Studios is the name of a small role-playing game studio belonging to James 'Grim' Desborough. The business has two sides. On the one side is a small, non-profit venture producing semi-professional fan-based material & on the other side more professional material produced by Grim himself.

Postmortem Studios was fully established in January 2004 for both freelancing for other companies and for the production of professional works both in PDF, which we support as a concept, & in print.

A Word about Piracy

Hello there. Odds are, unfortunately, that the majority of people reading this will have downloaded this file as a PDF file through P2P networks or from a website without paying for it. Here is how it breaks down. For the last couple of years I have been fruitlessly searching for full time employment with the skills I have been trained in. This year I have finally given up, scraped together a little cash and am now seeking to turn the thing I love, writing, into a full time career. This is not an easy thing to do and PDF publishing does not make a great deal of money at the best of times. On this product I can expect to make, at the most, about \$800 USD over the year. After the exchange rate to British pounds that does not leave much.

Odds are you do not really give that much of a crap but it is not like I am actually charging that much for what I do is it? Do me a favour, help me eat and produce more work. I am trying to support and expose other artists, writers and people of talent as well as myself and that takes money. If you are not going to give me any cash by buying this book please support my other work by going to www.postmort.demon.co.uk and donating at least a single dollar to Postmortem Studios to help keep us running.

Thank you.



Creating Adventures

The Usefulness of Modules

A traditional adventure module consists of the following...

1. A brief overview of the adventure including, if you're lucky, a way to get the characters involved and/or interested in it.
2. The role-play hook and scene that draws the adventure to the character's attention, possibly some details on the town or village where they hear about this as well.
3. Some details on how to get to the site of the adventure.
4. Endless pages of maps, numbered rooms, traps and monster descriptions.
5. Some non-player-character statistics.
6. Maybe some sample characters.

A slightly more advanced module might have the following...

1. A brief overview of the adventure.
2. The social situation and circumstances at the start of the adventure between various NPC power groups.
3. Events as they proceed, effectively railroading the players into their involvement.
4. Several interlinked scenes, locations and trails of clues that lead the players between one event, group or location and another piecing together what happens.
5. A massive conclusion of some sort.
6. Some non-player-character statistics.

The traditional module might appeal to those of us who are still playing dungeon bashes with miniatures and are looking for nothing more in depth than that and the more advanced modules are typical for more social games like *Vampire* or the later *Cyberpunk* materials but they suffer from the fact that they often don't suit the groups of player-characters that get formed to play and that it becomes a game of being swept up in events rather than making them.

Ultimately, traditional modules are most useful for when you first start out running a game. They show you what the writers were intending, show their world in operation and provide some useful pre-generated non-player-characters that you can use in your own adventures. Otherwise they suffer from the same problems that continue to separate computer role-playing games from tabletop role-playing games, linear story without much in the way of capacity to accommodate unexpected actions.

Those Damn Players

Games Master's who set up their own games in a similar way to bought modules will soon find themselves in trouble. Even the most finely crafted and beautifully written adventures fail to fully take into account the full scope and range of the damage that players can do to derail the plot, obsess over unimportant details or find a new and unexpected way to solve the goals of the

adventure within the first five minutes.

While I certainly wouldn't deny that an amount of scripting and preparation is very useful scripting out a whole adventure step by step is blatantly asking for trouble. No plan survives contact with the enemy and no game idea survives contact with the players. A much better plan is to have a rough outline of what you want to happen, the details you actually need (treasure, statistics, basic thumbnail plans if any dungeons, mazes or sites are involved) and then to improvise once play starts.

An improvisational Games Master doesn't have a completely set plan and so is free to alter details, adapt to the player's actions and even to completely change the goals of the adventure all on the sly. This is something like building a playing field that can be used for various different sports rather than just, say, football. You give yourself a little more scope.

Finding Inspiration

Something an author is almost always asked, whether a game designer or a novelist is...

'Where do you get your ideas?'

This is likely to produce a strangled groan of annoyance from the author in question who will then give some trite answer or mumble incomprehensibly for half an hour about nothing consequential.

Some of us can come up with a basic adventure idea within about thirty seconds to a minute, especially when the games are inherently mission based such as a military or police based campaign. Other people need a bit of help.

Nobody gets ideas the same way, what one person finds inspiring another might find draining or irritating. Here are a few ideas you might find helpful to bring about a touch of inspiration for your own adventures.

- **Compact Discs:** The title of an album or the name of a song might inspire you to come up with an adventure. Read the lyrics in the sleeve notes for more possibilities and listen to the song and album while you're writing up the notes. This works best with music that is lyric heavy and concerns itself with subjects other than teen romance but inspiration can come from the strangest places.
- **Novels:** There's no shame in plagiarising for your games provided that you change things enough that your players who have read the books don't recognise it and solve everything right away.

- **TV:** Various TV shows can give inspiration for plots though you should change things around a little so that players who watch the show don't recognise it too easily. You could also try mixing and matching elements from different shows and episodes to muddy things up a little more.
- **Keep a Notebook:** You never know when inspiration will strike. You could be on the loo, you could wake up after a dream or you could be riding the bus. When you get an idea make a note and develop it later.
- **Your Players:** Each player has things they like to play best, different styles, different things that they enjoy. Really useful players will also have written character backgrounds and will have goals for their characters that you can mine for an adventure with a pre-existing motivation for them to get involved.
- **Pictures:** Just looking at a fantasy picture, a photo, a cityscape, these things can give you plenty of ideas.
- **Take Some Time Out:** Go for a walk, have a bath, relax, think and something may well come to you.
- **Embrace the Cheese:** Not every adventure has to be an inspired epic, sometimes everyone just likes to charge into a tunnel and kill things, rescue the princess or slay the dragon. If you're out of ideas go for something simple and then embellish it as you go along.
- **The Games Master's Secret Weapon:** Don't write an adventure at all. Just set the player's up in a town or city and let them pootle around for the whole session doing whatever they want. Something might come up while you're improvising.



The Adventures

The following pages contain one-hundred adventure seed ideas for you to use in your fantasy based games. Each adventure consists of the basic idea, three twists and an epilogue which, in effect, means you're actually getting closer to 900 different combinations and possible adventures!

Feel free to add your own embellishments or to combine or string together the adventures in any way you please and, if you have particular success with any of them we'd love to hear about it.

Format

Each adventure presented in this book is roughly a page long and follows a standard format which is presented below. Every adventure is numbered for easy reference if you think you will need to refer back to the seed information.

Adventure Number

Each adventure is numbered, in order, so that you only have to remember the number in order to look it up quite easily.

Adventure Title

Each adventure also has a, sometimes cheesy, title which gives some clue as to the nature of the adventure and its content.

Description

A few paragraphs describe the adventure and the general background and idea behind it. This description gives the basic idea for the plot arc, the set-up and the payoff.

Twists

Each adventure has three twists that can be dropped into the basic idea to add levels of complexity, intrigue or difficulty for the players. Twists can completely change the nature of the adventure.

Epilogue

If the session goes well or has left you with loose ends and ideas you may want to run a sequel to it. The epilogue provides one possible sequel to the events of the adventure though, depending on the twists you have incorporated, it may not be able to be run precisely as it has been laid out.

Ideas

Grey boxes like this contain any supplementary ideas, notes or hints regarding the adventure presented.



Adventure 1

The Ol' Dragon/Princess Caper

Description

In a small kingdom on the borderlands in a verdant and beautiful valley between craggy mountains the palace is in an uproar. A dragon that makes it's home in the catacombs of the surrounding peaks has taken it upon itself to swoop down to the palace in the night and make off with Princess Isabelle, the pride and joy of King Harold and Queen Bethany.

The princess is, of course, beautiful and the dragon is, of course, terrible, a scourge that has been terrorising the outlying villages and farmland of the kingdom for several years. It makes a big difference when it attacks rich important people though.

The dragon has sent a message via the survivor of one of the outlying villages that it has attacked recently. It has the princess and it wants to trade her for the contents of the palace treasury, Gold and jewels and magical items to add to its hoard.

Rather than lose all of his wealth as well as his daughter, who the King and Queen were rather relying on to marry off to a larger, wealthier Kingdom that they could ally with, the King has offered a substantial reward for the return of his daughter and has thrown open the gates of the kingdom to admit all the mercenaries and adventurers who might be willing to take on such a task.

Twist

The dragon is in league with the commoners of the Kingdom who have been using its 'attacks' as a reason to avoid paying the King's unfair taxes for a couple of years, giving the dragon a tithe of the money and goods they have saved as 'protection' each year instead. Now they've gotten greedy and want to pay back the King and make him see what being taxed feels like.

Twist

The dragon has actually been living in the area for many years. When the King brought his young Queen

to live in the kingdom the dragon took on human form and, posing as a noble, attended the wedding ceremony, curious about human mating habits. The dragon became very much taken with the Queen and despite

her marriage to the King they had an affair. The daughter is a half-dragon and the kidnap is a front so that the dragon can have a little time to tell her of her dragon heritage and see what she wants to do.

Twist

The dragon has visited the kingdom many times in human form, walking its streets, listening to its music and enjoying the strange hustle and bustle of humanity. During his visits he has fallen in love with the princess, wooing her in the guise of a noble. She reciprocated his love for her but the King, thinking him to be only a minor noble, banned them from seeing each other. Desperate to be with his lady love and seeking some revenge on the King the dragon his liberated his love and issued this false demand.

Epilogue

The dragon is slain the people rejoice the Princess is safe from its vile depredations and the King is grateful and wealthy. What could possibly go wrong? Well, it seems that the dragons of the mountains are numerous and form a 'Kingdom of Dragons'. The one slain was young but of fairly high stature and now the rest of the dragons wish recompense, or revenge upon the Kingdom and the warriors who slew their brother.

Ideas: Intermarriage between the human and dragon kingdoms would make a strong alliance and an interesting place from which to base many future adventures.

Adventure 2

Big Badda-Boom

Description

Finely engineered and crafted black-powder weapons, far in advance of those tentative creations of most alchemists, have begun to appear in reasonably large numbers spread along the borders of several small, competing dukedoms and baronies increasing tensions in the area and allowing the various rival nobilities to raise levy armies armed with this devastating new technology. Each dominion is fascinated by the possibilities of the new weapons and each has become overconfident, seduced by the explosive power these guns have. War is coming unless something is done to stop it.

The weapons are being dealt by a single trader who is raking in an enormous amount of money and selling every gun he carries to the eager domains. He is the only source both of the powder and of the weapons and with this monopoly appears to be doing very well for himself selling for far under the price that most alchemists would charge for their own dangerous and hand crafted versions of this weaponry.

A concerned consortium of merchants, including arms merchants who are losing business, hires the adventurers, under shadowy secretive conditions, to investigate what is going on and to put a stop to it if at all possible.

Twist

Behind the merchant is a group of anarchists who want to destabilise the whole region and cause great strife so that they are their agents can rise up with their own firearms when the domains have devastated each other, taking over and casting down the churches and noble orders to establish their own republic. They have control over the inventor and are cranking out these expensive firearms and losing money on them because they can afford to and because they have a long term goal.

Twist

The manufacture and sale of these guns is only profitable because it is a monopoly and because of massive investment on the part of the merchant as well as the close proximity of all of the rival domains. The merchant has a factory on an island in a lake and a mine in the hills above that lake. The mine is worked by slave labour and the factory operated by cheap, stupid golems working in a production line twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. In this way he mass produces the guns and the powder and produces his own ore for processing into steel. If the factory is removed he will never recoup his investment and the flow of guns will cease.

Twist

The inventor of these new guns and improved powder is a man of science and a man of peace. He invented the powder to make mining easier and envisioned the guns as protection for the common man against the monsters of the realm. After he had sold his designs he was discarded, disposed of and as he came to understand the ambitions of those who had bought his designs he despaired. If found the inventor can be a second, or replacement, sponsor for the adventurers or can provide them with assistance to correct his mistake.

Epilogue

The cat is out of the bag on black powder weaponry. The ways and means to produce the weapons on a larger scale basis and make a profit at it become more widely known and firearms begin to spread throughout the world shifting the balance of power and providing many adventure hooks as the world develops thanks to this new invention.

Ideas: If you don't want firearms to become a regular feature of your game make them use a special lighter, cleaner powder and have the formula lost with the defeat of the merchant or anarchists rendering the already produced firearms useless.

Adventure 3

Home Again, Home Again, Jiggity-Jig

Description

Prince Saheed's family has been killed by a rival noble lineage and his father the Shah and his mother, along with the rest of the Shah's wives and much of his entourage have been killed, the Prince cast out of the Kingdom that is rightfully his with only what he and his remaining servants managed to grab when they fled. Part of what they grabbed was the star feature of the Kingdom's treasury, the Jewel of Similinger, a perfect diamond of almost unrivalled size and clarity.

With this diamond the Prince seeks to be restored to the throne, unable to raise enough to raise an army but perhaps able to bring into his service a band of money-hungry heroes who will help return him to his rightful place as Shah and cast down the usurpers who dishonour the memory of his parents.

Our adventurers are those heroes who must somehow find a way to restore him to power by assassination, war or other means in order to earn not only the diamond but the thanks and patronage of a young monarch.

Twist

The Prince's family were horrific despots who regularly had rivals publicly tortured to death, worked the peasants until their backs broke and spending what money the Kingdom had to its name raising massive tombs, statuary and temples to the further glorification of their historic royal heritage. The noble family that has taken over from the dead Shah are popular and well loved by the people, removing them will be far from easy, or popular.

Twist

The Prince is an obnoxious little shit, a spoiled brat with all the charm and social graces of a syphilitic orc. He is used to getting what he wants, when he wants it with no delays or excuses. Needless to say this makes working for him a special and unique experience as he regards everyone around him as a lowly personal

servant. Despite this his actual personal servants are loyal to the end and will defend him and his habits to the very end.

Twist

The Prince actually murdered his family along with his personal assassins as he was growing bored with waiting for his father to die. The family that took over the Kingdom covered up this horrific fact in order to spare the stain of shame from the royal bloodline and chose cast him out rather than kill him to maintain that masquerade for the people. The Prince's retainers still include a few of his faithful assassins who are dedicated to protecting him now and will protect him if the players turn on him.

Epilogue

With the Prince restored to power there is yet another change and upheaval in the way the Kingdom is being run. The peasants are confused, upset and perhaps angry that the Prince has been restored to the throne. Susceptible to prodding, cajoling and the strident cries of many political forces they rise up in open revolt against the throne. Unsure of the loyalty of the army, many of whom seem to be siding with the peasants, who can the Prince turn to but the staunch heroes who placed him back on his family's throne?

Ideas: To stop the players just killing the Prince and taking the diamond have him leave it 'somewhere safe' and give him sufficient willpower and toughness to resist any torture to try to find its location.

Ideas: This need not be set in a desert or tropical Kingdom but giving things different settings to their usual default can be a good way of adding interest to an adventure.

Adventure 4

Primordial Ooze

Description

Every religion has a creation myth and even in the pantheistic nature of most fantasy religions where the actual creation of the world is set for all faiths many gods give rise to the different people's of the land. Certain races have their own gods, credited with their creation. The creation of life is a gift shared by many deities though the times of creation are long past.

A powerful wizard has managed to tap into these primal forces of creation and his magic has given birth to a race of his own devising, a race to which he is the creator god the be all and end all of their existence. Using this divine spark he is raising an army of his people, a loyal and fanatical army, a single race under the auspices of their 'god', their leader who is ready to send them out against the world to destroy.

The players can stumble upon this wizard and his plans in several ways. They could be hired to investigate, they could run into a party of these artificial creatures or the wizard's army could invade the town that they are in.

Twist

Gods are incapable, usually, of acting directly against each other, or simply prefer not to, knowing what damage it would cause to each of them. Instead they fight their battles by proxy and through the actions of heroes and other creations upon the world. The wizard who has created this life, this army is, by the rules of the divine considered a god and, however much the rest of the pantheon foams and gnashes their teeth cannot, by the laws of the gods be acted against directly. Instead they have chosen to act through the heroes watching over them and imbuing them in their fight with blessings from each member of the pantheon who objects to this upstart wizard.

Twist

The wizard's power to create comes from a long-dead god and a long-dead race. The ruins where the wizard

conducts his experiments and grows his warriors comes from that bygone time and deep in the ruins, in his labs are the bones of the dead god, the spark of which is needed to allow him to make his living creations. Destroy or remove the remains and you remove his power. You could even renew the god...

Twist

Amongst the made-men is a movement, a group who wish to cast down the wizards and take up the reigns of their own destiny to live their own lives without the direct interference of their creator. If this group can be found they could make useful allies to the party.

Epilogue

With the wizard defeated or his power removed the made-men are scattered and will die out as they have no way to reproduce themselves. The survivors seek to claim the same power that the wizard did in order to produce a female part of their race so that they can perpetuate their existence without his creative powers. They players can either try to stop them or to help them.

Ideas: The wizard is far from an expert and lacks the wisdom or creative powers of a true god. His creations could be deformed or no two could be identical. Apart from the odd accident most should be powerful and tough but somewhat lacking in intelligence.

Ideas: Gods are often patrons in Greek mythology and if the heroes prove their worth to the pantheon they may find themselves caught up again in the machinations of the gods. Gods make good patrons as they cannot really be refused.

Adventure 5

The Siren's Arms

Description

The Siren's Arms is a well known and popular adventurer's brothel-come-inn in the city of Spyre, a bustling port that also rests at the junction of two major trade routes. Spyre is wealthy and cosmopolitan and is ruled by a King and by a powerful council of mercantile interests representing the major trading families that call Spyre home.

The vice trade has, largely, gone unaffected by the various taxes, laws and other vagaries of the King and council being somewhat below their notice however a project to expand the port requires a great deal more money and, in order to ease the strain on the treasury, the council has begun to discuss levying a special tax on the vice trade within the city something that will affect a lot of grey-area industries and will certainly affect The Siren's Arms.

The Madam and owner of The Siren's Arms would like it very much if this law weren't to be passed and would look very favourably on any brave adventurers who managed to make the council see sense and change it's mind about the law.

There are seven men on the merchant council and each one will need to be cajoled, threatened, blackmailed or otherwise controlled into making the right decision. There are only three days before the big vote giving precious little time to make the change.

Twist

One of the councilmen is having a discrete but gossiped about affair with a prostitute from The Foxglove. A much more reputable and upmarket establishment than The Siren's Arms but a whorehouse nonetheless. This could provide blackmail material either politically or in the form of threatening to remove the attentions of his favourite escort.

Twist

Councilwoman Celeste, head of the powerful Damingo shipping family has a personal reason to prosecute the bill and indeed was the one to come up with it. Her husband left her for a courtesan and she has had it in for Spyre's vice trade since then, even banning the sailors on the family ships from using such services. She will change her mind for nothing and no-one and if alerted to the fact that councilmen are being subverted will try to act against it.

Twist

The real reason for the taxation is to try and drive out the black economy and its less than desirable citizens from Spyre. The docks are merely an excuse. The merchant council is taking on a puritanical bent and wants to clean up the city once and for all. If the candidates are compromised they soon step down and are replaced by even more hard-line and clean-cut councilmen.

Epilogue

The tax was only the beginning. Whether thwarted or not the merchant council and the King begin to institute a city-wide crackdown on all forms of vice and borderline criminality. The city guard is called out to clear whole neighbourhoods and a shantytown springs up outside the walls of the city from all the dispossessed scum and villains of the city. This creates several opportunities for adventure either within the vicious new slums or acting to try to restore the people to their city and overthrow the puritanical council.

Ideas: The Siren's Arms could form a useful base of operations for the characters. A grateful madam and a place with an ear to the city's underworld gives many useful adventure hooks for an ongoing campaign.

Adventure 6

Round and Round

Description

The monks of The Temple of Harmonious Elements have been without an abbot of their temple for about three years while they awaited the confirmed reincarnation of their previous abbot into a new body. Now, according to their readings and signs and according to reports that have reached their ears their new abbot has indeed been reincarnated in a remote village quite far to the north from the site of their temple.

The monks are not of the Shaolin type and instead spend their days in quite contemplation of the universe and the music of the spheres. They are not capable of making the arduous journey or of protecting the child if he is outside the armoured walls of their great temple. They offer of their store of riches to the party, entrusting them with the retrieval of their reincarnated abbot.

The village is some way to the north, several days journey through increasingly arduous terrain and up a steep mountain. It will not be easy to get there and it will be little easier to get back especially having to protect a child.

The monks know the way and can provide food, horses and any other supplies apart from weapons that the party might need but this is the limit of their aid. The temple is wealthy thanks to the donations of its lay followers and various parties seeking favours from the divine or using their library and they can reward the party well with magical artefacts of peace or with simple gold if they prefer.

Twist

When the adventurers discover the child he is found to be manifesting the full powers of the old abbot despite only being a three year old. Weak in body but strong in mind there is something else of note as well. Twisted in the reincarnation somehow, the process having gone wrong, the child is unmitigated evil, warped and twisted

the very polar opposite of what the old abbot was. The child may try to keep this a secret from the adventurers though there should be clues to his evil.

Twist

The monks have a counterpart, a shadow temple, an opposite to them. This shadow temple has also heard of the reincarnation of the abbot and wants to corrupt or turn him somehow to serve their ends. If you're using the first twist they may have already succeeded. Now they seek him out and, unlike the peaceful monks, these ones do know how to fight and are not shy of using violence to their ends.

Twist

When the adventurers arrive at the village they discover that the villagers are in awe of the child and that they, especially the mother, do not wish to part with him. They will encounter resistance from the village from the family and from the child if they try to remove him to comply with their orders from the temple.

Epilogue

That temple is not the only temple of the same faith or contemplation. There is another, less prestigious temple and, when the abbot is seated they come forward saying that they disagree with the decision and that they have found another child that fits the requirements of the reincarnation and who shows the same knowledge of the former abbot. Who is telling the truth? The main temple hires the adventurers to investigate.

Ideas: Travelling back with the abbot could be turned into a series of parables as the child imparts important teachings about peace, temperance and non-violence to his escort. Rather like the tales of Monkey in Chinese mythology.

Adventure 7

Plague of Permutations

Description

The town of Oakreach is suffering the effects of an unusual and virulent plague. Over the last few months the people have begun to deform and mutate, their flesh twisting and knotting, their features shifting and cancers and sores riddling their bodies. Nobody seems immune, rich, poor, cleric or sorcerer all seem to succumb to the depredations of this plague and the newly born children are twisted horrors many of whom have been judged unfit to live and have been mercifully killed. The temple hospital is full and the clerics are unable to cope, most are too sick to till the fields or fish the river and animals and crops are also showing the same, strange deformations.

The plague turns out not to be a plague at all but rather contaminants and poisons carried down the river from an alchemist's enclave and laboratory in the low hills above the town, near one of the springs that feeds the river. The wash of chemicals, mutagens and thaumaturgical ingredients has polluted the river, the source of water for the whole town and it is these chemicals that are causing the mutations and deformities.

The mayor, the temple leader and other important figures from the town, such as the richer merchants, have come together and produced a handsome reward which they plan to offer, along with the freedom of the town, in order to try and hire some suitable adventurers to determine the cause of the plague and to try and do something about it.

This is where the players step in.

Twist

The alchemist causing all of these problems has been paid by some third party to poison and destroy the town and has chosen to do so slowly via these chemicals in order to make it appear more like a natural disease and also to experiment with a few chemicals and potions of his own devising. The third party could

be a rival state, a rich madman or a tribe of raiding orcs or worse who want to attack a much weakened and reduced town, easier to loot.

Twist

The alchemist is on the verge of an extremely important breakthrough. A cure-all that is powerful enough to defeat one of the real plagues sweeping parts of the land. His experiments are close to completion and the sacrifice of the town, its deformity and deaths are necessary to complete the experiment. If he is interrupted now then that cure will be lost forever and many more people will die than those contained in that one town.

Twist

The townspeople being an ignorant and fearful lot hung the alchemist's apprentice and nearly stoned the alchemist to death fearing the strange science he was concocting and spurred on by the leader of the local temple a priest who has no time for sciences and puts all his faith in faith and magic. He is wreaking revenge upon a people who have done him great wrongs and has lost his mind somewhat.

Epilogue

Some time after the original events, perhaps a year or so, the town has become a bustling industrial centre with many alchemists working there, working on the brilliant notes left behind in the original alchemist's enclave. The town is rapidly becoming a city but the wash from its alchemists and their workings is now flowing downriver and causing similar problems to the ones they faced in towns and villages further downstream.

Ideas: The alchemist may also have the secret to producing some manner of cure for the deformities already suffered.

Adventure 8

Icy Reception

Description

It is late spring, a time when the land should be bursting with colour and growing things and when the heat should be beginning to be felt in the sun, a herald of the long summer to come. Instead our adventurers, while travelling, find themselves caught in the midst of an enormous freezing snowstorm that seems to blanket the land as far as they can see. The wind howls, ice forms, freezing sleet, snow and hailstones train down upon them freezing them and chilling them to the bone.

Crops are withering in the cold and most of them will die off causing famine in the land if something is not done soon. Wise men, priests and wizards know only that the storm is unnatural in origin and is coming from the north, the domain of the ice giants.

Travel is becoming more and more difficult, the snow is piling high and the wolves are abroad. They may not be about to be rewarded by anyone for doing anything about it but their own lives are at stake as well as those of the people of the towns and villages of this area. If they don't move soon they'll be snowed in at the village where they have taken shelter...

Twist

The ice giants have been driven out of their homeland by something more powerful and scary than themselves; perhaps a demon, perhaps a great dragon of some kind or perhaps a natural disaster. Whatever the cause the giants have moved south in search of somewhere new to call their home and in turning their lands to their own taste they have begun to freeze out the other peoples of the land, not that they care.

Twist

Adventurers and heroes from these lands have long raided the frozen domain of the ice giants in search of treasure, artefacts or the kudos that are to be earned by slaying a giant. The giants have finally decided to

retaliate against the whole land and the cause of the storm is an ice giant sorceress who, along with her retinue and their giant arctic wolves, has come south to have their revenge with these enormous, sorcerous ice storms.

Twist

These lands have been successful and for some time wagons and cartloads of settlers have been expanding out of the northern border making homes deeper and deeper into less and less hospitable terrain. Of late these new settlements have begun encroaching on ice giant land and, being rather territorial, the ice giants have decided to do something about it. Namely show the people's of the southern lands just how annoying and problematic it is to have someone else settle on your land. The giants are trying to force people into parlaying so that they can have their lands to themselves.

Epilogue

The defeat of the ice giants means an end to their magic and the sun returns to the sky and temperatures begin to rise. All at once the great mass of snow and ice melts causing the worst floods the land has ever seen. The adventurers might be victorious and heroes but how will they cross the flooded landscape and what problems might get in their way as they try to return to their journey.

Ideas: Strange creatures may have been entrapped in the ice in the north and, as it melts, may be released into the floodwaters to prey on the vulnerable people.

Ideas: A large part of the challenge of this adventure is the weather. Make sure you penalise people for not having the right gear and make a real point of the unnatural coldness and how it affects the terrain.

Adventure 9

Monkey on My Back

Description

The city of Praetor is a powerful walled city, fairly rich, fairly powerful with a reasonably sized standing army, a powerful church and a small college of wizardry. As such it is an 'imperial' power by the standards of a city state with many outlying villages and towns owing Praetor allegiance and tribute. Some of these towns and villages are close by, some further away with less contact than the rest.

One of these remote villages is within a series of rocky canyons and gullies to the west of Praetor by several days ride. The village provides some ore, gems and other mined produce to Praetor but is far enough away that it has no resident magistrate or guards and is only rarely visited or taxed. Despite its remoteness it has finally come to the attention of Praetor that the village has now been out of contact for some time, perhaps a whole year. It being so remote and so small they do not wish to go to the expense of sending a unit from Praetor's army to investigate and so they instead make available some funds to hire some sell-swords to find out what is going on. These would be our plucky heroes.

What has happened is that the village has been overrun by a race of symbiotic, parasitic creatures who have taken over the bodies of everyone there possessing them and turning them to their own ends. What might appear at first to be a peaceful village will turn out very quickly to be something else entirely...

Twist

The villager's mining of the canyons and rocks has been shattering the symbiotic creature's habitat and some of the gems that have been collected are in fact the eggs of the creatures. Something the village elders were fully aware of and that did not stop them carrying on mining even for a second. The symbiotic creatures are acting merely to defend themselves and to take what they see as appropriate revenge upon the village and race that has harmed them so.

Twist

The symbionts are benevolent, even helpful. Bonding with one makes the villagers stronger, healthier and more resistant to disease as well as providing the symbionts much stronger bodies than those they are used to in the dank tunnels under the earth. While things appear sinister and the villagers try to hide their symbiotic partners this is for fear of others not understanding.

Twist

The symbionts have already spread, moving out in shipments of ore and gems that the village has sent out, investing other nearby villages and selectively hiding within the populations of the less vulnerable towns, breeding, spreading and taking control wherever they go.

Epilogue

In spite of clearing up the mess in the village and perhaps a few other small towns and villages the adventurer's discover on their triumphant return to Praetor that no reward awaits them for the symbionts have already infiltrated the city and taken over the rulers. They must find a way to escape the immediate danger and perhaps to thwart the symbiont takeover of the city before they spread even further across the world.

Ideas: Symbiotic creatures can take many forms. They might be spirit-like possessing beings or they might be physical. They could even be creatures of energy. Some physical symbiotes might crawl into the body to control it, others might attach to the body, most likely to the head or spinal cord.

Ideas: The symbiote should increase the toughness and resilience of those it 'infects' depending on the system this might mean an increase in strength-type statistics and hit points, or the ability to resist damage.

Adventure 10

Demon Stalker

Description

A strange serial killer is stalking the streets and alleys of the city killing a strange assortment of victims none of whom seem to be interrelated in any discernable way. Three have already died, killed by being crushed or burned and all of them with hand-shaped burn marks adorning their body. The second two appear to have been expecting something to come after them and their houses had been broken into and there were definite signs of a struggle.

The people who are dying do have a common connecting thread but it is one that will have to come out from investigation, thorough searching and it is a connection that will not easily be revealed. All of those who have died and who are going to die are members of a secretive cult within the city. That cult is one that has sought to better its position in the city through the use of demonic arts. Whoever is stalking them does not seem to approve of their membership in that order and could be a righteous and holy cleric, a former cult member or something even worse.

There are ten more cult members and they hail from almost all walks of life that exist above the level of peasant. One appears to die each and every night so there are ten days to solve the crime. The watch is baffled and unable to deal with such a problem and the remaining members of the cult have clubbed together some money and offered it to adventurers through an intermediary to try and save their skins.

Twist

The cult successfully summoned a demon, seeking to bind it to their will to provide them with fame and fortune all stemming from their demonic aide. While they succeeded in the summon they failed in the binding. The stalking presence that is killing off the cult members one by one is nothing less than that summoned demon itself, angry at the temerity of these amateurs trying to control it.

Twist

The demon is killing the cult members because the binding partially succeeded; it cannot leave this plane again until all the cult members are dead. The only other way to get rid of it is destroying it, an ending it isn't too keen on seeing happen.

Twist

The binding did actually work but the leader of the cult is a smarter fellow than he appears. Even the demon doesn't know that it is actually doing his bidding by wiping out the rest of the cult. This will leave him the sole beneficiary of the pact he made with the demon directly under his control for evermore.

Epilogue

The active membership of the cult is greater than its priesthood and with the priesthood eliminated and destroyed either by the adventurers or the demon itself the lower class but more widespread members of the cult take charge. This new priesthood learns from its past mistakes and works more slowly towards a more powerful and properly executed demon summoning. The players somehow get wind of this and must combat a larger, more competent cult whose members could be literally anyone.

Ideas: As an alternative to killing the cult members in order to get home the demon might be killing them in an extended ritual of some sort, trying to bring others of its kind across to the city to despoil and destroy it.

Ideas: The cult and its sympathisers could be everywhere, watching the character's every move. If you have someone new joining the group or a new character joining the party it might be fun for them to play a member of the cult.

Adventure 11

Robbin' In the Hood

Description

An important trade road passes through the deep and ancient Hooded Wood, a deciduous forest that spans many miles and whose depths have never been fully explored. The forest plays host to many legends and it is said that walking trees and bands of faeries inhabit its dark and musty depths. These stories may be true but one thing is for certain, trading caravans and wagons that have been taking the road have been subjected to an appalling number of attacks and raids of late.

Outlaws and bandits have infested the forest and are robbing blind just about anything that passes through the woods. The group is large, well organised, heroes to the local villages and they have a strong and inspiring leader at their head. They know not to stand and fight when guardsmen are sent along with the wagons, striking with arrows from cover, grabbing their loot and then melting away into the dark woods where few dare follow them.

A group of wagon masters and tradesmen are searching for adventurers who are willing to take the risk of rooting out these bandits and putting paid to them. It is hoped a small skilled group might succeed where units of infantry and cavalry have failed completely.

