

# THE FOLIO

Scott Taylor

## The Storyteller's Arcana

This life-long DM's custom guide to adventuring is compatible with both 1E and 5E mechanics.



Expand your gaming knowledge and find the sweet spot for fast and fun adventuring with new NPCs classes, kits, named monsters, lairs, magic, and much more in this new gaming supplement for all ages.

EMORE '10



# THE FOLIO

**The  
Storyteller's Arcana**

by Scott Taylor



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**The Storyteller's Arcana**  
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All characters, places, and events portrayed in this publication are either fictitious or used fictitiously.

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# Dedication

**I have to dedicate this book to the players who have stuck with me since middle school: Mark, Sean, Brent, Shayne, and Joe. Without them always having to turn the page to get to the next part of the story, what I do would not be possible.**

**I also have to give a shout out to all the Kickstarter backers who have stuck with me for three years as I've created adventure after adventure for The Folio. You all make this magic happen, and I love that every day I get to go into my office and create for you rather than punch a card for someone else. So thank you from the bottom of my heart for letting me do what I love.**

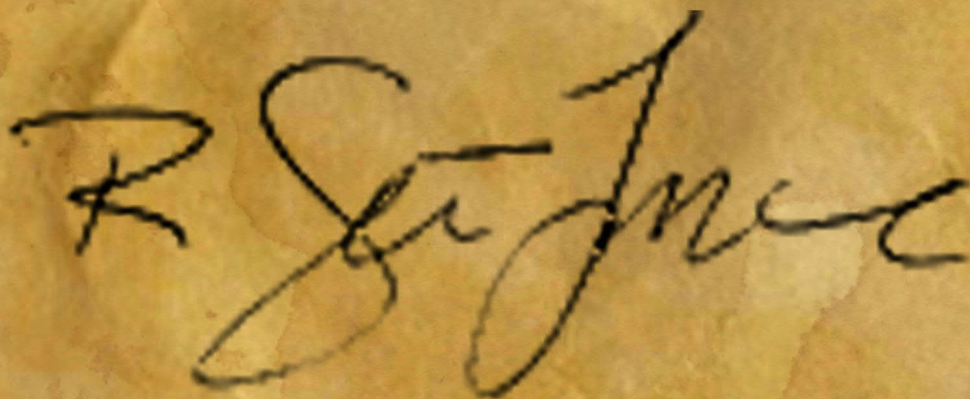




I'm getting close to my 40th year of gaming, and in that time, I've worked with dozens of incredible rules systems, players, DMs, and settings. As I've moved through all these adventures, I've picked up some key components to what I consider my own world building house rules. Some might work well with what you do at your gaming table, some might not, but one thing that has become clear to me over the years is that you should never stop learning, evolving, and tweaking how you create in the RPG multiverse.

With the Storyteller's Arcana, I've tried to not only show you a piece of what it's like to sit at my gaming table, but also how I would build, engage my players, and above all else, tell a story. In my personal gaming world, the Nameless Realms, I've played the same family of characters, the Fleetwoods, for ten generations, and in doing so, I've gone from Basic D&D, to AD&D, to 2nd Edition AD&D, to 3.0, to 3.5, to Pathfinder, to 5E D&D, and with each edition I've found little gems that have made my gaming table all the more exciting and entertaining.

So without going into any greater detail, and instead allowing you to discover what is within these pages on your own, I introduce to you  
The Folio: Storyteller's Arcana.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "R. S. Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The "R" is large and loops around the "S". The "J" is also large and loops around the "n". The "e" is a simple, horizontal stroke.





# **Part I** **Campaign Building** **with Trope NPCs**



# THE MENTOR



*The old elf stared at me across the fire, his walking stick absently cast over the knees of his traveling robe. What he saw in me, I couldn't say, save that those bright eyes seemed to twinkle in the amber glow of the flames.*

*"What do you know of the war?" I asked.*

*He smiled, the edges of his mouth turning downward as though he had heard such words many times before.*

*"I know too much," he sighed, "but not enough that I can undo what it has done."*

*Reaching out, he plucked a stick from the fire and turned the coals, each drawing at the open air and turning bright orange.*

*"Will you teach me?" I asked.*

*He nodded, the smile leaving his face.*

*"I shall, but know first that what you will learn will never bring you the joy you believe it will..."*

## Stat Block

For the purposes below, I've designed an elder magic-using persona, but if you are looking to have a physical fighter type mentor, I'd swap INT for STR.

[Utilize Proficiency Bonus from chosen base class]

1E Stat Block		5E Stat Block	
STR	10	STR	10 (--)
DEX	12	DEX	14 (+2)
CON	15	CON	15 (+2)
INT	18	INT	18 (+4)
WIS	17	WIS	17 (+3)
CHA	12	CHA	12 (+1)
*COM	12		

Magic-User Archetype	Fighter Archetype
----------------------	-------------------

HD: 8d6	HD: 8d10
Hit Points: 40	Hit Points: 78
AC: 5	AC: 0
Attack: +3 [+6]	Attack: +7 [+10]
Damage: (1-6)+5	Damage: (1-8)+9
[9 (1d6+6)]	[14 (1d8+10)]
#Att: 3/2 [1]	#Att: 2/1 [2]

## Trope History

When I think of the mentor, I can't help but be called back to the cycle of the hero's journey. This NPC is one more readily used when playing in small groups, especially if you have a particular character who fits the young hero role. The mentor serves the purpose of an Obi-Wan type character, or Dumbledore, or Merlin, and the list goes on and on. They always maintain a certain distance, at least in what they will tell their younger charge, and their power is certainly something that rarely comes into question. Many have secret abilities, and if you are looking to have one join the party, even if only for a limited time, I'd



suggest creating campaign-specific abilities. However, one thing that tends to link all these NPCs is their willingness to sacrifice their lives to help save the protagonist of your tale. Keeping that in mind, especially as you plot a course to the endgame, you can have a great ‘fly you fools!’ type of moment, so don’t miss out.

## Special Abilities

### Unknown Knowledge

Everyone has secrets, and there are certainly secrets lost to the annals of time which can hold the world hostage. This ability allows the mentor to have some hidden insight into the quest the players are on, and although they don’t have to reveal it, they may use this power to circumvent certain situations, providing them with limited precognition. For mechanic purposes, this ability can be used 1/wk to avoid an unwanted situation or provide the mentor with a temporary action bonus of +2 AC, +2 to hit, and +3 to damage for 5 rounds.

### Unseen Power

Although the mentor may seem to have ‘lost a step’ with the coming of years, he is secretly much more powerful than he typically lets on. This ability provides mentors with a temporary to hit and damage bonus equal to their HD for 5 rounds.

### Rescue

If a mentor sees his charge (whomever the DM believes that to be) in jeopardy, he can temporarily ‘share’ his hit points with the character until they are able to successfully get out of the sticky situation.

### Old Allies

The mentor has been around the block more than once, and likely around the world, so he knows a few folks here and there. By utilizing this power, the mentor can find an old ally or a friend of an ally in almost any situation. These allies will do what they can to help the mentor, including risking themselves. This ability can be used 1/wk.

## Spells

For a magic-user archetype, the mentor will be seen as a 10th level caster, having up to 5th level spells, and can employ 2 spell slots from each level. Fighter archetypes are more limited with spells (as they are more fighter/mage), being seen as only a 3rd level caster, and having 1 spell from each of their two slots.

## Henchman

The mentor typically has an animal ally that far exceeds the potency of most standard animals. For the purposes of this ally, the DM may apply a 4HD bonus to any such creature you choose, and up its Intelligence to standard human level (even with speech if you so choose).

### Skills

**Survival, History, Perception, Insight**

### Weapon

Each mentor is blessed with a weapon of superior quality, most being legendary in some way. They try to keep such weapons under wraps, but when needed, they will use its full force.

### For the magic-user archetype

+2 Wizard’s Staff with the special ability to provide 3 more spell slots at any level per day, as well as doubling the damage from an offensive spell 1/day.

### For the fighter archetype

+3 Longsword, intelligent, with the ability to detect enemies 1/day up to 150’ as well as ‘speed’, effectively doubling the number of attacks of the wielder for 3 rounds. This latter power can be used 1/wk.

### Equipment

Equipment will be standard for the class, with defensive equipment (bracers, rings, armor, shield) all being of +2 in enchantment. Otherwise, all mundane equipment will need to be created to match the needs of the mentor and the campaign.



# DRINKING BUDDY

## Stat Block

This NPC is typically going to be a fighter type (so they can do the most damage), but it is possible to have a monk, thief, or even cleric (go Friar Tuck here) who can get too full of the drink.

[Utilize Proficiency Bonus from chosen base class]



### 1E Stat Block

<b>STR</b>	16
<b>DEX</b>	14
<b>CON</b>	18
<b>INT</b>	11
<b>WIS</b>	10
<b>CHA</b>	11
<b>*COM</b>	11

### 5E Stat Block

<b>STR</b>	18 (+4)
<b>DEX</b>	14 (+2)
<b>CON</b>	20 (+5)
<b>INT</b>	11 (--)
<b>WIS</b>	10 (--)
<b>CHA</b>	11 (--)

### Archetype

HD: 8d10

Hit Points: 94

AC: 10 [12]

Attack: +3 [+7]

Damage: +4 [+4]

#Att: 2/1 [2]

### Trope History

From a drunken master to the guy who can't hold his liquor, there is always going to be alcohol in your gaming sessions and those who consume it. This NPC is all about what he does with his buzz, and for the most part, he tends to work better while under the influence. Sure, that might mean there is some collateral damage, but if the NPC is used to your advantage, the likelihood is that anyone teaming with him will come out on top, especially in a bar fight.

*There was no way of knowing how many drinks he'd had before I walked in, but the tab I'd set up before sitting down was already deep into my purse.*

*The dwarf looked at me with rummy eyes, a gap-toothed smile on his tanned face.*

*"I think the fellas you wuz talkin about just walked in brother," he offered with a whistle through the gap.*

*I turned to look at the entrance to the tavern, and sure enough, three of Burchen's enforcers were already scanning the tables, a fourth stood in front of the door with his hand on his shortsword.*

*"Not ta worry, I'm thinkin I'm due for a good brawl, so why don't ya head for the back and I'll deal with these boys," he said.*

*With that, he sucked down the remaining brew in his tankard, slammed it on the table, and then let out a great belch.*



When considering these types of high-functioning luses, I like to look to trope characters in cinema like Dean Martin in Rio Bravo, John Belushi in Animal House, or Karen Allen in Raiders of the Lost Ark. They tend to get things done while under the influence: shoot straighter, think better, and destroy things with great zeal.

For DMs utilizing the Drinking Buddy, I suggest salting the campaign with glimpses of this NPC before you need him, establishing him inside the characters' circle of friends, and letting it be well known that the further he gets into his cups, the more fun (and dangerous) he becomes.

## Special Abilities

### Alcohol Rage

If the Drinking Buddy falls below half hit points, he turns into a raging brawler, providing him an extra +2 to hit and +3 to damage. This effect lasts until the fight is over, or 10 rounds, whichever is first.

### True Friend

He may be hard to take, he may be loud, and he may be a pain in the ass, but the Drinking Buddy is a friend to the end. If the characters are pressed or pursued, the Drinking Buddy will sacrifice himself to see his friends escape. When doing so, his AC improves by 5 points, and he gains an extra attack per round. This effect lasts up to 5 rounds.

### Legendary Consumption

No one, and I mean no one, can drink like this guy. When consuming alcohol, he can imbibe 3x the normal limit without feeling the effects (or making a saving throw against those effects).

### Brawling

There is nothing the Drinking Buddy loves more than a good fistfight, and when involved in a melee scrum that does not involve weapons, he is considered to have his AC improved by 3 and is +1 to hit and +2 to damage on all attacks.

## Ally

Whether the bartender likes it or not, the Drinking Buddy is his friend, and as such any bar in which the Drinking Buddy resides will have a bartender that will 'cool down' a fight by threatening folks with a heavy crossbow. 'Maybe I can't get you all, but one of you is meeting his god tonight.'

## Special Equipment

### Ye Old Mug

Whether it be a drinking horn, a brass tankard, or an elven goblet, the Drinking Buddy is bound to have his own special glass he tends to drink from. When using this item, the Drinking Buddy can go all night with only a slight buzz (as drinking contests are done with standard cups).

