

City of the Hawk & Castle of the Mad Archmage



Synopsis: Become a living legend in the grim City of Greyhawk and the dungeons beneath Castle Greyhawk

System: OSRIC (Modified AD&D 1st Edition with House Rules)

Genre: Mega-dungeon, Dark Urban Fantasy, Sword & Sorcery, Grim Fairy Tales

Inspiration: AD&D Implied Setting, World of Greyhawk, Thieves World, Fafhrd and the Gray Mouser (Lankhmar),

FAQ: What in the heck is this game about? *City of the Hawk/Castle of the Mad Archmage* (CoMA) is my take on the Free City of Greyhawk and the legendary dungeons beneath nearby Castle Greyhawk (as originally envisioned by Gary Gygax). Adventures will revolve around expeditions delving into the Castle Greyhawk Mega-dungeon, and occasionally adventuring in and exploring the City of Greyhawk or its immediate environs as a diversion. **NOTE:** this style of game is significantly divergent from past campaigns. A good summation might be “*the principle idea is to view the game as a narrative of an adventuring party collectively becoming more powerful and successful over time, losing individual characters but building a group identity and engaging in a cooperative game of world-building/exploration with the DM.*”

How is a “mega-dungeon” campaign different than an epic/saga campaign? A mega-dungeon campaign revolves around expeditions into a well-known but very large dungeon complex. Certain elements of play become especially important in this type of game:

- Adherence to Rules-as-Written (or agreed upon); there is no plot to serve, so the only story is truly what happens to the characters. The dice will fall where they will and arbitrary death will occasionally occur.
- Attention to Logistics; equipment, wealth, supplies, time, and position are very important. A successful expedition requires players to make their decisions based on an analysis of these factors.
- Static Difficulty; the hazards of the dungeon exist independently of the player characters. There is no scaling difficulty. The depth of the dungeon is your only guide to the relative threat you may face.
- Treasure as Goal; all characters shall be motivated in some degree by the recovery of treasure from the dungeon. Treasure is the currency of the campaign – it allows you to advance in experience, subsist between sessions, develop a retinue, pursue research, and most importantly, mount further expeditions.

Who is my character? You’re no hero. You’re an adventurer: a bungler, an orphan, a down on his luck ex-soldier, a disgraced wizard’s apprentice, an exceptionally greedy thief, or an overreaching religious fanatic. Your character

can become a hero, but only through play - you start out as just another fool in battered chainmail wielding a sword (poorly).

Are there any special rules for character creation? Yes. Each player will create a pool of four characters. Each expedition (session), 2 of the 4 characters are active. Ability score generation will be negotiated, but likely limited in some fashion. Starting wealth will be $\frac{1}{2}$ the normal amount, to simulate the desperate straits of Greyhawk's underclass (and to encourage dungeon delving). Starting characters need only a single sentence description that contains a couple unique traits to develop should that character survive and prosper. Example: "Sleepy" is an androgynous and scrawny human-youth, whose perpetual scowl is matched by a dour and taciturn personality."

Where am I? You are in the **Free City of Greyhawk**, also called the City of the Hawk, the Grey City, the City of Thieves, Greyhawk the Wicked, and the Cesspit of the Flanaess. It is a bustling port city upon the waters of the **Selintan River**, not far from the **Lake of Unknown Depths (Nyr Dyv)**. The surrounding fiefs are known simply as the "Domain." The city survives on its shipping, meat-packing, textile, and mining industries, and as its monikers suggest, the city is rife with all manner of illegal industries as well. Imagine Greyhawk as run-down, dangerous city of injustice, vice, and depravity.

Is this campaign compatible with published material? No. This version of Greyhawk is different than other versions. Do not assume anything outside of the actual sessions to be canon for this setting. One goal of the campaign is collaborative world-building – the nature of the setting will be revealed through our game sessions. Many setting details have been intentionally omitted or underdeveloped so that they can spring forth organically when the time is right.

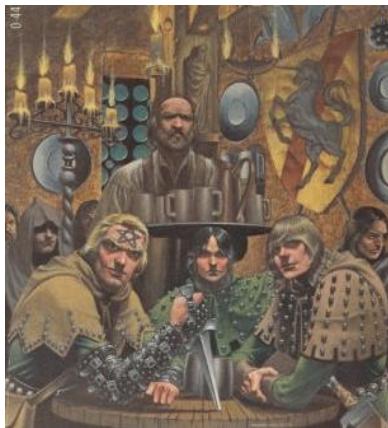
Who's in charge around here? Ostensibly, the highest authority is the **Lord Mayor Elezar Paerinn**, who acts as the speaker for the **Oligarchs** – a small council of the city's most powerful lords. The Oligarchs is composed of high ranking guilders, military commanders, religious demagogues, and a few important sorcerers. Though the Oligarchs officially act in unison, there is significant infighting and backstabbing within the council. On the streets, the true powers are whichever faction or gang claims that particular territory on that particular day. Simply moving about the city can be a complicated diplomatic process.