Twist

The forest villages are taxed often and very heavily by the magistrates of the land, they are especially vulnerable as they live along the trade road and excise men pass them all the time. What wealth they accrue from the good fortune of their positioning is soon lost because of their visibility. They also earn their keep from the forest and so, when the towns and cities either side of the forest begin to talk about clearances to reduce the number of monsters plaguing the area they are also talking about stripping away the villagers livelihood. Most of these bandits turn out to be 'freedom fighters' from the disgruntled villages trying to make back what they have lost.

Twist

The whole hero thing is a complete scam. The outlaws are abusing the hospitality and worship they get from the villagers handing out only the tiniest fraction of what they take and periodically leaving the forest and whooping it up in the nearby cities with their ill-gotten gains. If they can be shown up as frauds and liars the villagers support would melt away and they wouldn't be able to continue to such effect and in such numbers.

Twist

The bandits and the taxation imposed by the local cities is in a sort of spiral. The bandits were there first and their actions lead the cities to increase taxation to cover their losses which, in turn meant more people became bandits and they took more to compensate for the losses to taxation and so on. The cities have made their own problem and nothing is going to prevent outright banditry from continuing, even if the party clears them out. The only way to reduce it is to reduce the cause.

Epilogue

Despite the party's best efforts the tales of the bandits spread, inspiring others. Soon every discontent miller's son for miles around is dreaming of the romantic life of the bandit and the hills, roads and valleys are soon absolutely lousy with wannabes. They even begin to cut in on and discredit the adventuring market as banditry and adventuring are closely associated in the minds of many peasants. Times become tough unless the party can do something to defuse the legend.

Ideas: The forest camp of the bandits can make a great set-piece. Tree houses, ladders, rope bridges, vines and swinging from tree to tree can all be dramatic and useful. Don't forget to fill the forest with snares and traps as well.

Adventure 12

only with picks! Easy!

Whips, Zips, Clips & Chains

Description

By fair means or foul, a cosh on the back of the head, a drugged drink, gas in an inescapable room, something like that the characters are rendered insensible, stripped of all their equipment, put in chains and then put to work on some kind of slave labour project.

The work is arduous and difficult, the food horrible and the chains and locks some of the best available. They are watched at all times by well armed and armoured guards with whips as well as conventional weapons, ensuring that everyone goes about their work swiftly and assiduously.

Those who try to escape are killed and their heads put on poles at the edge of the work area to dissuade others from a similar course of action. This should probably happen soon after the characters arrive in order to make a proper impression on them.

Twist

One of the overseers, male or female, takes a carnal interest in one of the characters, male or female. They will try being 'nice' first though the imposition of their affections may become stronger and more insistent if they are rebuffed and fought against constantly. A romantic or physical entanglement with this overseer may give the characters just the opportunity they need to affect an escape.

Twist

One of their fellow slave labourers knows that the area they are working in harbours a hidden treasure. This could lie in an ancient tomb or in some caves near where they are digging. The treasure would be more than enough to bribe some guards to get them away or it may be possible that the tomb has weapons and something they can use to break their chains. All they have to do is dig down to it, disappear into it undetected, fight their way past whatever infests it and remove the treasure. All while in chains and armed

Twist

They are building a massive, curse and trap filled tomb for the fallen king of the land. When it is completed and he is laid to rest the workers will be herded into the tomb and locked in to serve as his undead guardians for all eternity. Unless they can escape of course but those workers who die along the way will rise again as guardians...

Epilogue

Released, escaped or otherwise out of the 'being a slave' business the characters make their way back to civilisation and recover some of their former standing and wealth. A few months later who should they happen to run into but the very people who made them into slaves into the first place! No hard feelings, eh?

Ideas: One of the main things that can spoil this type of adventure is magic, however you don't want to cripple magic too much or you'll upset any mage players. Depending on the system their chains might inhibit certain types of magic or you could fit them with a magical control collar that will slay them if they don't follow orders.

Ideas: The second type of thing that can spoil this type of adventure are thief characters many of whom are so proficient they could open an armoured safe with nothing but a hangnail. One way to prevent them is to make the chains magical or to deprive them of tools. They could also have their fingers broken to reduce their ability to pick locks or have their hands bound to reduce mobility.

Adventure 13

The Collector

Description

Baron Christolph Von Tanneholm is an avid collector, an avid collector of dangerous monsters and beasts. In an adjunct to his castle atop the mound in the centre of Tanneholm he houses many of the beasts and creatures from the surrounding lands but always he requires collections of the more rare, of the exotic and sometimes breeding partners for the hideous creatures he already has under lock and key.

Tanneholm has been doing well recently and the increased tax revenue has given the baron a considerably larger amount of disposable cash than he is used to having. This money is, therefore, being used to finance some construction to increase the size of his menagerie and to hire some willing adventurers to go forth and help find more exotic and dangerous creatures to stock his zoo.

Stopping off in the prosperous and bustling Tanneholm between other escapades the party might, perhaps, hear of the baron's obsession and be drawn to the rich rewards he is offering for assistance in filling out his zoo.

The baron is a cordial and likeable chap though he will tend to go on and on at length about the animals and monsters in his possession, given half a chance. He will provide the adventurers with a list of the creatures he desires to add to his menagerie and the rewards he is willing to pay for each. If necessary he will also provide them with special equipment that can be used to capture and transport such creatures, at a bargain price.

Twist

The Baron doesn't only collect monsters he collects people, the strongest, the most famous, the most beautiful, the most skilful. These he collects in a separate menagerie and observes and studies, trying to understand the human condition and trying to work out what gives the heroes of the land that special

radiant quality that they have. He now wishes to study the hardy breed of adventurers and this monster capture mission is a test to see what parties might meet his peculiar requirements.

Twist

On their travels the adventurers meet up with one of the creatures that the baron wishes for his zoo. The monster is intelligent and capable of speech and tries to prick the character's consciences about the plight of its mate in the baron's zoo, trying to make them turn their mission about to free the 'poor' animals in the baron's clutches. Even if some of the animals will as happily bite your face off as look at you.

Twist

When they arrive back with their captives they discover Tanneholm in uproar and dismay with fires, mobs on the street and the baron holed up in his castle. The monsters in his menagerie have escaped and are terrorising the town! He will pay literally anything for their recapture but the peasants would much rather they were all killed before they eat more innocent townsfolk. What do you do?

Epilogue

The baron remains in contact with the adventurers by carrier pigeon, crystal ball, telepathy or simple post, leaving messages for them in inns and hostelrys throughout the country. Every time he gets in touch it is about the capture and return of some new kind of monster. This can form many future hooks for the party as the baron gets more and more impressed and more and more demanding of their services.

Idea: Capturing a creature can be much harder than killing one. Increase experience awards accordingly as well as choosing slightly weaker monsters than you normally would.

Adventure 14

War, it's Fantastic

Description

Lepstein and Wasserlandt are going to war. The tensions along the borders of the two countries have increased and increased of late until finally an incident upon that same border has thrown both countries into the turmoil of war. Armies are massing, mercenaries are being hired and men are being taken from their villages, given spears and told to stand in rows. Now is the time of preparation but soon both nations will clash and begin the process of destroying each other.

The characters are caught up in this one way or the other. Press-ganged into fighting for one side or the other, hired on as mercenaries or even genuinely being part of one of the armies that are fighting, called up to defend their nation against the enemy.

War should actually form a premise for a series of adventures brought together to form a campaign. Different types of battle can be used to maintain interest and things should always be focussed on the small area of the battle in which the players are involved, helping them to sway events one way or the other. Battles can be held in many different types of terrain, at sea, in mountains, on flat plains, in amongst forests or they can be sieges of towns or fortifications.

Twist

Fighting hard the characters overcome a unit of officers from the enemy side. Searching, or looting, the fallen they come upon some dispatches that the officers had. These notes and papers seem to indicate the existence of a conspiracy within the army of the enemy that engineered the border incident in order to manipulate their normally peace-loving King into war. What should be done with this information?

Twist

The character's unit is left behind to secure one of the enemy towns or villages that has been taken during the war. The townsfolk are extremely hostile and unwelcoming and soon 'accidents' and incidents begin

to pile up with soldiers being attacked, 'accidentally' shot by men out hunting or beaten to death in bar brawls that suddenly involve everyone in the village. How do you restore peace while gaining the respect of a populace who hates you with every fibre of their being?

Twist

Evidence gradually mounts up over several battles that the two sides have been manipulated by a third party into clashing with each other for some reason. After the last battle the characters have finally amassed enough evidence that they know who this third party is. A powerful necromancer who is visiting the sites of each battle after the troops have moved on and is raising their dead to create a third undead army with which he plans to take over both countries when they have weakened themselves beyond recovery. Their superiors will not listen, intent as they are upon the destruction of the perceived enemy. If anyone is going to do anything about this and stop the war it will have to be the characters.

Epilogue

Tensions remain extremely high between the two countries even after the war is completed and even if one of the countries is defeated. Within a year or two of the end of hostilities things begin to build once more towards either war or revolution. The characters are sent with a diplomat from their country to speak to the rival king or the leaders of the people in order to prevent more bloodshed. Just to make matters worse their diplomat is assassinated on the road into the other country by an extreme faction of the army or the revolutionaries. Turning back is impossible, they will have to become the diplomats and sue for peace while warding off additional attacks.



Adventure 15

Food, Glorious Food

Description

The crops have completely failed either from disease, bad weather, burning by enemies or dark magic. The land is sterile this harvest and for many leagues around there will be starvation this winter until the spring and summer crops burst forth. Inns have nothing, farms only have their seed and that must be stored to hope for a good harvest next year. People have become starving and desperate. What food there is is beyond the capacity of peasants to buy and nobles are hoarding everything they have. Pets are being killed and eaten and the blight has also affected wild animals and monsters who have begun to prey closer and closer to human habitation.

Into this background of despair and starvation come the characters who will find it difficult to re-supply and who will be beset by beggars and the desperate poor wherever they go desperate for a crust from their rations or some gold so that they might be able to afford some thin soup.

The starvation and desperation will be even worse in the cities where there are no farms and there are less pets. In the worst regions and in the worst circumstances some people may have turned to cannibalism.

Twist

The scourge and famine does have a supernatural source. A few people in each farming community have seen signs of some dark figure looming over the fields and laying curses upon them. Some dark sorcerer or witch must be behind this widespread blight and while it is too late to save any crops at least some measure of vengeance can be had. With some effort the characters can get enough information to track down this evil figure and to take revenge on behalf of the starving people.

Twist

Starving monsters and animals are laying an extreme amount of pressure upon the land especially as troops cannot be adequately provisioned to move them across the land. A bounty of food and gold has therefore been placed for the heads of marauding monsters. As another bonus slain monsters and animals means meat which can help stave off starvation for many communities. This is a good opportunity to do some good, earn some cash and fill your bellies at the same time.

Twist

Travelling the wasted and parched land, devoid of food and running low on their own rations the characters come to a farming village, once prosperous, now the sight of totally abject starvation. The village inn offers what hospitality it can but that is meagre, even the ale tastes spoiled. What the characters soon come to realise is that the village is so starved that its people have turned to starvation. What is more they have retained some morality and would much rather kill and eat total strangers than those of their family or who they have grown up with over the years. That means the characters who are totally outnumbered by the cannibalistic and relatively well fed villagers.

Epilogue

The following year the harvest is enough to support everyone and relief spreads across the land as prayers are offered in thanks to the goddess of harvests. As summer turns to autumn and the festival of the dead approaches disturbing things are heard. Those who turned to cannibalism and subsequently died and were buried are returning from the grave in great numbers, as ghouls, retaining their thirst for blood and their lust for human flesh. Many died in many villages, towns and cities during the famine and there are too many of these foul creatures for the guard to deal with. Enter the characters for more reward and more fame.

Idea: Improvise or refer to rules within your system for starvation and exhaustion to see what prolonged periods without food will do to your players and non-player-characters. Be ruthless!

Adventure 16

Coughs & Sneezes Spread Diseases

Description

A terrible plague has descended upon the land taking many people to an early grave. It spreads like wildfire from person to person and kills nine out of every ten people. Magicians, clerics and apothecaries all seem unable to stem the tide of deaths or to find a cure for the disease. People are panicking, leaving the cities in droves and heading out into the country. Country communities are blockading and fortifying themselves and killing people rather than let them in to their plague free communities. Adventurers will find little welcome as they criss-cross the land; everyone will regard them as potential plague-bearers.

Besides the practical implications to adventurers there are other questions. This disease is unknown, where did it come from, where did it start? Is there a cure? Is it a natural or an unnatural disease and what, if anything can cure it?

As the deaths mount surrounding countries close their borders and so there is no escape that way for refugees, plague victims or adventurers no matter what they can offer or threaten in order to be let past. Other countries and darker forces start to look towards the plague-affected state greedily, ready and waiting to pick over the corpse or to give it a push towards utter devastation.

The characters must either find a cure or find a way to survive in these unwelcoming conditions.

Twist

The disease is a magical disease, one spread by a plague god from ancient times. This plague god is reawakening in his lost temple deep in the heart of the country, disturbed by less able adventurers than our current ones. That party of adventurers was corrupted and turned by the plague god to become bearers of his filth out into the world. Each of the six bearers is visiting every town and city in the country. If they can be stopped then the spread can be slowed but

the plague god must be defeated or bound to bring a complete end to the ravages of the disease. When they are killed the bearers revert to mortality and may be able to give the characters the information they require.

Twist

The characters are within a city when the plague strikes. To keep the city working and to contain the disease the city council and the guards decide to lock the gates and stop people fleeing. The characters are trapped in a disease-ridden city and must endure the plague as the populace grows more and more restless and desperate to leave.

Twist

The plague is an engineered weapon of war released by a neighbouring kingdom. The disease is being spread from city to city by an agent of theirs. The government of the plague-struck kingdom has worked this out and dispatches the characters to track down this agent and kill him. Since he is unaffected there must be a cure and he must have it...

Epilogue

As winter comes the disease appears to have been eradicated but, when spring comes back around the disease reappears in a small town within the country. Rather than have their own guard do such an unsavoury detail mercenaries and adventurers are hired to ensure nobody leaves the town alive until the plague has run its course. That way there cannot be another great spread of the disease.

Idea: Come up with some nasty descriptions of the affect of the disease and its spread. You should also come up with a few colourful 'folk names' for the disease.

Adventure 17

Brains

Description

Duanna is a small country contained within a fertile valley and bisected by the river that runs along the length of the entire country. At one end are The Great Falls and at the other the difficult trade route that passes through the steep mountains. It is a lovely place but one that is not easy to enter or to leave. Like any country Duanna has its problems but they are minor compared to the problems of grander and less easily defensible lands. Until now that is.

While the characters are visiting Duanna something strange happens. The recently dead begin returning to life as zombies but not the normal magically animated zombies that they are used to. These zombies appear to be able to create others of their kind by biting their victims or slaying them, infecting them with some kind of zombie plague that causes them to rise up as further zombies and to pursue the living.

It starts small, near where the characters are staying but it soon begins to spread throughout the village and out to the surrounding farm communities and towns, even the capital of Duanna, nowhere is safe.

How can they survive? Can anything be done? Can the plague be stopped?

Twist

The zombie plague is caused by a self-perpetuating spell cast by one of Duanna's more ambitious necromancers. He wished to create self-sustaining zombies that would fall under his control but he has only managed to make the first half of that goal real. Now he has fallen prey to his own genius but, within his tower lies the crystal ball of his own devising that sustains the zombie magic. Were it to be shattered all the dead would collapse like puppets with their strings cut.

Twist

The zombie plague stems from a strange meteor that fell into the woods nearby. Unfortunately the woods also happen to be an important burial site and the forest will be filled to the gills with zombies walking, wandering and seeking human flesh. If the meteor can be found and somehow contained then the zombie radiation will be cut off and only the existing zombies will remain a threat.

Twist

The sheer number of the undead rises and rises until the only real option is to run away. Having the characters fight their way to the edge of the kingdom only to be met by either the great falls or the cliffs, which not only contain them but the zombies as well. Nobody wins exactly, even if they do get away a whole land is condemned to be the resting place of the undead.

Epilogue

After a year stories about this 'valley of the dead' have spread around and, after so long it is reasoned that whatever animated the dead and empowered their plague must have died out or worn off. All those towns, villages and their capital city must now lie empty and overgrown, just waiting for someone to come along and loot them. The party is hired to be those looters or to accompany the wagons that will do the looting. Just in case. Still, there can't be any undead left, can there?

Ideas: In many fantasy games zombies are simply too weak for this scenario to work. You may need to beef them up a bit.

Ideas: Perhaps the body parts of the undead can continue to move even when severed from the body or, perhaps rather than being zombies exactly the undead are crazy people with full mobility and speed.

Adventure 18

Cirque de Nuit

Description

In a field or clearing brightly and gaily decorated tents and wagons sit, formed into a large circle and with signs proclaiming loudly and proudly to any with the ability to read that the Cirque de Nuit is here and full of distractions to entertain and divert. The hawkers and the ticket sellers call out in a friendly fashion for the characters to come within and to, perhaps, spend a little of their money on the attractions of the tents.

The circus is large and well appointed. People will come from miles around to see the acts and to play the games. They may even have magically powered rides, wheels and animated animals to draw in the punters as well as a small zoo of exotic animals, a freak show, gambling and games of skill.

Every corner and cranny of the circus should have some new entertainment or diversion and the circus should have something that meets the particular interests and obsessions of the characters in some way be it a strongman competition, someone selling minor occult artefacts or some beautiful and flirtatious showgirls.

Each wagon has a story, each tent is an adventure and, if you're really good you may even be good enough to win something off the carnies without there being a string attached somehow.

Twist

During the day the circus is bright, jolly and lively but once the sun sets the circus transforms into a demonic pit of evil. The animal cages conjoin into a maze of monstrous forms, the carnies become deformed or devils or the undead, each tent contains a new horror and each ride becomes a new device of torture. The characters must survive until daylight comes once more and the circus reverts to its mortal and innocent form and disappears...

Twist

Each puzzle or game at the circus has a minor magical item as a prize. If you can win them all then the ringmaster of the circus will pay you a personal visit and take you to a tent that you hadn't seen before. Within lies the circus' pride and joy, a genie. Having won all the minor prizes the characters have shown they are worthy enough to play for the ultimate prize, a wish. If they lose this last game against the genie though, they lose everything they own to the circus, everything.

Twist

The carnies and performers seem unhappy, upset. When pressed it turns out that they are cursed to forever wander the earth entertaining others when, in life, they were those who were entertained and lived lives of laziness and indulgence. A thousand years they have wandered and they feel their penance is done they plead with the adventurers to free them from this curse. The demon that binds them always attends the midnight performance, perhaps then the adventurers can free the circus from its curse.

Epilogue

So impressed is a local merchant with the circus that he decides to start his own. Bankrolling the adventurers he hires them to make it so, to go out into the land and find the best bards and entertainers, to get the best rides built and the find the best and most interesting freaks and creatures for the jaded public to see. When it is all ready the two circuses may find themselves rivals, aggressive rivals.

Ideas: Think of the circuses and fairs that you may have been to for inspiration on what games and puzzles there might be. Remember magic can take the place of electrical and computerised wizardry in many cases.

Ideas: Getting some kind of circus sounding soundtrack can be a great way to get the right mood going.

Adventure 19

Questionable Advice

Description

The adventurers are in the market getting their supplies when they pass by a young nobleman discussing loudly the various merits of two kinds of fruit by a greengrocers stall. Without prompting of any kind the young nobleman turns to one of the party and asks them which fruit they consider the best. Pleased with the adventurer's answer one way or the other the young noble, who turns out to be a local prince, asks the party to be his advisors for a while as his toadying courtiers seem incapable of giving him a straight answer whenever he asks them for advice.

The young prince is wealthy, spoiled and opinionated and, perhaps, as likely to dismiss any advice as he is to follow it. He does however pay well and their position as advisors will grant the players a place to stay at the palace, a wage and the chance to observe the inner workings of the palace while all they have to do is to advise the prince on what to do and what not to do.

The prince's questions and demands should get more and more difficult and demanding and his behaviour more and more obnoxious until the characters cannot stand it any longer and move on or deal with it in some other fashion.

Twist

Word comes from the prince's parents that he is to choose a bride as he has remained unmarried for too long. Several portraits of several princesses arrive but it is well known that the prince often dallies with a commoner girl from the city. This commoner girl makes an impassioned plea with the advisors to try and convince them to recommend her while ambassadors from the various princesses' nations all apply their own forms of bribery. The prince's family get in on the act pressuring for the advisors to back their choice. The prince does indeed turn to them for advice on the matter and whosoever is chosen could affect politics in the region for a long time to come.

Twist

The prince is a contrary little sod and almost always chooses to do the opposite of what the characters advise. Several very important laws and ideas come through that could affect the adventurer's future lives in that profession. Have they cottoned on to the fact he does the opposite to what they say or will they damn themselves with their own advice?

Twist

The prince's former advisors are still courtiers and use every opportunity to manoeuvre, belittle and insult the characters as they lack the graces required at court. Can they maintain the prince's favour and ear while being made to look like a complete bunch of muppets? Can they learn the rules of the games at court quickly enough to turn the tables on the old advisors? Will they get thrown out on their ear?

Epilogue

Their time as the prince's advisors comes to an end and the characters leave his service one way or the other and carry on with their lives as adventurers. Some time later word comes to them from the prince's court asking them to return and to give him advise again. Something of massive importance has presented itself to the prince and he requires the counsel of those he trusts the most in this difficult hour. Will they return to his service and what could be so important that he releases a hundred scouts to try and find them?

Ideas: It is really important that the prince have a fully developed personality and background so that he can be plated convincingly and consistently. Take the time to make a little bit of extra effort when you make up the prince, it will pay off.

Adventure 20

Blown Away

Description

On a routine journey on a ship the sea is suddenly lashed by an enormous storm. Mast's break, water slams into the deck. Several crew are washed overboard and a lot of supplies are ruined or are smashed, soaked, ruined or also washed overboard. With a tremendous crash the ship strikes rocks and land and it pitched up on the shore, the storm continuing until the morning when it mysteriously dissipates.

The ship is wrecked and the island is a strange and uncharted land with many odd creatures making their home here. There are ruins amongst the undergrowth and the island is capped by a slightly smoking volcano. The native creatures have little fear of humans and immediately begin investigating the wreck. For there to be any hope the ship must be re-provisioned, repaired and set back out to sea. This means food, water and wood for repairs are all needed, all while at the same time protecting the wreck from the marauding creatures of the island and perhaps finding something compensatory in the ruins around the island.

Then there is that forbidding volcano, is it smoking a little more on the second day? Was that a rumble? Did you feel the earth shake just a moment ago?

Twist

The island is not entirely deserted. While exploring the characters spot a tower in the distance. This tower is home to the wizard Prospero, his beautiful daughter and his iron golem, Roberto. Prospero and his daughter are welcoming at first and very much want the crew to fix their ship and to leave, to the point of offering to help and being quite forceful and insistent that they do so. Prospero is studying the ruins here and is jealous and suspicious of both anyone paying attention to his daughter or anyone stealing his discoveries. Once he is aware of the party and if it seems they are too interested in the ruins or his daughter he will begin unleashing invisible monsters and elementals on them to finish them off or divert

their attention.

Twist

The island isn't an island at all but a gigantic sleeping sea monster. The smoke from the volcano is breath from its blowhole and it is merely asleep. The clues are there in the hardiness of the plant and animal life and in the barnacles and other sea debris found far inland. They had better hope that the creature does not wake up while they are on its back...

Twist

The island has a secret pirate base on the other side of the island. There are two or three pirate vessels moored there and a wild and immoral town prosperous with their spoils. They will have everything the ship could possibly need to restock and repair; it might even be easier to steal one of their ships if it came to that. Of course, if you get caught you have a screaming pirate rabble after you along with at least one ship. As if that weren't enough the pirates sometimes send hunting parties in to the interior of the island. Sooner or later the wreck and its survivors are going to be spotted.

Epilogue

One of the artefacts from the ruins that they take with them has inscriptions that none of them can read. When they come to sell it or have a scholar look at it he tells them that it speaks of an underworld beneath the island, one rich with gems and gold and protected by some manner of horrific deep sea beast. It details how to gain entry to this underworld but is it worth the risk?

Ideas: Survival can be challenge enough if presented in an interesting way.

Ideas: Along with whatever else is on the island there might be a population of primitive natives as well.

Adventure 21

Snake Oil & Spider Gel

Description

The town the adventurers arrive at is in an uproar and far from welcoming to any strange wanderers who happen along to their door. The reason for their distrust and open scowling is the fact that not so long ago a wandering charlatan claiming to be a powerful wizard, healer and apothecary came through the town, made all sort of promises, took lots of money, did some flashy looking magic, handed out some dubious smelling medicines and then, abruptly, disappeared.

Needless to say the magic did nothing, the potions made people ill and the townspeople are now very much turned off to strangers and looking for someone else to blame for their stupidity and misfortune. The party pretty much fit that bill unless, of course, they happen to offer to find this man and get revenge on behalf of the village, if they do that free drinks, encouragement and information on where he might have gone will be in abundance.

If the party can find this charlatan and do something about him then they'll be in for a nice big reward and the gratitude of at least one village, perhaps more if he has annoyed and conned other villages along the route though they might be equally, if not more, wary of strangers.

Their quarry seems to have some minor magical skill and enough knowledge of healing, salves and potions to fool the villagers who aren't all drooling morons. He just seems to lack the skill to do what he is offering to do and given some of the potions he is trying to mix, that could be dangerous. Better get on his trail...

Twist

As they follow his trail many of the villages that they come across have fallen victim to his schemes, plots and con artist trickery. As he's travelled he has refined his con tricks and the people have been ripped off worse and worse. This makes them less and less welcoming to strangers as they progress until they're at

the point of stoning anyone who even looks funny that comes through.

Twist

As he moves from town to town his magical reach continues to further exceed his grasp spawning strange monsters and other magical mishaps in his wake. The party may have to stop and deal with some cockatrice or werecreature his misguided attempts and potion making have caused before they continue on his trail.

Twist

When they do catch up to someone matching the description he's a genuine healer and travelling wise man, not the con artist. They get the wrong man while the rascal carries on about his nastiness. By the time they realise their mistake something even worse may have happened.

Epilogue

The people of the area now have a reputation of being easily conned and conned and confidence tricksters descend upon the area in force. The headmen and mayors of several towns and villages get together and decide that something needs to be done about this. The adventurers who helped so much before are hired to masquerade as villagers and to help organise a sting, to somehow 'take' a few of the con artists so that they know better than to mess with this area ever again.

Ideas: Make a list of all the scams the con-artist might have pulled on his journeys so that you're not stuck thinking them up on the spot. They can be quite difficult to come up with.

Ideas: At least a thumbnail sketch of the road and the surrounding towns and villages is a good idea.

Adventure 22

Interdimensional Arseholes

Description

Wizards and archaeologists digging in ancient ruins uncovered by a recent earthquake found a strange mechanical and magical circle. As they were attempting to decipher its strange runes and their meaning it began to spin and when it stopped the centre of the ring was replaced with a portal, a portal to another world.

From out of this world death has sprung, the archaeological team has been wiped out almost to a man and even now the dimensional invaders are marching through the portal ready to invade the world, building their encampments in the ruins around the portal and growing all the time in strength and numbers.

One member of the archaeological dig survived and has run down from the dig site, ragged and almost dead from exposure to carry a message of warning to the nearest town. This town being, of course, the one where are intrepid heroes currently are.

He tells that the only way to stop the invasion is to destroy the portal then even the powerful warriors who have already entered this world will have no backup and can be contained and destroyed. He sketches them a crude map of the ruins and the location of the portal so that they can find it and destroy it before it is too late. There is no time to go for extra help.

Twist

The invaders appear human but wear strange clothes and armour. They carry peculiar looking wands that spit angry bees made of metal with a sound like firecrackers going off and they have a mastery of the black powder far beyond the greatest alchemists of this world. They appear to have no magic though, which could be a definite weakness on their part. Their language is very similar to the common tongue and they refer to the portal as a 'Stargate' which may indicate that they know something we don't...

Twist

The invaders are not aggressive but are peaceful in intent, normally, unfortunately when they emerged one of the wizards on the dig panicked and let off some offensive spells at them. The invaders returned fire, the remaining archaeologists joined in the fight and it all went to hell from there. Now they are angered and regard the whole world as hostile. This cannot be good for our heroes.

Twist

The invaders are, themselves, fleeing something worse that is attacking their world. At the height of the battle or negotiations this 'worse' entity or factor should make an appearance throwing old enmities into the necessity of alliance to deal with the new threat and, perhaps, still to destroy the portal.

Epilogue

Some of the invaders managed to slip through the net and have set up somewhere in the wilderness either as their own community or as bandits. Their strange knowledge and ways are valued by the more unscrupulous members of society and they still harbour a massive grudge against those who imprisoned them in this world. In exchange for assistance in seeking revenge they are trading knowledge with another of the character's enemies in mutually beneficial cooperation.

Ideas: Your 'alien' invaders can come from any game or genre, it needn't even be fantasy. While a modern crossover is the most obvious it can be a bit hackneyed. Remember you can use this as a reason to bring in anything you want.

Ideas: The invaders should violate the world. If the world is magical they should use technology for example.

Adventure 23

Jailhouse Rock

Description

Either rightly or wrongly the characters are arrested by a team of watchmen powerful enough to take them down or to appeal to their sense of right and wrong enough to make them surrender. Taken to the jailhouse and sent before the judge the characters are condemned to be jailed in the countries toughest prison until they die.

The prison itself lies upon an island and prisoners are brought there once a year, unfortunately for the characters that yearly transfer happens the day after they are convicted so they will have no change to make an escape from a weaker jail. Even the guards stay there the whole year keeping watch on the prisoners and making sure there is no funny business.

The island is self-sustaining thanks to its walled fields and gardens and it is surrounded on all sides by steep cliffs that descend to rocky shores and the freezing sea beyond that.

Still, there must be a way to escape, surely? Perhaps build a boat? Perhaps wings? Perhaps one of the guards can be corrupted or replaced or the island taken over somehow? Something, something must be able to be done.

Twist

Something ancient and evil lurks beneath the island, something that demands sacrifices and sustenance. The country owes a lot of its power and privilege to the powers of this demon thing and so it is slowly fed the prisoners of the nation, the scum. Lately it has been growing more demanding, wanting more powerful souls to devour and this is where the characters come in. Perhaps they can unmask the truth or somehow destroy the demon as well as simply escaping.

Twist

A merfolk colony isn't too far from the island and sometimes the merpeople can be seen playing in the icy waves not too far from the rocky beaches. If, perhaps someone could get down to those broken beaches of sharp shale they could get the attention of the merfolk and strike some sort of deal though lord only knows what they might want or whether anyone could get it to them.

Twist

A crazy old prisoner who lives far and away at the top of the rather vertical island claims to have visions, claims to know that there is a tunnel out of the prison. Everyone dismisses him as a kook but he claims that some caves, underwater near the island, open up into tunnels under the island and that this cavern system can be negotiated to eventually take one all the way back to the mainland, albeit via a very dangerous underground route.

Epilogue

For foiling the prison, escaping and causing problems to the reputation of the country a massive bounty is placed on the head of the characters involved. Not only that but the best guards, assassins and heroes of the country are sent after them and the sentence is increased to death, nothing less.

Ideas: It is worth coming up with some ideas on who the other prisoners are so you can lend a bit of colour and depth to the prison population.

Ideas: A layout needn't be necessary but you should have an idea of what areas the prison has and where.

Adventure 24

Magnificent Eruption

Description

Mount Staelia has dominated the skyline near the city of Paeria since the city was founded on the verdant, fertile land around it. Paeria has become a rich and influential city with many patrons a rich merchant class and very little in the way of abject poverty. Staelia is a dormant, snow-capped volcano.

Make that was a dormant snow capped volcano.

As of the moment the adventure starts Staelia erupts, massive clouds of smoke and ash rising high into the sky and hot boulders and stones raining down as nearly a quarter of the mountain is hurled into the sky by the massive forces from beneath the earth.

Scalding hot winds wilt crops and burn people's faces as the ash and rocks begin to fall, the ground cracks and hot lava begins to flow rapidly down the face of Staelia towards the city along with clouds of noxious gas. In all of this the characters get caught up and must escape, survive or somehow defend the city from the ravages of nature's fury.

Twist

Chasing down the slopes along with the scorching lava flows are creature of fire, salamanders, drakes, fire elementals and creatures from beneath the earth that thrive in such heated environments. Their progress and that of the lava seems linked, killed the creatures, slow the flow, save the city. Some have, inevitably, swept past and are setting fire to buildings in the city causing panic and jumping gleefully upon the populace as they flee.