### Skills

**Survival, Intimidation, Persuasion, Sleight of Hand**

### Equipment

The Drinking Buddy doesn't have much in the way of items, just the clothes on his back and the money he has to spend on booze. He also doesn't carry weapons as to do so might invite more than just a night sleeping it off in the local jail.



# HE'S NO FOOL



The workshop looked like it always did, a haphazard collection of trinkets, contraptions, books, bottles, maps, and all other manner of things odd from around the world. It always gave me a sense of claustrophobia when I entered, as if teetering piles might collapse on me as well as any well-conceived dungeon trap.

"I see you're back," a small voice called from farther in.

I could see a lamp glowing brightly on a desk beside a huge collection of scrolls, so I maneuvered toward it, the dust of ages tickling my nose.

"I have a problem," I replied.

"That's usually what brings you to me," a small voice said, "So what is it this time?"

Nezra leaned out from behind his scrolls, his bright eyes surrounded by a purely halfling face although with pale skin compared to most of his farming brethren.

"I found this in the latest tomb, but for the life of me I can't figure out what it is," I offered.

Slowly removing the cylinder from my cloak, I handed it over as his eyes got even bigger.

"It's a cryptic tube!" he exclaimed, handling it like one would an item of immeasurable value and fragility.

"And that means:"

"Give me some time, and its meaning will be revealed."

I smiled, asking, "So I came to the right place?"

"Indeed you have, my friend, indeed you have."

With that, he set about his work.

## Stat Block

Certainly, a magic-user type is nice here, and I like the illusionist class for some reason although bard fits perfectly as well. Having an Identify spell handy is always helpful to a group and can keep them coming back to this type of character although I'd try to stay away from the overuse of magic as a crutch if possible.

[Utilize Proficiency Bonus from chosen base class]

### 1E Stat Block

<b>STR</b>	9
<b>DEX</b>	13
<b>CON</b>	11
<b>INT</b>	18
<b>WIS</b>	14
<b>CHA</b>	10
<b>*COM</b>	9

### 5E Stat Block

<b>STR</b>	9 (-1)
<b>DEX</b>	15 (+2)
<b>CON</b>	11 (-)
<b>INT</b>	18 (+4)
<b>WIS</b>	14 (+2)
<b>CHA</b>	10 (-)

### Archetype

HD: 8d4

Hit Points: 22

AC: 10 [12]

Attack: -- [+2]

Damage: -- [-1]

#Att: 1

## Trope History

The He's No Fool is an old, tried and true trope, one that can be found in almost any adventure type setting. He's the know-it-all, the jack of all trades, the puzzle solver, the tinkerer. For contemporary purposes, I'd go with Cisco Ramon from The Flash, or in fantasy, Hermione Granger from Harry Potter is a great choice, but any mad scientist can certainly work.



## Special Abilities

### Intuitive Discovery

He's No Fool has a knack for finding the purpose of certain things or utilizing rumor, bits of information, and first-hand accounts to see the bigger picture. This skill works a bit like the spell Contact Other Plane in that it basically allows He's No Fool to ask the DM a question and get some kind of pertinent answer concerning a particular subject.

### Talking in Riddles

It's always very hard to get a straight answer from He's No Fool, not that he doesn't have answers, but he fears being wrong, or the repercussions of him being wrong, and therefore, rarely commits to a firm yes or no. When dealing out information, He's No Fool will have to provide 'maybes' or 'it's possible' answers, but is always ambiguous unless he makes a successful save vs. spell [DC 18 Wisdom].

### Overzealous

There is little that can stop He's No Fool once he gets on the trail of something, and when faced with a challenge that looks dangerous (opening a secret codex, reading from a book of forbidden knowledge, trying out that wand no one can identify), He's No Fool will have to make a successful save vs. spell [DC 18 Wisdom] or dive right in and do the act.

### Breaking the Code

He's No Fool NPCs are excellent code breakers, and they can figure out how to read, translate, or decipher most anything if given a chance. To break a code or such thing, they have a 75% chance [Insight +3].

### Shut in

Xenophobia and agoraphobia are two of the constant companions of He's No Fool NPCs. As such, they cannot go outside without some kind of support net and must

make a saving throw vs. petrification [DC 15 Wisdom] just to do so. Even then, once outside they will be at -1 to almost any action.

## Spells

He's No Fool NPCs can certainly have a repertoire of spells if built specifically off a magic-using platform, but for the case of a more simple trope class, I would limit them to 3rd level or lower bard spells, with 3 slots available in each.

## Special Equipment

### Research Lab

All He's No Fool characters have an extensive laboratory, studio, alchemical lab, tinkerer forge, etc. In this place, their vast knowledge grows exponentially, and they can add 10% [+1 Insight] to their Breaking the Code ability. They also have the ability to read languages at 55% while in the research lab.

### Skills

**Perception, History, Arcana, Religion, Insight**

### Equipment

The He's No Fool has one of each type of standard equipment kit, which would include the base packages of all known classes, as well as pretty much every item listed in the Player's Handbook under standard equipment. All this is available in their house, but if pressed to leave, they always overpack and become encumbered unless talked into leaving certain things behind.



# SHE'S NO STRANGER



*She was too good for me, I knew that the first moment I laid eyes on her, yet here I was, leaning against the rail of a ship, bound for Zumbolay, and she was beside me, smiling. The trade winds played with her hair as we watched the golden dunes of the Elohim Coast drift past, white seabirds calling out into the sky along the shore.*

*"I want to thank you again for carrying my bag when we came on board. I guess I shouldn't have packed so heavily," she said.*

*I nodded, remembering the way she had been questioned and her luggage had been inspected by the Sturgeons before she had been let on the ship. Rumor from the Emerald Serpent all the way to the port was that an artifact had been stolen from one of the old temples, and the city would be in jeopardy if it was not returned, but at least they were all away from Taux and its cursed stones.*

*"By the way, how many more days until we make Ulañdm?" she asked.*

*"Another three," I replied.*

*"Good," she said, "That should be more than enough time..."*

## Stat Block

I often use the ranger class for this type of NPC, because it gives a nice fighting skillset while also allowing for tracking, sneaking, and even a touch of magic. You could also utilize the thief class, but I tend to find it underpowered.

[Utilize Proficiency Bonus from chosen base class]

## 1E Stat Block

<b>STR</b>	15
<b>DEX</b>	17
<b>CON</b>	15
<b>INT</b>	14
<b>WIS</b>	13
<b>CHA</b>	15
<b>*COM</b>	15

## 5E Stat Block

<b>STR</b>	16 (+3)
<b>DEX</b>	18 (+4)
<b>CON</b>	16 (+3)
<b>INT</b>	15 (+2)
<b>WIS</b>	14 (+2)
<b>CHA</b>	16 (+3)

## Archetype

HD: 8d12

Hit Points: 92

AC: 3 [17]

Attack: +2 [+8]

Damage: +2 [+5]

#Att: 2/1 [2]

## Trope History

Linda Fiorentino's Sasha in the movie Gotcha! is a fine example of this type of NPC, or even, either Brad Pitt or Angelina Jolie in Mr. & Mrs. Smith. There is much more below the surface, and they will typically try to use the unwitting player to get what they want. However, they should also be considered to have a good heart and aren't going to be outwardly evil in their pursuit of whatever purpose drives them. They are all about a mission, and they are often far more powerful and dangerous than their exterior persona lets on. As a DM, the purpose of this type of NPC is to help the story evolve, deliver a magic item or other catalyst into the hands of the characters, and even bail them out of trouble. However, you must also place a troubled allegiance into the NPC's makeup so that a tough choice will have to be made before an adventure is over.



## Special Abilities

### Intuitive Discovery

You could refer to the She's No Stranger as Teflon, because nothing seems to stick to her. It's as though, in most circles, you don't even notice she's there unless she wants to be noticed. For this reason, she's always the last to be suspected of a crime, and in game terms, she's not part of the attack order unless specifically targeted.

### Contacts

Being something she's not, namely a spy, She's No Stranger has dozens of contacts all over the world. In any particular location, she will have friends, allies, or people who want to please someone she is working for. This means she gets a +20% Reaction adjustment [+2 to Charisma tests] whenever dealing with NPCs.

### Surprise Assault

No one expects the Spanish Inquisition! That's right, when She's No Stranger chooses to attack, she gets a surprise backstab at x3 [Sneak Attack +3d6].

### Loyalty

As she's loyal to whatever organization actually supports her activities, it means she's not the best partner to have. If ever there is a situation that contradicts what her prime directive is, she must make a saving throw versus spells [DC 18 Wisdom] if she wants to break her orders.

### Assassin's Hands

For the purposes of gaming, She's No Stranger is considered to have a standard +2 to hit and damage when working with any weapon, including bare hands, on a single opponent. This is a result of an intense and wildly varied combat training regimen meant to kill a single target. If combat devolves into a melee, these bonuses are lost.

### Access

She's No Stranger often needs to get into places she's not supposed to be; therefore, she has a standard Open Locks of 55% [Thieves Tools Proficiency].

## Spells

As a spy, she's had to become versed in the arcane arts. For this purpose, she's considered to have access to 3rd level or lower bard spells and is allowed 2 slots for each.

## Special Equipment

### Necklace Garrote

This thin wire necklace can be easily overlooked, but it can be used (in conjunction with the Assassin's Gloves) as a magical garrote. Anyone struck with it (using a Backstab [Sneak Attack]) must make a saving throw vs. spell [DC 18 Con] or be reduced to zero hit points. These saves must be repeated each round until the target breaks the hold or is rendered unconscious.

### Assassin's Gloves

This thin pair of leather gloves can transform into almost anything from a ring to over-the-elbow ball gown gloves. They provide She's No Stranger with magical weapons (they are considered to be +1) on her hands that do (1-4)+1 damage when unarmed.

### Leathers of Shifting

This +2 suit of supple leather armor can shapeshift into standard clothing, including setting-specific attire.

### Skills

**Persuasion, Intimidation, Sleight of Hand, Perception**

### Equipment

The typical equipment selection for a She's No Stranger revolves around the mission she is on, but most certainly, she will have a magical +1 Stiletto secreted away on her person as well as lock picks.



# THE BOSS

*"You're lucky I didn't give the order to kill you when you first showed your face in my place, but don't feel too blessed, because I only did that so I could personally watch you bleed."*

*Yeah, looks like I caught him on one of his bad days...*

## Stat Block

Without a doubt, this is a fighter type NPC, because to be the Boss, you've got to roll up your sleeves and deal some damage. There is a possibility that you could multi-class them with a thief or even assassin, and for the more oriental-inspired setting, you could also go monk, but at their core, they are always going to be a prime fighter.

[Utilize Proficiency Bonus from chosen base class]

### 1E Stat Block

<b>STR</b>	17
<b>DEX</b>	12
<b>CON</b>	17
<b>INT</b>	15
<b>WIS</b>	13
<b>CHA</b>	14
<b>*COM</b>	10

### 5E Stat Block

<b>STR</b>	19 (+4)
<b>DEX</b>	12 (+1)
<b>CON</b>	18 (+4)
<b>INT</b>	15 (+2)
<b>WIS</b>	13 (+1)
<b>CHA</b>	14 (+2)

### Archetype

HD: 10d10

Hit Points: 100

AC: 8 [13]

Attack: +1 [+6]

Damage: +1 [+4]

#Att: 2/1 [2]

## Trope History

Sure, when many think of a crime lord, they go to The Godfather or even Jabba the Hutt, but when I made this NPC archetype, I wanted something that felt a little more 'hands on' like James Gandolfini in Sopranos or Vincent D'Onofrio,



*"You better have a damn good excuse for coming here..."*

*The voice came out of the darkness, deep and with a thousand miles of use on it. I'd heard it several times in the past, but I swear I never wanted to hear it again.*

*"Word on the street has it..."*

*That deep voice cut me off before I could even finish the sentence.*

*"What do you know of the streets!? You call yourself a 'hero', but you know more about dungeons than the people on the above ground, and your purse is full of stolen gold, more than any of my own agents will ever dream of taking!"*

*The shadows stirred and the great bulk of a huge half-orc loomed into the orange glow of the single lamp in the room. His massive arms carried more tattoos than a Tungsese sailor, and his chest was barrel thick.*



Kingpin in Daredevil. Certainly, there is much to fear when dealing with a criminal overlord, because they wield tremendous power through their network, but there is also something to be said for someone who is willing to get their hands dirty.