Who are my enemies? Your primary antagonists are the denizens of Greyhawk's dungeons; monsters, traps, tricks, riddles, illusions, mazes, and mysteries. Greyhawk City is also dangerous. It is the meanest, seediest, and most corrupt town in all of the Flanaess. The forces of order are often just as dangerous as criminals, and the weak and downtrodden do not survive for long. There are a number of factions vying for control of the city: crusading clerics, scheming oligarchs, clandestine cults, sorcerous cabals, warring guilds, and bellicose foreign powers.

What kind of entertainment is available? In a city as crowded and unpleasant as Greyhawk, there are sure to be numerous venues which offer temporary respite from the drudgery of daily life. Within the city are hundreds of pubs, tap-houses, beer-sellers, wine-makers, restaurants, food-stands, and taverns. For the more adventurous, there are a couple dozen lotus-dens, brothels, pit-fighting arenas, and back-alley casinos. For the up and coming adventure there is but one destination: the **Azure Drake Inn**.



Azure Drake: This notorious saloon is filled at all hours with river-men, cutthroats, scoundrels, and those who fancy themselves adventurers. Would-be “**free-booters**” do not flock to this place solely for cheap drinks and ribaldry; they come to mingle with others of their ilk, not the least of which is the owner, **Sade Rashim Bilarro**. A grizzled and world-weary warrior and survivor of many ill-fated expeditions, Sade encourages guests to share tales of their expeditions, information about strange happenings in the city, the locations of unexplored tombs, and even rumors about the dungeons of Castle Greyhawk.



What is the deal with religion? Religion in Greyhawk is run as any other guild, with shifting patterns of allegiances, clandestine conflicts, and outright turf wars. Several factions have risen to greater prominence than the rest: the **Billets of St. Cuthbert** are raving fanatics who force heretics to repent and convert, or face the fury of their studded clubs. The **Templars of Pholtus** proclaim their own righteousness even as they seek the eradication of Non-humans. The allied churches of **Rao, Pelor and Trithereon**, are the eldest and most established orders, but they are also corrupt – extorting desperate peasants whilst absolving guild thieves and murderers. In the countryside, witches and druids preserve the **Old Faith** – a capricious pantheon from past ages. Foreign immigrants have brought their own gods – ruthless **Iuz**, cunning **Xan Yae**, the prophetess **Istus**, and inscrutable **Celestian**.

What are some major places I should know about? Most adventurers spend their time in the **Riverside** – a middling district of the city, not as dangerous as **Shade** nor as desperate as the **Rookery**. It offers easy access to **Hook Harbor**, where many adventurers find work between expeditions. Within Riverside is also the famed **Strip** – a trade-street filled with bawdy houses, taverns, gambling dens, saloons, brothels, and black markets. Brave free-booters might wish to seek out the **Wyrding Way**, a closed off block home to many strange shops and purveyors of curios. Within the **Craft Ward** one can find **Faire Market**, where dwell the jewelers and artisans who might purchase jewelry, art and gems. If you are rich enough, there are no better arms and armour than those produced by the **Godsworn** of the **Arms Exchange**. One place an adventurer would be wise to avoid is the **Citadel**. The great fortification on the river, the Citadel contains the Oligarchs ministers and is the fortress of the Greyhawk Garrison. These corrupt guardsmen are known throughout the city as the **Night-hawks**, for their practice of concealing their misdeeds in darkness.

What about places outside of the city? The geography of Greyhawk is a mix of natural features. In the north is the Nyr Dyv, a pirate infested sea whose depths have no reckoning. In the west is the northeastern corner of the vast **Gnarley Forest**. Called the Twisted Wood or the Moaning Deep (or more properly Gnarvergia) by locals, this thick black forest is inhabited by isolated tribes of woodsmen and hostile elves – both devout followers of the old religions of blood and stone. In the northeast of the Domain lie the **Cairn Hills**, so named for the numerous monolithic barrows within them. Most of these pre-Flan sites have been looted, but a few still hold valuable items. The Cairn Hills are also frequented by bands of brigands and raiders from **Urnst**. South along the Selintan lies the traitor city of **Hardby**, the savage lands of the **Wild Coast**, and the dangerous waters of **Wooly Bay**. Of course the region's most famous landmark are the **Ruins of Castle Greyhawk**.

What are the Ruins of Castle Greyhawk? A great tyrant once ruled these lands from his immense fortress northwest of the Grey City. His empire fell long ago, but much untouched wealth lies buried within the many vaults below. In the past, many an adventurer flocked to the site to loot the upper chambers. Eventually the treasure grew too thin to justify the risks of delving, and now few go to the ruins. Lately, there are rumors of renewed activity within, and a new influx of adventures seeking riches. The castle ruins lie 6-7 miles north of the city. It is built upon a great tor, and much tangled vegetation surrounds the place.