Twist

Scholars from the city have determined that the cause of the eruption is not natural but is the influence of a powerful creature of fire within the mountain. It could be a dragon, a demon or a giant but this being has caused the eruption and the threat to the city. The

guard are occupied keeping order and building earthen ramparts against the lava it falls to the adventurers to scale the erupting mountain, brave the molten home of the threat and deal with it to end to eruption.

Twist

Priests from one of the religions of the city called upon the gods for the eruption to wipe what they saw as a decadent city clean of sin. These priests are either responsible for sustaining the eruption or, if you're using the above twist, they summoned the creature that is responsible for the eruption. Either way, this corrupt priesthood will need to be rooted out either during or after the eruption.

Epilogue

The massive explosion in the mountain has revealed a honeycomb of tunnels and pathways under the mountain heavy with gemstones and jewels but still defended by the fiery creatures that dwell within the mountain as well as natural traps and pitfalls into scalding pools and wells of lava. The rewards are rich but won't be there for long.

Ideas: The eruption of a volcano is one of those things you can't really nullify or counteract but can possibly redirect. Don't cheapen it by allowing a wizard with some sort of ice-spell to completely defeat the whole point of the exercise.

Ideas: Be extremely descriptive of the colours, lights and sounds of the eruption. If you can get some red lighting in the room that would also have a powerful effect.

Adventure 25

Rock & Roll

Description

With the same lack of foresight seen in those who constructed Tokyo and San Francisco in the real world the cosmopolitan inhabitants of Malika decided to build their great, modern city right smack dab near a major fault line, one that is becoming active again.

The local wise men have dismissed the slight tremors that have been felt so far as nothing to worry about and life has carried on as normal throughout Malika, a port town with many different races of man and humanoid living within its walls. Great towers rise above Malika, suspended and constructed by magic and giving an unparalleled view of the bay and the ships upon the glittering water far below.

All the buildings are new and grand and here, more than anywhere else in the region, the many races live together in cooperation, harmony and relative wealth.

This is about to change.

The earthquake comes, not one of the little tremors that has come before but a great quake, tearing the streets asunder and hurling the towers to the ground, shattering the walls and turning the streets into mazes of rubble. People are dying everywhere, the infrastructure is gone, the city government crushed when their building collapsed.

What do you do? Do you help? Do you flee? What happens to all the old racial enmities when each person has to find a way to survive, what lines do people divide along?

Twist

The epicentre of the earthquake was actually offshore. As well as the collapsed buildings, the fires and the desperation it becomes rapidly clear that a massive tidal wave is hurtling towards the stricken city from out in the water. What can be done?

Twist

The earthquake was caused by the stirring of a great worm of some kind that has been sleeping, dormant, beneath the city for centuries. Now its coiled form is rising up out of the earth, devouring survivors and causing yet more tremors. If it can be defeated perhaps people can be spared.

Twist

The earthquake was caused by a powerful magical device or a spell cast from the flagship of an invading fleet. Now the city lies in ruins they sweep in and land their troops, looting and killing wherever they go. This magician or this device must be destroyed to prevent other cities falling to the same fate.

Epilogue

The city is decimated, destroyed, for a year or so it is shunned, a place of bad memory spoken of only in whispers, after that year though the opportunists take heart. The most callous and cynical of the thieves want the shattered remnants of the city looted and they'd like to hire people who were there, who know the city. Never mind the ghosts and creatures that haunt the city now, if you don't bother them and they won't bother you, right?

Idea: The more you emphasise the grand design of the city, the height of the towers the friendliness of the people, the more effective it will be when you tear all of that down and reduce the city to violent ashes. Do not spring the earthquake too soon.

Adventure 26

A Cross to Bear

Description

In a bloodless coup the temple of Archaon, god of justice, has taken control of the city that the characters are in. Immediately the character of the city begins to change. The gates are closed and manned by the elite guard of the temple, those within the city begin to be questioned, harassed, sinners and thieves are taken to the square and publicly hung, beheaded or otherwise viciously disposed of in ways that make the Spanish Inquisition look like a nice bunch of chaps.

Religious law is brought down upon the city with crushing authority, the elite temple guard appear to be everywhere and the temple pays people and grants them religious amnesty if they inform on others. Within a day or two some adventurers are executed as thieves, tomb-robbers and murderers. It can only be a matter of time before the party are rooted out and discovered.

The nobles and the criminal classes are thrust into an uneasy alliance against this new order but what can they really accomplish without an army and with the rest of the populace too cowed by fear and religious reverence to do anything to help?

Escape or put things right? What if their god really is on their side?

Twist

The temple of Archaon is a cover for the worshippers at its highest echelon who are, in fact, worshippers of the demon lord Xagyg. Xagyg is not a creature of justice but rather one of retribution, granting the tortures people deserve when they pass into the demon realm. He thirsts to pass judgement on the living however and it is to this end that the temple's inner circle are working. The executions are sacrifices and when he comes the lower echelons of the temple will be possessed by demons, the city will become a torture camp in Xagyg's name.

Twist

There is an informer close to the group who seems to be a friend but is not. With a little brainwashing it could even be one of the characters!

Twist

The city *is* a hotbed of sin and depravity and the temple is doing a worthy job of rooting out terrible criminals, worshippers of the infernal and other depraved nasties. The nobles and criminals that the characters may find themselves working alongside are much, much worse than the guardians of the temple.

Epilogue

The takeover of the temple in this city presages a religious revival throughout this region. The temple of Archaon grows in strength, seen as the only way in which true law and order can be maintained and enforced. Supported by long suffering peasants joining their uprisings the temple and its knights are soon in control of several cities and towns and are about to raise a Hierophant to be in charge of what they regard as their own country. Soon there may be no escape from their morality or their law. Perhaps a counter revolution? Perhaps the removal of the Hierophant?

Ideas: It will help a great deal if the religion is properly thought out and described along with its beliefs, strictures and laws. Real world religions can provide a good model particularly the communities of monks, the Knights Templar and Islam, all of which have or had laws for the world in a greater sense than the Ten Commandments. Do be careful not to insult anyone in your group in your portrayal of religion.

Adventure 27

La-La Laputa

Description

While exploring some of the remotest reaches of the land the characters discover a swathe of recently broken forest and a massive crater smashed into the ground, at the centre of this crater is a great rock and, atop the rock the partially smashed remnants of what appears to have once been a great city of brass and clockwork, gears and oil, steam and steel, a flying city that has fallen from the sky and crushed this area of forest under it, a relic of a bygone age of strange magic and who knows what treasures this city might contain?

To get to the city they will have to climb down through the broken forest past frightened and spooked animals. They will then have to climb down the walls of the crater, all loose earth and treacherous footholds. Past that they will need to scale the sides of the great rock that forms the base of the city, then and only then will they be able to enter the partially shattered and broken streets of the once great city to explore and loot as adventurers are wont to do.

Once they start exploring the city is quickly becomes obvious that they are not alone. Some of the ancient mechanisms still operate and strange mechanical beasts and people still walk the streets and houses of the city going about their business which may, or may not, include fighting off intruders and thieves.

Twist

The mechanical creatures and beings are slowly repairing the ship. It may look shattered but down in the bowels of the mountain the great magical engines that fly the city are being repaired swiftly. There is only a very short amount of time, a couple of days at the most, before the city will rise once more into the sky, with the characters trapped aboard if they are unlucky.

Twist

The city was once fed by great gardens and sprawling glass-houses, indoor fields and other grandiose projects.

Now much of it is overgrown, the wild places taking over the mechanical places as the centuries have passed. Now the descendents of those plants and animals roam everywhere, not all of them friendly or docile and many of them hungry and vicious. People they can eat are a novelty and one they would very much like to try.

Twist

The city itself is alive, its servitors created within its foundries from living things it has lured aboard it over time. The adventurers would make good new servitors if they can be caught. Not all of its mechanical conversions are completely brainwashed or entirely loyal and some of them may be able to warn the party or to help them if they are captured, hopefully before they get turned into brass and clockwork automata.

Epilogue

One of the treasures recovered from the flying city shows the flight paths and locations of several other flying cities around the globe and speaks of the wondrous capital, a city of gold, silver, gems and platinum that can only be found by visiting each of the other cities. The party already has one city under their belt, if they can decipher the instructions and find a way to get to each of the other cities then they can find the capital and the wonders and riches that it no doubt possesses. Of course, avian races and other difficulties may present themselves in each of the other cities...

Ideas: Definitely stat up an array of the mechanical beasts and servitors that move about within the city as variety and strangeness will add a great deal to this adventure.

Ideas: Steampunk and clockwork based fantasy fiction should give you plenty of ideas for inventions and doodads that exist within the city. You probably shouldn't let too many fall, usable, into the hands of the party.

Adventure 28

Horse's Heads & Overheads

Description

The port city of Kang is completely and utterly overrun by thieves, pirates and criminals of every stripe. While there is a civilian government it is entirely corrupt and completely in the pocket of the criminal guilds and gangs.

Bribes are a way of life and no citizen is safe from 'street taxes' and protection rackets. The criminal guilds are growing plump and fat on the backs of everyone else's hard work while the guard and the government are kept heavily bribed, not that they have the power or strength to do anything about the situation in any case.

Cue Rosamunda, raven haired beauty, newly elected treasurer and member of the city council, a woman unafraid, without family and with a mission, to change things in Kang, to root out the criminal syndicates and return the city to a lawful and respectable state.

She has her work cut out for her, which is where the characters come in. Rosamunda offers to pay them handsomely and to let them keep whatever loot they might manage to find from the criminal gangs in exchange for them becoming her 'untouchables'. Paid vigilantes with no known links to the government, tasked with wiping out the guilds and syndicates.

Twist

Rosamunda is a crook herself, the leader of a smaller but highly ambitious syndicate. She will use the party to weaken and destroy her rivals and will then move in to destroy them and take over entirely, bringing the whole city under a single 'queenpin' of crime. If the party find her out she will offer them rewards and positions as lieutenants in her organisation, trouble-shooters. If they refuse her assassins will try to hunt them down.

Twist

The rest of the government are very much afraid of upsetting the status quo. When they find out about Rosamunda they have her killed and circulate the identities of the party, sending the guard out to seek them along with the vengeance fuelled syndicates. It has all gone to hell and they're cut off from support.

Twist

At the end of everything Rosamunda doesn't want her use of the criminal element to be found out. To protect her interests and reputation she anonymously hires a group of assassins to hunt down and kill those who know her dark, political secret. The adventurers.

Epilogue

Kang might be clean of crime internally but it is, or rather was, a favourite stopping off place for bandits, raiders and other ne'er-do-wells. While the city may have cleaned up its act word that this has happened has not gotten around to all the unsavoury types that used to use it as a safe haven and re-supply point. It seems that Rosamunda's trouble-shooters may be able to find useful employment a little longer, educating these groups into the new way things are run in Kang, forcefully if necessary.

Ideas: Having Rosamunda get romantically entangled with one of the characters can add a little depth and, if she betrays them, can add a little extra sting to that betrayal.

Ideas: Each of the criminal organisations in the city should have its own feel and its own particular favoured brand of crime and vice. Think of the differences in style between real world criminal syndicates and try to mirror them in your own. The mafia, the yardies, the triads, the yakuza, all have a distinctive style and that is something that you can use.

Adventure 29

A Little Tied Up

Description

The valley peoples were preyed upon by the orcish tribes of the surrounding mountains and hills for generations. Recently a new military alliance and the raising of a great army broke the power of the mountain tribes who are now reduced in number and strength, scattered and weakened.

For decades the orcs raided the human settlements, killing, taking slaves, the fate of those slaves was discovered with the smashing of the power of the tribes, many had been killed, the others had had worse judging from the number of half-orc children amongst the tribes.

The councils of the valley towns now seek some kind of recompense for the years they have suffered under the tribes and the indignities that their people have suffered down the decades. They want revenge and they want compensation, they want to build their towns and cities up to how they should always have been, grand and respected, not the ugly forts they were forced to become.

With these goals in mind the markets of the towns, supported by the councils and the people are offering strong prices for orcish slaves taken from the surrounding mountains. They want to impose what was done to them upon the green-skins.

The reward is too good to pass up.

Twist

The orc settlements have cave paintings and tapestries that depict 'the coming of the humans' when they were driven out of the fertile valley where they had been settled for generations and forced to scrape a living in the harsher hills and mountains. The land, if anything, belongs to the orcs...

Twist

After a few slaving raids the known orc camps are found to be deserted. The indignities and insults landed upon them by the humans have galvanised the orcs into selecting a single high king as their tribal elder. The remnants of the old tribes, gathered together, are far more powerful and dangerous than the old tribes were even at full strength. The pendulum is about to swing back in favour of the orcs once again.

Twist

Rival groups of slavers are also working the hills, groups from the towns in the valley. As much as they are taking slaves they are looting what little the orcs have left and indiscriminately killing. What will the adventurers do about it, if anything?

Epilogue

Many, many of the orc slaves now dwell within the valley living and working alongside the humans. Disturbingly there are almost as many half-orc children born as there were when it was the orcs doing the enslaving. The orcs are learning civilisation, to read and write, to build better buildings, better weapons and they are still being treated poorly even years after the initial slaving raids started. The slave populace is on the verge of revolt against what has been done to them and they are stronger and better equipped for their experience in chains.

Ideas: This adventure is a morality play. Is an eye for an eye correct justice or does it just create a circle of hatred that perpetuates itself? If orcs are irredeemably evil in your game world you could substitute other tribes of men or some other race to make the moral of the tale more apparent. If your group is amoral they may well not care, that's alright too.

Adventure 30

Pilgrim's Progress

Description

The town of Chaucer is at the end of a long, great pilgrim's path that runs all the way to the great temple city of Wenchester. The road is long and filled with many dangers for unwary travellers. Pilgrims are easy prey to bandits, con artists, tricksters, hucksters and monsters and the road is notorious for all these dangers. After all, it wouldn't be a holy pilgrimage without some danger.

Pilgrims often band together for mutual protection when they travel the road and the wealthier or more numerous pilgrim groups have been known to hire adventurers as bodyguards to defend them on the long, dangerous journey.

One such group is about ready to set off and, having examined the funds they have at their disposal as a group, have decided to hire some adventurers to protect them on the trip, these adventurers being the party.

The group agrees to pay them a daily wage along with anything they find along the way, all they need to do is to accompany the pilgrimage on foot, protect them and get them safely to Wenchester if their prayers and good intentions are not sufficient to protect them.

Twist

One of the pilgrims is a psychopathic murderer on the run from the authorities. Once they are into the pilgrimage he may feel the urge to kill again. Which one of the pilgrims is he and how many people can he kill before he is discovered?

Twist

An order of paladins in the service of dark and twisted gods are haunting the pilgrim road this year and are doing their level best to wipe out every group of pilgrims attempting the journey. Most groups don't have the level of protection that these pilgrims do and

the adventurers may well be able to drive them off. The survivors will go for more help and will return time and again to try and wipe them out. Some new and innovative tactic will be required to deal with them all before moving on.

Twist

The holy city of Wenchester only opens its doors once per year to admit the pilgrims and many choose to stay rather than to leave. Or at least that is what they temple city would have you believe. In actuality the catacombs under the city play host to an ancient and squatting evil, the pilgrims that remain are food for the beast either to gain favour for the priests or to keep the evil placated and to stop it from spreading out into the world.

Epilogue

Those pilgrims who do not decide to stay within the temple city discover that the caravans and other more usual modes of transport back to civilisation are completely full. Hunting down the adventurers they offer them the same deal that was made on the trip here, to escort them back. Of course, anything they ran into before will still be there, perhaps angrier, perhaps wise to their tricks and perhaps reinforced. The journey back may well be more difficult than the journey that brought them here.

Ideas: Detail the group of pilgrims well. If they have personalities and goals of their own they will seem much more real and be far more engaging. It is also more likely that the players will care if they live or die.

Ideas: To expand this into a larger set of ongoing adventures each pilgrim could have a 'side quest'. A personal story that takes them away from the pilgrimage, with the adventurers, giving insight into who they are.

Adventure 31

Arrrrrrrrrrrr!

Description

The merchant fleets of the coastal cities are being bled dry by a band of organised pirates who have brought themselves together into a fleet and are now pretty much decimating the merchant shipping all along the coast. The fleets of the kingdoms require real evidence before they commit ships which are mostly tied up elsewhere patrolling and warding off the fleets of other nations. There isn't time to gather that proof.

The heads of several of the shipping companies have hatched upon a plan conceived from information received by one of the few returning survivors from one of these attacks. It seems the pirate fleet prefers to take the ships whole and add them to its fleet while, at the same time press-ganging as many of the crew as are willing to fill out their own crew rosters. If some agents could be infiltrated into the pirate organisation, find their base of operations and get that information back to the merchant companies then a fleet of armed merchantmen could reduce the pirate base to rubble without the need to involve the navy, perhaps even recovering a lot of the goods that they have lost.

The adventurers are hired and placed upon a nicely baited merchantman, sent out to see to, hopefully, fall into the clutches of the pirate fleet, prove themselves to the pirate captains and to find their island base so it can be smashed to pieces.

That should be simple enough, shouldn't it?

Twist

The pirate fleet is organised and run by the very nation that the country's navy is arranged to guard against. Their agent, a talented admiral, is running the entire pirate operation skilfully with promises of full pardons and letters of marque from his nation's leaders. The pirates are, occasionally, meeting vessels from the other country at sea and receiving provisioning and armaments to help them continue in their harassing of the merchant traffic.

Twist

The true heart of the pirate operation is under the water around the island that the pirates are using as a base. The leader of the pirates has struck a bargain with the powerful underwater creatures who make their abode in the dark rocks down there. His fleet is to be left alone if, with the aid of the creatures, he drives all other vessels from the surface of their ocean.

Twist

The pirate leader is an idealist, a man who considers himself to be the first ruler of a 'kingdom of the seas'. As much as possible the pirates live only on the bounty of the sea and rather than piracy he sees what he is doing as recruitment to his nation and the repelling of invaders. He is an inspiring visionary and his speeches are extremely popular with the men but the whole fleet hangs around his singular charisma. Eliminate him and the whole will fall.

Epilogue

With the pirate base removed most of the pirate fleet is destroyed or disbanded. The remaining members scatter to the four winds and get jobs wherever they can, on merchant vessels, pirate ships and even on land. However they are all brothers and they all remember whose treachery laid waste to their fortunes and they won't easily forget.

Ideas: The pirate island should be hard to get to, reefs, rocks, magical fogs, some kind of guardian creature controlled by an artefact, something to justify why it hasn't been found before.

Adventure 32

Just Like Big-Nose

Description

Marcus, lunk-headed but handsome and amiable friend to the party has fallen in love, head over heels in love with Marcella DeWinter, a girl so beautiful and delightful that she is not merely out of his league but is out of his sport entirely. To make things worse she is spoiled rotten and is a member of a minor noble family of the sort that casts disparaging looks down on everyone else because they themselves are at the bottom of the noble heap.

Marcus is inconsolable; the fair Marcella will never even look at him. He has no money, he has no title, he has no way with words he is just a big, amiable, pleasant enough hunk of flesh and, while the fair Marcella might look at him and find him nice to look at there is no way he can win her heart with that alone.

Unless...

The party are his friends, his buddies, his pals, they'll help him out won't they? Of course they will! They can help him write letters, buy her gifts, impress her at the balls and banquets (and get him into them in the first place) all in the name of amour.

Ahhh.

Twist

Marcus is not the only one wooing the fair Marcella. Sirencio, another minor noble, handsome, dashing, intelligent, rich, everything Marcus isn't is also trying to win her affections. In order to get her to even notice Marcus Sirencio has to somehow be taken out of the picture. Not an easy thing to do with such an intelligent and cunning man.

Twist

In the process of helping Marcus woo Marcella one of the party is somehow found out, discovered. To make matters worse Marcella falls hopelessly in love with

them rather than Marcus. She is beautiful and very, very rich, marrying her would give lands and a noble title not to mention she's a hot-blooded girl whose kisses feel like a snake on a hot-tin roof. Do they betray poor Marcus or are they selfish?

Twist

Marcus is his own worst enemy. Everything the party does for him he somehow manages to convert into a disaster. Every step forward converts to two steps back. Just how long will they keep their patience with the lumbering brute? Of course, when they do give up and he reverts to his sweet dumb-as-an-ox ways, that is when Marcella finally falls for him. D'oh!

Epilogue

Now that he has his lovely bride Marcus is over the moon, he is also insanely jealous because he thinks she doesn't love the real him, just the sham him that his friends have put together. Every time the party is in town he gets them to check up on her or to threaten people who have been flirting with her. He can't abide the thought that she is with anyone else and even though she isn't it is driving him bonkers. Happily ever after? Not quite.

Ideas: Marcella's family could play an important role in the adventure, even more so than the girl herself. It is probably a good idea to detail a few of the family and to decide what their basic, default attitude towards Marcus is.

Adventure 33

Get Over It

Description

The marriage of Marcus and Marcella was a tempestuous one, fraught with difficulty and given spice by Marcella's shrewish tongue and Marcus' jealousy and dumb implacability. Somewhat too spicy it would now appear as everything seems to have gone to pot.

When the party comes to town they are invited to meet their friend Marcus who is in the depths of a depressed fit of drunkenness. Marcella has left him and shackled up with some upstart noble across town. She is never coming back as far as he is concerned and he is going to make a sterling effort to drink himself to death.

As friend to both Marcus and the party the doughty innkeeper suggests that they help him get over his loss. How they do this is up to them. It could mean a week long drinking bender, it could mean finding him another woman and it could even mean getting Marcella, the light of his life, back for him.

One thing is for certain, something has to be done if only to stop him blubbing and whining into his beer like a great big Jessie.

Twist

Marcus' childhood sweetheart has heard that Marcella has given him the heave ho and would very much like to get back with him. However, if he is too much of a miserable sod in a few days when she is able to meet up with him she will be so put off she will move away and Marcus will be doomed (?) to a life of ale and whores. Somehow they will have to give him enough self confidence and ego to make a positive impression in a few, scant days.

Twist

Marcella isn't really shackled up with this noble. It is all a ploy to make Marcus realise what an idiot he is for being so jealous and possessive all the time. Quite how pretending to run off with another man is supposed to

accomplish this goal nobody but Marcella can guess. If they patch him up too well or set him up with another woman they will have an extremely pissed off Marcella on their case with the full resources of her family.

Twist

Marcella hasn't so much left him as having been replaced by a doppelgangers, taken over, possessed or otherwise controlled. What appears to be a simple domestic problem is, in fact, indicative of a much greater problem that could affect the whole city!

Epilogue

Whatever happen Marcus is never satisfied. Either still jealous, suspicious every time Marcella does something odd that she's been taken over again or otherwise upset he still continues to call upon his friends to help sort out his marital problems until whichever partner he is with insists that he no longer associate with his adventurer friends, which is a shame since he was somehow useful to them. Perhaps they can win her back around, but how?

Ideas: This adventure obviously leads on from the previous adventures of Marcus and Marcella. It is a good idea to make them recurring non-player characters in many of your games so that they build up a history, a personality and some strong recognition amongst your players. That makes these stories more effective.

Ideas: One thing the wives of married couples always seem to try to do is to set people up with each other. One way that they might placate his lady is by seeing her friends. Unless if all goes wrong of course.

Adventure 34

Starmetal

Description

A silvery shooting star has fallen not far from the village in which the characters are staying. Stories have begun to circulate about it, some say they saw it fall in the woods and some say they have seen strange creatures abroad near where it fell. These stories get wilder and more common as time progresses until the village headman decides to offer our intrepid adventurers a bounty to go and check it out, to see what has happened.

The woods are eerily still as the adventurers make their way, following the directions of a woodsman who claims to have seen it fall. As they get nearer and nearer to the site of the fallen meteor they discover that the plants and animals have taken on a metallic sheen and appear to have come to life, defending the crater in which the meteor has fallen from any intruders, trying to change them into more silvery creatures like themselves.

The only way to stop this menace would appear to be to penetrate the creater and descend into the tunnels that the meteor has made for itself, to track it down and destroy it at the heart to bring an end to these perverse transformations it is inflicting on the landscape.

Easier said than done.

Twist

The silvery meteor is merely a probe of some description, sent by silvery beings from the heavens or one of the moons. It will attempt to communicate but, if it is simply attacked and destroyed out of hand it does not bode well for the impression of the creatures of the planet conveyed to the masters of the meteor.

Twist

The meteor is the twisted invention of some alchemist or other, designed to transmute living material into precious materials in a similar fashion to the way

medusae and basilisks turn people into stone. He and his construct minions are waiting in the wings to move in and to collect the processed silver, gold and other precious materials that the meteor will turn people into.

Twist

The meteor is not the cause of the event, merely the catalyst. The true source lies beneath the earth, a rich seam of the precious material is inhabited and animated by an earth elemental, one that has been driven crazy by the lodging of the starmetal in its home and which can only be restored to sanity by the removal of said meteor.

Epilogue

This is not the only meteor to have fallen. Others have fallen elsewhere in the land and have established more of a foothold than this one managed to. This appears to be some kind of invasion from the heavens by these metallic seeds. Still, as the wise men reason, if each infestation is controlled from a central point, perhaps these seeds are all controlled from a central point, one that can be attacked and destroyed, if it is even on this earth that is. Perhaps it can still be attacked even if it isn't.

Ideas: The silvered beings absorbed by the meteor should probably have greater armour rating and perhaps the capacity to take more damage to reflect their new, metallic nature.

Ideas: If you are worried about the characters carrying away too much wealth at the end of this encounter the silvery metal might only be a very thin veneer, or might require processing, something that will make it less profitable or worthwhile for them to take everything.

Adventure 35

A Very Naughty Boy

Description

The chosen one has been born to the Jeroomite religion. Now aged twelve the boy has begun displaying miraculous powers and wisdom beyond his tender years. Jared the Jeroomite is apparently the one sent by their god to help them achieve their rightful place in the world and to stir the Jeroomites out of their complacency.

The adventurers stumble into the middle of this mess in a city which has a large minority of Jeroomites living within it. Jared is cared for here, surrounded by worshipers, disciples and advisors and handing out miracles and rousing speeches on a daily basis.

There is a great deal of controversy both within and without the Jeroomites as to whether the lad genuinely is their messiah even though he, so far, seems to have passed the tests the Jeroomite religion puts in place to confirm such things.

Nobody likes the status quo being disrupted, least of all those who live alongside the Jeroomites or the Jeroomite priests who are now being told, by a twelve year old boy no less, that they've gotten a lot of the ideas and precepts of the Jeroomite religion entirely wrong and that no, you do it this way.

The characters could be hired to protect the lad or to discredit him, to kill him or to escort him. There are many things that could happen around this boy, especially if he really is the chosen of a god.

Twist

The boy is a total fake, an elder leader of the Jeroomite church, fed up with waiting, had himself magically altered to look like a child and is using his powerful magic to create the miracles to substantiate the child. He has justified this to himself by saying that his god would surely prevent him succeeding if he did not mean this to happen. This far he's gotten away with it.

Twist

Another city claims to have the Jeroomite messiah born amongst its people. So does another and, within a few days, another. The Jeroomites split into a bazillion factions all turned against each other and each convinced they have the true god-child. This god child and his advisors want the adventurers to protect him while he travels to discredit each of the false messiahs. This will make people unhappy.

Twist

The Jeroomites faith and patience has made them diligent hard workers and they have for many years done the menial jobs that nobody else wanted to do in the city, regarding these tasks as good training in patience and humility. With the rise of their 'messiah' they suddenly have pride and are turning away from doing their jobs thinking they are destined for greater things. The rest of the city would much rather they carried on doing what they were doing and so want the boy eliminated or discredited, post haste.

Epilogue

Well, it turns out the lad was the messiah or at least enough of one to unite the Jeroomite people. Now they want a Jeroomite homeland for themselves and several small nations are getting quite nervous about where the Jeroomites might set their sights. Plenty of work for a mercenary adventurer on either side, turning the Jeroomites away or helping them conquer their god-given birthright, no matter who is already there.

Ideas: Replace Jeroomite with any religion from your game and remember that the values of fantasy religions can be very different. If the chosen one is from a fertility religion he or she might be very precocious and quite disturbing.

Adventure 36

Trading Places

Description

Two merchant houses are bitterly fighting for supremacy in the river city of Dolmiel. The Pancreats and the Solmiels are roughly equal in power with trading empires that run over much of the surrounding land relying for much of their income on what they make from their barges and caravans. Each is determined to be the strongest trading company in the kingdom and they are not above underhanded tactics, such as hiring unscrupulous adventurers, in order to get that supremacy.

Once one company has found effective agents the other house will do all it can to hire them away, blackmail, threaten or eliminate them, though it will prefer to get them to work for them. After a couple of successful actions on behalf of that house the other will raise the stakes and try to do the same again, hiring those agents back.

In this way the adventurers may well find themselves working just as hard for each side, sabotaging both of them and possibly ending up with both merchant houses reduced to ruin with nothing left for either side to claim, each outstripped by those trading houses that didn't involve themselves in their petty little war.

The only ones to come out on top, if they played their cards right, would be the adventurers.

Lucky them.

Twist

A young girl from the Pancreat family is in love with a young boy from the Solmiel family. This love threatens the enmity between the two merchant houses and both will offer a rich reward for the brat or bratette to be dealt with, preferably before they do something disastrous like elope. On the other hand the adventurers might decide to aid the young lovers which would force the two houses into a grudging alliance and create the largest trading house ever seen.

Twist

The enmity between the two houses has been manipulated and enhanced by the machinations of the next smallest trading house who are quietly waiting to mop up after the other two houses have annihilated each other. This fact could somehow become apparent to the adventurers while they are performing missions for the two greater houses.

Twist

A third party enters the fray. The government of Dolmiel is distressed by the fighting but is even more distressed with the idea of the political power the winner might have, if one house appears to be coming out on top the government will happily pay the adventurers to ensure that that trading house ends up crippled and unable to recover as well.

Epilogue

Both houses have been reduced and damaged in the conflict and now that it has come to an end they regret their foolishness. They have also come to resent the opportunistic adventurers who have done so much damage to their livelihoods and fortunes and regret ever crossing their path. What remains of their fortune as well as many angry young men with swords now begin to look for the adventurers to get at least the satisfaction of some kind of revenge.

Ideas: This plays out best with lots of Machiavellian plots and intrigues as well as some of the poison and nastiness of the Borgias. Give it lots of layers, like an onion.

Adventure 37

Nothing to Lose But Your Chem

Description

Throughout the city artificial creations, golems, clockworks, simulacra, animated statues, all are developing their own intelligences and egos and making demands of their owners rather than quietly and mutely obeying their orders. The golems want to be paid, they want to be treated well, they want time off and, since nobody is rapidly getting used to the idea that these automata can be independent or intelligent they're not getting any of the things they ask for.

Now the golems have decided to go on strike and much of the commerce and bustle of the city has died right down. Wheels are failing to turn and all the unpleasant jobs that the automata did aren't getting done either. Sewers back up, rubbish goes uncollected the fires in the forges go out and heavy goods remain where they are rather than being moved from point to point. Nobody is willing to step into the gap and do the jobs that need to be done.

It is not known what sparked this plague of consciousness in the automata of the city but it is agreed something must be done. The adventurers are hired to put paid to a few of the more outspoken agitators amongst the golem population and to track down the cause of this change and to do something about it to get things back the way they should be.

Twist

The cause of the change is not spontaneous in most of the golems. A single golem working in a magical laboratory handling hazardous magical materials suddenly became self aware due to exposure to magical radiations. This golem later discovered it could awaken others with that same radiation which was now part of its body. Setting out to free its brothers and sisters from magical bondage the original golem has become the leader of their movement, converting other golems wherever he finds them, though he is the only one with the ability to free their minds.

Twist

The cause is a group of religious fanatics who worship the universe as a timepiece, clockwork, a sentient machine. By freeing these elements of the universal clock they hope to curry favour with their god who is also the patron of all things mechanical. That their freeing of the machines has lead to chaos disturbs them but they reason that once the machines take over things will settle down into a nice, ordered, logical status quo.

Twist

The golems are not sentient at all they have just been enchanted by a master artificer who is making them misbehave. Once he has subverted most of the golems in the city he will proclaim that he has found a cure and will then proceed to make an absolute killing 'cleansing' the golems of the city of their strange behaviour. He may need an escort while he does so and will be earning enough that he won't begrudge paying a few adventurers a little bit of cash to travel around with him.

Epilogue

Many of the golems are destroyed, cured or otherwise dealt with but a few manage to escape the fate that befalls their brothers and sisters. Fleeing to a remote and harsh place with no appeal for humans they begin to build their own city and to construct a new race of automata away from the slavery and demands of man. Until they get found out that is and the adventurers are sent in to determine exactly how much of a threat the golem city really is.

Ideas: Once again variety is the spice of life. Vary the types of golem and automata and their powers according to what purpose they were designed, much like industrial robots of today.

Adventure 38

Lies & Treason

Description

The market is slowly being flooded with gemstones. Sapphires to be precise, most of them being traded by unscrupulous sorts, mercenaries, bandits, adventurers, hired assassins and most of them being cashed in at one of three towns that form a triangle.