This is why I like to refer to such NPCs as the Boss, because they are certainly a special kind of monster. DMs should be wary of using these NPCs as simple thug overlords, but instead, incorporate them when you need a recurring character, one that might help the characters on one occasion and then flip out and try to kill them the next. Certainly, the Boss has his own set of rules, probably only ones he knows, and they could shift if the need arises, so keep them chaotic in their nature.

## Special Abilities

### Simmering Rage

The Boss isn't the most pleasant individual even on his best days, and he's certainly had to 'do what it takes' to get to his position. From that standpoint, there is a dark rage within him, that when tapped can cause utter destruction. Once per week, the Boss can tap into this primal fury and give himself a +2 to hit and +4 damage on all attacks.

### Killer Instinct

There is no doubt that the Boss is a killer, and as such, he has the assassination ability.

### Family Weakness

Certainly, every person has some kind of connection to a more mundane world, and it's likely that the Boss has someone of this nature, be they an old flame, a true family member, or even someone inside the organization that they treat as a son or daughter. This weakness can be used against the Boss (but low the fury once this piece is played). If the Family Weakness is in play, the Boss will take no action against those involved until their Family Weakness is safe.

## He's Mine!

That primal fury isn't a blackout type, but instead something that can be channeled. Often, to prove he's still in charge, the Boss will accept the terms of a duel or simply wish to kill a target with his bare hands. Anyone wishing such an action against the Boss has a +20% Reaction [+2 Charisma] when trying to bait the Boss into a fight.

## Henchmen

The Boss is always surrounded by half a dozen henchman of  $\frac{1}{2}$  his HD, as well as one lieutenant that is 2 HD less than his. These are typically fighters, but other classes can be mixed in as desired.

### Operation

For the purposes of gameplay, it can be assumed that wealth is not a problem for the Boss, and he can pay what's needed for whatever support he might offer. He will also have some kind of fortified lair with triple his normal number of henchman inside.

## Special Equipment

### Crux of the Matter

You will find the Boss to employ some kind of bludgeoning weapon of choice. This weapon (brass knuckles, cane, club, etc.) is always +2 and the Boss is +3 to hit and damage with it.

### Skills

**Intimidation, Deception, Perception, Persuasion**

### Equipment

The Boss isn't known to have much on him at any time. Certainly, a ring or two of some value (likely one of Protection +2), standard clothes for the setting, but no weaponry other than the Crux of the Matter.



# THE HELPFUL TURNCOAT



*The tomb was everything Cronus had said it would be, and by this point, my nerves were on the edge of an iceberg, teetering on the brink of complete collapse. Morath was already with his ancestors, and Cara & Tolvar had turned back when the last porter had succumbed to the acid spray at the great tunnel fork.*

*"What do you see?" Larus asked, a shudder just beneath the surface of his thin voice.*

*I raised my torch higher, cobwebs melting away as the bejeweled eyes of Vagra, the Wolf Goddess of the Nolb, stared down at me at last.*

*"Don't look her in the eyes; she will curse you!" Larus hissed.*

*I'd been around enough mages to know what could curse you and what couldn't, but I averted my gaze anyway and withdrew my short blade from the leather sheath at my waist. Two minutes of work later, a heavy emerald the size of an apple lay in the palm of my hand.*

*"Take this," I called over my shoulder.*

*Larus complied, and I went to work on the statue's second eye, but before I had the mortar on the second eye half chipped away, the sound of a portcullis echoed behind me. It had to be the same one I'd avoided closing when I'd entered the chamber.*

*"I'm sorry Garret, but the guild in Arcania paid me more than you could imagine for these, and I know you hate sharing," Larus called from across the chamber.*

*I turned back just as he slunk away into the darkness, my fist pounding the statue's leg as I cursed his name. As if in answer the chamber shook, and the other eye dropped out and rolled across the floor along with crumbling bits of ceiling.*

## Stat Block

Thieves or assassins are the likely classes for the NPC, and I'd probably stick to them as they will provide the most opportunity to be sneaky and cause havoc behind the scenes.

[Utilize Proficiency Bonus from chosen base class]

1E Stat Block		5E Stat Block	
<b>STR</b>	12	<b>STR</b>	13 (+1)
<b>DEX</b>	17	<b>DEX</b>	18 (+4)
<b>CON</b>	13	<b>CON</b>	14 (+2)
<b>INT</b>	11	<b>INT</b>	12 (+1)
<b>WIS</b>	9	<b>WIS</b>	10 (--)
<b>CHA</b>	12	<b>CHA</b>	13 (+1)
<b>*COM</b>	9		

## Archetype

HD: 8d6

Hit Points: 30

AC: 5 [16]

Attack: -- [+3]

Damage: -- [+1]

#Att: 1

## Trope History

One of the best trope NPCs there is in cinema and fiction, the Helpful Turncoat, is the guide, the porter, or even the outcast sibling. They will use friendship, blood, and guile to keep themselves above water, even if that means everyone else around



them has to sink. I'm always reminded of Alfred Molina's Satipo on Raiders of the Lost Ark, or Kevin J. O'Conner's Beni from The Mummy (1999), or even if you are looking at it in a particular fashion, you could go with Gollum from LotR. Certainly, the list of such characters is extensive, and their use in any campaign can make for many fun hours, until the inevitable betrayal.

As a DM, I'd utilize a friendship of familiar relation when bringing this NPC into play. You also have to keep in mind that they need to prove some worth to the party, putting out bits of pertinent information to the quest, providing a much needed backstab to save a character's life, etc. Once they have entrenched themselves with the party, then you can maneuver for the right time when they think selling the players out will be of the most profit to them.

## Special Abilities

### Self-Preservation

No one means more to the Helpful Turncoat than himself, and anytime he gets into a sticky and life-threatening situation, he must make a saving throw vs. spells [DC 16 WIS] or flee (or turn against the party, etc.).

### Greed

If staying alive matters most to the Helpful Turncoat, then treasure is his second love. He is always looking for that perfect score, that one true reward that can end all his suffering, and by the gods he deserves it! Whenever a big score, magic item, or such is in play, the Helpful Turncoat will have to make a saving throw vs. spell [DC 16 WIS] or do everything in his power to get it.

### Thieving Skills

The Helpful Turncoat has thieving skills at the same level as his HD.

## Timely Help

There needs to be some measure of trust with the Helpful Turncoat, otherwise he wouldn't ever have the ability to get close to the party. In this fashion, the Helpful Turncoat can do a heroic act 1/wk. Such acts could include knocking out a bad guy, producing a key to a lock, warning a character of an impending attack, etc.

## Look into Your Heart

It's incredibly hard to kill the Helpful Turncoat, even if one has betrayed you. Attempting to end the poor wretch requires a saving throw vs. dragon breath [DC 18 WIS] just to make an attack that will put him below zero hit points.

## Special Equipment

The Helpful Turncoat isn't known for having a vast amount of treasure or special items, and if they did, they would likely have run off and retired.

### Skills

**Sleight of Hand, Stealth, Perception, Deception, Persuasion**

## Equipment

Standard equipment for the Helpful Turncoat includes thieves tools, several talismans (including holy symbols of all alignment ranges of gods), a Ring of Protection +2, and well-worn traveling clothes.



# THE 'IT' GIRL



*A small trail of blood led from the living area through a back room and onto the frame of an open window. A tattered linen curtain swayed gently in the breeze as I pushed it back, my view extending down two stories to the cobbles below. The street was empty, and the sounds of the city drifted through the air, a lone dog barking, a baby laughing, and someone likely getting beaten in the alley across the street.*

*Eighteen feet was a long way to jump, especially wounded, but fear sometimes makes the common man superhuman.*

*Sighing, I turned back toward the interior, my eyes catching on a small cabinet set with various bowls, utensils, and mugs, the door of which was slightly ajar.*

*Sometimes, one didn't have to be superhuman to disappear.*

*Stepping forward, I lowered the tip of my longsword and pushed the little door open, the lovely and terrified face of a teenage girl staring back at me from a nearly impossible contortionist's pose within the cabinet.*

## Stat Block

In most of the situations that this NPC is used, I'd utilize the thief template, but sometimes it is possible that magic could be involved (ala a lost or hunted apprentice), so if that is the case, swap DEX for INT and you should be good.

[Utilize Proficiency Bonus from chosen base class]

## 1E Stat Block

<b>STR</b>	11
<b>DEX</b>	17
<b>CON</b>	14
<b>INT</b>	13
<b>WIS</b>	9
<b>CHA</b>	14
<b>*COM</b>	17

## 5E Stat Block

<b>STR</b>	12 (+1)
<b>DEX</b>	18 (+4)
<b>CON</b>	15 (+2)
<b>INT</b>	14 (+2)
<b>WIS</b>	10 (- -)
<b>CHA</b>	15 (+2)

## Archetype

HD: 6d6

Hit Points: 30

AC: 5 [15]

Attack: -- [+3]

Damage: -- [+1]

#Att: 1

## Trope History

The 'It' Girl, not to be confused with the I.T. girl who might fix your work computer, is the title I give to the young person normally related to a protagonist or an important NPC who is in big trouble. Whenever you watch a character like Alyssa Milano's Jenny in *Commando*, Natalie Portman's Mathilda in *Léon: The Professional*, or Newt in *Aliens*, this type of trope storytelling pops up, and the NPC seemingly uses some skill picked up along the adventure to thwart the bad guys at the end.

This character is likely too young for a romantic interest, but perfect for the younger sibling or lost child type NPC relationship. Finding the heartstrings with which to utilize this NPC will be the key to your success, and certainly don't forget that as smart as this NPC seems, there is inevitably that situation in which they use a brainless and headstrong move to somehow risk all the best-laid plans.



## Special Abilities

### Hide in Plain Sight

With this ability, the It Girl can find almost any place to hide, sometimes fitting into impossibly small spaces. When using this ability, she gains an 80% Hide in Shadows [Stealth +8] roll and can use this skill 1/day. Also, she can only use this skill when alone; otherwise, it is superseded by 'Trouble Magnet'.

### Trouble Magnet

Trouble always seems to find the It Girl, making traveling with her all the more difficult. In tense situations, there is a 25% chance of her attracting some kind of unwanted attention (making a noise while trying to be quiet, getting the attention of a guard looking for the characters, having her beauty attract a gang of thugs, etc.). Unfortunately, this ability is always active.

### Quick Study

For all intents and purpose, the It Girl is a blank slate and a knowledge sponge. When interacting with characters, she can pick up one skill that shouldn't be within her wheelhouse, up to half her hit dice. Thus, a standard 6 HD It Girl can learn a 1st level magic-user (or cleric spell), get single specialization, and know backstab, if there is anyone available to teach her such skills. Usually, the use of such skills manifest at an opportune moment.

### Wisdom Intolerant

No matter how many times you use logic on her or try to tell her to 'stay put', she will inevitably go against your instructions. Anytime someone tells an It Girl to do something important for her own safety, there is a 25% chance she will ignore those instructions and do the opposite.

### Escape Artist

Although the It Girl often finds herself in many sticky situations and is often caught, she also seems to have an equal ability to get herself free. Anytime the It Girl is put into some kind of bondage

situation (held with a knife at her throat, in a cage, tied up, etc.), she has a 25% chance of slipping out and making a break for it.

## Special Equipment

### Bag of Goodies

Typically, the It Girl is traveling alone and in hostile (to her) territory, so she needs to keep her entire life with her. This means she has a satchel type bag (that she can still run with) filled with all manner of things to keep her going. At any particular time, she has a 10% chance of being able to pull a needed item out of her bag with an 'I think I have one of those' response to the need.

### Hunted Object

Assuming the It Girl isn't what the bad guys are after in the first place, she's likely to have absconded with an object of great importance. This can be anything from a magical relic to a piece of parchment indicating a plot against the king (likely she drew something on the back and has no clue it is even there). Whatever the case, this object is usually 'lost' someplace within her Bag of Goodies.

### Totem Item

There is always some kind of 'totem' prop for an It Girl, either a stuffed animal, a god awful necklace her dead mother gave her, or a ring that supposedly belonged to her father. Whatever the case, this totem item has a strong magical connection to the It Girl, and once per week, it can help her avoid any one situation (like a Natural 20 against her, a deadly fall, etc.).

### Skills

**Survival, Stealth, Sleight of Hand, Persuasion**

### Equipment

Other equipment for the It Girl usually includes a rough set of street clothes, some kind of identity-concealing cloak, and a small knife (which she uses only in dire need).



# THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER



*It was one of those days, hot, with a wind that blew dust into the air in little whirlwinds. The town was on edge, Dogra's goons having ridden in the night before, breaking the place up before drinking themselves into a stupor. Now, the bulk of them were still sleeping it off in the tavern, and a few locals were hurriedly moving around the streets in hopes of getting errands done before they woke.*

*At first, I thought he was a mirage, just some play of the light against the dust devils, but the black of his cloak solidified as he passed the first few homesteads, each step bringing him further into our reality.*

*I can't say who he was or where he came from, but there was little doubt to his purpose as he moved directly toward the inn, a couple of Dogra's men rising from their lounging positions on the porch to take up arms against him. For them, it would be the last action they ever took.*

*The next day, the sun rose on our town with a bit more color, and the people came to the town square to honor the man who had cleared out the rabble, although many knew that only more would come, and those would be more set on causing trouble and death.*

*It was then, under the old hanging tree, that the man in black gave a promise to the old miller's daughter, Helda, that he would ride out to Dogra's hold and see that no cutthroat ever again ranged down into our town.*

*I can say I never saw him again after that day, but Helda was with child the next spring, and no man questioned who was the father, nor did we ever hear from Dogra and his rabble again...*

## Stat Block

Fighter is the typical class here, but ranger would also work for the NPC. You'll be able to utilize some of the special abilities of these NPCs with your fighter types, likely swapping out proficiency slots for them to add extra 'flare' to the campaign.

[Utilize Proficiency Bonus from chosen base class]

1E Stat Block		5E Stat Block	
<b>STR</b>	17	<b>STR</b>	18 (+4)
<b>DEX</b>	17	<b>DEX</b>	18 (+4)
<b>CON</b>	15	<b>CON</b>	16 (+3)
<b>INT</b>	12	<b>INT</b>	12 (+1)
<b>WIS</b>	12	<b>WIS</b>	13 (+1)
<b>CHA</b>	12	<b>CHA</b>	12 (+1)
<b>*COM</b>	13		

## Archetype

HD: 10d12

Hit Points: 105

AC: 1 [19]

Attack: +7 [+12]

Damage: +7 [+8]

#Att: 3/1 [3]



## Trope History

Clint Eastwood's classic 'Blondie' from *The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly* would fit this trope perfectly, but over the course of forty years, this type of character has been portrayed again and again in cinema. However, if you are looking for a good example in fiction, you might lean toward Garet Jax from *The Shannara* series.

For the characters, this is a perfect trope to wander into a campaign when things look bleak. He (or she) will have ample ability to help the party out of a tight spot, while also being able to teach the more martial characters a trick or two concerning fighting. He can work as a mentor, but his help is always on the edge, and instead of dying, he will likely ride off into the sunset before everything is over.

## Special Abilities

### Showdown Speed

The Mysterious Stranger's skills with his chosen weapon are unmatched, and as such, his speed and number of attacks with it are beyond even the greatest fighters the characters have ever seen.

### Grit

There is no doubt that the Mysterious Stranger is tough, and as such, he can fight to negative 10 hit points and regenerate 1/HP round up to half his normal hit points, then the ability tapers off to normal healing rates.

### Never Tell Me the Odds

It is almost as if the Mysterious Stranger fights better when the odds are stacked against him. Whenever faced with odds of three to one or more, the Mysterious Stranger gets an additional +2 to hit and damage.

## Soft Spot

For some reason, the Mysterious Stranger has a soft spot in his heart for those in need, abused, or suffering. He can't seem to turn away from terrible situations, and therefore, must always make a saving throw vs. dragon breath [DC 18 WIS] or not be able to turn down a plea for help.

## Special Equipment

### Weapon of Choice

Whatever weapon the Mysterious Stranger uses, it is always of +3 magical enchantment.

### Trusted Steed

Many times, the Mysterious Stranger will have a trusted steed, be it a horse, dragon, or even a mule. The bond between the mount and the Mysterious Stranger is a strong one, and most simple commands can be followed (and more if the steed is highly intelligent). Each Trusted Steed is considered to have 4 HD over the usual for its species.

### Skills

**Intimidation, Survival, Perception,  
Animal Handling, Stealth**

### Equipment

Equipment for the Mysterious Stranger usually consists of a Cloak of Protection +3, a Ring of Protection +1, several +1 Throwing Knives, and a suit of Leather Armor +1. Other more mundane equipment would be a pipe, tobacco, and traveler's gear.



# THE SECRET KEEPER



*I tipped the map again into the light, the ancient runes along its edge taking on a kind of blue glow under the open flame.*

*"Where did you find it?" the gnome trader asked.*

*"In Wyvern's Deep, at the tomb of an old knight," I replied.*

*"Then I doubt very much it is authentic," he said.*

*I turned to him, my brow furrowing as I lowered the map. "And why is that?"*

*He provided me with a condescending smile and reached out to pat me on my armor-plated shoulder.*

*"You are human, and as such, memory doesn't serve you well, but for my people, we've known the Wyvern's Deep for centuries, and the tomb of which you speak could be no more than 70 winters old, when the 3rd Donblas Crusaders prowled these lands, and that means such a map would have been of the False Harvest, forgeries to delude and confuse the crusaders sent for by Darn the Blackheart," he explained.*

*I frowned, and with a sigh looked back at the map in my gloved hand.*

*"Still, I'm sure you found gold within the tomb, so don't think you've completely lost out, but that map is of little more use to you than kindling for tonight's fire."*

## Stat Block

Magic-user is a good class base for this NPC, and I'd lean them heavily to scribe, or even illusionist. You could

also make one a bard if you are pressed for the statistics, but that might complicate matters in the end because they aren't supposed to be overly powerful

[Utilize Proficiency Bonus from chosen base class]

1E Stat Block		5E Stat Block	
<b>STR</b>	12	<b>STR</b>	12 (+1)
<b>DEX</b>	12	<b>DEX</b>	12 (+1)
<b>CON</b>	13	<b>CON</b>	13 (+1)
<b>INT</b>	16	<b>INT</b>	18 (+4)
<b>WIS</b>	16	<b>WIS</b>	16 (+4)
<b>CHA</b>	14	<b>CHA</b>	14 (+2)
<b>*COM</b>	11		

## Archetype

HD: 10d4

Hit Points: 30

AC: 8 [13]

Attack: -- [+5]

Damage: -- [+1]

#Att: 1

## Trope History

Whenever this NPC comes to my mind, I'm always drawn to Erick Avari's Dr. Terrence Bay from *The Mummy* (1999), or even the character of Billy Bones in *Treasure Island*. This NPC is often found in your campaigns as the storekeeper, the merchant, the caravan master, or even the barkeep. They seem mundane at first look, but when the planets align, the veil of the secret society they have been indoctrinated into is thrown off, and they must act.

This is a perfect NPC to throw at old maps, or confirmation of legends, or even the revelation that your party has finally found that secret dungeon. They are friendly, but only to the point of



breaking with their true loyalty, and their purpose is to always ‘protect the players’ by making sure they don’t find the item or place they seek, because they can’t possibly understand the danger they will put everyone in by finding it.

## Special Abilities

### Key to the Mystery

The Secret Keeper is all about knowledge, particularly when it comes to specific ancient curses and such. For this reason, he can apply that knowledge to gaming situations that have some crossover with the ancient curse in question. Anytime the Secret Keeper is faced with such a circumstance, she can provide the party with insight into defeating the challenge as per a Bless spell (and this ability can actually stack with Bless).

### Elder Alliance

The Illuminati, the Magi, the Masons, all elder secret sects have a spiderweb network that can be accessed by the Secret Keeper. In so doing, the Secret Keeper can call on aid, manifesting in gold pieces equal to 10x their HD, or a number of ally henchmen (3 HD) equal to her HD.

### Clumsy Detriment

As the name implies, the Secret Keeper doesn’t like to divulge secrets unless absolutely necessary. This means that she is considered to be 50% resistance to all forms of charm [+5 to any Charm saves], and can also ‘inadvertently’ destroy needed information at a 65% success rate [Sleight of Hand +2].

### Sagecraft

The Secret Keeper is an expert in languages and texts, and as such, she has a Read Languages of 55% [Insight +2].

### Passing the Torch

The Secret Keeper knows that she can’t last forever, and even worse than divulging a secret is losing the secret forever, so she is always on the lookout for a new protégé. As such, a

Secret Keeper can pass on the Elder Alliance ability to a chosen character, typically if a situation looks dire. Once the ability is passed on, the Secret Keeper will forfeit her life (if needed) to see that the inheriting character survives.

## Spells

Although not particularly known for powerful magic, the Secret Keeper can cast up to 3rd level bard spells, with 2 slots dedicated to each level.

## Henchmen

The Secret Keeper will have a few strong allies close by at the start of any given campaign. These will typically be a 5 HD fighters and their HD will equal ½ the Secret Keeper’s HD.

## Special Equipment

### Glasses of Translation

These mystical spectacles provide the wearer with a +10% to Read Languages rolls [Insight +2] as well as making the wearer immune to gaze attacks.

### Tome of Ancient Knowledge

This giant brass-bound tome holds many of the secrets of the ancient cults, curses, and arcana of ages lost. Anyone reading it will have access to the special abilities of a Secret Keeper and can purchase them using their proficiency slots [or in place of class abilities].

### Skills

**Insight, Religion, History, Arcana,  
Investigation, Sleight of Hand**

### Equipment

The Secret Keeper typically has a Ring of Protection +2, robes, and traveling gear. She can also be equipped for dungeoneering if needed.

# THE SILENT ONE



*The vaulted crypt was dark, only a single shaft of light falling like a pillar from a breach in the ceiling fifty feet above. In the shadow provided by the pillar sat Krang, his huge form decorated with bits of armor and polished bones.*

*“You’ve come a long way to find your death,” he bellowed, his voice bouncing around the chamber.*

*I looked at Nezhara, his black tattooed face breaking into a smile as his nimble fingers wove a pattern of ancient arcana in the air. A moment later, the room shook with the power of the elder blast, the spell specially designed to send the demon back to his world. Dust and debris filled the air, and the sycophants around the room fled or bowed to the show of our might, all save one.*

*She stood back to the left of the now empty throne, her dark clothing and cowl hiding a lean figure with no more detail than a few silvered spiderwebs at her shoulders.*

*“It’s over!” I shouted at her.*

*It was only then that she moved, slow and steady into the pillar of light as she let the cowl fall back to reveal a face both beautiful and filled with death.*

*“Who is she?” Anain whispered as she fingered her holy symbol.*

*“It doesn’t matter. She’s obviously an enemy at this point,” I replied, sliding my sword from its sheath.*

*As if in response, the silent one inched back her cloak, exposing the handle of a thin sword, and with a slight ‘click’ as she pressed her thumb against the crossguard, the weapon came free. No other word was spoken, and no other word was needed. Death was around the vault, and only the next few moments would tell who it would take and who it would spare.*

## Stat Block

Fighter is the typical class here, but ranger would also work for the NPC. You could also dual class between fighter and assassin, but with the various abilities the NPC already has, I’d say sticking to a heavy hit point primary class is going to be your best option.

[Utilize Proficiency Bonus from chosen base class]

### 1E Stat Block

<b>STR</b>	17
<b>DEX</b>	17
<b>CON</b>	15
<b>INT</b>	12
<b>WIS</b>	12
<b>CHA</b>	12
<b>*COM</b>	13

### 5E Stat Block

<b>STR</b>	17 (+3)
<b>DEX</b>	17 (+3)
<b>CON</b>	17 (+3)
<b>INT</b>	12 (+1)
<b>WIS</b>	12 (+1)
<b>CHA</b>	14 (- -)



## Archetype

HD:10d10

Hit Points: 100

AC: 1 [19] \*(-2 [22])

Attack: +8 [+14]

Damage: +8 [+10]

#Att: 2/1 [2]

## Trope History

I watched an episode of the Simpsons once where there was a fight scene and Homer had to leave before it was over, only to complain, 'but the quiet one hasn't done anything yet'. After he was outside, there was a huge commotion, and he sighed with disappointment at having missed it.