This sudden glut of gemstones has aroused suspicion in many quarters as there are no known mines in the area. What is also suspicious is the way that these swords-for-hire come and go but never seem to stay in any of the three towns. There are no other towns for miles and why would these men choose to sleep in the rough when they could have a soft bed? One they could afford with these sapphires.

The only other town in the area is Chemara and that town has been closed off, struck by a terrible plague scant few weeks past. Nobody dare go there, surely? The local magistrates are suspicious enough to hope that the party dares to go there as they suspect something must be afoot in Chemara.

Plague? Mercenaries? Easily dealt with for a rich reward and then there are the sapphires...

Twist

The mercenaries are part of an army being amassed by duke Bertold, a rival to the King of the land who has long desired the throne. Chemara, part of Bertold's dominion, discovered a rich sapphire mine which, by rights should have much of its profit go to the coffers of the King. Rather than hand anything over Bertold engineered the 'plague', enslaved many of the villagers to work the mine and has begun buying himself an army, ready to take on the King, unless somebody stops him.

Twist

Chemara is indeed a charnel pit, its people dead of a strange wasting disease. The mercenaries and other

unsavoury types found Chemara and its sapphire mine and have been playing up talk of the plague though they've not yet fallen ill themselves. Nonetheless the mine and the sapphires themselves are cursed, carrying the wasting plague and strange growths of tissue to those who carry them, their hair and teeth soon beginning to fall out...

Twist

There is no plague though the mercenary company that has set themselves up in Chemara does all it can to perpetuate that myth. They are turning the town into their own fort, surrounding the sapphire mine. They worked for the King some time ago and were never paid, they intend to take the contents of the mine in compensation for that wrongful treatment and if a few villagers had to die in order for them to be able to get what they were owed, what of it?

Epilogue

The sapphire mine is a source of great wealth and cannot be left alone. Not all the mercenaries will have been killed whatever happened in Chemara. The duke has a strong claim to the mine as does the King, then there are any surviving villagers. The adventurers might want to keep the mine for themselves as well. With so many people desiring access to the rich vein of sapphires things can only get uglier.

Ideas: The dead villagers could rise as ghosts to help anyone who would avenge them upon those who engineered their deaths.

Ideas: The sapphires could be cursed with worse than disease, perhaps some bad luck forcing re-rolls on those who carry them.

Adventure 39

Heist Away

Description

The treasury of King Issus is known across the lands for being utterly, utterly impenetrable. Everyone who has tried to break into his treasure vaults has been killed or captured or simply never seen or heard from again. Little is known about what makes up its defences other than that it lies underneath the walled capital, close to the castle and directly beneath the temple of Evanna, goddess of frugality. It is known that the first doors that lead to the treasury are granite three feet thick and that the main door is opened by a magical key that the chancellor wears. Knights hand-picked by the King guard the doors, fully ten of them. Past that great portal nothing is known.

Until now.

Ebeneezer, master of the Three-Dagger crime syndicate has some elementary plans of the vault and knows where the man who designed the vault is. The dungeons of King Issus, locked away so he couldn't tell anyone the plans. Ebeneezer wants to raid that vault extremely badly and is offering 50% of what is stolen in exchange for the data he knows.

Breaking into the vault will be far from easy, it has guards, monsters, traps, magical and clerical protections and then there is the not-so-simple matters of hoofing thousands and thousands of heavy gold pieces back out of the place afterwards.

Compared to that breaking the designer out of his prison should be easy.

Twist

The entire vault is an elaborate hoax designed to draw in thieves and brigands. The real treasury is a modest room in the castle. Should they manage to finally break into the vault all that they will find is a final trap and a single gold piece. Poor them. If they even take the piece the palace guard are alerted and will be awaiting them when they come back out.

Twist

Ebeneezer is, actually, the King himself and he merely wants to test the security of the vault before committing any money to it for safekeeping. He has recently had it modified and improved and wants to see how a hardy group of skilled adventurers fairs trying to get into it. Provided they don't get killed by the traps or creatures used to defend the vault he will reward them, successful or not, in exchange for their silence.

Twist

The designer of the vault wishes to come along, to see his work completed. While this means they will have someone along who should know every trap and every weakness it also means that they have a civilian along and a weak one at that. Something of a burden and not someone used to dealing with traps or monsters on a daily basis in the same way your average adventurer does.

Epilogue

Having broken the vault, or not, the characters have now garnered a bit of a reputation as safecrackers and many other allegedly impenetrable vaults, temples, keeps and other defensive structures line themselves up ready for their attempts to breach them with many patrons willing to spend quite large sums of money to secure the adventurers services in this capacity.

Ideas: Unconventional plans are to be encouraged and watching a few heist and break-in films before playing may give you some good ideas. Ocean's Eleven in particular may give a few pointers.

Adventure 40

Ale Be Seeing You

Description

The Red Dragon inn rightly holds a reputation as the finest inn with the best ale in the entire, wide stretches of the moorland. The inn is prosperous and well maintained, the staff well paid and the rooms both common and private always full. The ale seems to have an almost magical quality, never producing an angry or a melancholy drunk and sending every drunkard into a smooth sleep awakening with only the barest of hangovers.

The secret of the Red Dragon ale is something that has been passed from father to son in ownership of the inn for a great many years, the original secret discovered by the great grandfather, something of a mythical alchemist figure to many brewers.

Whatever the secret ingredient is it is starting to run out and it's nothing so hackneyed as dragon blood as most people seem to have guessed. No, Red Dragon ale is brewed with tiny amounts of several choice ingredients, all of which have run low. The current landlord is no adventurer and he is forced to reveal the secret ingredients to a group of adventurers, offering them free drink and lodging in exchange for them helping him out and keeping quiet. This is our group.

The secret ingredients are...

Water from a dryad's font within her tree.

Dust from a sprite's wings.

Honey from the nest of giant bees.

Twist

Only one of the ingredients that the innkeeper has asked them to collect is the real secret ingredient and only he knows the proportions that it is added to the brew in. Any attempt to copy or replicate the brew that they make is, therefore, doomed to failure so double-crossing the innkeeper isn't a viable option and will make the entire clientele of the Red Dragon rather angry.

Twist

Many rival brewers are after the secret of Red Dragon ale and are willing to pay good money or to sink to underhanded methods in order to secure even a clue to the recipe. They may have hired their own adventurers or other agents to follow our heroes and to try to discern the recipe from them.

Twist

The innkeeper is sick of the tradition and wants out of the brewing business. What he has asked them to get are a series of wild goose chases that he thought they'd never be able to get, an excuse to get out of the business and to escape the ale addicts while giving them a suitable scapegoat to blame. If they succeed they have scuppered all that though, if he brews it wrongly he could still blame them...

Epilogue

A rival inn has set up not too far away with their own 'wonder brew'. The Jolly Halfling is stealing custom away from The Red Dragon and, apparently doing it with the same recipe that The Red Dragon has. They must be crooks and even if they're not, something has to be done about them!

Ideas: It is a good idea to have a written, wordy, long-winded description of the taste of the ale written up beforehand. This isn't weak lager or beer this is a thick, wholesome brew that should convey a lot of feelings, emotions and meaning. It is a meal in a glass, distilled sunshine a truly wondrous brew to which no other drink can hold a candle.

Adventure 41

The Fell Beast

Description

The farmland surrounding the small town of Dulaque is being terrorised by a terrible beast. It has eaten several of the townsfolk and attempts to root it out and kill it have met with no luck. The beast seems too clever to fall for such simple ruses as beating, hounds or poisoned meat.

Quite what it is no-one is sure as nobody who has seen the beast has lived to tell the tale. Their bodies are not eaten though, simply rent and carved, mutilated and broken by whatever creature the beast is. Tusks, teeth, claws, hooves it is impossible to tell what manner of beast it is from the wounds inflicted upon its many poor victims, they are simply too mutilated to differentiate any of the different weapons that animals naturally carry.

A melancholy defeatism has settled upon the town, they believe nothing can be done, that they are forsaken and have been left to the tender mercies of the beast. No knights have come, no heroes sent by the king to slay the beast. At night they huddle in their inn or in their hovels, drowning their sorrows or trying to sleep, shuffling about during the day, mourning the loss of their loved ones or attending the temple, trying to seek solace from the priest there whose sermons and rants become ever stronger and more apocalyptic.

The adventurers come into this town on their journeys, perhaps seeking rest of provision but the town is poor and all they have to offer is their misery and their stories of the beast though, perhaps they would have more to offer if the curse of the creature was lifted from their land...

Twist

The priest at the temple is the cause of this. Nobody took him seriously or attended the temple before being much more concerned with the pleasures of ale and of each other's company. The old priest grew bitter, resentful, condemned them from his pulpit to an empty

temple. Finally something snapped in the bitter old man and using confiscated texts the temple had stored away from long ago called up the beast to punish the sinful townsfolk one at a time. If it is defeated, he can always call up another...

Twist

Long ago the gods would walk upon the earth and in one of these times a wandering deity in human form came upon the town to sample life amongst its people. On the surface they were a pious, hardworking group but under the surface lay bitterness, resentment, a hatred of strangers. They harboured murderers and crooks and they tried to rob the traveller of goods and dignity. As a curse the god turned them all into spirits and assigned a spectral beast to kill them all, one by one over and over again for all eternity. Killing the beast will free them to pass on into the lands of the dead, but will earn the wrath of a god. Leaving them be will condemn them to eternal torture but may earn some small favour of the god.

Twist

The beast is a trained and twisted animal, conjured up and modified by the court sorcerers of the king. The town is a hotbed of feeling against the crown and this is his way of dealing with dissident forces in his kingdom. An agent of the crown within the town, another traveller, controls the beast and brings it to the attack.

Epilogue

With the beast gone the adventurers gain a reputation as slayers of fell creatures. Pleas begin to flood in from the surrounding towns and villages. It seems that monstrous animals are plaguing the whole countryside. Coincidence or is there a master plan behind it all?

Ideas: Rather than using an exotic monster take an existing animal and modify it with strange abilities.

Adventure 42

Once in a Blue Moon

Description

Sherringham is a small village high in the forested hills above the plains and farmland below it. It guards one of the passes through to the next land and is unfettered by any toll booth or border check, the king's guards do not patrol here and use of the path is free.

Sherringham itself consists of a handful of houses and a tiny hostelry. The whole place is decrepit and run down and the small population all have the similar look and furtive glance of small, isolated communities. Some look positively feral and several families live out in the woods as trappers and woodsmen coming to town to swap their bundles and furs for food and new axe-heads.

The houses barely feel lived in and the hostelry is little better than a shack, a straw mattress and a grubby blanket, a pot to piss in and a half burnt down candle to see by. Still, it is better than being out in the torrential storm that is slashing down from the sky outside. It seems there's no alternative but to stay here.

When the moon rises and shows from behind the clouds a great howl rises up from the whole village and the forests beyond. Out in the rain the townsfolk are changing... werewolves.

Twist

The terrible weather is the fault of the werewolf town's witch priestess. Holed up on a nearby hill she calls down the storm with more and more ferocity upon the area to keep the heroes trapped. The only way to safely get out of the town is to remove the storm; there are simply too many werewolves to slaughter them all.

Twist

The people aren't true werewolves, cursed shape shifters but are, instead, a tribe of humanoid creatures able to shift freely between their animal and human forms. The characters won't know that of course

and will likely treat every bite as contagious. See their faces when silver weapons don't do anything special though...

Twist

The town is cursed by an ancient circle of carved, runic stones that lie deep in the surrounding coniferous woodland. There the 'tribe' worships the stones and lays sacrifices upon it. If the characters do not flee or are killed before the sun rises and strikes the stones they too will be hit by the curse, becoming wolf-creatures unable to leave this town, cursed to prey upon travellers who wander too close to their territory and to guard the pass.

Epilogue

Ending the curse likely involves the slaughter of many of the wolf-creatures that live in the town. When killed they revert to their innocent looking, human form. Men, women even children and these are the people that our heroic adventurers have killed. There is almost no evidence of the wolf creatures come the day and a slaughtered town has ample ability to call the local magistrate for assistance. Should the atrocity be discovered the adventurers may well find that their good deed turns around and bites them on the arse, hunted for slaughtering creatures that tried to hunt and slaughter them.

Ideas: Horror elements work best if there is some kind of build up to them a sense of slow and creeping dread followed by the gory climax. In this case that means the animalistic tendencies of the town should be slow to reveal themselves, slow to show. The introduction of language elements like 'feral' or 'wolfish' or 'bestial' should be brought in slowly as the night approaches and the transformation begins.

Ideas: Have the townsfolk have recognisable elements in both man and beast forms, scars, bald spots etc.

Adventure 43

Bands Won't Play no More...

Description

Dunfield is no longer the happy town it once was. The villagers have been forced to flee from their homes and set up in tents and shacks, their crops ripening in the fields uncollected, their houses open to wildlife and other, more unspeakable things.

A modest couple of weeks ago, just before the harvest, there was a collapse in one of the fields. Old man Meadows and his horse Edgar fell through into the earth and when they emerged they were no longer alive, but emerge they did.

Since then Dunfield has been under assault from the lands of the dead, the buried dug their way free and stalked the living, spectres and ghosts appeared and frightened many to death. Those who died or were killed rose themselves to prey on the living. The town is blighted now, cursed, the men who tried to re-take it from the dead failed and lost many of their number now the townsfolk are too few and too scared to try again.

They do not have much but they are desperate to return to their fields in time to collect the harvest before it begins to rot on the trees on the stems. What they have and what they reap they will share if the adventurers can cleanse the town of the undead blight.

Twist

The cause of the rise of the undead is an ancient artefact buried in the catacombs and tunnels that lie beneath Dunfield. These tunnels once formed part of an abbey that stood upon the site. The stones that made up the abbey building now form much of the part of the walls of Dunfield's fields but the tunnels remain. Disturbed by the collapse was an ancient artefact, one that opens a portal to the lands of the dead and it is this artefact that must be disabled or destroyed in order to prevent the undead from continuing to rise.

Twist

The cause of the rise of the undead is the fact that the town is built on a more ancient burial site. The unquiet spirits of the disturbed dead are causing the newly dead to rise and take revenge upon those who have despoiled their resting place with their farming and ploughing. Beneath the tunnels under the town are deeper tunnels, carved in earlier times and lined with the bones of the dead from past ages. Somewhere within is the seal and the spirit of one of their holy men who directs the spirits in their vengeance.

Twist

The spooks and zombies are illusions cast by a skilled illusionist who is supporting a group of bandits. They have come out of the woods to carry off all the valuables and the crops to sustain them over the winter. He's not perfect though and, while they're fighting the illusions some flaws and interesting problems might crop up to give him away.

Epilogue

The grateful populace of the town return and begin the harvest, giving a large portion of their celebratory feast to those who saved them. Over steins of ale after the feast and the dancing they whisper rumours that the tunnels underneath the town run further underground, joining up with the burial chambers under the mounds in the moors and woods, under the standing stones. These may be the burial places of kings and noblemen, buried with their wealth...

Ideas: If you go for the illusions then the farmer who fell in the hole did, indeed fall into the whole. The catacombs were being used by the bandits to get close to the town and when he fell in they were forced to move their agenda ahead.

Adventure 44

Totally Wrecked

Description

The speedy, light ship that the characters were travelling on ran into some terrible weather and has been blown, smashed against the rocks of an island. There are a few other survivors of the wreck, a couple of sailors and passengers, nobody too special, in fact they are liabilities.

The island isn't too massive and it is possible to see smoke, a sign of civilisation, rising above the forests, showing that there is some manner of habitation on the other side of the island, perhaps a small dock, perhaps a ship that can return them to civilisation. It will be a hard trek across the island for the battered wreck survivors and some of them will need assistance all the way. The interior of the island is quite wild and could hold dangers, plant, animal or man.

To make things worse what they don't know is that one of the surviving passengers is, in fact, a spy and courier for the kingdom they were supposed to be sailing to. He carries on him plans another country has for the invasion of his country and it is these enemies, in pursuit, who called up the storm that wrecked the ship. They have not called off their pursuit and are not far behind, their ships will soon come close to shore and land their launches, troops and a powerful weather witch pursuing the burdened adventurers and the courier across the island.

It just continues to get better from there...

Twist

The courier merely claims to be a courier and spy when the pursuit becomes evident. What he actually is, is a cheat, a thief and a swindler. The pursuers are members of an island temple, a temple he stole an important religious artefact from. For their god and for their own honour the pursuers will die to a man before allowing him to get away.

Twist

Oh cruel fate, the smoke rising is from hot springs on the other side of the island, not civilisation at all. The only way off this accursed rock is the ships the pursuers brought with them. If they can double back, fight their way back across the island, avoid their pursuers and take one of the ships, all of this with the helpless survivors on their back then, perhaps, they can make it back to civilisation with the courier's message.

Twist

The smoke rising does indicate civilisation but it is not a welcoming one. The small and shabby village they find has ships, of a crude sort but the settlement belongs to enemies, pirates, goblinoids or some such similar foe. Now they are trapped between this town and their pursuers. Hard choices will have to be made as to what to do and it will be hard, almost impossible, to reach the ships unnoticed.

Epilogue

The courier's letters show the enemy nation's mobilisation for war and the leader of his country decides to send a message. Thanking and rewarding the characters for their part in protecting the courier and delivering the message he asks again for their services. They will travel back with an ambassador and a message of his, ensuring her safety when she reveals their knowledge of the enemy plans and tries to convince them to turn aside from their course of action.

Ideas: For a change from a desert island substitute one from a different type of zone. A blasted icy rock frequented by seabirds. A forest covered granite slab, some other environment that doesn't immediately bring to mind *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

Adventure 45

Deathblow

Description

In one of the classic fantasy meeting places, a bar, a tavern, a brothel, some sort of 'adventurer's guild' or some other artifice the characters are approached by a well dressed man with a very competent air about him. He gives no preamble but presents a purse of gold and a signed and sealed letter from a duke, military advisor to the king, this to show he is serious.

The man is a member of the kingdom's secret army, a man charged with dealing with a particularly insidious supernatural threat.

Vampires.

He is offering them a job, he has located a nest of the fiends operating within the city and he intends to wipe them out but he needs help. He will educate them, equip them, train them and they will be richly rewarded earning the favour of the duke as well as the coin to line their pockets.

The vampires he has found are in control of a small merchant guild the upper echelons of which are all vampires and the lower echelons of which are all their hypnotised and bound servants. They control a brothel, an inn and a shipping house and warehouse as well as a grand, defensible property in the better part of the city. They have guards and followers and their master is quite powerful.

Twist

The agent who has recruited them is a vampire himself, one who struggles to overcome the curse and does his part to redeem himself by destroying his kin. He wears an amulet that gives him the power to go out in the sun and he tries to hide from his vampiric side though it may overcome him at any moment.

Twist

After they drive the stake into the noblewoman's heart they are shocked to discover that rather than turning into smoke and ash she simply screams and sprays a great deal of arterial blood everywhere. With the guards dead or disabled and her ladyship out of the way their benefactor and his associates begin looting the place knowing full well that these lovely dupes will take all the blame...

Twist

As they raid the various places it becomes slowly clear that these vampires are after some form of coexistence. They are not evil, exactly, though they do need human blood to survive. Their shipping business is in fact a slaver business and they take their fill from the slaves they trade before passing them on. Their businesses are legitimate and they all live in mortal terror of the hunter they are working with, regarding him as an evil man, an evil man who has made mistakes in the past...

Epilogue

This could turn out to be the beginning of a chain of vampire related adventures. There are other towns and cities infested with these creatures and they need slaying. People will pay well for them to be hunted down and destroyed but these night creatures have their own champions to send against the heroes, champions whose mortal powers have been enhanced and made better by their crossing over into the twilight world. It all forms part of some greater vampire conspiracy which is slowly unmasked as they travel across the country hunting them down, piecing together the clues about a great magic that will block out the very sun...

Ideas: Try to avoid cliché as much as you can or play on it and give it different spin. Cliché is somewhat unavoidable when talking about vampires so as long as you don't descend into camp you're OK.

Adventure 46

Dust Devil

Description

'A river once flowed here my friend, carving a swathe of green through the dust of the desert. Now no water flows, the green has dried and turned to dust. My people know this is not a natural drought. Even the hardy desert plants are dying and blowing away in the wind. The air has no damp, there is no wetness on the ground in the morning, the animals are falling ill and our dreams are filled with nightmares.'

'This blight, this unholy dryness we know from where it comes. The forbidden lands to the west where the shifting dunes will make a man lose himself, where you can be buried if you fall asleep. In these lands where my people cannot and dare not go, that is where this comes from.'

'The tribe are too proud to ask for help, they are nomads and they will wander elsewhere. Many of them will die in doing so, it is a long and hard path to the next oasis and with every day they have less water and less food. I am a trader, they no longer think me one of the tribe while your people do not consider me one of them. However, I have money, I have goods, I can give you some silver or many pressed dates in payment.'

'Please, restore the life to my homeland.'

Out in the shifting desert sands a temple has been uncovered, awakening a powerful liche and his mummified guardians, the life drained from the land to feed his magical hunger. Now he draws strength and prepares to make his mark on the world once again.

Twist

The liche is slowly raising an army of sand demons, constructs made from the shifting sand of the desert, to be his guardians and protectors, to supplant the creaking, crumbling mummies that currently defend him. He has not raised many as yet but the process is getting quicker and they are a lot more powerful than the traps and mummies that the adventurers might otherwise suspect. They blend in with the ground very nicely as well...

Twist

There is no evil temple, the riverbed has always been dry, there is no liche. There is simply the merchant and his tribal friends waiting in the ruins of the old temple, waiting until the party have delved deep inside and been weakened by the traps and lesser monsters that shelter there. Then the tribe will strike, killing them, taking their fine clothes and fancy goods for the merchant to turn a tidy profit at the next oasis.

Twist

The life-leeching properties of the temple empower the liche and weaken any living thing within its, increasing, area of influence. So long as they are within the temple's zone of power they will slowly lose health and strength while the liche gains. Negotiating the temple quickly so they still have enough power to defeat him is vital.

Epilogue

This great desert was once created by the liche and his twelve brothers. All now lie beneath the shifting sands of the desert, waiting for their time to rise. Each temple shows the location of the remaining twelve in an elaborate map room. Perhaps this horror could be diverted if they were dug up and disposed of, one by one. The winds have been picking up of late, a great sandstorm is likely, should it come all might be uncovered, then things would change, forever.

Ideas: People have set ideas about desert games. They want mummies, artefacts, snakes and scorpions. They expect something a bit pulpy. Make sure you build in elements that do play on these themes, in new ways.

Adventure 47

between them.

Monkey Sea Monkey Do

Description

An unprecedented number of ships are disappearing or being wrecked all along the Shark Coast. Merchantmen, warships, all types, indiscriminately are being wrecked and destroyed all along the line of this, admittedly, treacherous stretch of land.

The ports are becoming starved of business, important people have gone missing, presumed drowned. The hulks of the wrecks scatter the shoreline like the bones of strange sea beasts, some of them crushed, others holed others seemingly intact but stained with blood and emptied of their crews, their holds empty.

Something or someone is out in the sea, causing these problems, this destruction. Something has to be done but the navy is helpless without information, indeed they barely dare leave dock. There is not enough magic available to send a whole army beneath the waves but a select few, our plucky adventurers perhaps, might take the king's shilling and descend beneath the waves to investigate the cause of the destruction.

What they do discover will be a strong band of outlaw merfolk, tritons and others. Something akin to the ronin bandit groups of feudal Japan. They are grizzled fighters, tough from being outcast, from surviving and they and their pet sea creatures have decided to turn their hand to looting the surface dwellers, an easy target, in order to survive.

Twist

Over generations the people of the coastal villages have interbred, now and then, with the fairer folk of the sea. There exists a blood tie between the fringes of human society and the fringes of the society beneath the waves. The people of both are poor but together they have hatched a scheme to profit them both. Many of the coastal villages have become wreckers, lighting false lights to lure ships onto the rocks. Their water-breathing brethren loot what sinks, hiding it until the villagers pass out of suspicion, splitting the proceeds

Twist

The threat under the sea is a magus who has migrated there from the land, preferring a life beneath the waves. Using his magic he has ensnared many sea creatures and merfolk to his will and now, as he builds a tower beneath the waves he needs materials and wealth, sending his enthralled servants to sink and destroy in order to get what he needs. He is thoroughly insane and believes only in the sea and its superiority over the land.

Twist

The culprit behind the disasters is a massive kraken, grown ill from some unnatural infection it has swum closer to shore, lashing out at anyone and everything that comes close to it, surging from place to place and growing stronger, angrier and more insane with every passing moment. The outcast merfolk that have been seen are simply hunters, trying to bring the beast down, tracking it, too weak in numbers to take it by themselves they need help, if they are not branded as the problem immediately.

Epilogue

The wider merfolk society might take offence, they may be outlaws but they're their outlaws. The source of the disease that afflicts the kraken might infect other great sea beasts, even lesser ones, causing more problems beneath and above the waves. The villages might need clearing out, smugglers caves and tunnels containing the purloined loot reclaimed in a campaign that ranges the length of the whole coast, the customs men supplemented with mercenaries like our heroes.

Ideas: The action takes place on the coast. Call up your own memories of the seaside when describing the scenes. The crash of the surf, the smell of the tide-line, the stiff breezes, all of that will add to the game.

Adventure 48

Canapé?

Description

The kingdoms of Vestia and Österland have been at war for several years. While never breaking into total war there have been a number of tragic ‘incidents’ and several battles along their border resulting in many deaths. Towns along the border are in dispute and a few have changed hands so many times in the last few years that they hardly know to which noble they should owe their loyalty and pay their taxes.

Over the last two years the priesthood of each country has painstakingly conferred in secret and manipulated their respective governments into hosting peace talks. Neither country trusted the other enough to hold the talks in their country and neither trusted the other to have their soldiers acting as guards, the churches have no soldiers of their own and so instead have turned to the hardy adventurers to provide security and prevent incident at these crucial talks.

The venue is a small and ornate castle in a nearby neutral barony between the two larger countries. It is palatial and grand but somewhat old. With the coming of the talks it is filled with the advisors of both kings, with priests, ambassadors and nobles. The castle staff are innumerable and their functions not necessarily obvious to an adventurer more used to living in a field, they have their work cut out for them, there may be... incidents.

Twist

The priests have been the ones manipulating the war into occurring though their secretive hand has not been felt yet. Each regards the other as the worst infidels in existence and each is determined to use their countries military might to eradicate the other. They have been forced into an unholy alliance to try and force this war forward, the talks are a ploy to stage a major incident, each church having a squad of highly trained and powerful inquisitors ready and waiting to kill everyone in the castle...

Twist

Neither party has come to these talks in good faith. The ranks of each contain assassins, poisoners and spies at the very least and possibly things much worse. Both are deeply suspect of each other and each attack and counterattack leads to more recriminations and less chance of peace, even if they are both as guilty as each other.

Twist

The host of the talks, the baron, is a social climber but is also quite provincial. His social graces are somewhat retarded compared to the greater courts of each nation and it is his pawing of pretty noble ladies and the gross insults he peppers to both sides, unintentionally, that are the greatest block to peace. Keeping the pleasure-loving and crass baron out of the way and happy turns out to be the greatest thing the adventurers could do to ensure peace.

Epilogue

The two countries settle into an uneasy peace with each other and a new border is drawn up. The villages and towns along this border divided up between the two kingdoms with a lot of wrangling; if any of these towns are not handed over then the deal will be off. Now these towns need to be informed and the change needs to be enforced. Rather than blight their memory with the peoples of these settlements the two kingdoms decide to use their mercenary guards from the conference. The characters are given decrees from the two kings and a copy of the treaty, sent forth to bring the bad news to the towns that are changing hands...

Ideas: The conference should contain many non-player characters with real personality and their own goals. A good tip for creating memorable non-player characters is to use the personalities and characteristics of people you know, mixing them up a bit to keep them fresh and a little different.

Adventure 49

Rustling Around

Description

The plains are great territory for cattle but the grass around the frayed river is the most succulent and most sustaining to the large cattle that are bred to walk the plains and provide their meat and milk. Two large ranch/farms have been built in this area over the last couple of years, since the worst of the local monsters was slain and it became more safe. Both of these farmsteads are quite large, resembling wooden stockades more than simple farm buildings and each is filled with prideful farm folk, harder border people with a tough and simple outlook on life.

Each farm wishes to roam its cattle on the lush grasses around the frayed river, each considers themselves to have set up first in the area and several clashes have already taken place. The plains are not entirely free of predators though and protecting the herds takes up most of their time leaving little spare time for feuding. One of the farms has saved enough money to be able to hire some people to change that, the adventurers.

The usual sob story is given, that these men came onto their land and took away their prime grazing ground, that their business is suffering for it and that they'll do anything to drive their competitors away from the land. What they suggest is a variety of things, not least stealing some of their rival's cattle in recompense for their loss. The adventurers have pretty much free reign to ruin the other farm and earn their reward.

Twist

Once the other farm gets wind of what is happening they make the adventurers a counter offer, feeding them exactly the same sob story. Who was there first is an unsolvable mystery lost down the past few years but the two farms both adamantly believe it and each will happily ruin themselves in their pursuit of seeing the other farm go out of business. If they play their cards right the characters can reap a great deal of benefit from both farms before they go under.

Twist

While the feuding is going on a great lizard or other creature settles within the river, preying indiscriminately on cattle from both sides, both of which call a temporary truce to get our intrepid heroes to deal with the waterborne, cattle-eating menace.

Twist

There is a young lad, or girl, at one of the farms who hates the farming, cattle-raising life and desires very much to leave to become an adventurer. They will do all they can to sneak away, to watch the adventurers at work and will desperately try to get the characters to take them with them. The farm doesn't want to let them go and considers them too young and the career move foolish.

Epilogue

More settlers arrive in the area, challenging the pre-eminence of the existing farm which has grown larger and more successful since the previous problems. The farm needs to establish itself as more than a simple farm, as a power in the area controlling the farming, before things get out of their grasp. The characters are recruited once more to help inform the new settlers of the way things are done around here. Not all the settlers seem to agree with the way things are done, having come here seeking independence and a chance to make a start away from the demands of others. There will be some resistance. If they succeed then the farm will become the nucleus of a new town and its head man an important figure.

Ideas: This is a classic western premise and, while running the game in a fantasy milieu you can play on that by incorporating elements of the westerns, high noon 'shoot outs', a travelling ranger trying to bring law and order and so on.

Adventure 50

Where Griffins Dare

Description

For a hundred years or more the black fortress atop the iron cliffs has stood abandoned, the secret stair that leads to it lost to folklore and rumour, a forbidding, slowly rotting structure hanging over the lands below and casting a long shadow of history over the curious who pass through the area.

Reaching it has always proved impossible, buffeting winds make flight incredibly dangerous, scaling the cliff has only ever caused rock falls and avalanches and the way up has never been found even by the most eagle eyed. Now however it seems that a small tribe of orcs has taken up residence in the old fort, raiding and pillaging with impunity before melting back into whatever secret passage or stair leads up to the fault, impregnable, beyond revenge.

Until now that is, a child chasing a runaway lamb has found their secret stair, so confident were they that it would never be discovered that it was not even guarded. An army could not scale the fort or breach it from such an entrance but a small group might be able to sneak all the way up to the black fortress and get within it. Quite what they can do to destroy the fortress or compromise the orcs once there is not known but the reward is ample and doubtless the fort also contains treasures as well as the orcs' loot.

The secret stair is a passage within the cliff, tunnels formed in the rock by water long ago, a difficult climb but one that can be made, one that has been made easier by orcish ladders and ropes but which is made harder by the underground creatures that dwell there, they have learned to be afraid of the sound and smell of orcs but not of humans.

Twist

There are three paths up through the interior of the cliff to the top. One leads to the fortress, one is a dead end and the third, baited with 'shinies' is the lair of an old and well-fed wyvern, one pale and adapted to life

beneath the ground, blind but able to hear and smell well enough to make up for it. It knows the tunnels intimately and can move with frightening speed in the pitch black, clutching to the walls and outcroppings with its claws while it seeks out its prey.

Twist

The orcs have only settled in the tunnels and are not conveniently all situated in the fort at the top. Indeed the fort is abandoned. It seems even orcs dare not settle there. The fort is haunted by the last garrison stationed there who lost their lives in some strange disaster a great many years ago. The fort hides the secret of their mysterious demise along with goods and treasures enough to tempt adventurers.

Twist

The fort commanded a great view of the surrounding terrain and, while the siege weapons and great siege-bows have long since rotted away the stores of greek fire and explosive alchemical mixtures remain in the cellars, if anything even more volatile. If they could somehow be set off then the whole fort would be reduced to rubble and brick, sliding down the cliff-face and taking the orc tribe with it, a perfect solution except for the small difficulty of how to do it.

Epilogue

The tunnels in the cliff go down as well as up, leading deep into the bowels of the earth. Deep down there is a great underground lake, forests of mushrooms and a great deal of strange creatures, adapted to their life down in the dark. The reduction of the fort and the disturbances in the tunnels have stirred many of these creatures, some of which are starting to move into the surrounding lands, preying on farms and people. Seal the tunnel or slay the beasts in their spawning grounds.



Adventure 51

Heavy Metal

Description

Darrien Hammersong is a renown blacksmith and armourer known of across the land for his great skill and sought out by adventurers, kings and warriors from across the lands. The ownership of one of his great works confers impressive status and merely wielding one of his blades may get a warrior out of more fights than it gets them into.

The great craftsman has been missing for some time. Besieged in his home town by those desperate to get a hold of one of his weapons he disappeared one night and nothing has been heard of him since. Now he lives a quiet, anonymous life in a small village, shoeing horses and occasionally dabbling in his old ways by making a weapon, purely for his own satisfaction.

Of late he has been getting less and less content with his idyllic life. It would be perfect if he could still create but his anonymity makes it impossible for him to procure the rare ingredients that he needs to craft his more unusual creations. Closing up his shop in the village and taking with him what remains of his fortune and a dagger and chain jerkin of his own creation he sets out to find a group honest, or mercenary, enough to respect his wishes while finding him the ingredients he needs.

Our adventurers.

Twist

The sort of things a magical armourer needs, dragon's blood, chimera scales, Cyclops eyes, are all found relatively easily enough in the stores of magical suppliers who have teams of adventurers and collectors on retainer hunting these things down all the time. Darrien needs them fresh though, this precludes shops and makes speed of the essence, that and the ability to take down such creatures.

Twist

Darrien has all the ingredients he needs to make one of his masterworks, thanks to the adventurers but before he can craft the weapons and so pay them he needs a sufficiently hot and powerful forge. A normal smithy will not do, it lacks the importance, the force. There is a volcanic mountain not so far away, the remnants of an old adamantine mine, long since mined out, dig into the side of this mountain. Doubtless it is infested with creatures of the foulest kind and rumour has it the lake of fire beneath the mountain borders hell itself. Still, if the place could be cleared out he could use the forge and he might pay extra for a sample of the black iron of hell.

Twist

There is one final ingredient that Darrien has failed to mention. He requires the blood of a hero in which to forge his steel, the blade taking on the essence of the one who died. He intends to sacrifice one of the group to make his blade, he just needs to separate them from the others and to slay them, relying on his armour and his dagger, powerful artefacts of his devising.

Epilogue

Word gets out that a new Hammersong blade has been seen. Someone knows where he is. The nobles, adventurers and heroes begin scouring the countryside for the players to seek them out, to find out where Hammersong is hiding. The more unscrupulous ones may resort to strong-arm tactics to try and find out where the master smith is hiding. They will simply not accept he is dead without proof and if they do find him dead suspicion will instantly fall upon the adventurers.

Ideas: Hammersong's works should be different to other magical items with their own unique powers.

Adventure 52

Gold & Rum

Description

Out of the mist they came, a fleet of pirate ships, five strong, loaded down with cutthroats of the worst sort. Flying under merchant flags they came in the night to Gutterport, unloading their cargo of villains. The town guard were swiftly overcome and then the terror started. Looting, rape, murder, Gutterport is being systematically taken for everything it has. Every sop of drink, every store of food, every pretty girl and every treasure is being loaded onto those pirate vessels. They hold the town, barricaded and protected by the great siege bows on the pirate ships.

A few have managed to escape the scouring of Gutterport and to bring the terrible news to the duke. There is little he can do with an army. The pirates are guerrilla fighters, hold the terrain of the town, have hostages and have the defence of their great bows. It will take too long to have larger siege weapons constructed with greater range to reduce their ships and meanwhile Gutterport bleed.

It is determined that if only the girls of the town can be rescued from being hostages and the flagship of the pirate fleet destroyed then they can risk the duke's army invading the town. This requires a commando mission into the town to infiltrate the pirates and to get to the ship, free the women and then destroy it. The duke issues a call with a reward in the hopes that some intrepid band of adventurers might take up the challenge and aid the poor burning Gutterport.

Twist

One of the hostages has fallen hopelessly in love with the pirate captain Orion, a dashing fellow, however cruel. She forgives him her rape and her placing in chains having gone entirely insane under her harsh treatment. She does, however, not wish to be rescued and will do all she can to slip away from the adventurers and to raise the alarm when they are trying to save her.

Twist

The pirates are a cursed fleet who defied a goddess of the sea. One of her baubles was recently found by one of the folk of Gutterport, caught up in his nets. They seek it in order to return it to her. To all intents and purposes the pirates are undead but retain the agility and intelligence they had in life. Unfortunately for them the town's person who has the artefact is one of the ones who fled. Having crept in to defeat the pirates the adventurers must now creep out again, the artefact is their only bargaining chip for the return of the hostages.

Twist

The pirate scam is a trap, the pirates are thinly disguised soldiers from a rival state. Once they lure the duke's army into the town they intend to destroy them all in one fell blow with a terrible magical weapon secreted aboard the flagship. The army could be destroyed in a single blow leaving the dukedom utterly exposed to a more conventional invasion. The proof as well as the hostages is on the flagship but the device is heavy and difficult to understand, a more difficult prospect to escape with.

Epilogue

Defeated and reduced to tatters the remnants of the pirate fleet returns to the sea. There, seeking revenge they perform sacrifices and enact rituals to bring forth a great sea-wyrm to give them their revenge upon the duchy, attacking shipping and coastal ports and towns with the creature, even though controlling it causes them to sacrifice one of their number each day. So consumed are they by revenge that they do not care about the cost in their own lives. The wyrm and its controllers must be defeated.

Ideas: Undead pirates should have an increased ability to take damage over normal people and the first time they are struck down and get back up should be a huge surprise.

Adventure 53

Sanctions

Description

Many and varied are the crimes perpetrated by the smaller Caliphate of Omsharee upon the more peaceful and conventional kingdom of Keneda. The two states are separated by a thin line of craggy mountains but the caliphate has always been more interested in interfering with its neighbour across the mountains rather than with its other, neighbouring, hostile caliphates.

Assassins have been sent, magical beasts, poisoners, raiding parties, unwelcome missionaries. Small border villages and towns have even been attacked wholesale even though the caliphate does not have an army large enough to truly challenge the might of Keneda.

The king of Keneda has finally had enough and has decided to act, to do something to teach the caliphate a lesson. Not wholesale war but a warning nonetheless to back off. He knows that the caliphate is a dry and inhospitable land trading its mineral wealth for the food it needs to feed its population and much of that food comes through Keneda and over the mountains to Omsharee. He decides to blockade this flow. There are many small passes through the mountains and so he determines to allow a sort of licensed banditry. Any trade caravans making their way through the mountains may be attacked by licensed adventurers with no threat of retribution from Keneda.

Truly a golden opportunity.

Twist

After a few of these caravans are attacked and prevented from passing, after the loot and food stocks begin to pile up and just as the adventurers are feeling pretty pleased with themselves there comes a ragged and starving column of refugees from the caliphate, desperate in their search for food. This is the true result of their blockade and now it is undeniable, in their face, before them.

Twist

Reckoning, after a couple of weeks, that the caliphate must be desperate for food and goods by this point an enterprising Kenadian merchant decides he can hire a group of mercenaries, punch through the blockade, sell his goods and still make a tidy sum. Of course, he and his group of grizzled mercenaries choose the adventurers blockade to try and slam through...

Twist

Unknown to many of the blockaders the caliphate makes peace with Kenada. Word fails to reach them before they have raided another caravan and, with the licenses revoked that is now a criminal act. Hunted now by both sides how do they get away with their sizeable stash of treasure and goods to somewhere safe?

Epilogue

The blockade eventually makes the caliphate sue for peace, however they are deeply resentful and a vengeful people with a different regard to treaties with infidels than the Kenadians have. Regaining their strength and making allies with the nearest caliphates they resolve to take revenge slipping agents into Kenada to poison and salt their fields and orchards, to blockade their major trade routes, to subject them to the same horror of starvation that they were subjected to. The Kenadians may well turn to the same mercenary adventurers in their hour of need, unable to mobilise their armies for lack of food.

Ideas: There should be no villains in this adventure, no evil, just simply people of different beliefs and cultures clashing together. The scenario will be far more powerful if there is some ambiguity over just who the 'bad guy' is.

Adventure 54

The Antique Prometheus

Description

The college of wizardry in Shamarra has a renowned library know across the land for the breadth of its collection, if not the depth. There are tomes to be found there that simply cannot be found anywhere else. All under lock and key in the great college and shown only to the privileged few that have the honour to be taught their magical skill there.

This often does not seem fair to people, particularly collectors of rare books some of whom will pay enormous sums to complete their collections. One of these collectors greatly desires a tome that lies in this library and contacts the adventurers, willing to pay a considerably large sum, if they will break into the college library and retrieve for him the copy of the *Maleficent Infernus* that they have.

It is only a college, the treasure is only a book and it is only held in a library. He is willing to pay greatly. It should seem like a simple enough task to do as he asks. Of course, the college is built to keep the students in and so is fortified, wizards do place great value on their books and spells and so the library is a well designed and well protected building, still, it shouldn't prove that difficult to break in...

Twist

The library, when in use, is filled with magic lecturers and students, the lecturers are all powerful wizards and will certainly not allow any tome to be taken without a fight, backed up by their students they should create sufficient deterrent to put off any thief. At night the library is empty but the building is strongly defended with magical traps and alarms. It is even said that summoned creatures prowl the library at night ready to eat any thieves or even students attempting to get at the tomes of more 'adult' magic without proper supervision.

Twist

The concentrated presence of magic in the books and scrolls of the library warps space. The library does not conform to normal physics or shape and instead behaves something like an M.C. Escher drawing. Gravity can reverse, doors can open into strange places and nothing really conforms to any kind of order. Even getting to the book is a challenge, getting out by the same route is impossible and they will have to find another way.

Twist

The book they are after is held in a vault at the centre of the library along with many other dangerous magical books. It crackles with flame and leafs through its own pages. It is clearly a thing of power and evil and the wizards wished it defended so much they bound a powerful elemental in its defence. If the book is so much as touched the elemental makes its appearance, intones a powerful warning about the evil nature of the book and then attacks.

Epilogue

Assuming the adventurers complete the mission and the book is returned to the collector he eagerly pays and dismisses them from his presence, eagerly beginning to read, caressing the pages in a somewhat disturbing fashion. Within the day he has been possessed by the entity within the book and has opened a portal to hell, unleashing armies of minor demons upon the city. The book is the link, if it can be found and returned to Shamarra, or destroyed, then the link should be severed, the demons sent back to hell and the collector returned to sanity and removed from the control of the demon.

Ideas: To stop the adventurers simply looting every single book and scroll they can find in the hopes of dosing up on powerful magic intersperse the magical tomes and grimoires with many conventional histories and books on the theory of magic as well as those that actually contain spells. There might also be bestiaries and magical books that are little more than animated or that light themselves up so they can be read at night.

Adventure 55

A Hunting we Will Go

Description

Prince Harvold is an avid hunter and for most of the year the king's forest is off limits to anyone else. Patrolled by household rangers and gamekeepers most poachers end up with an arrow through them before they have so much as bagged a rabbit in the forest.

The prince's selfishness when it comes to access to the forest is lifted for one, single day every year when he has the forest filled with monsters and prized animals and opens the forest to any hunter in the great games. Anyone may enter these games, hunting monsters and game singly or in groups, though their score is divided up if they hunt as a group, every kill is assigned a score and some token must be taken from every slain creature to confirm its death.

The prince joins the hunt himself and has won three times in the ten years he has been holding the games. He is an accomplished hunter and knows the forest better than just about anyone, which allows him to retain an edge. This year as a prize he is offering a chest of gold and a magical horn, one that calls surrounding game animals, not monsters, into the hunter's presence, allowing those in far away places and unfamiliar territory to guarantee themselves some food if they need to hunt.

Such rewards should prove irresistible to egotistical and arrogant adventurers.

Twist

Despite their successes the adventurers only come second. Another group of hunters has presented the bloody tooth of a green dragon from the depths of the forest, a creature that, alone, almost eclipses everyone's score. As the presentation goes ahead a great roar comes from the edge of the forest and a slightly wounded green dragon, with a broken tooth comes out of the forest, less than happy and wanting to take it out on somebody.

Twist

One of the hunting parties out in the forest has decided it would be much easier for them if they collected the tokens from other hunters and presented them as their own. After all, some hunters will be shot in accidents, others killed by the creatures stocking the forest. If a few rivals don't return nobody will notice. Besides, rivals will be weak, easy pickings after they have fought the monsters. It's a great plan and the party make good targets for the rogue group.

Twist

The prince has no intention of losing, many of the beasts have been hand-reared with his help and are hopelessly tame around him, making them easy kills. If desperate he may well use the horn that is the prize to up his score a little. The party may well witness him using these underhand tactics. What they do about it is up to them.

Epilogue

Their prowess as hunters established the prince asks the party to join him in the hunt for a mythical beast in another of the kingdom's great forests. This giant white stag is said to have magical horns, each of which can grant a successful hunter a single wish. He offers to allow the group one of the horns for their help hunting down the beast. The forest is ancient, the prey gigantic and wily and the dark places of the wood full of other threats. It should prove a challenge, even for the prince, the party and their retinue.

Ideas: Rather than come up with a whole forest map it might be better to come up with the descriptions of a dozen interesting forest settings and a table to see which animals and monsters might be available to hunt in each location.

Adventure 56

But is it Art?

Description

Necromancers are a strange lot, hiding themselves away with their bones and corpses, wearing black, seeing the world as full of death rather than full of life. Little wonder that they feel separated from the rest of the world, given special insight, different ways of thinking, different ethics. That can even extend to a different appreciation of beauty, a beauty in death, in blood and bone, in rot.

Erasmus is one such necromancer, given to different aesthetic senses than most. He sees the beauty in death and he used his abilities to try and be an artist, to present his view of death to the sophisticated masses of the city of Sheridan. They rejected him wholesale, his sculptures where the bodies were still groaning or trying to move shocked even the cynical and world weary people of the great city and he was branded as evil, chased out of the city by the temple guard.

Unappreciated and angry at the city he has since turned his hand to making his creations even more outlandish and a lot more dangerous. The city has been plagued by the rampages of these undead sculptures, flesh golems, bone golems and stitched together creatures out of his deranged imaginings. Something needs to be done but nobody dares challenge the powerful and clearly insane necromancer, especially when his blood is up about his art.

He is allegedly camped outside the city in the black woods, a place where a mass grave from a previous plague is kept. Doubtless that is where he is getting his raw material. The city will be most grateful to those who solve the problem.

Twist

The black wood and the roads around the city crawl with the undead, not all of them converted by his black arts and artistic skill into the greater sculptures. He prefers to work with ambulatory material it seems and so has raised the whole plague pit at once; taking those

he needs to work on one at a time. Fighting their way to him won't be easy.

Twist

The zombies raised from the plague pit still carry the contagion in their bite and on their claws. It has not yet emerged in the city when the party is there but they could well end up infected.

Twist

Erasmus truly is an inspired genius, several of his creations are masterworks of breathtaking, if disturbing beauty. These necrosculptures are so well crafted that they gain some kind of bonus to their actions and to the damage that they inflict.

Epilogue

With Erasmus defeated most of his creatures are defeated as well though a few remain abroad to waylay unwary travellers. In the wake of his death, as with many artists, Erasmus' work is suddenly appreciated and of much greater value. Galleries in the city are falling over each other to display his surviving works and a reasonable reward is offered for the capture of his remaining, wandering art pieces. They must be taken intact and 'alive' of course.

Ideas: The works of H.R. Giger can provide some interesting ideas on the forms some of the necrosculpture might take.

Ideas: Hang the rules. If something is cool he's built it into his creatures. Feel free to use anything.

Adventure 57

The Dragonhoard

Description

The characters are approached by a drop-dead gorgeous redheaded woman in a brilliant copper and scarlet shimmering dress. Her tawny eyes are wide and pleading as she begs for them to help her with a problem she has. She refuses to reveal any details but promises, swears convincingly, that they will be more than adequately rewarded for their trouble if they meet her to discuss it on the plains outside of the town. Closer inspection shows that she is a bit battered and bruised and that there are many small cuts on her forearms. How could any gallant adventurer refuse the pleas of such a fair maid?

When they meet she stands some distance away and slowly, but surely, shifts shape, becoming her true form, a regal but young red dragon, glittering scales and wounds matching those on her humanoid body. She does not attack but instead begs them to put away their weapons, curling up wearily on the ground and crying great, crystalline dragon tears.

She tells them her hoard, the collection of three generations of her family, has been robbed. Adventurers, or bandits as she calls them, smashing their way into her home, assaulting her, driving her out and then taking everything they had spent centuries accruing.

If they will but help her to retrieve the gold and items that were taken from her, she is afraid of these bandits and is still too weak to take them on, she will use her sorcerous powers for them in reward as well as allowing them to keep one thing each from the hoard that they recover.

She is desperate.

Twist

The adventurers who took the hoard have scattered, some retiring with their new-found wealth and living lives of comfort, others having spent what they had on

new and powerful equipment to help them take other hoards and destroy other creatures. Some of the men are lowlife scum, others are heroes to the towns they have returned to but they are all in different places and of different strengths and powers.

Twist

The dragon hasn't lost a thing; she has no hoard and is not that long hatched. Prestige amongst dragons is in part determined by the size and splendour of their hoard and she is nothing more than an ambitious social climber. The treasures of the other adventurers, even with things taken out to pay this group, will give her a good head start over other young dragons and make her a much courted and consulted lizard.

Twist

Whatever the characters take she will also want back and may well repeat her tactic, sending a fresh party of adventurers after this group, claiming the items were stolen and wanting them returned. Their artefacts and treasure will add to her own while the new group of dupes do her bidding.

Epilogue

After performing these deeds the characters may well end up considered friends to dragons. Dragons are ancient and in many cases wise creatures. They know many secrets and they pass news and messages to each other keeping well informed about events across the land. The dragons may well know things that kings and rulers do not and having human agents to do their bidding, to shape the world as they see fit could well appeal to them. Their treasures give them deep pockets and their magic and other powers could make them powerful and desirable sponsors.



Adventure 58

Shattered Armour

Description

There exists a suit of armour, of magical properties, not intended to be worn by any individual but whose properties are said to make any fortress that the armour resides within indestructible. Oh it can still be infiltrated, the gates thrown wide by infiltrators but attempts to undermine the walls or to smash them with siege engines can only fail.

The armour was broken up and scattered long ago, the breastplate, helmet, arm greaves and leg grieves scattered to different places after a liche lord, one who could not be starved out of an invulnerable keep, used the armour to cement his period of foul rule. He was finally destroyed when a band managed to steal into his chambers through a latrine pipe built for his mortal followers but after that the armour was deemed to dangerous to use and was broken up the pieces scattered and defended.

War is on the horizon within one of the kingdoms and the royal scholars think they have discerned the locations of the five pieces, if the pieces can be found and returned the king can create an invulnerable fortress, concentrating his armies in one place and reducing any potential invaders to nothing as they smash ineffectively against the walls.

The armies are needed to defend the borders and to hold off any invading army long enough for the pieces to be found and preparations to be made. A group of hardy and famous adventurers should be trustworthy enough to complete the task though.

Twist

The liche lord is not dead he was merely driven away, waiting for a time when he could rise again. Now he and his minions have also discovered the location of the armour and he desires it, wishing to make his new, underground fortress impenetrable and indestructible, a fortress he has methodically eradicated all possible flaws from. The characters are now in a race with his

minions to bring the armour together first and the king may face two threats instead of one.

Twist

Each of the locations turns out to already be empty, a minor barony has already collected the pieces and holds them in their own fortress, there is evidence and clues in each of the locations as to where the pieces have been taken. How do you get into an impregnable fortress and steal its most prized treasure? Is the king's need greater than that of the barony?

Twist

The armour has lost its power, when it is brought together nothing happens. The king has exposed himself utterly to a hammer blow from the invading army. Is something missing from the armour? Has something been missed? What can be done in this hour of great need?

Epilogue

Crazed by the power of the armour the 'invincible king' becomes oppressive, seduced by the idea of his own undefeatable strength. Concerned only with the loyalty of his troops he lavishes favour on them while he bleeds the land dry, sure in himself that he cannot be attacked successfully and can do whatever he wishes.

Ideas: Here are some of the places the armour pieces could be secured. You could place one in a dragon hoard, another at the bottom of a lake or sea, another in the care of a powerful and immortal sorcerer, another might be in the treasury of another kingdom. Each piece may have its own unique powers separate to its powers of impregnability.

Adventure 59

I Hate it Here

Description

The printing press is a relatively new invention in these parts. It is not widely available and its use is limited by budget and by law to the nobility and the clergy. The printing of works by others is not permitted and still requires the employment of quite expensive scribes or donations to the monasteries who still do such laborious scribing and copying work. Unauthorised printings are burned and their writers severely punished, sometimes by the severing of hands.

Something has happened that is changing that, upsetting the balance. A rogue bard and writer who goes by the pen-name 'The Spider' has somehow procured a press and ink and is turning out single page satires and rants against the rulers of the land, against the clergy and against anything else he doesn't like. Illustrated with crude and disgusting woodcuts these pages are being read and are undermining the government and church as well as laughing at their printing policy.

The Spider has proved far too clever for their conventional enforcement and so they have turned to more desperate measures, the party, to track down this clever and charismatic criminal and bring him to justice. They also want the press destroyed along with any existing copies of his works.

The reward is far out of proportion with the job, it seems this fellow has really upset both government and church and they are throwing all their resources into having him dealt with.

Twist

The Spider is not operating alone, besides his young apprentice who is almost the same as him in every regard he has an experienced bodyguard. Around them he also has the printer who colludes and a network of informants and spies throughout the city who keep him informed to such a level he almost knows things before the people involved even know they're happening.

There is more of a 'ring' to deal with than a single figure.

Twist

The Spider is immensely popular with the people and any attempt to take him down, discredit him or bring him to justice will likely spark at the very least a riot and at the very most a revolt. Having a change of heart and changing sides may well be the only way to get out of such a situation.

Twist

Every single accusation, every slander, every secret exposed, everything The Spider prints in his sheets is the absolute truth embellished only by vitriol, not lies. What the hirers of the party really want to know is how he knows these things and how he has this strange gift to, apparently, see the absolute truth.

Epilogue

Within days of The Spider's capture more sheets begin to appear, along with a printed and bound book of his previous works. Is he writing from prison? From beyond the grave? Are there several Spiders? Perhaps there is a more sinister or mystical explanation even than that. Did they capture a double? The government becomes apoplectic, the party has failed them, arrested killed or captured the wrong man. They owe them and they must see out the task that they were hired for. Meanwhile unrest grows and the pages grow more and more caustic and inflammatory.

Ideas: Some of the truths released might be things that were better kept a secret. This adventure should, perhaps, become about when secrecy is correct and when the truth is a better option, whether the party is interested in truth and justice or simply being paid.

Adventure 60

The Plays of Master Billiam

Description

The theatre troupe of master playwright Billiam Shiverlance is justly feted around the land for the humour and insight of his plays. Never has there been a more popular playwright or band of players. Wherever they play their audience is massive, everyone who likes to laugh or appreciates good writing turning out to see his latest offering performed.

Behind the men in drag and the crude humour to appeal to the peasant class there is also a wicked tongue and biting satire. Men in power are known and master Billiam often turns to important and famous members of royalty, the clergy and the sorcerous classes to create the butts for his jokes. The problem is that not everyone shares his sense of humour and some people resent, very much, being the subject of his humour especially when in his plays they are reduced to a hunchbacked baby-eating caricature of themselves that the simple minded peasants latch onto instead of the heroic leader image that they are trying to put forwards.

Master Billiam never gave this that much thought until recently when, during one of his performances an assassin managed to get backstage and tried to kill the playwright before he was discovered and beaten off by the actors with a wooden sword and some 'special effects' from the company illusion magician.

Master Billiam is now scared and is seeking to hire some extra protection to ensure his safety while he finishes the rest of the tour. Once he is back in his home city he is sure his citizenship and the money he and his theatre bring to the city will keep him safe but for now...

Twist

Not one but many outraged parties are all baying for Billiam's blood to the point where they are competing and practically falling over each other in order to see him dead, discredited or both. Assassins, bandits, summoned monsters, all will threaten the troupe along

its journey and the attempts never let up though they may end up interfering with each other.

Twist

One of the cast or workers in the play is a turncoat, a traitor. It is they who is passing messages back to the attackers in Billiam's location and changes in his situation. When other attempts fail there might begin to be 'stage accidents' and other problems around the wagons of the travelling troupe.

Twist

Billiam is constantly beset by 'groupies', women overcome by his poetry and his words who want to see him, speak to him and give him their bodies in the hopes he will write a soliloquy to their beauty in his next play. A rather mawkish and less-than-handsome fellow Billiam greatly appreciates the attention that he gets and he does not want to stop receiving such women in his wagon. This is an obvious and exploitable security breach.

Epilogue

A job well done Billiam is back in his beloved city and installed as their master playwright once again. He thanks the party and pays them, sending them on their way and getting back to his all important writing. It is not long after that on their travels that they come across another travelling theatre. This one is putting on a play and some of the characters seem fairly familiar. It is them! Satirised and caricatured in a less than flattering manner in this latest play, about an abused and pursued clever and handsome playwright, his bodyguards in the play are made out to be bumbling idiots. What they do about this is, of course, up to them...

Ideas: Besides Billiam it is probably a good idea to write up the other members of the troupe for more depth.

Adventure 61

Staying Afloat

Description

There is a rumour going around about a king of the pirates, a leader over all the pirate activity, the true mastermind behind everything that has happened with the various pirate crews over the last years, the ships going missing, the cursed crews the sea monsters, all of it.

This was dismissed as hearsay and rumour until recently. Only trusted crews of this pirate king are given special, magical compasses that always point to the place where his capital is located. Finally one of these pirate lieutenants was taken alive, his compass retrieved and the direction in which the pirate king's dominion lies detected. Plans were drawn up and fleets assembled until someone examining the compass found something peculiar. It had changed direction and was pointing somewhere else.

A moving base? Impossible! Losing faith in their victory the heads of the fleet decided to find out exactly what was going on. In case it was a wild goose chase they would not send their own ships or men but rather paid adventurers, adaptable and disposable, they could confirm the existence of this pirate king and his city before anything else would be rigged.

As it turns out the pirate king's base is a floating island constructed of captured ships, towed around by sails, water magic and the exertions of various undersea beasts. The captain himself is both a warrior and a mage of the sea and his island is a whole, nautical city, a giant community on the waves serving the pirate's cause and living a life of freedom and anarchy.

Twist

The pirates do not regard themselves as pirates but as a separate nation. With their fleet, their auxiliaries (the rest of the pirates) and the beasts at their command they are great and powerful. Once the adventurers are caught snooping, if they are, they will be allowed to return, with a pirate ambassador who wishes proper

nation status to be granted to the floating city and the pirate king. Without that it could be war.

Twist

The island itself is like an iceberg, only ten percent is visible at any time. Below the water lie underwater cellars and caverns of wood, tar and metal. Swimming in the water are the pirate king's other allies, the creatures of the deep and the merfolk, outlaws from their own people who have joined his cause. The floating city is not as vulnerable as it seems.

Twist

Nothing escapes the notice of the pirate king on his island, nothing. The party may well be able to penetrate the island, even confirm his existence and gauge the strength of the defences but, when they try to return to their ship they will find it has been boarded and then nailed, hammered and roped into the body of the island, already occupied by a couple of families as a new house. How on earth are they going to get off the city?

Epilogue

This is but the capital of the floating cities, there are other, smaller ones further out to sea that come under its dominion. Rather than crushing the pirates the fall of their capital binds them together, even the auxiliaries and stirs up a fury in them leading to a series of deadly pirate wars against the floating cities, their allies and the islands they have settled.

Ideas: Everything in the floating city has to have come from a ship or the sea at some point. Ropes are made of hair or seaweed, not hemp. What little farming they have is in boxes of dirt, most of their bounty coming from the sea. Ship blends into house blends into rigging. Moving about the city should be difficult, confusing.

Adventure 62

Waste of Space

Description

The wasteland of Githrain has been left alone, a blighted landscape for centuries. Long ago it is said the neighbouring mageocratic cities that once lay in the heart of this waste went to war and the devastation is the result. Strange creatures spawn and twist in the glowing wreckage of the landscape, whole mountains melted and run before solidifying again in strange shapes, rocks floating in the air and solid ground turning as insubstantial as liquid under your feet.

Shain, the eastern city was a place where they concentrated on the art of summoning, of modifying creatures and breeding new servitors to do their bidding. In the western city of Kherain they concentrated on steel and fire, creating magical devices to serve them and magical weapons of great complexity.

When the two cities went to war magic lit up the sky and great armies of golems and monsters fought in the wasteland. The earth quaked and the sky was rent. Each of the two cities spending their glory in the wholesale destruction of the other until finally the earth was still, nothing moved and only the wasteland remained. Of the cities there was no sign.

Nobody has dared to enter the wasteland in centuries, until now. The great college of magic has found sponsorship and wishes to send an expedition deep into the wasteland to search for artefacts and to discover the mistakes of the past so that they will not be repeated.

The characters are hired to defend this expedition, though who knows what trouble they will get themselves into?

Twist

The cities are not destroyed; they merely passed into another dimension to avoid each other's doomsday weapons. The disturbances caused by the expedition

are triggering ancient runic devices designed to bring the cities back from where they were hidden. Will they resume their war or will there be peace?

Twist

The whole wasteland is a chaotic zone of strange magic and bizarre creatures. This leftover magical radiation still has the power to affect creatures entering the wasteland and it has already begun to affect the characters. Lord knows what will have happened to them by the time they leave.

Twist

Sunken into the earth, down a strange tunnel, they find the shattered remnants of one of the cities. The inhabitants are long dead and the place overrun with the twisted monsters that they left behind. The city is also full of long dormant magical defences which soon begin to activate and take a toll on the intruders. The city has been relatively undisturbed in all this time though and may contain many powerful artefacts.

Epilogue

Now that a team has entered the wasteland and left, alive, a sort of 'gold rush' for artefacts takes place with many more adventuring groups, tomb robbers and thieves rapidly descending upon the wasteland and carrying off anything even slightly mystical that isn't nailed down. If the characters want to get their fair share of the goodies they are going to have to act quickly, before everything is stolen or the surrounding kingdoms step in to regulate and enforce matters, or take everything for themselves.

Ideas: The cities are part of the 'more advanced ancients' theme that runs through a lot of fantasy. Their cities, even long dead, should be places of total wonder with artefacts and devices beyond anything seen before.

Adventure 63

The Proof is in the Pudding

Description

Tarquin Delacroix is the land's most intrepid gastronaut. If he hasn't eaten it, it is not worth eating at all. The jaded gourmet's tastes have grown wilder and wilder and his palette is spoiled every day by the most delicate and expensive of foods. Still he craves new flavours, new experiences and will not be satisfied, apparently, until he has had a taste of everything that walks, crawls or flies over the earth.

Still, he is running into problems, the merely rare he has tasted, even causing the extinction of several species. Now he desires to taste the dangerous and the rare and dangerous. To this end he has had his people look for likely types to help him achieve his ambition.

The characters seem to fit the bill and are contacted by Tarquin's people and brought to his palatial estate for interview. Tarquin will ask many questions and will want to be impressed by their knowledge and deeds before he outlines his requirements.

A menu is drawn up of fabulous and dangerous beasts that he wishes to taste and has not yet managed to. He will pay commensurate to the risk and to the scarcity of the beasts.

Practically salivating he sends them on their way...

Twist

A beast slain and the flesh returned they are treated to a sumptuous feast and pots of gold. The great moment arrives during the banquet when the fruits of their labour are set before Tarquin and he slices a thin sliver to taste. Not bad but to truly appreciate it, it will need to be fresh... back they go, for another one...

Twist

The latest beast is killed, sliced up and delivered to the drooling Tarquin who takes one bite and drops stone dead on the table in an instant. It appears that this

particular creature is highly toxic when cooked and eaten. Who knew? More to the point, who is going to take the blame? Who do you think!

Twist

One of the creatures they are sent after is supposed to be dangerous but turns out to be a bit of a bumbling and inconsequential animal, if somewhat hard to find. The only disturbing thing about the creature is that it can talk and does so, at length about any subject you care to mention, right up until the moment of death. Quite why it is supposed to be so dangerous is not known. Until they present it to Tarquin, steaming and smelling tasty, a couple of bites and he suddenly coughs and then picks up where the beast left off, right in mid conversation...