The Silent One is the dark companion, the guard, the true final foe far beyond the power of the boss. Like Boba Fett or Jabba, these deadly warriors let their weapons do the talking. They are to be valued by the DM as a trump card, the not so hidden ace up your sleeve, and certainly a looming threat and enigma for the players to both fear and try to solve.

## Special Abilities

### Silent Menace

The Silent One isn't about talking; instead, she uses her full focus on the content of a battle. In doing so, she gains an addition +1 to hit and damage in melee combat as long as she isn't speaking.

### Mage Reaper

Adept at making sure spellcasters can't take advantage of her martial skills, the Silent One carries small throwing knives that can disrupt spellcaster's incantations. She can, as a free attack, throw a single knife once per round at an opposing spellcaster (and has been known to carry poison on these blades).

## \*Melee Focus

The skill set of the Silent One fully understands that the odds are almost always stacked against her. For this reason, she has trained herself to defend against attacks from multiple opponents in battle, calculating the best advantage she can have during a battle. This ability allows the Silent One to double her Dexterity defense adjustment in a melee.

## The Quickest Cut

Once per round, the Silent One can choose to take an extra attack against a single foe, and that attack supersedes all regular initiative rolls. This ability requires the use of the Silent One's Honorbound Weapon.

## Lone Wolf

The Silent One has prepared her mind and body to fight a solo battle against incredible odds. As such, the inclusion of any other friendly combatants in a melee will negate many of her skills, including Mage Reaper, Melee Focus, and The Quickest Cut.

## Special Equipment

### Honorbound Weapon

The Silent One carries a deadly weapon of +3 value. This particular weapon is so favored, that without it, the Silent One is at -6 overall to hit and damage in combat and also surrenders one melee attack per round.

### Skills

**Stealth, Perception, Intimidation, Survival**

### Equipment

Standard equipment of the Silent One includes Leather Armor +2, a Cloak of Protection +2, 10 +1 Throwing Knives, 2 vials of Poison (DM's choice), and standard adventurer's pack.

# YOU'RE BEING PLAYED



*It was hot, like how a dungeon corridor feels when you are closing in on the dragon. I wiped my neck with a scarf I'd been carrying since my days in the Calif's service and watched as a fly buzzed around the rim of my long, dry mug.*

*If I didn't get some business soon, that dry mug wouldn't be my only problem...*

*Then I heard it, the sound of hard-heeled boots moving down the corridor toward my room. I straightened, ran a hand through my greasy hair, and grabbed a mint leaf to start chewing on. A light knock sounded, and I took a breath, offering, "Come in."*

*The door opened, light from the overhead lamp framing a figure like nothing I'd seen since I got a look at the Calif's harem ten years before.*

*"Captain Holt?" a sanguine voice asked from the portal.*

*I offered up a sad smile. "That's not a title I've heard in a long time, and I doubt it applies anymore."*

*My visitor came out of the shadow and into the light of my lamp. She was a vision, blond hair too polished to be anything but noble and an outfit cut in such a way to be anathema to such a title.*

*"Well," she offered a white smile, "no matter what title you choose for yourself I need your help."*

## Stat Block

Illusionists and bards are likely to be the best types of base classes for You're Being Played, but certainly a thief or assassin could work.

[Utilize Proficiency Bonus from chosen base class]

1E Stat Block		5E Stat Block	
STR	10	STR	10 (--)
DEX	15	DEX	15 (+2)
CON	11	CON	11 (--)
INT	14	INT	14 (+2)
WIS	12	WIS	12 (+1)
CHA	18	CHA	19 (+2)
*COM	19		

## Archetype

HD: 9d4

Hit Points: 27

AC: 7 [13]

Attack: -- [+3]

Damage: -- [--]

#Att: 1



## Trope History

This femme fatale is always bad news from the get-go, but that never seems to stop her. No matter the warnings given by friends, You're Being Played somehow finds a way into your good graces. Sometimes they have a heart of gold and only manipulate for a purpose, other times they are agents of evil, and still other times might want to establish their own alibi and escape while pinning a crime on the characters.

These noir-type NPCs are not to be trifled with lightly, and anyone doing so should be well prepared for a hard fall.

## Special Abilities

### Aura of Trust

You're Being Played has a kind of nature about her that just makes it damn hard to go after her for something. If a character wants to attack (or even accuse) You're Being Played, he must make a successful saving throw vs. spell [DC 18 Wisdom]. If the roll is failed, the character must back off for at least  $\frac{1}{2}$  the number of rounds equal to You're Being Played's HD (unless attacked).

### Dark Secret

Something in the past of You're Being Played is always there, just below the surface. Whatever this secret is, it keeps You're Being Played in check, and she will do nothing to expose it, even going so far as to kill to keep the secret protected.

### Seduction

There is an animal magnetism to You're Being Played. She receives a +20% reaction adjustment [+2 Persuasion] when dealing with members of the opposite sex.

### Wealth

You're Being Played rarely comes from money, but somewhere along the line she has done whatever it takes

to gain wealth beyond her meager beginnings. These resources can be put into play whenever You're Being Played likes, and for the purposes of gaming, anything below 1,000 gold pieces is easily had, and up to 10,000 gold pieces can be gotten in less than a week.

### Dangerous Beauty

You're Being Played has a 'look', and she knows how to use it. This NPC gets a +2 bonus to her Charisma (and Comeliness score).

## Henchmen

There is no doubt that somewhere in the shadows there are at least a couple of goons dedicated to protecting You're Being Played. These base goons are  $\frac{1}{2}$  You're Being Played's HD and are considered standard fighters. There is also a 'dark goon' that has fighter HD equal to You're Being Played who is particularly dangerous and loves nothing more than busting up guys who sleep with You're Being Played.

## Spells

If You're Being Played is built on a non-spellcasting frame, then she is still allowed to have 1st and 2nd level bard spells, 2 slots each.

### Skills

**Deception, Perception, Insight, Stealth**

### Equipment

You're Being Played has a Ring of Protection +2 as well as a wide assortment of revealing and noble clothing. Otherwise, her Wealth ability will allow her to buy all she needs if pressed into going somewhere outside her comfort zone.

# Candella Ramona



Born to a lower class merchant family in Ebontra, Candella was always a tomboy, running the streets of the dark city in her dresses, tussling with boys, and driving her parents mad. Her tumultuous and rebellious youth finally came to a head when guards showed up at the family home seeking an arrest for a petty theft. Her father used his meager political connections and money he couldn't spare to get her off the charges, but after that, he'd forced her into finishing school.

Obviously, drinking tea with other tweens didn't sit well with Candella, and she often skipped classes and even started a few fights and torrid love affairs. Beside himself, her father offered a compromise, correct her behavior in her school and he would get her an audition with one of the Ebontra Crosses for apprenticeship into their dueling guild. She agreed, and over the next three years, she excelled at both her schools until her father announced that he'd found her a husband.

Within the hour, Candella was on a ship bound for Taux and the Free Coast. She never looked back, selling her services as a duelist in Taux until fate brought her in contact with Duchess. The free-wheeling and personable Candella was a perfect foil to the determined and harsh warrior, and yet they both shared an intense desire for freedom, wealth, and roguery. The latter provided quick run-ins with the Taux thieves guild, and soon they were traveling the roads north of the city bound for 'The Keeps' (Ketton and Roslof) where they began their adventuring careers plundering old ruins and tombs.

Candella is an interesting study. She has a wide swinging moral compass, is chaotic in the extreme, is sexually promiscuous with both sexes, and hates societal law. However, she does have a strong connection to the grounding force of Duchess, and as such carries the honor of thieves between them, seeing the dark-haired warrior as her only true friend and ally. That said, she's the life of a party, has an infectious smile, and childlike curiosity, not to mention a natural beauty that can turn men's and women's heads with equal ease.



<b>STR</b>	11	<b>Class:</b> Duelist (Dragon Magazine #73 and Best of Dragon V4)
<b>DEX</b>	18	<b>Level:</b> 5th
<b>CON</b>	14	<b>Alignment:</b> Chaotic Neutral
<b>INT</b>	11	<b>Patron Deity:</b> Arioch (Melnibonean)
<b>WIS</b>	10	<b>HP:</b> 48 <b>AC:</b> 0
<b>CHA</b>	17	(Dueling Leathers, Pantaloons, Dex + Duelist AC Bonus)
		<b>Languages:</b> Common

### Ebontra Needle (Longsword)

Hit + 2, Damage +2 (Attacks 3/2),

### Cross Dagger

Hit +2, Damage +1 (Attacks 2/1), Total Attacks 7/2

## Items

Dueling Leathers (Leather Armor), Cross Dagger +1  
(1d6 when thrown), Ebontra Needle +1, Burgundy Cloak,  
Pantaloons of Protection +2, Traveler's Clothes

## Weapons of Proficiency

Longsword, Dagger, Cross School Style (3 Slots)

## Special Ability

### Parrying the Death Blow

(If an attack will take Alexa to 0 HP or lower, she can make a save vs. death magic to take no damage. A save vs. a second attack in the same round will put her at 1 HP, but a third saving throw is not allowed.)

## Special Ability II

### Ebontra Cross Style

Cross suffers no penalties for offhand fighting. Cross gets an extra attack with offhand.

<b>STR</b>	12(+1)	<b>Class:</b> Fighter
<b>DEX</b>	20(+5)	<b>Level:</b> 5th
<b>CON</b>	15(+2)	<b>Alignment:</b> Chaotic Neutral
<b>INT</b>	12(+1)	<b>Patron Deity:</b> Arioch (Melnibonean)
<b>WIS</b>	11(--)	<b>AC:</b> 18 (Leather, Pantaloons, + Dex)
<b>CHA</b>	17(+3)	<b>HP:</b> 28
		<b>Initiative:</b> +5
		<b>Proficiency Bonus:</b> +3
		<b>Saving Throws:</b> Strength & Constitution
		<b>Skills:</b> History, Persuasion, Athletics, Perception
		<b>Tool Proficiencies:</b> Gaming (Dice)
		<b>Passive Wisdom</b> (Perception): 13

**Background:** Noble (Lesser)

**Personality Traits:** 'Despite my noble birth, I do not place myself above other folk.'

**Ideals:** Independence 'I must prove that I can handle myself.'

**Bond:** 'My life is my own, no matter what my family may think.'

**Flaws:** 'By my words and actions, I often bring shame to my family.'

**Languages:** Common

## Features & Traits

Fighting Style (Two-Weapon Fighting), Second Wind, Action Surge (One Use), Martial Archetype (Ebontra Cross), Improved Critical, Extra Attack, Ability Score Imp (DEX)

## Actions

**Attack:** +9 Ebontra Needle, 9(1d8+5), piercing, finesse, light.  
+9 Cross Dagger, 7 (1d4+5), piercing, finesse, light, thrown.  
[Total Attacks 4 (2 sword/2 daggers)]

## Items

Dueling Leathers (Leather Armor), Cross Dagger +1 (1d6 when thrown), Ebontra Needle +1, Burgundy Cloak, Pantaloons of Protection +2, Traveler's Clothes

# Prys 'Duchess' Greenwood



Born to farmer parents, Prys was a gifted youth in almost anything she tried. Her small community enjoyed her presence, she attended ceremonies at the Temple of Sif, and many thought she might enter the church. However, when she was twelve, her parents died in a gnoll raid, and most of the community was scattered.

She bounced around the Oakfield province and Gariny in a refugee caravan for a few years before she had run-ins with the caravan leadership, mostly come-ons and threats until she decided to go it on her own at seventeen.

In the first year she was by herself, she suffered greatly, finding that the world owed her nothing, that men were harsh masters, and that even Sif seemed to have abandoned her. It was then that she first turned to thievery, slipping into caravan camps (that she knew all too well from her time with them) and taking what she needed.

Soon, she was a highway bandit, stealing from pilgrims and merchants when she found the opportunity. Eventually, she took the southern road toward Taux and left her profession to become a guard with insider experience on defending wayfarers. It was during her time in Taux that she first met Candella, and they instantly hit it off. Both had issues with the matriarchy, and both found that they could help each other get to where they wanted to go.

Leaving the big city, she and Candella began a string of investigations into ruins and tombs littered throughout the Free Coast, slowly traveling north. With her new partner, Duchess has managed to mitigate her outright hatred for most civilization and is coming to terms with her place in this world.

Smart, confident, and bold, Duchess has a no holds barred type attitude. She does, however, have a good heart deep down there someplace, likely stemming from her idyllic childhood. Although Candella can be flighty, Duchess grounds her, and both employ certain abilities that prove useful for tomb raiding.



**STR** 14

**DEX** 17

**CON** 17

**INT** 15

**WIS** 12

**CHA** 11

**COM** 14

**Class:** Fighter

**Level:** 5th

**Alignment:** Chaotic Good

**Patron Deity:** Sif (Norse)

**HP:** 50

**AC:** 2 (Studded, Ring, + Dex)

**Languages:** Common

### Longsword

Hit + 3, Damage +4 (Attacks 3/2)

## Items

Studded Leather, Ring of Protection +2, Longsword +2, Dagger +1, Traveler's Clothes

## Weapons of Proficiency

Longsword, Thief Skill x2, Dagger

## Fighting Techniques

(Unearthed Arcana)

Single Weapon Specialization (Longsword)

## Special Ability

**Thief Skill**

(Open Locks: 50%),

**Thief Skill**

(Find Traps: 42%)

**Class:** Fighter

**Level:** 5th

**Alignment:** Chaotic Good

**Patron Deity:** Sif (Norse)

**AC:** 18 (Studded, Ring, + Dex)

**HP:** 50

**Initiative:** +4

**Proficiency Bonus:** +3

**Saving Throws:**

Strength & Constitution

**Skills:** Deception, Stealth, Intimidation, Perception, Survival, Thieves Tools (Expertise)

**Tool Proficiencies:**

Thieves Tools

**Passive Wisdom**

(Perception): 13

**Background:** Criminal (Highway Robber)

**Personality Traits:** 'I am always calm, no matter the situation.'

**Ideals:** Redemption 'The spark of good is in everyone.'

**Bond:** 'I've committed many crimes, and for that, I must make amends.'

**Flaws:** 'When I see something in a ruin, it's like it's calling me to loot it.'

**Languages:** Common

## Features & Traits

Fighting Style: Great Weapon Fighting, Second Wind, Action Surge, Martial Archetype (Champion), Improved Critical, Extra Attack, Expertise

## Actions

**Attack:** +7 Longsword, 9 (1d10+4), versatile. [2 attacks]

## Items

Studded Leather, Ring of Protection +2, Longsword +2, Dagger +1, Traveler's Clothes



# Part II

## General Gaming and New Spells





## Scouting & the Countryside

Not all adventures start the same way, and although you have a great deal of control as a DM, the players will also have some input (like when you make an adventure and the players move off on another unplanned tangent), but I'm not really here to talk about rogue players, but instead about the getting to and from section of any adventure. The journey to your meticulously planned dungeon can be filled with encounters, both beneficial and deadly, that your players will likely consider just as memorable as the true quest, having arrived at the entrance bruised, beaten, and trepid to enter. Will they risk another night in the cold rain of the wilds or be harried by enemies into the dark unknown of a foreboding cave complex, seeking a repose to heal their wounds? This is what roleplaying should be about—choices and consequences—not 'You arrive at the dungeon after an uneventful day's ride.'

When I think about the wilderness, I like to imagine film cinematography like the Fellowship walking all over New Zealand or Conan running across incredible wastelands. The journey should have some impact (even if only a sentence here or there) and help to put things into perspective for the players.

First off, if characters are traveling, even to a final destination site, they have the ability to find other sites along the way. Sometimes, players

## Gaming Example

A party of 5 players is moving through a high desert wasteland, lots of plateaus, gullies, scrub, and richly painted rock formations. You, as the DM, have decided to offer up a special encounter that will provide a needed magic item to the party for the upcoming ruin dungeon they are heading to, and therefore, allow each player a roll as they travel to spot some sign of another possible natural oddity. Each player then rolls percentiles, going against their average  $(INT + WIS/2) \times 5$ . The magic-user has the best chance here, with a  $17 INT + 15 WIS$ ,  $32$  divided by  $2$ ,  $16$ ,  $\times 5 = 80\%$ . However, he rolls poorly with a  $91\%$ , and yet the thief actually comes up with a  $13\%$  which is well under his  $40\%$  chance. You inform the thief that he notes a strange reflective glare on a rock escapement not too far off the trail, like something metal is catching the sun, and upon closer inspection, an ancient trail (thought to be a dried watercourse) actually runs in that direction off the main trail. In this fashion you provide the players an opportunity to investigate, if they so choose, and make the adventure more than just 'you arrive'.

# Scenario Seed #1

## Not a Meeting in an Inn

### How to Create a Group without an Inn

One of the oldest and tried and true tropes for getting your players together for the first time is having them meet in an inn. Now, while this certainly fits the bill, there have to be other opportunities to meet up. For the purposes of *Duchess and Candella*, I considered having them meet in a jail. Certainly, the ability to throw a few first level characters in a cell together is a perfect opportunity to have them chat, perhaps form alliances, and also start out with next to nothing in equipment or gold, which is a great motivator when it comes to adventuring. This is also a perfect opportunity to throw in a meeting with a trope NPC, as in the case of *Duchess and Candella*, they met a friendly Mentor who bails them out and sets them

on their first mission together. Other more interesting places to start a first adventure could include a ferry crossing (nothing like alone time on a raft to make a connection), a commoner festival (can anyone say *Ren Faire?*), after a natural disaster (fire, flood, swarm of rampaging orcs), or you could even go for the old answering a wanted add (Needed, adventurers to kill the ogre).

The *Duchess and Candella* scenario involving the jail has several nice twists as well, including the use of Charisma to deal with guards or perhaps fight a few NPC punks that share the common cell. Another factor here is the motivation for the characters to leave the city to lay low, either having run afoul of the city constables (for escaping) or the local thieves guild (for beating up their gang members in the jail). Such motivators keep the party moving toward your goal—the adventure in which you wish to place them.





get overly concerned with the need for rangers and druids in the wilderness, and they are great to have and make things easier, but that doesn't mean any adventurer can't make it in the woods. Keeping that in mind, you could provide possible chances to find lost sites, ruins, and dungeons based on an average Intelligence and Wisdom score multiplied by 5 in percentage. That way, seeing signs, reading old maps, watching for smoke, or 'feeling' the magical corruptions of evil could allow the party to encounter all types of cool things along the way. Once you've determined if you'd like to offer up side encounters for the part before the main adventure (like some of those in Part III of this book), have your party start rolling dice without explanation (and let the paranoia begin to spread!)

Second, there always needs to be an easy way to work out a group's chances of moving without detection in the wilderness. I've taken prompts from other gaming systems in creating a Dexterity average for the party, multiplying it by 5, and using that percentage (rolled by the group's caller) as the party's hide percentage. You can also modify this by group armor class, meaning any AC lower than 5 subtracts 5% per point overall (do not use multiple armors as negatives), and you can add 5% for every 3 levels of ranger in the party.

Third, if you are using the list of herbs I've provided elsewhere in Part II, the party has a great chance of finding good natural products

## Gaming Example

The same party of 5 players is moving through enemy territory in a forest. They are wounded, low on spells, and trying to avoid a fight with a local band of orcs that is hunting them. Taking the average Dexterity of the party, which is 11, there is a 'party move silently' check of 55%; however, the party has two modifiers to this roll, the first being the paladin in plate mail and shield with an AC of 2 (thus receives a -15% to the roll), and a 3rd level ranger (which adds 5%). Taking these two factors into account, the final party stealthy movement roll is 45%. The caller rolls and comes up with a 53%, so the orcs are now hot on their trail!

## Gaming Example

For an entire party actively searching an area, you can break each player's percentages down, but remind them of the time involved in this, so I suggest just having a single player (typically a woodsman type) doing either an active or casual search while traveling. The 3rd level ranger in the party of 5 is actively searching the orc infested forest, hoping to find some emergency healing for the party as they try to avoid patrols. Her combined INT + WIS is 26, which is multiplied by 2, 52, and given a +5% for her three levels of ranger, meaning she has a 57% chance to find something in her search. She rolls a 46%, so now you'll have to refer to the herbs chart in Part II, and hope it has healing properties!

## Gaming Example

The party of 5 has an average Constitution score of 12, meaning their percentage chance to try to move more quickly to a target area is 60%. They need to get to a border outpost that is seven days travel, but they have to get there fast enough to warn the defenders of a goblin uprising, so they can be ready for it. The caller rolls a percentage, attempting to cut down on the time and rolls a 57%, just under what was needed. The characters thus cut the overall travel time by a full day! They decided they want to try it again, but this time their percentage to achieve success is cut in half, to 30%. The caller rolls again and scores an 18%, success! The characters have now managed to push through and shaved 2 days from their journey. This seems fair to them, so they don't try again, but if they did, they would be looking at getting less than a 15% for a success to shave off a third day from their journey to the outpost.

## Gaming Example

Faren, the party's bard, decides to use a little charm on the local farmers of a territory who have had run-ins with the orc tribes of the deep forest. He makes a Charisma roll for reaction adjustment **[DC 18 Charisma]**, and if the result is positive, you could negate some of the Home Territory bonuses that enemies get against the players.

in the wilderness. Remember king's foil? It's a weed! Well, I've always been intrigued by the thought of natural healing and other effects from magical-property plants in a fantasy setting. During my own gaming sessions, I've broken down looking for magical plants into two categories, one being actively searching while not traveling, and the other being casually keeping an eye out as you travel.

For the active searching percentage, use the average Wisdom & Intelligence multiplied by 2, with a ranger modifier bonus of 5% per three levels or 7% per three levels if in their native or specialized environment.

For casual searching, the percentage is Wisdom & Intelligence straight, with a 3% per level add from a ranger or 5% if in a native or specialized environment.

Fourth, travel time. Now, one thing I like to keep out of my campaigns is using hexes to measure travel time over a large map. That can get old, and as the DM, you should really be able to give your characters a perspective on travel and then move on from there.

What I mean by that is trying to put things into a way that players will understand, like giving them a number of days. For example, say, 'If the weather holds, the journey should take you eight days.' In doing so, you've established two



things, the time it will take and that there might be a delay. Now, sometimes players will need to get places faster than the standard time, and here is where you can shave days by throwing various tests at the players, like doing a party Stamina test with an average of the party's Constitution score, multiply by 5%, and then have them shave a day off the journey for every 15% they beat their overall percentage by. However, this number is decreased by ½ for each day it is attempted, meaning it gets harder and harder to cut down the time and still be functional.

As a standard practice, it can be assumed that a party can travel between 8–12 hours on a given day and needs to rest 15 minutes of every hour. That said, the above system would increase hours traveled and decrease break time.

Fifth, you can gather information on the journey. Now, this will go along with the Enemy Territory section in this part, but the bottom line is that if the party spends time talking to locals and can make successful Charisma tests, they might be able to avoid the negatives that Enemy Territory instills, especially on ambushes and such, so you might encourage your players to have a talk with folks now and then as this can be a great roleplay opportunity.

Sixth, check your rations. As rations are listed in days, be sure to keep track of your own tally if it is an extended journey, and also give characters

a chance to hunt if they like although this will likely add time to the journey. For every day hunting is required to feed the party, you can assume several hours are spent in the endeavor, so every four days of hunting will add another full day to the journey total.

## Herbs and Natural Remedies

Over the course of my time running my Nameless Realms campaigns, I've had the opportunity to play both higher magic settings and low magic settings. In the lower magic, healing can be very hard to come by, and to counter that I've done many things, from making a surgeon class to utilizing natural herbal healing.

Concerning the later, it can be beneficial to collect and purchase specific types of herbal remedies when no clergy is present or you know those healing spells will be gone rather quickly in a deep dungeon. For this purpose I used a list of possible herbs that could be found or purchased before adventures in the New Kingdoms of my world, which would roughly be a standard European fantasy setting. Certainly, there would be other herbs around the world, but this list includes the most used in standard RPG settings.