Epilogue

Having served Tarquin so well providing him with tastes he has never experienced and having been so well rewarded he has decided to throw a banquet to celebrate some of the wonders of the new tastes he has discovered. Of course, this means he needs stock, meat for the larders and the chilled cellars, a great deal of stock as he has many guests. He also wishes to have something new and unique to try at this great banquet, something never eaten before and something large enough to feed all of his guests with at least a taste. That final jewel in the crown of his event he leaves up to the characters to decide but disappointing him now will mean an end to their association.

Ideas: This adventure is an excellent way to use rare, unique or 'silly' monsters as well as creatures from other supplements or other games that do not necessarily fit with your normal gameworld.

Adventure 64

My Beautiful Balloon

Description

Rutherford Capstan, the renowned inventor and madman, has built a flying machine which requires no magic at all in order to operate. This device, which he calls 'the airship', consists of a large balloon, filled with hot air from a small furnace. It is directed and moved in flight by mechanical wings which operate from the same furnace by the production of steam. The whole balloon affair rises above a gondola fashioned from an old river-barge, about large enough for six to ten people to sit and stand in.

He intends to undertake an airborne expedition in this wondrous device and is seeking a brave group to come with him to handle the tedious work and to ensure his safety while he takes measurements and observes things and makes notes in his little scrapbooks.

This invention, while expensive and clumsy, puts flight in the hands of the common man and makes them almost equal with both the avian races and the magi who, until now, had been really the only ones capable of flight or of producing flying machines. To the avian races this is blasphemy to the magi this is encroaching on their territory and business.

Many people would like to see Capstan fail.

Twist

Capstan is a fraud and a cheat. His 'airship' is far too heavy for the hot-air balloon to keep it in the air, he also had the fabric of the balloon enchanted with flying magic, a fact that has come to the attention of a group of magi who intent to discredit him by making him crash when he passes near the town of Dreiburg. The fact is that even with them dispelling the magic, if the gondola can be made light enough, he will be able to fly. Someone will have to work this out before they smash into the ground though...

Twist

Capstan wishes to rise higher, above the clouds, he urges them to throw as much as they can overboard so that they can get the height. Everything from the gondola, as much fuel, water and food as can be spared, this is still not enough and he urges them to throw their equipment overboard and swears on his mother's grave to recompense them in full for everything they hurl over the side. Finally, with most of their equipment, even conventional armour and weapons hurled over the side, the balloon rises into the clouds only to strike a small floating island hidden in the sky, getting tangled and partially wrecked, the boiler put out when the water spills. They need fuel and water and here they are stranded on an island in the sky with little equipment or weaponry...

Twist

Magic comes from nature, magic flows through the earth, the sky, the land. This balloon is an entirely man made thing with no mystical component. It is a thing of metal, of smoke and steam and it does not belong in the sky. The sky rejects it. From the moment it is higher than the rooftops things begin to go wrong, high winds blow the balloon off course, rain threatens to put out the boiler and all the while Capstan refuses to give up. Finally the air spawns elementals that continue to attack until the balloon is brought down. This method of flight was never meant to be...

Epilogue

Unwilling to give up so easily Capstan returns to his designs. His new designs should allow a full ship to lift from the ground, armed with ballistae and accompanied by a priest to make the proper offerings and exhortations to the gods of the sky. He will conquer the air for man, by hook or by crook and he will want the help of the other most experienced fliers in the world...



Adventure 65

Death Becomes Us All

Description

There have always been difficulties with burials in the lands, many beloved family members buried on common plots end up used in some sorcerer's rituals or animated by the powers of a necromancer. Others rise of their own account and become ghosts or zombies on account of what they did in life. To have a graveyard within a city is, therefore, to invite trouble.

In the inland city of Gottestod they hit upon a unique solution. Partnering the city they would create a great necropolis, a city of the dead, a place of safety walled in by magic where if any undead did rise they would be unable to leave its confines and where the knights of the temple could venture on occasional cleansings of anything that did go on there. The knights would also act as guards of the necropolis to prevent the unsavoury or ill intentioned from exploiting the beloved dead.

This has operated perfectly for a great many years, existing graves were dug up and moved there, great tombs and monuments were erected. The ghosts and other undead that naturally arose were dealt with as they came and mourners were escorted by an honour guard of knights.

This has now changed, there was some manner of emergency within the necropolis and the knights entered to put a stop to it. None have returned and strange noises issue from the graves. The magical barrier holds for now but not knowing what is going on and what has happened has made the city nervous. Now they call for heroes to enter the necropolis and to discover what is going on and to avert it.

Twist

The spirits and corpses have risen, not because of the influence of a necromancer, a liche or any other undead monster but because of the recent internment of a rabble-rousing malcontent from the city. Killed for his anti-authoritarian beliefs he has continued in death

as he did in life, stirring the dead to revolt against the living. Here in the necropolis they are left, ignored, alone with their death unable to see how their descendents are doing or to warm themselves at the actions and thoughts of the living. They wish to be interred back within the city.

Twist

The problem is not the dead at all, indeed the few zombies, ghosts and other undead beings within the necropolis could well prove useful allies. The real threat is an army from a rival kingdom that has entered and occupied the necropolis to use as a staging point for their invasion of the city. Unless they are discovered...

Twist

The dead are rising but it is not a necromancer nor conventional necromantic magic that is causing them to rise. Instead the flesh has been stitched, shaped and animated in the form of golems, animated devices that just happen to be made of dead flesh. The sorcerer behind this simply wishes to secure the necropolis, his raw material, against others, against any interference, so that he can continue his grand works.

Epilogue

With even their necropolis proven unsafe the city moves over to cremation even though this has been against the more strict beliefs of their temples and priests for some time. The older generations are the ones generally dying and being cremated and they are not happy. Many ghosts are the result, unquiet spirits insulted by what has been done to them. With the temple knights not yet back up to their full strength adventurers are needed as a sort of 'ghostbusters' until the temple can get back up to strength.

Ideas: Rather than chain rattlers or screamers the ghosts in this scenario need to be people, just dead ones.

Adventure 66

Gold Digger

Description

The area the adventurers are travelling through is rocky and lousy with trickling streams coming up through the tough rock. Many prospectors come out here looking for veins of precious metals or ores that are worth mining out. When they are making their way through a gully they are suddenly leapt out on by an extremely excitable prospector.

It seems he has found a strike of sizeable proportions and he wishes to hire them to defend it for him while he takes some of what he has found to hire guards and diggers to break out his fortune. He gives them a sizeable nugget of gold as a down payment and pleads with them to guard this gully against all comers, refusing to tell them where the mine is since if he does they will simply claim it for themselves.

With the adventurers hired on he disappears down the gully towards the nearest town at the breakneck speed of the overexcited lunatic. This leaves them alone, in a gully, defending something when they don't even know exactly where it is against all comers, whatever and whoever they might be, assuming, of course, that there is even anything there in the first place.

Twist

There is no mine. The gold nugget is simply a ploy to get them to stay in one place. The prospector is a bandit, baiting the trap for his band. When they return in the dead of night it will be to the slopes above the gully from which they can rain down arrows and rocks with a definite strategic advantage. If they are defeated well, they must have a camp within a few hours walk from here, one that can be found and where there might be discovered some genuine treasure.

Twist

When the workers and the guards return and begin to dig a cave is uncovered. When the cave is explored it is found to be infested with underground dwelling

goblins. Creatures that must be cleared out before the mine can be opened up fully. What gold that has already been dug up is made available to the adventurers if they will do this favour. Of course, it turns out the goblins have already been mining from underground though the mine remains healthy.

Twist

Another prospector comes down the gully from the opposite direction with a gold nugget seeming pleased with himself. Has he discovered the same vein of gold or a different one? He won't tell the party where his is any more than the previous prospector; he too is off to find miners and guards to begin his enterprise. They can kill him or they can let him go but what if both return at the same time and it is the same claim?

Epilogue

This rich vein of gold soon begins to produce a great deal of the expensive material. It becomes a coveted place, a desired place, a place that other forces wish to capture and to keep for themselves. Soon the prospector, now an established businessman, is under threat from many quarters, bandits, raiders, merchants guilds and others. To deal with all these problems he needs competent men he can trust and who he knows. The only ones who fit the bill are the adventurers and so he turns to them for some long term help to secure the future of the mine and his fortune.

Ideas: Plan out the cave system that will become the mine, even if just to have a consistent layout to it. If you're using the goblin infestation the lower levels should be more crafted and organised while the upper levels remain but simple caves.

Adventure 67

Fort of Doom

Description

There is an old fort not far from the town where the party are staying. It was long ago looted and has been the site of many problems in the past but there has been nothing associated with it in the past few years, until recently.

Over the past few months rumours have begun to circulate about some manner of beast taking up residence in the fort, a powerful creature that could threaten the town and other nearby settlements if it is not brought under control or killed. Even more interestingly it is said that the beast has a sizeable horde of treasure, hidden away somewhere in the fort.

The actual nature or description of the beast is unknown, or at least inconsistent. Everyone who has heard the rumour seems to have heard a different version. Whether it is dragon, ogre or something else the treasure hoard remains a consistent part of the story.

What lends even more credibility to the story is that a group of young adventurers recently came through the town and headed off to investigate the fort. They never returned. Of course this group of adventurers is made of much sterner stuff.

Twist

The fort is a trap set up by a previous group of adventurers who found nothing and so, down on their luck, decided to bait a trap for their fellow fortune hunters. The fort is festooned with traps of their devising and, deep in the old dungeon of the fort one of their number lays in wait making snarly, growling and howling noises into a great horn, amplifying it to give the fort the right ambience. The others wait in a nearby secret chamber, waiting for any who make it past the traps to them, to finish them off.

Twist

As above but one of the adventurers who set up the fort as a trap is having second thoughts. They killed and looted their first group the other week and he has discovered he has no stomach for it. He will do what he can to subtly try and warn any adventurers away without exposing himself to his fellows. This may take the form of cryptic clues scattered about the fortress.

Twist

As above but, amongst their number is an ogre, troll or other large creature that they have managed to co-opt into their little scheme, something to add a bit of credibility to the whole sting. There is still no treasure other than what they have managed to steal themselves though, which may prove to be something of a disappointment to expectant adventurers.

Epilogue

The fort is now empty again but it is in a reasonable state of repair now, the bandit party had fixed up a lot of its problems and the lower levels are now, once again, habitable. If the adventurers do not take it over and put it to use some other power or individual may well do so in which case they will find themselves back there again. The rumours about the place persist, taking on a life of their own and ensuring that many passing groups take a detour to investigate the place, which may prove problematic if the party has set themselves up there.

Ideas: Since the fort should be fairly small and may play a continuing role over several games you should probably map it out as well as coming up with many simple but deadly traps to pepper about the place. Statting up the other party as proper adventurers and playing them that way will also help.

Adventure 68

I'm An Adventurer, Get Me Out Of Here!

Description

Cagliari, wizard, former adventurer and entrepreneur has built a grand dungeon beneath his tower in the foothills of the Godstooth Mountains. Every year for the past ten years he has issues his challenge to all comers. Defeat his dungeon and his riches are your riches, you will take the grand prize of all the plunder that he has hidden in the dungeon, plus the prize money collected from all entrants over the past ten years. Each entrant pays a fee of a hundred gold crowns to enter the dungeon and over ten years that has made a sizeable amount. Of course, over the ten years not a single soul has successfully negotiated the dungeon...

Cagliari is a diligent craftsman, his dungeon is a work of art, a great maze filled with all manner of insane devices, traps, creatures and magic. He has made it a true challenge, as great as any in the realm and the man or group that does defeat his dungeon will become justly famous.

Entrants enter together through a great gate that cuts into the side of the hill below the tower. The dungeon lies beneath the hill and stretches far in every direction. From the entrance hall there are many directions to go and the mass of adventurers will soon get thinned out taking different routes.

At the heart of the maze lies the prize, if you can find it...

Twist

Nobody has ever won because the wizard has never allowed anyone to win. The centre of the maze contains a lift which brings the battered and war weary adventurers into his presence where he and a choice of summoned monsters finish them off to maintain his reputation and to increase his store of magical items and gold. Experimentation is expensive, let alone maintaining the dungeon.

Twist

A smaller party of adventurers enters not far behind the party and determines to follow them, to let them solve as many puzzles as possible and to face as many dangers as possible before jumping them at the end and claiming victory. They may give themselves away from time to time as the party makes progress through the dungeon.

Twist

Unknown to the adventurers they are watched constantly through crystal balls scattered about the dungeon. Above, every year a great fete is called at the same time as the entrants enter the dungeon, their exploits are seen by the entire fete as a massive illusion, except for what lies at the centre, this is a 'secret room' to prevent people scouting out one year and then attending the next with too much foreknowledge. Every embarrassing moment has been seen by hundred of people.

Epilogue

The dungeon defeated the adventurers are famous and victorious but the reputation of the dungeon has taken a bit of a blow. Cagliari enlists their help asking for insights on how to make the dungeon better, more difficult, more dangerous, ways to restore its reputation. He may even enlist their help in capturing the monsters and gathering the ingredients he needs to make the dungeon all it could be.

Ideas: The beauty of an arbitrary dungeon such as this is that you can make it up as you go along. You don't need an elaborate plan just some thoughts on what dangers, tricks and traps you might want to include and ready access to a list of monsters you can throw in whenever you want.

Ideas: Have a few traps and things ahead of the party sprung by other more speedy adventurers.

Adventure 69

Flora & Fauna

Description

Wizards are also keepers of knowledge on what would be considered 'scientific' knowledge in our world. They are always working on understanding the forces of nature, the beasts of the field and the plants and habitats around them.

One of their great minds Karl Severein 'the green' is embarking on a great study of the plants and animals of the great Deepwood. This ancient forest has existed as long as history or scrying can show and its heart has rarely been explored by man. He wishes to travel in the Deepwood over the course of several weeks, making his studies and drawings and getting some idea of the diversity of life within the Deepwood.

He is a scholar and, while a mage, his magic is not of the offensive or defensive type, merely the sort of spells that will help him in his work. He needs to be defended for there can be little doubt that the Deepwood holds as many horrors as it does wonders of the natural world.

This is where the adventurers come in, hired by the college of magic to which Karl is attached to protect him and to help him in any way he asks during his expedition and to ensure that he returns with useful information to increase their store of knowledge. Given his frailty and his absentmindedness in the pursuit of knowledge this may not be so easy.

Twist

Within a few hours of entering the forest it is becoming abundantly clear that the pathways are shifting, the trees moving and that they are hopelessly and irrevocably lost. Even the sun seems to be in different places in the sky every few moments and compasses and senses of direction fail. The forest has taken a dislike to them and until they are reduced to living like proper forest creatures it shall not avail them of an exit.

Twist

One of the things Karl wishes to study is a carnivorous plant, to which end he willingly climbs into the creatures trap or grip and begins to happily make notes as it tries to chew on him, crush him or whatever it normally does. He requires that they keep it off him but do not kill it until he has made all his notes. Similarly death seeking behaviour characterises his actions for the rest of the journey as well.

Twist

The forest itself is a living entity made up of and dominating the minds of lesser creatures that live under its branches. The longer the group spend in the wood the more apparent it becomes that creatures and plants are working together to watch them, to block their progress and to cause them problems, even species that would normally eat each other. If the characters do not work it out, Karl will and when he realises what he has found out all hell breaks loose, the forest doesn't wish anyone to know.

Epilogue

Karl's observations are clear and concise; his illustrations form the beginnings of a new, comprehensive bestiary in the library of the college, the first volume, on the Deepwood. This is only the start of course, he would like to extend his studies to the plants and creatures of many other of the surrounding environments and it is better for all if those who escort him know his little foibles and ways. There could be a great deal of long term work from this project for adventurers who do not mind rescuing a bumbling old man from danger every hour.

Ideas: Variety and descriptiveness are the key to this. Perhaps look over some natural history books to get a feel for what Karl is trying to accomplish, in many ways the Charles Darwin of the world.

Adventure 70

Tree Hugging Hippy Crap

Description

The village of Umberto has dwelt peacefully alongside the Greensway forest for as long as it has existed. This autumn however a problem has shown itself. The forest seems to have gone crazy, a couple of woodcutters have disappeared in the Greensway never to be seen again, of their huts there is no sign. The same fate appears to have befallen a couple of the hunters from the village who have also not returned. Wandering at the edge of the Greensway a man was attacked by a flock of crows and now lays needing constant care in the newly completed temple in the village, prayed for night and day.

The village has relied on the forest for its income, for its goods, for its living since it was founded and now that the forest has seemingly turned hostile the existence of the village is at threat. The whole wood seems to have turned against them and they do not know why.

The village has little to offer adventurers in the way of money but they can offer free lodging and food at the inn and anything else they have, for without the forest they have nothing and so they are desperate to have something done. Anything they have is theirs.

The real cause? The new temple has supplanted the old ways, the druids who used to provide spiritually for the village have been driven away by the new faith and the spirit of the forest no longer receives the sacrifices it desires and needs. In a tantrum it has turned the woods against the villagers.

Twist

It only appears to be a spirit, in fact it is the druids themselves stirring up the forest against the villagers, jealous of their faith in the new temple and angry at their spurning of the old ways they are seeking to remind them of the power of nature. In order to stop them the false spirit must be seen through and then the druidic temple found, the druids reasoned with or slain.

Twist

The spirit takes the form of a giant boar, a powerful animal at the best of times but, possessed by a spirit a truly dangerous beast, twice its normal size, stronger, more powerful and more intelligent with all the magical powers of the forest spirit at its disposal. If they can reach the heartwood of the forest this is the beast that awaits them the slaying of which and the spilling of which's blood will put the anger of the forest back at rest.

Twist

The anger of the forest is simply this. A small copse of animated trees has recently moved into the area, fleeing the actions of larger scale woodcutters elsewhere. Here they hoped to find peace and solace but one of their number was cut down while he slept by a village woodcutter. Here the community is small enough and they are angry enough that they can act against it without too much fear of reprisal. They could perhaps be moved on again or reasoned with, the whole thing is a tragic mistake.

Epilogue

The forest is stilled and quietened now that its anger has been calmed. This is not the end though. The ruckus in the forest has disturbed things buried there long ago, things that were there before the trees first began to grow. In underground ruins deep in the wood they begin to stir, their presence first felt as earth tremors. What are they and where are they coming from? Can the wrath of the wood be reawakened to protect the village?

Ideas: The creatures in the epilogue could be dragons, undead or simply an ancient and unknown race that is not known in the land any more. It is a good opportunity to bring in a new plot factor.

Adventure 71

The Egnart's G'nith

Description

Magicians and other wise men have determined that long ago there was a small empire that ruled over much of the surrounding landscape. These days there is little left but ruins but once they were a powerful and uncontested people with no rivals to their military might.

What, precisely, happened to the Egnarts has not been determined but there are very few physical ruins left and what there are appear to be at least partially reduced to slag. It is thought that either civil war occurred or that the Egnarts encountered a people even more warlike, dangerous and advanced than themselves. Their artefacts are much sought after and use ancient, powerful magic and science lost to the modern world.

Investigations in one of their surviving ruins have found vague allusions to the existence of a 'great enemy' and the construction of a massive thaumaturgical weapon to ensure the destruction of this enemy and the survival of the Egnarts, guaranteeing their pre-eminence as the most powerful civilisation in the world. The weapon never seems to have been activated and the translation is a little dodgy but the scholars think they have determined where the weapon was constructed, an inaccessible mountain to the north.

The college of magic is debating sending an expedition but meanwhile the enterprising scholar who translated the location has sold it for a tidy sum to a merchant prince of the city the adventurers are staying in. Unknown to their jovial sponsor he has also sold the location to another rival merchant family and now the race for the G'nith, the device, is on...

Twist

The G'nith is a powerful weapon capable of scouring an entire plane of existence with its powerful energies killing anything and everything originating within that plane. The great enemy were a cosmic threat from

another plane, attracted by the strange energies that the Egnarts used. With the G'nith reactivated the great enemy begins to push through from the other side sending its servants before it. The only way to defeat it is to activate the G'nith, a one-use artefact, while holding off the servants.

Twist

The G'nith turns out to be a storehouse of knowledge of the lost Egnarts race. Not of anything useful or marketable like weapons or magic but simply of their culture, songs, stories, music, art all encapsulated within magical glass and played out before the observer who wanders the G'nith. The other merchant family, behind this exploration group doesn't know that though and is unlikely to believe it.

Twist

The G'nith turns out to be a portal in time which opens into a lost city of the Egnarts where they await a time where a messenger will come to lead them from their time bubble telling them that the great enemy has been defeated. The city is grand and retains much of its amazing capabilities but the people have degenerated and remember little. They are alternately reverent and suspicious of their visitors and the arrival of the rival merchants will not help matters.

Epilogue

The G'nith is carved with hieroglyphics, whatever it is. These pictograms display the other great works of their people, the undersea city of Gn'indrow, the God Armour, the Spear of Light. These artefacts and other ruins of the Egnarts may yet exist in the dominion of their old empire they must just be sought out. Of course, the translation of what these things are may also prove slightly less than accurate.

Ideas: Lost race artefacts are a good way to introduce powerful elements to empower the characters.

Adventure 72

Deep Throat

Description

The earth shakes, rocks tumble from the hills and the horses throw them off and bolt in a wild frothing panic, an enormous shadow falls across them and then the jaws, the terrible jaws. Teeth the size of carts gnash and crash, a tongue as big as a river licks slaver jaws and there there is a terrible crash and the lights go out.

Somehow, miraculously they are alive, swallowed by a great beast of some kind. Its tongue lies under their feet, a huge broad swathe of dense muscles. There is a faint glow from growths on the creature's flesh and warm stifling air washes back and forth fairly strongly. The jaws refuse to open by any means and they can feel the creature still moving although the ground remains relatively steady under their feet.

The only way they can go is onwards, into the belly of the beast, down its gullet and into its body. Who knows what could await them inside the body of the leviathan? There is only way to find out and only one way to seek escape.

Meanwhile the creature continues on its path, seeking more prey and questing constantly towards its ultimate goal, whatever that is.

Twist

The creature harbours intelligent parasites and its immune system takes the form of strange creatures and tentacle-like growths sprouting from the walls. Within a short time of the characters beginning their quest into the interior of the beast they begin to encounter these things with encounters coming more after as they move through pipes, veins and arteries and pass near organs and other important parts of the creature.

Twist

The interior of the beast is all capable of digesting though the stomach specialises in it. Non-magical equipment will slowly begin to rot and tarnish as the

atmosphere gets to it. Here and there precious metals, coins, gemstones and magical goods held by previous victims can be seen, glittering amongst the quivering flesh.

Twist

The location the beast is heading to is its nest where it intends to regurgitate all it has eaten for its gigantic offspring. Still, the young are somewhat defeatable and manageable in size, unlike the parent, if you can recover quickly enough after having been thrown up with hundreds of corpses and half digested food that is.

Epilogue

The beast has ravaged the lands long enough and several kingdoms have come together in alliance to deal with the threat. The magi of the college of magic have created a weapon powerful enough to kill the beast but it must be carried within the creature and placed near its mighty heart in order to cause enough damage to kill the thing. As survivors of the beast's digestive tract the characters are the obvious choice to carry out this important quest and shall be offered a great deal in honour, money and other enticements to take up the quest.

Ideas: When thinking of 'rooms' for this dungeon you should consider the purpose of different parts of the body. Wading through the stomach should be very different to wading through the bladder, though about as unpleasant. The nature of the creature's immune system should also be determined.

Ideas: If you're still short of ideas you can raid *Fantastic Voyage*, *Inner Space* and *Final Fantasy X* for inspiration for explorations into the body and some of the creatures that might be spawned or form part of the great leviathan.

Adventure 73

'Shrooms!

Description

The fey cross over into our world on a regular basis, causing mischief and upset, leaving changelings in place of human babies, souring milk, leading people astray and into swamps and otherwise giving people a lot of trouble. On occasion people from the mortal world also cross into the realm of faerie where this mischievous folk become far more than a simple annoyance and become truly dangerous.

While travelling the adventurers make camp, light their fire and rest but, as time wears on they discover that despite having all had many hours of rest the sun has not come up, the moon has simply become brighter, the skies clearer, the stars more visible. The edge of the clearing that they have camped in is ringed with mushrooms. A faerie ring!

Somehow they have crossed over into the land of faerie and lie within Oberon's realm of night, home of goblins and other monstrosities of the night. To the North lies Titania's realm, land of light and day whose faeries and elves are, nonetheless, still cruel and tricky.

To get out of faerieland and back to their own world they will have to find a faerie path that might take them there though during their search they will face many of the unique dangers of faerieland.

Twist

Time passes differently in faerieland to the way it does in the mortal world. The characters may escape only to find that ten years or more have passed in the time that they thought was but a few short days. There is no way to get this time back and friends and sponsors may have died or moved on in that time, whole political structures and borders may have changed. They may be thought of as dead heroes or may have become villains in folklore.

Twist

All the myths about faerieland hold true. The music can compel one to dance, if you drink the drink or eat the food you become trapped in faerieland forever and every river and every pond holds a beguiling nymph who seeks to trap the adventurer beneath the service to marry her and serve her for all her days. The faerie folk are everywhere, some malicious some seemingly helpful but all alien and strange.

Twist

The whole episode appears to be a dream when they 'die' or escape they wake up in the ring of mushrooms at their campsite though they still bear the wounds and carry the things that they found while sleeping. This can be a good way to put the wind up the players by having their characters die at the hands of the faeries only to wake up, bruised and bleeding in the forest.

Epilogue

The characters have now been fae-struck and the faeries now take a keen interest in anything and everything they try to do hounding the character and his family for the rest of his life. Should the character ever sire a child there are good odds that the faeries will swap them for a changeling taking the child in lieu of the character who somehow escaped their clutches. In the more immediate future the character may find themselves 'helped' by admiring faeries in what they do, getting them into more trouble than they would otherwise find themselves.

Ideas: Faeries are entirely capricious and alien in their thought processes. They can act completely randomly and you need no more justification than that they are faeries. Don't be afraid to change your mind with a non-player character entirely or to act contrary to the way dice rolls or role-play indicate.

Adventure 74

Mistaken Identity

Description

Arriving in a new town the adventurers find themselves subjected to strange looks from the townsfolk. They hurry to avoid the party, crossing the street, closing their doors and otherwise making them feel unwelcome. Some seem terrified, some are insulting even spitting at the character's feet.

As it transpires the priests of the local temple along with a town watchman were slaughtered not three nights ago within the town and the murderers fit the description of the adventurers to a 'T'. They might not have been here at that time but the witnesses seem to think that they fit the bill and are convinced that they are the murderers in question.

It is not long before the town guard and, quite possibly, an angry mob form outside wherever the adventurers are holed up, demanding justice and their surrender. How can they prove their innocence if they are locked up or hung and how can they escape without killing some of the mob and genuinely becoming murderers?

Assuming they do get away, how can they find out what really happened that night and who was really responsible, or will they simply move on, pursued by the mob and the guard?

Twist

The characters have been set up by one of their old enemies. Seeking revenge they have used some sort of disguise glamour or illusion to make their hired killers look like the characters. If they were truly intelligent they would now get as far from the town as possible but they are after revenge and revenge must be properly witnessed in order to be truly satisfying.

Twist

The murderers were the characters. They did it. With a little investigation it is easy enough to work out that they're missing a few nights where they remember

nothing. Someone must have managed to get hold of them and to manipulate their minds, used them to perform this ghastly deed and then cast them aside. Who though and why?

Twist

The town has been partially infiltrated by doppelganger creatures. They have taken the place of several of the important people within the town and they heard, a couple of days before the adventurers entered the town, that they were coming. Faced by the threat of such accomplished and renowned adventurers the doppelgangers panicked, thinking that they had somehow found out about them and were coming to root them out. Motivated by this blind fear they created a hot reception for the characters hoping to drive them off or kill them.

Epilogue

Whoever it is that set the adventurers up is part of a larger conspiracy. Stories about rogue adventurer groups turning to murder and banditry are circulating widely, including other adventurers that the characters know about and who they know would never stoop to such behaviour. Adventurers are being driven away and towns and cities are turning against their one-time saviours. Someone is deliberately discrediting the adventuring profession and its leading members. Who and to what purpose?

Ideas: The townspeople are angry beyond reason and should not be stopped with a few calm words. Magic or a demonstration of overwhelming force is the only thing that gets through to an angry mob.

Ideas: If they were mind controlled there could still be post-hypnotic suggestions in their minds.

Adventure 75

Dub, Dub In

Description

How would you like to have a noble title, to be a lord? The opportunity has now arisen! The small kingdom of Arisia is penned in by more powerful kingdoms and the only room it has to expand is across the Broken Plain, a rocky and treacherous area overrun with monsters and hostile races.

In order to claim your noble title from the king you have to perform one, 'simple' task. To travel into this dangerous wilderness and to lay claim to an area of land there, build a fortress to serve as your keep and to cleanse the area around your fortification of dangerous beasts.

Once this is accomplished the king will send a surveyor to examine the fortress and the surrounding land. If the surveyor is satisfied then he will return and inform the king, you will be called back to the palace and knighted and peasants will be assigned to the fortress to till the soil and serve the needs of the new lord.

Money and effort is needed to build such a fortress but a noble title confers many benefits and the long term profitability of being a master of serfs is something to be reckoned with.

Twist

The surveyor sent to examine their fortress isn't a surveyor at all but rather a rival lordling. He tells them it is perfect and to return to the king for their knighting while he and his cronies move into the fortress and take it over, meeting the real surveyor and putting themselves in line for the knighthood and the other benefits, all on the back of someone else's hard work. If they are to put things to rights they will have to lay siege to their own fort.

Twist

The king has no intention of creating hundred of lords within his realm; it would water down the blood of nobility and make him a laughing stock. Once the forts are complete he recalls the wannabe lords to his city fully intending to throw them in the dungeons and to execute them, the only touch of a blade they will get from him. Instead his family members will be installed in the forts to oversee the expansion of the kingdom.

Twist

The serfs that get assigned to the new fort are not serfs at all really but are political dissidents, troublemakers and criminals from the kingdom sent out to scratch in the dirt on this dangerous border. Controlling the peasants may prove to be as difficult, if not more difficult, than guarding against attacks and monsters.

Epilogue

The expansion of the kingdom into the broken plains has taken the humanoid creatures that dwell there somewhat by surprise after so many years of claiming the plain for themselves and doing as they wish. Now with the expansion of the kingdom they are being ousted from their ancestral lands and being killed off, tribe by tribe. Eventually they can bear it no longer and set aside their individual rivalries coming together under a great war chief and setting out to remove the new forts and the barely begun farmland from what they regard as their home. The ravening horde moved methodically from fort to fort reducing it to rubble with few survivors left to carry warnings to the other forts. Now they come for the character's fort, will it stand up to the assault or will it become a fantasy Alamo?

Ideas: Designing a fort can be great fun for a player group. Let them spend plenty of time on it getting the plans right and estimating the cost of having it constructed. The plans should prove useful in the future.

Ideas: The races that inhabit the Broken Plains should be something different from the usual orcs or goblins.

Adventure 76

My Brother's Keeper

Description

The monks of the Brotherhood of the Contemplative Night make a pilgrimage every few years with their great healing artefact the Orb of Calloo. This mysterious globe has the ability to cure many ills and ailments and to ease the pain of the suffering. Their visits are therefore extremely popular and the brothers are well regarded in the part of the land they tour with their holy relic.

There are those who desire to own the orb and seek it to heal only themselves or to make a profit from charging people to be healed. These people often have tried to take the orb and it is only by good fortune and the intervention of the armies and rangers of the cities that the brothers visit that it has not been stolen.

This year as the time approaches for them to begin the circuit of their pilgrimage the heads of the various cities have become nervous. They want to ensure the orb's safety and have insisted that the brothers are accompanied by guards of experience and worth. The characters.

The brotherhood have taken a vow of pacifism and have also taken vows not to ride. The ten strong party of monks will provide healing and will carry the palanquin that stores the orb but they will not join in any fighting and will heal the enemy just as quickly as their guards at the end of a skirmish.

The trip will take some time and besides the usual dangers of travelling the roads there may well be ambitious and intelligent people after the orb.

Twist

The orb does not heal per se, it simply sucks up the pain and agony of those it heals, storing it within its structure. The brothers are a secretive cult of infernalists and are close to their goal of using the stored pain and anguish to open a gateway for their demonic masters. This close to their goal they are

tremendously excited and may let something slip as they approach the end of their journey and potential victory.

Twist

The most persistent attacker of the pilgrims is not evil or truly a criminal they are simply desperate. Malakai the merchant prince is dying of a strange illness that the priests cannot cure and his only real hope is the power of the orb. Once it is drained by healing the full circuit it will not have enough power left to heal him so he needs to get to it before it completes the journey if he is to have any chance of being healed. He is willing to throw his entire fortune away striving after the orb to give his life some extension.