### *Note:*

*Some of you might be wondering why I don't designate ecological 'zones' that these plants are found in. As I've said many times, I like to add flavor to a campaign with different wrinkles, but I don't want to bog things down with too many rules either, for this reason I simply say that as magical plants, they can grow almost anywhere in a European type setting, and you could customize new versions for more foreign lands.*

### Winter's Kiss

*Flower* 10 GP *Heals 1–10 damage*  
*Poultice/Applied* 75% Find Rate  
*Shelf Life* 1 week

Winter's kiss is a popular light-crimson flower that blooms mostly in the early spring but can be found all year round in colder climates and sheltered groves. It is attributed to many young lover's tales, and when found, the flower must be ground into a poultice and applied to wounds directly.

### Lay Flower

*Flower* 8 GP *Bone healing*  
*Brew/Ingest* 40% Find Rate  
*Shelf Life* 1 year

Honored by many nonmagical healers, the lay flower is a small golden vine that can be found clinging to the low branches of oak and ash trees, getting its sustenance from the tree that hosts it. Its small golden leaves can be dried and then brewed into a strong tea that mends bones with incredible power, completely repairing those smashed, crushed, or broken.

### Halrium

*Leaf* 15 GP *Heals 5–30 burn damage*  
*Brew/Ingest* 32% Find Rate  
*Shelf Life* 1 year

The halrium bush tucks away in deep glens and shaded forests, and its copper leaves give it the moniker 'dragon's bush', especially with the fact that a potion brewed with its dried leaves will heal burns at an incredible rate.

### Sunshine Bliss

*Berry* 50 GP *Heals 3–30 damage*  
*Fresh/Ingest* 27% Find Rate  
*Shelf Life* 3 days

These bright green berries love to hide beneath the fronds of large ferns, sometimes peeking out to bask in the sunbeams that find their way from the high canopy of deep woods to the forest floor. The berries must be eaten fresh, but they have fantastic healing powers.

### Rill Root

*Root* 10 GP *Binds wounds, stops bleeding*  
*Poultice/Applied* 18% Find Rate  
*Shelf Life* 3 months

The roots of this small, blue-tinged forest plant can be ground into a poultice which will stop bleeding and bind open wounds. It is highly valued by adventurers who have those terrible moments when half the party is down and bleeding and they don't want to make Healing checks.

### Blue Minstrel

*Flower* 50 GP *Increase Charisma by 4 points for 20 turns*  
*Brew/Ingest* 17% Find Rate  
*Shelf Life* 3 months

This proud violet/blue flower springs up in the night and blooms beneath the blood moon on hilltops and in open fields. By morning, it is typically a shriveled husk, but if picked at its height, the flowers can be dried and then brewed into a strong tea (or used in the creation of Love Potions).

The tea causes a temporary increase in the drinker's Charisma, and many a young maiden has fallen victim to a farmhand who is on this rare brew.

### Tiger Vine

*Leaf* 25 GP *5 Rounds of Rage (+3 hit, +6 Damage)*  
*Ingest* 12% Find Rate  
*Shelf Life* 3 months

A dark-skinned vine with iron-like thorns, this plant slithers around old ruins, some say feeding on the background count of death within them. It has small dark leaves, and if one is put beneath your tongue, it will provide an adrenaline rush that can be terrible to withstand, giving it the nickname 'ogre's cousin'.

### Moon Bells

*Flower* 75 GP *10 minutes of regeneration*  
*Ingest* 8% Find Rate  
*Shelf Life* 3 days

These large circular white flowers grow on vines that breach the tree canopy of deep forests. They feed nectar to great violet moths, but if their flower is eaten fresh, it has incredible powers of regeneration, enough to give the eater 5 HP per round or even grow back a single lost limb.

### Honey Ivy

*Berry* 75 GP *Delay Death for 3 days.*  
*Brew/Ingest* 5% Find Rate  
*Shelf Life* 3 days

Tangling around the roots of lichen covered trees, this vine with amber-colored berries is a rare and wondrous creation. If the berries are brewed and then the liquid is dripped into the mouth of a body, it can delay the soul's journey to the afterlife for up to three days. During that time the body can be healed, and poison can be removed, and then a slight shock of electricity will restore the person to a whole and living individual.

### Sleepers Chalice

*Mushroom* 150 GP *Raise Dead within 1 day*  
*Poultice/Applied* 3% Find Rate  
*Shelf Life* 3 days

These rare mushrooms grow only in underground caves and are known commodities of the Underdark; however, sometimes they will spring up beneath sheltered ruins, and common folk find and sell them for a small fortune. If put into a poultice and rubbed on the flesh of a fresh corpse, their magic can raise the dead, as the spell of the same name.

I've detailed finding such herbs along the trail in the Journey section of this part, but for the purposes of specific herbs, I've placed the percentage chance of finding each herb after any particular search. These percentages can be adjusted by the level of any ranger, barbarian, or druid who is doing



# Scenario Seed #2

## Dealing with the Digger

### The Tunnels under the Town and the UMBER Hulk

Many times an adventuring party will find themselves in the wilderness, and while there will have some kind of small hamlet as a base of operations. Although standard practice is to have threats to the hamlet be from outside sources, typically dungeons the players can explore, it is also nice to have something that might threaten their base. This time Duchess and Candella have been staying in a local burg while they enjoy the easy plunder of several ancient tombs that dot the landscape around the town. During their time in the town, they form a few relationships and one becomes problematic when an associate or a child disappears. Whispers begin of a 'rumbling in the earth' and a sinkhole opens at one corner of the town. At the bottom, Duchess and Candella discover a warren of tunnels, likely with a few monsters, and last but not least, the creator of this problematic scenario—an umber hulk.

Such a scenario allows the DM to come up with a nice 'boss' encounter as well as creating a rather random labyrinth that takes no particular design knowledge or forethought. It's a fun place to put large insects, especially beetles, to keep the investigators on their toes before the final big fight.



## Gaming Example

A party decides to search for a specific herb and has a 3rd level barbarian and a 5th level druid. Those classes will provide an 8% bonus to the party roll (rolled by the caller), the druid will also cast *Locate Plants* and subtract another 10% from the roll. Thus, the party will get an 18% total subtraction from their roll. They roll a 31%, subtract their 18%, and come up with a 13% overall roll. This qualifies them for 7 different plants (down to tiger vine). So, rolling a d8 (and re-rolling an 8 result), the party rolls a 3, halrium. However, that isn't what the party was looking for, and because they have both a barbarian and a druid, they can modify their roll by two places, thus being able to choose any result from 1 through 5. Deciding they might need some heavy duty healing, they choose the sunshine bliss.

the searching as their knowledge of nature will help them zero in on more specific locales that a type of herb would be found. Also, the final roll to determine exactly what is found is modified in any 'direction' by the number of above classes that are searching.

When determining what special herb you find, roll percentage dice and subtract any 'bonus' from various levels of characters or spells. Once you've gotten your bottom line percentage, compare it to the above list and ALL herbs that fall within the range of the percentage get put into a random roll to determine what is found.

You could also use a *Speak to Plants* spell (offering a 5% bonus) and adjust the percentage downwards as well, having the plant, in general, talk like a hick and give the caster a hilarious story about how he once knew a daffodil—you know daffodils love to talk, right?—that had an annoying neighbor who was what you were looking for. Oh... the possibilities are endless.

Also, the casting of a *Locate Object* or *Locate Plants* will provide a 10% bonus to any roll.

A final note on modifications, remember to allow players to utilize whatever they can if the situation is dire. Maybe, a magic-user can use a *Monster Summoning* spell to summon a handful of sprites to help the party find some honey ivy, etc. As the DM, you might modify the roll by 1% per total Hit Dice summoned, and then have the final result roll modified by 1 per creature. Just a thought, but have fun with it.

The final result in this process is determining how much of the plant is available. This will always be randomly determined by a d4 and modified by any ranger, druid, or barbarian in the party, with a single + for each class. Thus, the party mentioned above (with a barbarian and druid) would find 1d4+2 applications of sunshine bliss.



# Scenario Seed #3

## The Trees Have Eyes

Making a Case for an Adventure of

Nothing but Hide and Seek

I'm not sure how many people run wilderness adventures. Lord knows when that particular 'orange spine' hardcover came out for TSR, I was lining up to buy it, but never really used the book, to be honest. Still, I think I probably wasted more than one opportunity to have a good time outside of the typical dungeon crawl environment. That said, over the years I have come up with a few wilderness type adventures, and one common theme always takes me back to 'the chase'. In this particular scenario, Duchess

and Candella find themselves deep in enemy territory, and as such have to run a game of hide and seek with the orc tribes that are out to get them. For the gaming purposes of the scenario, I always like to break things down into a series of encounter points with some kind of evasion test (see party move silently in Part II), and if failed, then you can manifest a particular encounter.

Great wilderness encounter points can revolve around things like 'the open glade', 'the waterfall', 'the tall grove of trees', 'the gully', and 'the rock maze'. Writing in a series of places the characters will encounter during their flight from their enemy will allow you to create a cool setting before they make their evasion roll, and then you can also build out a quick encounter there that might incorporate some of the natural terrain in combat.



# Food and Lodging

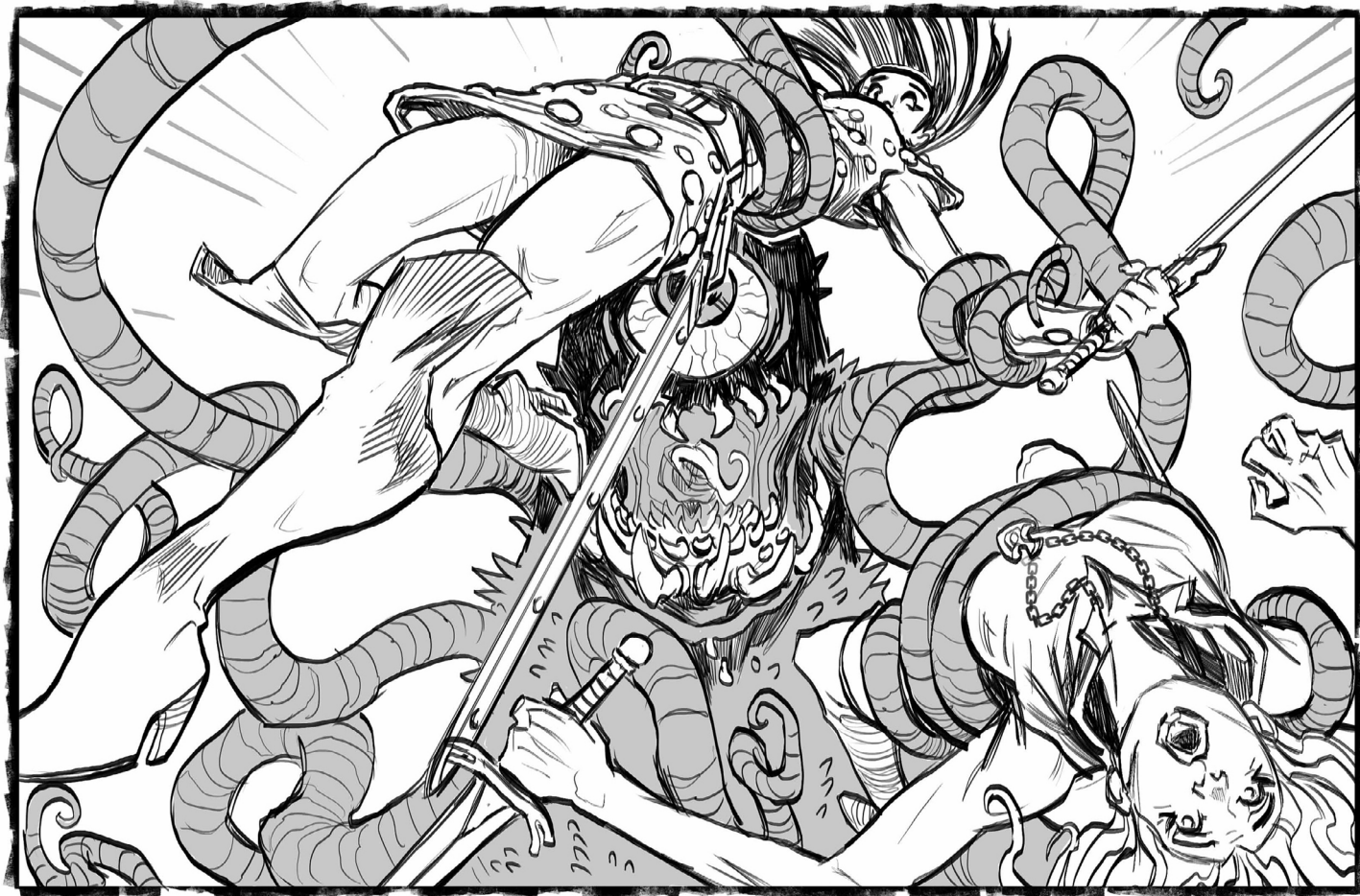
You know, one thing I wanted to make sure of when doing this book was that it would find a special place next to the DM because it had so much information that could readily be sampled and added to a campaign at any time. That meant that all those little pestering issues that players come up with like ‘What’s his name?’ or ‘What’s on the menu?’ could be answered.