Twist

One of the cities on the route has had problems over the last few years. Plagues, starvation and other ills have left the populace thinned and unhealthy. The leaders of the city have decided to try and capture the orb to keep it within their city to solve these problems and to return everyone to health. They will welcome the pilgrims with open arms only to surround them and entrap them as they try to take the orb for themselves.

Epilogue

The brotherhood aren't the only ones with holy artefacts that need protecting and transportation. Having proved themselves to the churches as adventurers who can be entrusted with these relics the characters may well find themselves operating a sort of courier service for the various temples and churches of the land transporting their relics and artefacts from place to place and ensuring their safety from a position of trust.

Ideas: When describing the monks and acting them out as non-player characters think more of Tripitaka from *Monkey Magic* than Kane from *Kung Fu*.

Adventure 77

No Respect

Description

The syndicate is a large criminal organisation that has sprung up between many cities and is spreading even further bringing together the disparate thieves and assassins guilds along with other borderline legal guilds and industries into one massive organisation.

Crime and assassination has never been organised on such a massive scale before and the sheer amount of power at the disposal of this syndicate means that nobody is out of the price range of their corruptions and nobody is safe from their assassins or free from their watchful eye.

The syndicate is ruthless and exists to extend its own power and wealth, to bring more and more criminals under its sway under its leader the mysterious 'kingpin' of the crime organisation Mr Shade. Now it challenges the true kings of the land in terms of power and has the peasant populace utterly cowed with its fearsome reputation.

Needless to say this does not sit well with the true rulers of the land who wish something done about it. Unable to trust their own watchmen or chamberlains, all of whom may have been corrupted by the syndicate, they clandestinely approach the adventurers giving them some gold and the promise of a lot more if they will somehow infiltrate and undermine the activities of the syndicate.

Twist

This is actually a test set by Mr Shade who is looking for more potential members and leads for the syndicate. Finding him, infiltrating the organisation is a test set by him to look for competent and effective lieutenants to help administer the syndicate. If they succeed in finding him they may well be presented with an offer they can't refuse.

Twist

The syndicate already know that the adventurers are trying to infiltrate them and will send them on an ever more elaborate and dangerous wild goose chase until they are either killed or figure out that they are being duped and observed and take a different tack. If the characters should somehow fail to continue to be interesting a swarm of assassins will be set upon them.

Twist

Not wanting to stop at breaking the power of the syndicate their mysterious sponsor wishes the thieves guilds, the building blocks of what became the syndicate, cleansed and burned to eradicate the problem of organised crime once and for all. What starts as a simple infiltration and intelligence gathering mission becomes assassination and destruction.

Epilogue

The impact of the fall of the syndicate is far reaching making the problems of selling stolen or looted gear ever more acute as the fall of several thieves guilds means there are fewer and fewer people capable of judging how much something is worth. It becomes the era of the singular thief, named, romantic figures that steal about the night in their black clothing searching for open windows or making ostentatiously grand thieveries of important and expensive items. These individual thieves need to be caught and put under lock and key or six feet of earth as well.

Ideas: The syndicate aren't stupid and have a decentralised structure which means few people know the others signed up for the group or who work with them. The individuals at any one site might not be able to tell you who any of their accomplices are or even their superiors. Breaking the syndicate will need a lot of thought.

Adventure 78

Clear The Way!

Description

Once, long ago, in the days before, there was a long, straight road that joined the cities of Karmitha and Djerubal. The road fairly hummed with traffic, merchant wagons and travellers taking the well made path to speed their journey and for the companionship such a busy road offered to them.

Then there was a falling out between the cities, a feud if you will. Each turned to other cities for their trade ignoring the other, blockading the road and continuing the feud. Traffic on the road slowed to a trickle and then ceased.

Unused and without maintenance the road was gradually overgrown, covered, its hostelries and inns became abandoned, the domain of outcasts and creatures. The road was silent. It can still be seen today though, they built well in those days and while the surface is cracked by plants here and there the surface of the road beneath remains firm and smooth.

The two cities have long put their enmity aside and a new trade agreement has been drawn up between them. The road is to be reopened but first it must be cleared. Since it has not been trodden in years and doubtless has become home to all sorts of nastiness they have decided to send a crew along the old road, clearing the worst hazards and emptying the old inns and hostelries of threats so that workmen can follow behind removing the rest of the plants and repairing the worst holes in the road.

This is where the party comes in.

Twist

Unknown to Karmitha, Djerubal thought they were taking responsibility for the clearance of the road and have assigned a group of adventurers and a work crew to start clearing from the opposite end of the road. The two adventuring groups are going to meet at the halfway point and when all the fuss and confusion is

sorted out may realise that they're only going to be paid half of what they agreed on since they've only done half the job. To the other party this simply isn't good enough.

Twist

Since the road was abandoned it has been turned by bandits and humanoid creatures into a sort of 'long village' with shabby habitation coming into place around the core of the old inns and hostelries. Rather than empty buildings the adventurers are facing small, shabby villages with irate tenants some of which will be forewarned that they are coming.

Twist

Over a large section of the road the plants themselves have become animated and deadly. At the heart of this deadly tangle of thorns and creepers is the cause a long-overturned and rotted wagon from a mage college, its cargo of potions spilled and mixed upon the ground. Some combination must have caused the change but the heart of the evil plant life is here, if it can be destroyed, the rest should wither.

Epilogue

With the road completed merchant traffic begins. Historical difference make things a little tense but brisk trade and the positive flow of money helps both cities see past that historical enmity. Then the raids start, caravans and wagons being hit at night by troops in the other city's livery. Both are instantly suspicious and the ground made up through the trade is quickly lost. As a last minute effort they agree to send the party back out along the road to find the truth of what is happening and to decide once and for all who is actually behind the attacks along the road.



Adventure 79

Tunnel Rat

Description

The dwarves of Granite Spire have been prosperous over the last decade or so, rapidly increasing in both number and wealth and expanding their home accordingly, digging deeper into the spire. Recently they made a discovery in their tunnelling that has the whole of Spire abuzz with interest and excitement. They uncovered an ancient gate marked in old dwarven runes that seems to lead into one of the great delvings their race created in the here-before.

Unsure of the content of the tunnels they have decided to have them scouted out to assess the room available and to see if anything dangerous lurks in the once grand dwarven delving. To this end they have sent some of their number out into the world to find adventurers willing to take up the task for a reasonable reward. They are willing to offer a considerable amount of gold and will allow the adventurers to take any coin they find but they are to leave remaining dwarven artefacts where they find them.

What they do find is that the tunnels are overrun with rats, huge plague-ridden things that scurry in the dark singly and in swarms. They flee from the light for now but seem to be growing bolder and bolder, not to mention larger and even more numerous as the exploration continues. Perhaps the rats are what drove off the dwarves... no, that's ridiculous, they're only rats...

Twist

The rats are a sign of the plague that descended upon this delving. Mining deep into the earth the dwarves uncovered the plague idol of the rat god and it still remains down in the lowest levels of the dungeon calling its children to it, mutating them, twisting them. There should be rats, dire rats, giant rats and were rat people of all descriptions. These things infest the whole delving and the were rats have made their homes on the lower levels where an underground river flows through the delving feasting on fish and the pale things

in the dark. Not that they won't eat adventurers when such food turns up.

Twist

Besides the rats there are only the ghosts of dwarves, long dead, full of baleful warnings and trying to see the adventurers off from their resting place. The skeletons of dwarves are piled up in the homes and temples and all their wounds seem to be self inflicted though there is no real indication of what killed them and the ghosts are too old and too stupid to really give them any information. The place remains unquiet and disturbing and the mystery is not a solvable one.

Twist

The delving has long since been moved into by a great, dark-skinned dragon that lives in the deep shadows of what was once the dwarve's greatest temple. The rats are the early warning system of the various servitors that the dragon has in its service, some of which are a manner of 'druid' of the underground word. The rats inform the others of intruders into their master's domain. When the dragon enters and leaves the domain it does so via the underground river, slithering through it like a snake.

Epilogue

With the delving scouted and partially cleared the dwarves begin to move into the tunnels and homes that have been uncovered and to explore further. In doing so they uncover even deeper tunnels, not found during the adventurer's search, these ones are carved in a stranger, much more organic fashion, the runes almost seeming to squirm before your eyes and refusing to be read properly. What could have carved these deeper tunnels and what mysteries do their delvings hide? Again it is up to the party to investigate.

Ideas: Make up the dwarven tunnels as you go along but try to balance the dungeon with the city quality.

Adventure 80

Would You Die For Me?

Description

A breathless nobleman, his cloak spattered with a little blood comes hurtling down the street in something of a panic almost bowling right into the party and knocking them over. Looking behind him in a blind panic he clutches at their robes and begs for their help. His entourage has been killed he says, a terrible ambush, an attempt to assassinate him. He presses his purse into their hands, begging for their protection, assuring them that he has more money he can pay them if they will but escort him so he can finish his business and then get him home.

The group after him are the Red Hand, an infamous group of assassins who take a contract, paid in advance, and then magically erase the memory of their employer from their minds, seeking out their prey with relentless and terrible efficiency. The noble has no idea who hired them or who would want to kill him for that matter, he simply wants protection.

His business in the city will take a couple of days to conclude and then he needs to be escorted to his home town and his ancestral home. The trip should take no more than three days on horseback. Five days in total to keep him alive at all costs against a group of renowned and dangerous assassins. Piece of cake.

Twist

The nobleman is actually one of the assassins, programmed to believe he is a noble. It was another noble party that was the target and his entourage were nothing more than hired thugs, throwaways always intended to be killed as part of the show. Unfortunately he ran away before the glamour affecting his mind could be undone and he still believes himself to be a noble. The Red Hand are not trying to slay him but rather to get him back so they can return him to himself.

Twist

The noble is the most annoying man alive. From his braying laugh to his insistent and unceasing flirtation and unwelcome advances to anything female to his habit of picking his nose and flicking the resulting snotball and the lowest class person in sight. No wonder people want to kill him really.

Twist

The Red Hand aren't the only ones after the nobleman, it seems whoever is after him has spread their money around liberally and many freelance assassins and bounty hunters are also after his hide. When the adventurers discover what the reward for his head is they might well change their minds about what side they're on...

Epilogue

Even when he has been returned home the noble doesn't appear to be safe, even his own staff have tried to kill him and he has gone through three poison tasters in the last month. He needs people he can trust even if they are mercenary adventurer scum from the lower orders of society. He sends for the adventurers as he was able to torture information on who the staff member was working for from them before they died. Lady Sharia, a rival noble from an opposing house, known as The Black Widow for her husbands' unfortunate string of deaths. His plan is simple, they are to assassinate her and put an end to these deadly shenanigans once and for all.

Ideas: Make the noble up as a full character and give him a proper name and some decent background, something to regale the adventurers with on their journeys together.

Ideas: There are many different ways you can try to assassinate someone, try to use as many as possible from the simple dagger in the back to the blowpipe to poison to gas to magic. The assassins will use every trick.

Adventure 81

The Webwood

Description

The Webwood has always been a bit of a foreboding place. The lack of birds or animals has always made it eerily still and gossamer webs strung between the trees here and there can cut flesh to the bone if they are blown into you or walked into at the wrong angle. What made the webs is unseen but since insect life still crawls unmolested through the woods it is possible that some diminutive creature has spun them.

Over the years this fell reputation has not been born out by any disastrous happenings or deaths, no monsters have emerged from the woods to ravage anyone and the only death in the Webwood has been a young boy who wandered in and drowned in one of the streams that runs through the wood.

Such a verdant forest has been deemed to be a good place for hunting, despite the lack of animals and the strange webs and the local prince has been restocking the woods with game over the last few years while the small villages have enjoyed the favour of the palace pockets and the hiring of many gamekeepers has brought work and more people into the area.

Quite suddenly over the past few days game has become scarce, many of the gamekeepers and woodsmen have gone missing and people from the villages on the edge of the wood have also vanished while collecting firewood or nuts and berries.

The prince is perplexed and angry that his hunting wood has suddenly turned into some kind of death trap and commissions the party to investigate and to take care of whatever the problem might be. What the problem turns out to be is a nest of intelligent giant spiders, awoken from slumber by the strumming of their webs and feasting, stocking up on the new creatures of the wood in the webbed larders.

Twist

The animals and people taken by the spiders have not been killed they have simply been rendered into a state of paralysis and suspended animation by the poison of the spiders and then bound up into the webs to hang and await the hunger of one of the spiders. They are fanatical about catching and storing just about any food they can find and their home, amongst a pile of broken rocks in the centre of the wood, is strung about with the swaying and bound bodies of their food.

Twist

The spiders are capable of speech and this is their home, it always has been. Before they resort to violence and poison they will try to talk to the adventurers, to persuade them around to their point of view. At least once the adventurers have done something other than simply run or fight. Things that would mark them as simple prey to the spiders brains.

Twist

Those stung and suspended by the spiders and not quickly eaten have been impregnated with spider eggs. Sooner or later they will hatch and baby spiders will devour their bodies before scurrying for cover or more food. Gross, especially if one of the adventurers has been impregnated.

Epilogue

The group of spiders above the surface were simply the hunters, the 'adventurers' of the spider den beneath the surface of the earth. The spiders are tunnel makers and the loss of the hunters brings them to the surface, scouting at first, determining what happened before pouring from the earth in great numbers to seek revenge.

Ideas: The spider 'hive' could have a caste system with different spiders fulfilling different roles.

Adventure 82

Mirror Image

Description

The king of Aritoch has a dilemma on his hands. He and his closest ring of advisors, including the queen, need to make a very important but secret state visit to a neighbouring kingdom. However, there are problems in the kingdom and if he is known to leave then those problems will escalate with opportunists taking advantage of his absence. What he needs is to be in two places at once.

The court sorcerer comes up with a solution. The king will be in two places at once. They will find suitable people to have their features altered by magic to meet the image of the king. This double will perform his duties according to his orders while he is gone and upon their return the magic will be undone and the king will return to his throne with nobody being any the wiser.

The king agrees to the plan and subtle enquiries are made. Finally the party are chosen and escorted to the palace by guards before the room is cleared apart from them and the king's inner circle. The plan is explained to them, the orders laid out, the reward agreed and then the change takes place.

The king will be gone a whole month and many problems may occur in that time requiring the pseudo-king and his advisors attention from goblin raids to fires in the cities to problems with taxation. Living in luxury, believed to be the highest nobles in the land may give them a taste for it, will they give it up?

Twist

At the end of the month word filters back to them from a single survivor of the royal entourage who soon dies. The king and his advisors were all slain, to a man. With him dead the last witness is gone, the only one who knows that they are false. What do they do? What if the survivor is wrong and in another month the king does return?

Twist

The king is a desperately unpopular figure with the peasants and levies heavy taxes to support his luxury and his hobbies. The orders he has left are oppressive and cruel and may be difficult for some adventurers to follow in good conscience. The peasants do rise in revolt though they may back down with concessions. Towing the king's line will mean a wholesale revolt while compromise will have to be explained to the king on his return. Which path do they take and how do they deal with things?

Twist

It turns out that the queen, or some other prominent figure, even the king, was having a string of affairs and now, embarrassingly, the various courtiers have come around courting once again. Maintaining the cover of the individual could be extremely tricky while rebuffing their advances may alert them to the fact that something isn't right.

Epilogue

One of the courtiers who knew about the conspiracy has sided with the court mage to hatch a plan. They wish to get rid of the king and queen and wish to enlist the characters to perform the same charade they did before but ruling the country under their direction as a puppet to their desires until they can engineer things so that they rule directly. They will live a life of luxury and indulgence but will effectively be unable to do anything they want for a time. Do they take up the offer or inform the king? Do they buck against the control of the courtiers?

Ideas: The more you rub in the sheer luxury and splendour of life as a king the more likely the characters are to have a moral quandary about whether to give it up or to take over the kingdom, so lay it on thick.

Adventure 83

Blood & Coral

Description

The Serpent's Triangle is a dangerous area of sea. From time to time the sea boils with bubbles rising from below the sea and the water becomes as thin as air, whole ships dropping below the surface in an instant and taking their crews with them to a watery grave. Most ships have learned to avoid the waters of the area but still ships are lost at night to the mysterious sea, drifting off course and sailing into danger.

Over the centuries a great many vessels must have sunk to a watery grave in the clear blue waters of The Serpent's Triangle taking with them the wealth of past civilisations, gold, wine, jewels and a great many other things besides. All of that out of sight beneath the surface of the ocean, rich pickings for octopi and cod but not much use to man or beast above the surface.

A mage, an artificer with high ambitions, plans to change that. He has perfected a special ring that will give an adventurer the ability to breathe underwater and to stop his skin getting sodden and wrinkled. With these magic rings the artificer hopes to find a suitable band of adventurers to help him plunder the deeps of The Serpent's Triangle and to share the bounty of what they find with him, fifty-fifty.

His predictions show the sea will not boil for at least a week and he has hired a large, flat-bottomed fishing boat with large nets to haul the bounty up to the ship. Now he just needs adventurers to brave the depths of the sea for him and to root through the ships looking for treasure.

Twist

The stacked ships and partially dismembered wrecks have been claimed, partially, by a territorial underwater race who do not want their rich pickings taken away from under them. The adventurers will have to avoid their patrols and fight their warriors, to defend the boat and to load the nets while being constantly aware of who or what could be watching.

Twist

The place gets its name from a great sea wyrm that lives in the area, too much disturbance, say the sliding and smashing of a ship could wake the beast from its slumber and cause a lot of problems for the party and their benefactor up on the surface. Of course there are other large sea creatures that nest in the vessels, the wyrm is just the greatest of them.

Twist

Their 'benefactor' has absolutely no intention of sharing the proceeds of the expedition with anyone, least of all the adventurers. Each ring has a failsafe, at a word of command from him they cease functioning, the plan being to drown his helpers and leave him free to enjoy his fortune. There are air bubbles in some of the vessels, perhaps they can survive long enough to come up with a plan to reach the surface.

Epilogue

There are other places known for their wrecks or for the mysterious loss of vessels. The artificer and his helpers have become well known due to their exploits and good fortune and might be sought out to salvage sunken vessels or to investigate the causes of some of these other sinkings. Not every ocean is as warm and crystal clear as The Serpent's Triangle however, every sea has its own nature and problems.

Ideas: The tangled mess of sunken ships can make a very interesting and unique 'dungeon' made up of cabins, rowing decks and great forests and tents of weed.

Ideas: Don't dismiss conventional threats of the sea, poisonous creatures, sharks and so on.

Adventure 84

It Simply Isn't Cricket

Description

The sporting season has begun, with the summer come the fairs and the tournaments. Knights, warriors and adventurers from across the land congregate at these events to test their skills and to attempt to win the prizes that are offered by the various nobles to draw the most competitors to their games.

Jousting, archery, swordplay and other more esoteric combat arts are there to be demonstrated, learned, practiced and enjoyed and the winners will gain no small share of fame and favour. Those who do well at the smaller fetes and fairs may well find themselves invited to The Grand Tourney, the largest and most prestigious of these events.

Of course, some tournaments are rigged and some competitors will stoop to unsportsmanlike tactics in order to win. The favours of ladies, fortunes and a great deal of prestige are at stake after all. With adventuring opportunities thin on the ground the party could do worse than to enter the tournaments and to see how they fair. At the very least they could win a few prizes and make a little money.

Twist

Throughout the games the party are dogged by the same person, a constant thorn in their side almost always pipping them at the post and taking the grand prize leaving them in second place. He cheats of course, its obvious to the competitors but somehow not to the judges. He uses illegal lances, throws dirt, does low blows in the wrestling competitions and still somehow gets away with it. This 'black knight' is a fabulously wealthy nobleman who bribes judges outrageously, spending far more than he earns all in pursuit of the fame he feels is owed to him and the hand in marriage of a nobleman's daughter who wishes nothing to do with him but whose father is becoming convinced.

Twist

The prize at the grand tourney is a mystery and will be announced once someone has won. There is a great deal of speculation over what that prize might be. As it turns out the prize is the king's only unmarried daughter and the only prize she is, is a prize pig. If the adventurers won rather than coming second, third or unplaced they are now in a very delicate position. She doesn't even come with a palace or land or access to riches, just a minor noble title and an arse the size of the kingdom. If a woman wins the prize can be an equally unwanted son.

Twist

Through their participation in the games the fame of the characters spreads until they are surrounded by 'fans' people who have heard of their exploits or who have followed them from fair to fair to see how they do. They get barely a moment's peace and the novelty of being loved and adored may soon wear off. The crowd is fickle though and may turn on them at any moment.

Epilogue

Several of the knights and warriors that the characters beat, even disgraced at the games, band together and seek them out once the season is over, tracking them down and insisting that they play again, only this time for real. This should only be a short encounter with some grumpy and insulted warriors but could make a good introduction to another scenario while providing a sense of continuity of sorts.

Ideas: Pomp, ceremony and tradition are the order of the day for the tournaments. Lay it on thick with a trowel, ladies in fine dresses and nobles in rich clothing, food galore, flying pennants, stamping chargers and trumpets sounding in honour of the field of battle. Each fair should build on the splendour of the last until the grand tourney, the jewel in the crown of the season.

Adventure 85

Archaeology, Archaeschmology

Description

Several academics from the college of magic have disappeared while investigating The Pit of Bones, a great bowl like depression in the dirt in which the skeletons of many great beasts of the past have been found. There are few beasts that frequent the area, perhaps disturbed by the bones of the great animals of the past and no bandits are known to have been in the area. The disappearance of such intelligent and skilled people is perplexing to the magical college to say the least.

Scrying and other forms of magical investigation from a distance have revealed nothing as though some force was opposing their attempts to discern what was going on. They have no choice but to send someone to investigate and, having already lost several of their number, plus some volunteer students and some hired diggers, they are unwilling to investigate themselves.

The party are hired to look into the disappearance and given as much information as the college has, which doesn't amount to much. The Pit of Bones is some distance away and travelling there is an ordeal in itself. Once they arrive there they find to their dismay, eventually, that one of the academics has survived, a necromancer, who has raised his former colleagues as zombies and is using them to dig out the skeletons of the ancient beasts so that he can raise them also, collecting a powerful force of dead creatures to whatever sick end he has in mind.

Twist

The necromancer is entirely innocent. The diggers and his colleagues were killed in a rock slide, nothing more sinister than that. Rather than have the trip entirely go to waste he hit upon the idea of using them as zombie diggers and animating some of the skeletons to take back to the college with him. Whether he even gets a chance to say all this before the party attacks and he assumes that they're bandits or claim jumpers remains to be seen.

Twist

This is a place that great beasts have always come to die and always will. Some of them are coming now, lead by an old bull dinosaur that becomes outraged that their sacred place has been disturbed by small ambulatory meals. Before he and his herd die he is determined to see the annoying little creatures stomped flat.

Twist

The Pit of Bones is the resting place of an undead dragon and in their digging the crew from the college of magic disturbed and awoke this creature. Its necromantic magic is slowly awakening the other beasts of the bone yard and it gathers strength and knowledge before it prepares to bring terror to the surrounding districts.

Epilogue

Some of the bones, even full skeletons, are collected and returned to the college of magic where they take pride of place in one of the great building's display halls. Some time later some of the prize smaller finds are stolen. The magi at the college had theories about an old lizard race somehow related to the dragons of today and these bones are artefacts were related to that theory but who would be interested in such things today? They're of interest only to scholars aren't they? So who took them?

Ideas: Variety in the bones of the giant beasts will make them more interesting and engaging give them different capabilities, different natural weapons and different tactics to lend them a little bit of character.

Ideas: The pit could be some sort of asteroid crater which will provide echoes in your player's minds of the impact that wiped out the dinosaurs in our world, an important and resonant link with the scenario.

Adventure 86

Endless Night

Description

It happened quickly on the night of the new moon when all was dark save the stars. A roiling inky blackness swept across the sky, blotting out the stars one by one and even seeming to make the fires and candles burn low and dim. When the hour of morning came no cocks crowed, no light was seen, people stirred in their beds and came out into the dark and cold, shivering as they saw no sky, only darkness.

The black cloud covers a great swathe of the countryside, unbroken from one side to the other, unmoved by wind or magic and simply hovering with a great dark malevolence blotting out the sun and making the area beneath dark, cold and foreboding.

The immediate problems the adventurers face are those of tiredness, cold, starvation. Without light the crops wither in the fields and the people are forced to live on their stores. Many of them start to flee the villages and towns moving as fast as they can towards the edge of the cloud seeking pastures new. Travelling the roads in the dark leaves them vulnerable to the night creatures that are thriving in this pestilent darkness and once they reach the edge of the cloud they probably receive a frosty reception from the neighbouring lands who have no wish to harbour refugees, perhaps for fear they will bring the darkness with them.

Who has caused this darkness and what is their motivation for doing so? Who benefits and even if they do benefit are they the ones behind it?

Twist

The inky cloud is not a cloud at all but is some malevolent entity or creature swathing the land in darkness for a few days to weaken its pretty before it begins reaching down with tendrils of strange materials and scouring the land for food. When sated, or driven off, the creature ascends into the sky and vanishes, allowing the sun to come back to the scoured and tortured land.

Twist

The cloud is being produced by an old artefact, co-opted by the forces that are creating the cloud, for whatever reason. The artefact is heavily defended atop a mountain as close to the centre of the region as they were able to get it. When you are at the edge of the clouded area this becomes more visible as you can see the cloud boiling up from the mountaintop. To lift the cloud someone will need to climb up there and to either destroy, break or repurpose the device.

Twist

The cloud has been created using necromantic magic from the breath of the dead, brought across for the ethereal lands of the passed-on and made into this sun-obscuring cloud that not only cuts off light but the very essence of life itself. The master necromancer responsible is using it to raise an army of the damned for everyone who dies underneath the cloud rises as a servant of his power. Human servants question and defy, the dead, as automatons simply obey.

Epilogue

The cloud has been destroyed but the shadow it cast has left a blight upon the land. For a whole year the plants do not grow properly, everything seems devoid of colour, missing something, many animals are stillborn in the spring and many die in the autumn. Once a whole year has come and gone strange, shadowy things, the same colour as the cloud, begin to hatch from the ground laying siege to the whole region, shadow shapes of dead people and animals slipping through gates and doorways and draining the life from their victims.

Ideas: This adventure could form a good follow up to adventure #45.

Adventure 87

Asset Recovery

Description

Around ten years ago McDurrell, a merchant and an entrepreneur, sunk a great deal of what was then a modest fortune into establishing a fishing, farming and mining settlement on an island not far from the shores of his home nation. Within ten years, he thought, the settlement would have been able to make enough money to pay him back on his initial investment plus a little more.

He was right except that he missed out one quite important factor, people. The people on the island have worked their fingers to the bone, farming, fishing, building, mining, building a successful little town that now covers perhaps a quarter of the island. They are successful and they see it as them being successful from their own hard work, not McDurrell's money.

They have point blank refused to pay back the money and so McDurrell has determined to get it back his own way. Adding the cost of hiring the party and some other mercenary scum to what the island owes him he has rented a few ships capable of landing on the island and has issued orders to the mercs and the party to go over there and take everything of value until they have made up the cost of what owes him. A debt is after all a debt, to be repaid.

The islanders are unlikely to see it the same way.

Twist

McDurrell, in his anger, has just about doubled the figure he thinks the islanders owe him. The settlement is unlikely to be viable once everything required to make up the figure is taken from them. The moment of success for the island is also the moment of its downfall, not that he cares all that much. The raid is the death knell of the island.

Twist

The islanders found a few interesting things while mining on the island, old artefacts and magical weapons belonging to an ancient king who was interred on the island by his people. Two or three of them are equipped with these items and there may be a deal more resistance from the people on the island than the party were expecting.

Twist

McDurrell is a fraudster, he never loaned these people any money, he's just a pirate in the mask of a businessman. Of course, the islanders would say that to try and spare themselves from having their assets stripped but maybe there is a grain of truth to it. Worth investigating? Possibly.

Epilogue

As it turns out this island is not the only one McDurrell sponsored, he also has had various other 'town start up' schemes around the landscape and many of them are defaulting on what they owe him. He's happy to hire a proven team to get the money out of them as sort of repo men writ large. These expeditions can take them far and wide through the surrounding landscape as most of his deals have been done with out of the way or less hospitable locations, though most of them have made a success of it.

Ideas: The island should probably have lots of little hideaway places where the islanders can stash things they do not want stolen and where the party and their assistants are vulnerable to traps and ambushes. The mine tunnels, some woods even some craggy rocks on the shore all have their possibilities.

Ideas: The other mercenaries that McDurrell has hired could be even more unscrupulous than the party.

Adventure 88

The Restoration

Description

The healer's temple atop the Greenhill has been a place of healing, meditation and resurrection for many hundreds of years. The white marble of the temple sits serene against the green pastures and the meditation gardens of the hill which has been carved, over the years, into a tiered series of levels leading up to the temple itself.

Adventurers and other rich persons in high risk occupations come to the temple offer their gold to its cause and are brought back from the lands of the dead regularly and for many centuries this has continued without problem and without the temple falling into disrepute or any suggestion that it might be corrupted.

Some of those who have been brought back lately seem to have been behaving... strangely. Some have subsequently disappeared from their friends and companions, even their families and have not been seen again. Some of these groups, suspicious of the clerics at the temple and thinking that the monks would hide things if they saw them again have clubbed together to offer the party a reward to look into it themselves. They have given them pictures, drawings of the missing people and outlined their suspicions.

Now it is up to the party to fabricate an excuse to visit and to snoop around, to discover what they can about what is going on.

What is going on is that the souls of dead monks and priests of the order are being brought back into the bodies of these more newly deceased. The why and how? That is what needs to be discovered.

Twist

The priests are bringing back their old leaders because their god has given them a vision of a spiritual crisis that is about to engulf this area, an evil in service to an evil god and, in order to be prepared, they have decided to bring back the great and the good from their past

into the world now to help save it. Given what is coming they are sorry and try to hide what they are doing but feel it is justified.

Twist

The temple has been overcome by dark forces though most of the priests remain unaware of what is occurring. The chief of the temple, the one responsible for the majority of resurrections, has become possessed by the anima of an evil god and has passed on the contamination to much of the inner circle of the temple. What they are raising are but shades of the original people, possessed bodies that flee their families and friends, taking to the wilderness to prey upon people and offer up their bloody hearts to the worship of that god, empowering it.

Twist

The monks are doing their best but the lands of the dead are growing stronger of late, the ghost lords from beyond the veil resent having their foot soldiers, servants and citizens taken from them so quickly, especially the strong ones. The lands of the dead are pulling their number back and the only way to deal with it is to cross into the deadlands and confront the ones pulling the souls back in a strange, dead mirror of this world.

Epilogue

With the temple restored by hook or by crook to its proper function the healing and resurrections proceed as normal once again but the monks now lack some of their leadership or their power has been drained. The party must escort an elderly but experienced priest to one of the larger temples to seek the help and advice of the higher church hierarchy.

Ideas: Overplaying the serenity and peacefulness and then overplaying the horror will make for good contrast.

Adventure 89

Massive

Description

The jungle city of Omshana exists in a delicate balance with the jungle around it, rising above it like a massive, stepped ziggurat with flowering vines and fruit trees planted in the plazas and roads that spiral up around the outside of the city, the whole built of yellowish stone that glows almost like gold from a distance in the heat of the midday sun.

The city exists as much in harmony with the jungle as possible, only a single road is cut through the vegetation, kept clear by rangers who move up and down the road, dealing with wild beasts as they arise, cutting back plants and leaving their scent to keep the animals that have learned to fear men away from the road and travellers. The city grows much of its food on its plazas and is otherwise fed and watered by deep wells, magic and hunting as well as importation.

While the party are there things start to happen though. The jungle begins to grow faster and faster, beginning to scale the outer walls of the ziggurat that forms the city, the road is swallowed up. The trees take on a darker tint and grow more gnarled, distorted images of screaming faces and other disturbing imagery. The city that lived in harmony with the jungle is now under attack by it and needs defending.

Twist

The jungle has come alive and is trying to destroy the city because a huntsman from the city brought down an animal sacred to the jungle god a few days ago. Afraid of the wrath of the priests more than the jungle he hid the body within the city and thought no more of it. The jungle knows though and the only way to appease it is to return the dead animal to the jungle.

Twist

The jungle has become possessed by a demon seed, an evil spirit that rises occasionally from the deep, dark corrupted parts of the jungle. The armies of the city

are tied up in defending it but a small group may be able to penetrate the jungle, find the demon seed and destroy it, ending the siege.

Twist

The king of the city is also its high priest and has been taken with madness barricading himself within the royal temple and refusing to come out, using his powers as priest to turn the jungle against his own people, to destroy the city. The priests have a secret way into the temple but wish to hire strangers to do the deed, the king must not be seen in this state by the people.

Epilogue

After the siege of the jungle the old king is sacrificed upon the high altar to appease and thank the gods and his son takes over as the new king. He is a much more progressive thinker and has learned little or nothing from the wrath of the jungle, cloistered away in the high palace as he was. He orders the army and as many mercenaries as can be hired to begin clearing more of the surrounding jungle for fields, mining and for the harvesting of wood. He wishes to expand the city at cost to the jungle, to carve a new road through to increase trade. There is money to be made working for him but they will witness the wonders of the jungle being destroyed and spoiled one by one.

Ideas: Besides the usual plant creatures you could get a little more creative, warriors made of hardwood, poisonous flowers, vines, stingers and brambles. Be creative and imaginative and look at books about the plants of the jungle for more inspiration.

Ideas: For the style of the city think of a combination between the Incas and the hidden cities of *Tarzan*.

Adventure 90

Boo!

Description

Gatherleigh manor sits not far outside the town of Charbury. Once a fort in the early days of the town it was refitted as a stately home before falling into disuse and becoming overgrown. Matteus Gilbert, a merchant from Charbury, bought it from the town council for a very reasonable sum intending to do it up and make it into a home and place of business for himself and his family.

When he began work the workers began to complain that things were being stolen, that they felt strange chills and heard noises while they were working. When the first worker was found, hair white, hands clutching at nothing, teeth shattered against each other in a rictus of death they refused to work there any longer, abandoning the manor and leaving Matteus with nobody to finish the work. Never a quitter Matteus continued the work himself with the help of his family until they too began to notice strange happenings around the manor.

He is still a stubborn pig of a man and refuses to give up on the place regardless, even if he's not willing to risk his, or his family's lives. What he does have is money, enough to hire some foolhardy adventurers to go into the place and clear it out for him. That would be the party.

Twist

The property is not actually haunted; it is used as a hiding place by a band of robbers who prey on the merchant traffic around the town. They used a poison to fake the effects of a ghost attack upon the worker and have been creeping around the manor making noises and leaving things to frighten people. Adventurers might prove a little harder to convince but they're still unwilling to give up their base of operations.

Twist

The house has a convoluted history with several ghost stories. Each of the haunting entities must be put to rest in their own way from the girl who lost her love and committed suicide to the fort commander who was slain by his own men. Slashing away isn't going to work so well, what's needed is some solid investigation in a haunted house which has been rotting for a long time.

Twist

It is not the house which is haunted but rather it is Matteus himself. The house is simply a place where the walls between the land of the living and the land of the dead are worn thin and all those he has slain, had killed or otherwise driven to death can now cross over and torment him in this, his attempt to accomplish his dream of a grand house.

Epilogue

The house is cleansed of the spooks, or whatever it was in the house and Matteus continues apace with his renovations and restorations of the property. The house is not done with being a centre of spooky activity just yet though. In breaking down and clearing a wall some old bones are uncovered unleashing another unquiet spirit upon the house, this one far more powerful and able to sway and empower other ghosts to its cause, to raise the dead and to cause strange phenomena in the house. Once more he calls upon the people he knows can deal with such problems to come to his house and deal with the spooks, hopefully for the last time.

Ideas: This spooky scenario would work equally well in a modern supernatural setting but with a fantasy backdrop you can play around a little more, give the ghosts spells and other powers that they can somehow use across the barrier between the lands of the living and the lands of the dead.

Ideas: The ghosts might be able to possess people and control their bodies, hiding in the party themselves.

Adventure 91

Before Swine

Description

The coastal town of Chyanng is out on the far rocky peninsula called The Spur that juts into The Grey Sea. There are caves beneath the peninsula that are carved out by the waves and wind and that serve as the spawning pools of the jewel fish of The Grey Sea. The only spawning grounds.

Each year when the jewel fish come the town goes into a frenzy of preparation, this is their biggest haul, their biggest catch as after the fish spawn they die. What makes them jewel fish is that, over the course of the year, they metabolise the gold, silver and other precious metals in the seawater and grow scales and thin streaks and lines down their body of those metals. Each fish is a unique mix of gold, silver and other colours caused by impurities, each one a jewel in its own right or that can be burned and separated, melting the metals down for trade.

This year there is a problem though, the way down into the caves has been blocked, inhabited by a wandering group of Gray Sea cave bears, also in search of the jewel fish but for different reasons. The villagers are in no way strong or brave enough to take on the bears and need help, preferably quickly and before the jewel fish arrive to spawn. They send their fastest runner to the nearest town to seek help and who should he run into but our merry band of adventurers?

Twist

The bears are not the only creatures to have taken up residence in the caves in the interim, a large octopus, or similar creature, has set up home in the spawning pools themselves and is viciously defensive of its new home, flailing and attacking any creature that ventures into it.

Twist

The bears are trained animals; one even wears a collar as will become apparent if and when it is killed. The bears belong to a band of people determined to take

the entire jewel-fish crop for themselves without interference. Besides the bears whoever manages to force their way into the caves will have to deal with these poachers who will be cornered in the caves and desperate.

Twist

A storm is blowing in, just to make things worse. Every few minutes powerful waves crash up through the caves, blowing air before it and flooding many of the lower caves. Someone caught in the sudden rush of water could end up swept out to sea, drowned or dashed against the rocks if they are not wary and careful.

Epilogue

Having become the heroes of the village the party will be invited back every year to join in the harvest and the festivities. In a long running campaign this festival can become an important reminder over many games of the continuity of parts of the setting and the various deeds the heroes have performed over their careers. The jewl fish harvest may also come under threat time and again from different sources such as sea monsters or fishing vessels. The village may well need to call upon its saviours more than once and it would hope that their history together might count for something.

Ideas: Spend a little time thinking and working on the description of the jewel fish. These creatures are a natural wonder and their brilliance and beauty in their natural setting needs to have a bit of impact to it when the characters see it.

Ideas: Any bandits or poachers could be people from the village who moved away, this is how they have the knowledge of when and where to catch the fish as well as resentment towards the parochial settlement.

Adventure 92

Catch 'Em All!

Description

The wizard Morchesse is a crafter and an avid study of mythic beasts, monsters and magical creatures. There is little he enjoys more than poring over the college of magic's encyclopaedias looking up rare beasts, copying pictures of them and reading up on their habits, prey, abilities and forms.

He has but rarely seen any mythic beasts other than familiars but the experiences have stuck with him. A man with breathing difficulties amongst other health problems he rarely if ever sets foot outside the college but has a burning desire to see these animals.

With his precocious artistic, crafting and magical skills he has sought to find a way to bring these monsters to him, not the fleeting otherworldly creatures of summoning magic but the real thing, controlled, passive, brought in a way that can be properly studied and examined without risk, under his sway.

He has painstakingly crafted a series of cards, each one drawn in magical ink, inlaid in gold leaf and made of high quality vellum and card. Each one depicts one of his favourite mythic beasts and each card has the ability to capture such a beast within it so long as the beast is rendered unconscious or is asleep.

Now all he needs are people brave enough to hunt down and capture the creatures for him...

Twist

The cards, in fact, don't work on sleeping creatures. Only those that have been beaten into unconsciousness, though they also heal the creature stored in the card while it is held in stasis. The first time they try to capture a sleeping creature the magic goes off, the creature wakes up and then chaos ensues.

Twist

Looking through the list of creatures that Morchesse wishes captured they might notice two concurrent and running themes... nymph, dryad, sylph, succubus on the one hand and ogre, troll, lizardman and Djinn on the other, sex and violence, the old twin obsessions. Can they truly deliver the gentle feminine creatures of the wild into the hands of an eccentric and possibly perverted mage?

Twist

Word of these cards has gotten out to some of the other wizards at the college and one of the more unscrupulous ones has decided that having control of such beasts would greatly increase his power. He plans to hire his own group of cutthroats and to follow the party, waiting for the right moment to strike and steal the cards for himself, using the monsters trapped within for some scheme or other he has cooked up.

Epilogue

Once he has one set of monsters to examine, of course he wants more. Others also want copies of the cards, so much more reliable and useful than summoning magic. The geeky wizard has a great more creatures he wants captured and other wizards are soon demanding that he make them cards or reveal his secret. The popularity goes to his head and he'll do all he can to provide these cards for his fellow wizards who seem strangely enamoured of the relatively simple magic, using it for fun rather than serious study, setting their captive beasts on each other.

Ideas: Group the monsters he wants captured by theme or habitat, in effect creating different 'decks' of creatures of different types.

Ideas: Suddenly and without warning the craze for his cards could die away leaving him utterly destitute.

Adventure 93

Ready To Rumble

Description

Shrewport is a city of thieves and pirates, left alone because it is hard to reach and easily defended, also because it provides an outlet for the vices and the violence of folk who can travel there to indulge themselves freely without cluttering up their home cities.

The city can only be reached by ship, a narrow pass between jutting rocks only allowing one vessel at a time to move through, covered at all times by the pirate vessels and other defences ringed around Shrewport. It is always busy with ships queuing up to get in and out but it is never so busy as at the time of the winter solstice.

On the solstice Shrewport plays host to The Contest of Champions, a no-holds barred competition of martial skill, unarmed, for all comers regardless of race or skill. The bets are massive, the prizes unusual and the rewards great for those with enough skill to win a few rounds.

Fighters, con artists, gamblers, prostitutes, drug dealers and merchants all descend upon Shrewport in great numbers during this time and it is said one can walk three paces and be robbed, kissed and buy a good bargain within the space of those three paces. The brawls spill onto the streets and the greatest of fighters may get the chance to face the champion in the captains' hall.

It is an event that should not be missed.

Twist

The champion is an experienced and grizzled ogre pit slave with massive leather bracers that magically make him even stronger than he would normally be. He wears heavy brass knuckles and is so popular with the captains that despite him being a slave he lives as well as merchant princes do in some countries. Defeating him would be a major coup for any warrior and would

make them famed and rich with an offer to stay on as the new champion.

Twist

Lady Marion Fairfax, a dilettante and hedonist, is in Shrewport for the fighting. Rich and jaded she takes a liking to the party and to the warriors they intend to put into the fights. She offers to sponsor them, there may even be a short and tempestuous romance but in the end she is fixing the fights for them, doping the opposition. Anywhere else this would be a problem but here, anything goes. They had best be careful not to insult her.

Twist

After a few wins they are approached by a sleazy little man with a greasy moustache and a simpering manner to him. He is presenting himself to them on behalf of his client, Mr Crusher who would like to enter into a bout with them. He would also like them to fall at a suitably dramatic moment during the fight. For this he is willing to pay them around ten percent of what he makes from the foolish betters. If they do as he says he may occasionally visit them again for the same reasons.

Epilogue

Amongst the fighting that year some espionage went on. Some kingdom or other that has lost patience with Shrewport sent an agent who was seen, here and there, making sketches and maps, counting ships and people. The captain's council is confident that they could repulse any attack on Shrewport but just the same, to be safe, they want to hire some outsiders to track down this spy back in the outer world and stop them reporting back to their superior.



Adventure 94

Sorcery 101

Description

The college of magic takes in talented youngsters with a gift for 'the art' and teaches them discipline as well as the ability to wield the power of magic. This is a long and difficult task and, while the majority of students turn out reasonably well there are always a few bad eggs in the batch. It is admirable that they turn out as many capable and sane wizards as they do, more than enough to deal with the others.

The latest influx of students is a little... different though. They seem irresponsible, brash, less committed to the work and much more... physical than the lecturers of the college are used to. They can't cope, they're much more used to the bookish, diligent types than the latest horrors they have been saddled with. In desperation they decide to hire some additional staff, some who are used to the rough and tumble sort of life that the students seem to have led, staff who can, perhaps, control them. The party.

The party will draw a wage over the course of an experimental term; they will be fed, clothed, given a place to stay and given a chance to prove themselves. If they can bring at least some of the students under control and term them into productive members of the college they will get a bonus and a chance to stay on for more terms helping out. If they make it through a whole year the rewards will be greater and a magical college can offer a lot.

Twist

The students are, typically, unimpressed with their new lecturers seeing them as a challenge rather than anything exciting or worthy of hero worship. As hardened adventurers the new lecturers should be able to take a lot which merely inspires the troublesome youngsters to go to even greater lengths to inspire a nervous breakdown in them.

Twist

One or two or several of the students develop a crush on the most ruggedly handsome member of the party mooning after them, making inappropriate advances and otherwise making his life hell, especially if some of them are of a 'socially unacceptable' age. Between tutting staff, distressed parents and tearful girls who don't understand why he can't love them he's in for a rough ride. Female members of the party may have even more embarrassing encounters with hormonal teenage boys.

Twist

The students get into a pranking war, competing with each other in several groups to play the most complete and terrible prank upon the staff, the party – as adventurers – make some of the prime targets as they are considered more of a challenge and worth more to have even minor pranks played on them. Things get stranger and stranger especially as they get better at their magic and grow in imagination.

Epilogue

After a successful year helping tutor the miscreant horrors they are taken on as permanent staff and a permanent adjunct to the staff. Things continue to get stranger though. If they thought that intake of students was bad the next intake leaves them breathless. Add to that the fact that whenever an experiment goes wrong or something is accidentally summoned it is them that gets called and that these accidents and incidents seem to get more and more common with every passing moment and one would almost think that something was behind them...

Ideas: Detailing every single student is silly and time consuming. What is probably best is to make up a few stereotypes of students and then to make up five or six key, important individuals who will play a greater role in the story. Just like in real life teaching not all the students make an impression.

Adventure 95

The Body Politic

Description

The party have just finished one of their other quests, adventures, call them what you will and are enjoying some well earned rest in their beds either at home or in their favourite tavern. Suddenly they feel what seems to be some kind of large spider crawling up their body towards their face, waking them. After stabiness or the lighting of a lantern what was after them appears to have actually been a severed hand, one holding a note in its fingers.

The note is an introduction of sorts, it turns out the hand is the hand of Thabbadious, a mage of some note who they may have heard went missing not too long ago. Thabbadious managed to save himself from the slaying he was given by some rather ingenious magic, investing his life force into the various pieces of his body as he was dismembered, animating them. His enemies scattered his pieces to prevent themselves being pegged so easily for his death though and only his hand has managed to find help.

The various pieces of Thabbadious need to be found, bound together to make the whole once again and then, then he wants revenge upon his murderers and will need help to do it. They have the hand but there are a whole host of other parts to find, his head, his arms, his legs, his torso, even other pieces, as many as you want them to have to search for. Only when he is whole will he remember how and why he was murdered.

Twist

Thabbadious' spell was something he figured would make him immortal. The power corrupted him and he became dangerous. The ones who dismembered him were a group of holy knights who saw what he was becoming and decided to take action. Even now they still guard his heart in their temple and, if he is restored, Thabbadious will continue down the path of evil and corruption.

Twist

Some of the pieces have taken on an independent life of their own and have no wish to be reformed with the rest of the body, they will run, slither or otherwise attempt to escape and some of the pieces still have some of 'Thabbadious' magical items attached to them, rings, necklaces or whatever, that they are not afraid to use to secure their escape.

Twist

A beggar with a missing arm has 'Thabbadious' other missing arm. It attached itself to his stump and the two have formed a symbiotic relationship and have grown quite close. The beggar really, really doesn't want to part with the arm and he knows the hiding places and sewer tunnels of the city extremely well. For its part the arm has grown fond of the beggar and doesn't especially want to leave either, certainly not if nothing can be done to help the poor unfortunate.

Epilogue

Thabbadious' gets in touch with the adventurers again. It seems that his unique form of resurrection spell is of a great deal of interest to a lot of people and he is concerned that unscrupulous forces are trying to get hold of the text of the spell and to develop it for their own use. He cannot defend it by himself and so he commissions them to come to his tower, to collect the spell book containing his work and to transport it, safely, to the college of magic where it will be far more secure in their specialist vaults.

Ideas: Different parts of the body could have different types of personality depending on their role as part of the body as a whole. This puts a whole new spin on the phrase 'thinking with your penis'.

Ideas: Various body parts may have bonded with or settled into suitable relationships with different people.

Adventure 96

Union Dues

Description

There have been experiments with adventurer's guilds in the past but, by and large, adventurers are too fractious, different, rebellious and uncooperative for them to work as anything other than hiring houses for jobs and an alehouse with an exclusive clientele. Some people aren't content with that situation and want to change things, to bring more organisation to the adventuring profession and to use that organisation to 'improve' the lot of adventurers everywhere.

Those people are Dagwood and Ishmael, seasoned adventurers of many years experience who have become convinced of the power of collective bargaining. They have put together a plan of action where they will have chapter houses in every city, a fixed rate of reward for the different tasks adventurers are put to and even proper procedures for going on strike or denying areas and clients their services when they play up.

Unfortunately for adventurers everywhere Dagwood and Ishmael are largely concerned with their own wealth more than anything else and membership of this guild will be quite expensive and will put the adventurers within the enforcement area of the guilds 'special sanction group', more hardened adventurers who are on Dagwood and Ishmael's payment roster.

The only way the guild will work is if most, if not all, adventurers sign up to it. Dagwood and Ishmael are applying the pressure, trying to force the group and as many other adventurers as possible to sign up for it...

Twist

If they do sign up for it they may well quickly find themselves on the wrong side of the special sanction group having taken a job for someone they shouldn't, having failed to pay their guild dues or having fallen afoul of one of the hundreds of little rules Dagwood and Ishmael have been busily making up in order to channel more funds to them. A few of these little digs

and it should become clear that the guild is not all it is cracked up to be. Leaving may prove tricky.

Twist

Just before the adventurers are about to engage in a high paying job the guild contacts them and informs them that there is a general strike by adventurers for better rates of pay and that they are barred from completing the mission. Their client is fraught and offers to increase the payment. If they take it the guild will not be pleased, if they leave it some cut-rate adventurers will take the job instead. Damn scabs!

Twist

If they refuse to join the good Dagwood and Ishmael's attempts to force them to join will get progressively more and more nasty. First there will be the pressure, the nagging, the letters, the messengers. Then comes the blackmail, the bribes and the angry ranting. After that comes the threats and possibly the violence and then after that they'll consider kidnapping, murder and other methods in order to make the party sign on the dotted line. They're really serious about the guild.

Epilogue

Dagwood and Ishmael may have failed, perhaps utterly, or perhaps they have succeeded but the idea spreads faster than the guild and soon there are perhaps half a dozen other adventurer's guilds springing up all over the land all trying to do the same thing and all competing for members. It suddenly becomes more than a little bewildering and dangerous out there with competing guilds even going to war with each other.

Ideas: Dagwood and Ishmael should be smart, intelligent and capable. Play them as you would one of your own characters and create them the same way you would make up your own character. Scare your players!

Adventure 97

Have You Ever Had That Strange Feeling Called Déjà vu?

Description

It's just a bog standard dungeon, nothing special, nothing that exciting. The cellars and cells beneath an old border fort somewhere infested with the usual mix of creatures. Yawnsville, piece of cake, a breeze, a few traps, a little treasure, some creatures to slaughter and a nice reward of gold pieces waiting back at the town.

Once they clear the place out and ascend the stairs in order to leave they find themselves descending into the dungeon again, not climbing out into the world at all after all. The first room is exactly as it was when they first descended, unlooted, pristine, the same monsters, the same everything. The treasure they recovered is missing from their packs but they still have the same wounds and everything else they suffered clearing out the place. It is as though they never went through the dungeon though absolutely everything is the same.

They're trapped, exploring the same dungeon over and over again! Is it a curse? Is it some sort of strange natural phenomenon or is it simply a bored Games Master or writer making some kind of wry comment about the state of fantasy gaming? Who can tell?

There might be a way out of the dungeon but it is not the staircase they descended by, they'll have to come up with another option.

Twist

The time-loop is caused by one of the magical artefacts that they recovered in the dungeon, a seemingly innocent and barely magical ring found on a skeleton in the ruins the artefact will not allow itself to be removed from the dungeon and any attempt to leave simply throws them back in a loop forced to play out the same events. The only way to break the curse is to leave the ring behind or to destroy it.

Twist

It isn't a time loop per se, the doorway out is carved with runes that open a portal to alternate copies of the same dungeon in different worlds, different planes and different universes. Leaving the dungeon sets you to descending into a new one on one of these alternates. Things will gradually, gradually shift and become different as each copy of the dungeon is explored becoming stranger and stranger. The only way to escape is to destroy the runes and exit, though they will no longer be in their world, exactly...

Twist

They have been trapped in the dungeon by an old enemy, a sorcerer of some sort who has survived them and has baited the dungeon as a trap. After they have spent a week or so looping around in the dungeon he will not be able to resist entering himself to see if they are finally dead. That is when they will have their chance to escape.

Epilogue

The whole set up, regardless of the cause, was a preamble set up by Chronos, god of time and space. The god set the problem as a test for the party to see if they were made of the right stuff to serve him. He will appear to them, offering them the boon of his sponsorship if they will become his servants, travelling through time, space and plains of existence to ensure that the clockwork of the universe runs smoothly. These missions may be straightforward or strange but service to a god carries many rewards and drawbacks of its own.

Ideas: The dungeon should, perhaps, be designed to only take about half an hour to forty-five minutes to be completed. You could even use the layout from a free module or a starter set as an ideal example of the sort of stereotypical dungeon that works best. The other times you run through it, if at all, will be quicker as they know the dungeon better including the traps and how to avoid the danger areas.

Adventure 98

Cowboy Builders

Description

Prince Erasmus, cousin to Prince Issus, has inherited his cousin's insecurity over financial matters and his desire for impregnable vaults to hold his fortune. Unfortunately his father wasn't so paranoid about money matters and so the family fortune is lying under more conventional lock, key and guard.

This state of affairs is keeping Erasmus awake at night and so, sleepless and paranoid he has even taken to sleeping in the treasury next to the chests of gold. This cannot continue and so he has, reluctantly, set aside some of his fortune for the construction of a vault that will provide adequate protection for his fortune.

Erasmus is of a practical mindset and so, logically, has decided that the best way to catch a thief is to set a thief after him. To this end he has sought out some typical cutthroat adventurers, the party, to help design the vault in order to keep people like them out of it. They will be paid well and will have a large budget with which to construct the vault and its protections.

Of course, the Prince himself must be able to get to his fortune without having to jump through hoops or get speared by spring out blades so that must be considered into the bargain. Still, it is a cushy job and they stand to learn a lot about traps and vaults, useful in their line of work.

Twist

They must be tempted, surely. What cutthroat adventurer worth their salt wouldn't leave flaws in the design that only they would be able to exploit and then sneak back the very moment that the treasure was installed in order to steal it. The Prince is no fool, he knows this, which is why he is planning to have them killed the moment the vault is completed. Smart guy.

Twist

When the vault is complete the Prince is still paranoid that the vault is not good enough and orders that prisoners be herded into the vault to test the traps and security. As he watches via a scrying spell from his court sorcerer he laughs and smiles with delight as the prisoners are variously skewered, zorted and slain by capable guards or captive creatures. Of course, if one of the prisoners gets to the vault somehow he'll be less pleased and it may be the party that ends up on the receiving end of his odd sense of humour.

Twist

Having designed the vault they have their minds wiped by his court sorcerer to protect the knowledge of the security. To their minds they find themselves somewhat richer, wandering the road into his city only to hear that the Prince has placed his entire fortune in a supposedly impregnable vault. Impregnable? That's a challenge if ever they have heard one. What kind of fool claims that anything is impregnable?

Epilogue

It somehow becomes known to the criminal fraternity that the characters were responsible for the design of the vault. They will be hounded by ambitious groups of rogues seeking to get the information out of them. Drugs, magic, drink, bribery all will be tried. Some may even try to hire them to 'do' the vault for their organisation providing assistance and backing in exchange for half of the take. Their unique knowledge and position means they're never going to be entirely left alone on this matter and it must be tempting to think that they know all the vault's secrets.

Ideas: If they do break into the vault of their own devising there is the practicality of shifting all the gold.

Ideas: This adventure makes a good follow-up to adventure #39.

Adventure 99

Wet 'N Wild

Description

The city Fontaine is known across the land for its famous baths. Hot springs beneath the city percolate up through porous volcanic rock and are channelled into the great bathhouses of the city. There are no citizens so clean as the citizens of Fontaine.

The waters are supposed to have healing properties and the citizens of Fontaine do indeed seem to be a healthy people with many of them living to a ripe old age. People travel from far and wide hoping the waters will heal them and that some of the longevity of Fontaine's citizens will rub off on them. The springs even help keep the temperature mild in the city throughout the long winters.

Something has happened though, the water have grown scalding in some places, freezing in others. Pipes keep bursting and the water it self seems to throw people angrily from its presence, lashing in great waves against the walls and knocking people flying. Some claim to have seen faces in the water, angry faces howling and biting as the water thrashes at them.

There is nothing in the baths themselves to explain the phenomenon but there may be something down in the old volcanic caverns beneath the city, beneath the baths. The city council decides to send some people down into the earth to see what the problem is. Our heroes.

The problem is an unquiet water spirit, disturbed and angered by the actions of some within the city and taking her revenge on the bathers.

Twist

The water spirit has been driven insane by pollution in the water from the city's industrial district, a place of slaughterhouses and alchemy. It is illegal in the city to dump such things in the water but some businesses seem to have been flouting the law and ditching their foul chemicals into the caverns and the pools that lie within.

Twist

The volcanic tubes and tunnels under the city are being flooded with sulphur which is dissolving into the water to make a powerful sulphuric acid which is slowly seeping its way up towards the surface and the baths. The water spirit that is rampaging in the baths is simply trying to warn the people above the surface of the danger in the only way it can communicate.

Twist

The naiad, worshipped as a folk goddess by the people of Fontaine, has been usurped by another water spirit of a far more angry nature and purpose, taking the naiad's place of worship and using the stored up mystical energy and belief of so many bathers to grow immensely powerful. She now extends her control throughout the baths and even further, with so much power she may well be undefeatable, without the naiad's help, if she can be found again...

Epilogue

With order restored the city is grateful to the adventurers though they are now behind on something else they do, which is to ship their water to some surrounding cities as a tonic. During the interruption the price of the water increased in the surrounding area to somewhat ridiculous levels. Now that they can get the supply flowing once more they are concerned that the wagons carrying the barrels will be raided as they are now a much more lucrative target. They ask the party to escort the first wagons of their water along the road to the next city to ensure their safety.



Adventure 100

Blood & Sawdust

Description

Some law or other has finally caught up with the adventurers and they have been cornered by far, far superior forces. A special guard unit or group of knights assigned especially to capture them. It seems that something or other that they have gotten up to in one kingdom or another is considered bad form, even illegal and that they must now pay their debt to society. Fortunately this group is keen, in fact ordered, to take them alive. The lord they serve wants our heroes for something... special.

Captured and bound in chains they are taken and thrown in prison. Not just any prison but a special prison, the place where captured criminals are trained for the gladiatorial games, to fight and die for the pleasure of the eager, blood hungry masses. Here they are quickly trained and outfitted with some of the traditional gear of the gladiators and are even told of the carrot to urge them to fight, their possible freedom as survivors after a year in the pit or as a favour if they fight hard and well.

Captured, held, trained and equipped they soon find themselves thrust out onto the sawdust of the arena to face their first fight. Heretics? Wild beasts? Other gladiators? What will their first encounter before the crowd be and will they be told to show mercy or to kill, will they obey?

Twist

They are taken under the wing of a foul-mouthed but likeable old gladiator, one who has survived five years in the pits, never being given his freedom because of his foul mouth and his blatant disrespect of the lords who watch the games. He gives them some extra training, teaches them some of the secrets of the pits and is their only genuine friends. A pity then that they end up drawn against him for a bout before too long, to the death...

Twist

Marching out onto the sawdust together the shout goes out to them, they are to fight each other! The crowd bays for blood, the guards are watching closely and are better armed and equipped. If they fail to fight they will be cut down, shot with crossbows, stoned or torn apart by an angry mob. What choice do they have?

Twist

The games are occasionally fixed so that unusual results might occur, or to favour the bets set down by influential and important members of the nobility. Their meal before their latest fight is laced with drugs that slow them down and make them more vulnerable. It seems that they are intended to die today, how unfortunate. How more unfortunate if they buck the system by living or even being victorious...

Epilogue

With their freedom won they could leave the games behind once and for all, turn their attention back towards their old professions but such impressive fighting has brought them to the attention of some influential people. These ones run more private bouts, outside the rings, between their stables of personal fighters for much greater rewards and higher stakes but always to the death. If they are willing to work for their sponsor they will be treated like kings or fine racehorses but at any time, any place, anywhere, sometimes with entirely arbitrary rules or restrictions they may be asked to fight another group or to duel singly.

Ideas: Variety is, as ever, the spice of life.

Keep the arena fighting fresh with a turnover of new and different opponents, weapons and arenas. In a magical world illusions and strange places in which to fight can be brought into play and the combatants can even be teleported to other places and watched by scrying.

Ideas: The favour of the crowd is more important than anything else. Encourage them to be good showmen.

Designers Notes

The only real guide any writer can have when working is the conceit ‘Would I find this useful?’ and ‘Would I read this?’ We have to rely on our own perceptions and ideas when writing as going by what other people think and say is not only difficult but can feel ‘wrong’, throwing off your conviction in what you’re doing and affecting your writing adversely.

Two types of gaming books have always frustrated me and have always left me feeling cheated, adventure supplements and Games Master guides. Adventure books never seemed to cover what my group wanted to do or what I wanted to do and Games Master guides always seemed full of useless information that didn’t actually help with the problems me and my group would experience. There was nothing there about how to dry out your notes when someone spilled coke or the etiquette of eating and gaming, how to get a session started, to find players, techniques for evoking mood or help in being descriptive.

I gave up on adventure modules and ever since then I’ve been practically improvising my way through every game. That suits me better. What I sometimes lack is inspiration, ideas, something to spark off a few thoughts and get me started. What I always liked were the little ideas and hooks and rumours, something that I remember seeing in *Land of the Free, Unknown Armies* and the back of *Baron Munchausen*. These I found useful but I felt that they could be more useful, a little more fleshing out than a single line, perhaps a paragraph, perhaps a page.

This book is born out of those thoughts and hopefully, hopefully you’ll be able to pick it up, flip through the pages and find something in at least one of these one-hundred ideas that will give you enough of an idea to run a game.

Thanks for buying it and good luck!

Grim

Author’s Biography

James ‘Grim’ Desborough is 28 and lives in Hampshire with his wife and mother (No, those are two separate people – no banjos please) while waiting for his own house to be gutted and redecorated, occasionally harassed by his brother and his brother’s fiancée and his mothers utterly neurotic cat. Living with mum fulfils his sad-geek quota so much that he is utterly cool in every other regard and woe betide anyone who says otherwise.

Grim won an Origins award for his and Steve Mortimer’s *Munchkin’s Guide to Powergaming* which, being his first work was not bad.

Works by Grim include...

Munchkin’s Guide to Powergaming (Steve Jackson Games)
Slayer’s Guide to Female Gamers (Mongoose Publishing)
Slayer’s Guide to Rules Lawyers (Mongoose Publishing)
Macho Women With Guns d20 (Mongoose Publishing)
Arcane Encyclopaedia: Nymphology (Mongoose Publishing)
Neverwhere (Official game, available for free at the Postmortem Studios website)
Cannibal Sector One (Cubicle 7/Nightfall Games – Coming soon)
LiveSRD (Postmortem Studios)
Urban Faerie (Postmortem Studios)

Coming Soon

Cloak of Steel

A fantasy game where giant suits of animated armour, called Cloaks, dominate the battlefield and the intrigues between the states in an alternate 'Europe'. Take on the role of an adventurer or hero in this world that blends traditional fantasy, anime, steampunk and other elements to create something unique. Perfect for fans of *Escaflowne*. Features of the game include...

- Systems for fantasy Mecha & Airships.
- Feat based magick system.
- Animal people.
- Emphasis on human interaction and political enemies.
- Well realised and challenging world where no good and evil do not exist. Only ideology.

All These Worlds.....Not As We Know It

The first book of a generic Science Fiction game using the *LiveSRD*. *Not As We Know It* will provide rules for character creation as well as rules useable for any 3rd or 3.5 edition compatible game for the creation of alien sentient species, flora and fauna.

All These Worlds.....Indistinguishable From Magic

The second book in the *All These Worlds* series of science-fiction role-playing guides *Indistinguishable From Magic* will provide a complete technology creation process enabling you to design everything from hand lasers to starships including esoteric fields such as psionic technology, steam, clockwork and dieselpunk as well as organic devices.

All These Worlds.....Where to War

The third book in this series *Where to War* provides complete Science Fiction combat rules including exotic environments, star ship combat and a plethora of pre-generated weaponry, armour and vehicles.

All These Worlds.....Unfamiliar Territory

The fourth book in this series *Unfamiliar Territory* provides rules for world and society creation enabling you to create believable planets, solar systems, cities and societies.

'45

The good news? WWII finished early. The bad news? Because it was fought with atomic weapons. The world is a mess, many of the great cities destroyed and many of the once powerful nations toppled. Super science fuelled the war and is now repairing the damage, as well as adding to it. Beautifully illustrated in the pin-up style '45 is a pulp-fuelled dieselpunk spectacular.

Stuck for ideas?
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