I well remember reading *Village of Hommlet* and being very taken with Gygax’s list of foodstuffs at the local inn, and that made it a special purpose of mine to give the players some good options to eat and drink when they finally settled into a tavern after a long adventure.

I’ve also been taken, on occasion, with the way

that certain RPG-based video games deal with food, and in some games, food has characteristics and ‘buff’ bonuses. To me, filling a campaign with taverns and inns can add to the enjoyment, especially if there is a benefit to the players. Think about how you stop at a town while traveling because it has your favorite restaurant. Now consider how you might entice your players to get excited about dining at taverns, might they begin to keep lists of foods and their benefits and ‘buffs’ or perhaps have a favorite tavern from the rich descriptions and experiences had there.

On the next page, I’ve listed a bevy of worldly meals and drinks, along with pricing, that might help give your campaign a bit more flavor (certainly, a pun was intended there). After the list,





you'll see my possible effects examples that might help you weave these things into your games.

## Magical Properties of Food

Once you look over the list above, you might begin to wonder why anyone would pay such gold for food, well, other than the fact that adventurers are notoriously rich and can spare it. So let me give you some suggestions on what 'Elaborate' food might mean to a player.

First and foremost, in a mundane nature, you could rule that an Elaborate meal might decrease healing time for wounded characters by ¼ or ½ depending on price. That is a nice incentive if you are working with natural healing only.

Second, I would consider some dishes to be 'buff' capable, and you might want to increase the price for such specific dishes by an additional 10 GP, but that is up to you. Possible buffs included hereafter would likely be in effect for 6–8 hours after consumption.

+1 to an ability score

+1 'luck' bonus

+1 HP per hit die from stamina boost

Night vision

+10% to thieving abilities [+1 skill]

+1 spell slot of a specific low level

+1 to all healing spells cast

### Breakfast

Plain (rice pudding, toast, cheese) (1 SP)

Plain (porridge, toast, cheese) (1 SP)

Plain (toasted oats, goat's milk, cheese) (1 SP)

Standard

(boiled rice with a raw egg, ginger tea, celery sticks) (2 SP)

Plain (cold fish stew, toast, cheese) (1 SP)

Elaborate (eggs, ham, toast, dried seaweed strips) (5 SP)

Elaborate (eggs, fish, cornbread, honey bun) (5 SP)

Elaborate (eggs, ham, toast, gravy, sweet bun) (5 SP)

Elaborate

(eggs, fried fish fillet, toast, salted pork, sweet wine) (5 SP)

Elaborate

(chili-spiced scrambled eggs, batter-fried fish fillet, dark banana bread, honey-brewed ale) (1 GP)

### Lunch/Dinner

Plain (pan-fried tomatoes, breakfast bacon, bread & honey butter) (1 GP)

Plain (pan-fried potatoes, breakfast ham, bread & honey butter) (1 GP)

Local (unidentified 'meat of the day', hard bread & curdled milk) (1 GP)

Standard (pork & chicken fried rice, chicken broth soup, sliced carrots) (5 SP)

Plain (fried banana mash, duck flank, rye bread & twice churned butter) (1 GP)

Plain (melon slices, roast chicken, bread & honey butter) (1 GP)

Elaborate (boiled yams, rabbit stew, soft loaf & cane butter) (2 GP)

Elaborate (deep-sea tuna stew, roasted tomatoes, soft loaf & twice churned butter) (2 GP)

Elaborate (sweet potato, ham stew, soft loaf & cane butter) (2 GP)

Elaborate (grilled squid with lemon and butter, gazelle flank in tangy gravy, soft loaf of wheat bread, slice of dwarf berry pie) (4 GP)

Outsider (fish stew, green cheese, soldier's wheat bread) (2 GP)

Elaborate (grilled eggplant, fish stew, soft loaf & sugar butter coat) (2 GP)

### Supper

Plain (chicken legs, hard corn rolls & bacon gravy, fruit of the day) (1 GP)

Plain (pan-fried fish fillet, hard rolls & gravy, fruit of the day) (1 GP)

Local (deep-fried grubs, hard rolls & tangy red gravy, apple pie) (1 GP)

Standard (seaweed-wrapped fish, white rice bowl, island fruits) (1 GP)

Standard (chicken cutlets on wooden spears, hot mustard dipping sauce, deep-fried carrots) (5 SP)

Outsider (mammoth steak, cup of tangy beans, pan-fried bread wedges, cinnamon-topped apple pie) (5 GP)

Plain (fish stew, hard rolls & mango jelly, bowl of olives) (1 GP)

Plain (catch of the day, hard rolls & gravy, bread pudding) (1 GP)

Elaborate (mountain bull fillet, grilled shrimp, buttered back yams, soft loaf, coca iced cream) (10 GP)

Elaborate (3 lamb chops with sweet mango chutney, cup of olives, diced cabbage with honey-vinegar dressing, full soft loaf, fig pudding) (5 GP)

Elaborate (fresh catch of the day, corn meal cates, butter squash, soft loaf, hot jungle berry pie) (5 GP)

Elaborate (wild boar cutlet, cup of sauced beans, pan-fried potato slices, soft loaf, hot fruit pie) (5 GP)

Elaborate (whale stew with potatoes, cheddar-sprinkled biscuits, chilled island melons, aleo chocolate rum) (7 GP)

## Gaming Example

Delbin the Nimble has been in Taux for more than two years, but tonight is his first time being a ‘second story man’ for the guild, and as such he really doesn’t want to screw up. To help him with his upcoming mission, he goes to the Emerald Serpent and special orders a Winged Serpent Filet, costing him an astounding 20 GP. Still, the dish is said to help one with his thieving skills, and as such, he will have a +10% bonus to all his skills for the next 6 hours, now he just needs to get the job done before sunrise.

## Gaming Example

Dorn the Dwarf comes into a town after three weeks hunting goblins in their lairs around the Karas Range. His current ‘battle’ equipment is a battleaxe, Shield +1, and dwarven field plate armor. The rate for repair on his items is 7.5 GP for his axe ( $75 \times .10$ ), 2.5 GP for his shield ( $250 \times .01$ ), and 200 GP for his armor ( $2,000 \times .10$ ), so his total repair bill will be 210 GP. Obviously, Dorn would like to upgrade to some magical armor!

Third, you can also consider ‘bad’ food to have effects that might be the negative versions of the above because of food poisoning or lack of nutrition although that might be taking matters a bit far for most campaigns. You don’t want to fixate too much on food as it is about the adventure after all.

## The Weight of a Campaign

Over the years I’ve tried many times to put all manner of cool little things into the campaign to make it more ‘real’, and in the end it typically backfires, bogs down the sessions, and isn’t really any fun for the players.

Certainly, things like hit bonuses and negatives for weapons versus certain types of armor in AD&D is such a rule, as is dealing with spell components, or magic being affected by moons, etc. All sound good in theory, but when you are dealing with everything else in combat, including aligning miniatures or 5-foot steps, this stuff can get overly cumbersome.

So I’ve asked myself ‘what makes gaming fun’, and for me I think it is ease of play, but that doesn’t mean there aren’t cool things that can be added in that don’t require epic time consumption during the process of a battle (which we all know takes a long time as is). Below, I’m going to give some easy to use suggestions that can be put into play after the adventure ends that should add some realism to the campaign while also providing adventure seeds.

### 1. Weapon & Armor Damage and Repair

I’m certain that more ink has been wasted on this one than pretty much any other non-canon



topic in D&D, but I think I have a new ripple that won't require dice or vast amounts of time.

Now, it can be assumed that, during combat, weapons and armor get worn down, hurt, chipped, broken, etc. I don't think anyone would argue that. We can also assume that magical armor and weapons have a certain resistance to this 'wear', but I'd think they, too, would require some taking care of.

So, in effect, any front-line fighters will be required to pay 10% of the total value of their weapons and armor (a 25 GP sword would cost 2.5 GP) to a smith once they get back into town to get them back in full working condition. If this is not done, each time they go back into combat, their weapons will be considered -1 to hit and their armor will be considered one point worse than its original AC. I would only impose this after each full adventure, not at camps or rest periods. For magical arms and armor, this cost is 1% of the total gold value of the item (thus a 2,000 GP sword would require 20 GP).

Now sure, this might sound petty, and it could become annoying, so I suggest having the front-line characters tally up a 'maintenance cost' on their sheet, so they know when they get back to town what their cost will be and can then look for a smith. If they don't have to do math all the time, just find the smith, it will give them something to do other than to

drink at the inn and make them feel like they are honestly taking care of their cool stuff.

## 2. Training

I've played a lot of old 90s video games in which my characters had to find someone to train them in new abilities. This was both rewarding (when I could both find and afford them) and frustrating (when I couldn't find or afford them). Thus, I've gone back and forth on this idea, but I wanted to give you an option concerning using it.

I would say that all characters have the applicable knowledge to gain two full levels above their current one before they would have to return to a 'master' for training. Thus, you could establish a guideline that says every third level (4th, 7th, 10th) a character would have to visit a master of their craft to progress to the next series of levels.

In this fashion, you put that training in the forefront of players' minds, but not bind them to having to do training every level. It also gives them the opportunity to find a master that could teach them, and you could also 'prepay' for training if a 5th level character finds an appropriate master, they can train them, and thus would only need more training at 8th instead of 7th.

I would also make gold involved, and say it costs the character 100 GP in training for every level they will be prepping for (so a 4th level training would require costs for 5th, 6th, and 7th, for a

total of 1,800 GP). This price could be mitigated by membership in guilds or churches, so keep that in mind.

### 3. Spell Components

Boy, spell components sure do sound cool, but at the end of the day, who has time to keep track of the damn stuff? As a rule, I don't really use them unless they have a really high-value component (Identify comes to mind), and some components are certainly reusable (glass rod anyone?).

#### Gaming Example

Kent, the paladin of Donblas, has just reached 4th level and needs to seek out training for his next three levels of experience. Lucky for Kent, he's close to Ketton Keep and travels there on his trusty steed to seek out training from a higher up member of his knightly order. As a member of the Holy Knights of Justice, he receives a 20% discount on all training from his order, and thus the normal price of 500 GP for 5th level training is 400 GP, and the price of 600 GP for 6th is 480 GP after the discount. Unfortunately for Kent, he only has 1,000 GP in reserve, and thus can't afford 7th level training at this time (he can train up to three levels above his current level at one time), so he goes with 880 GP for two levels of training, and will need to go back again before he can reach 7th. (However, at 7th, he can train for 8th and 9th if he has the gold.)

However, like the front-line fighters, there needs to be a cost involved in the craft of standard magic-users. So, I'd place a price on spell components at 1 GP per level of spell, each time you enter a town. Certainly, some spells might not have been used, but that isn't to say that there might not be an expiration date on some components, and thus they need to be replaced with fresh goods.

This tally should also be listed on the magic-user's sheet as 'mundane component cost', and this will need to be paid after each full adventure. Thus, a magic-user with three 1st, two 2nd, and one 3rd would pay 10 GP each trip into town to keep components up to snuff.

### Swords and Armor

Often, in the process of collecting treasure, players will pick up and later discard magical treasure, especially weapons and armor. In all the books I've ever read, this isn't really something that is often done, as when you find a magical item, you tend to keep it forever. However, the mechanics of D&D don't lend themselves particularly well to such a concept, so I'm going to give a bit of advice that I've picked up from other legendary DMs as well as my own experiences.

First, I'd like to talk about the concept of the '+', or the magical bonus system. The system builds a lot around this magical property (at least in AD&D), and it's very difficult to discard it without upsetting the balance of 'needs a +1 or better weapon to hit'



# Scenario Seed #4

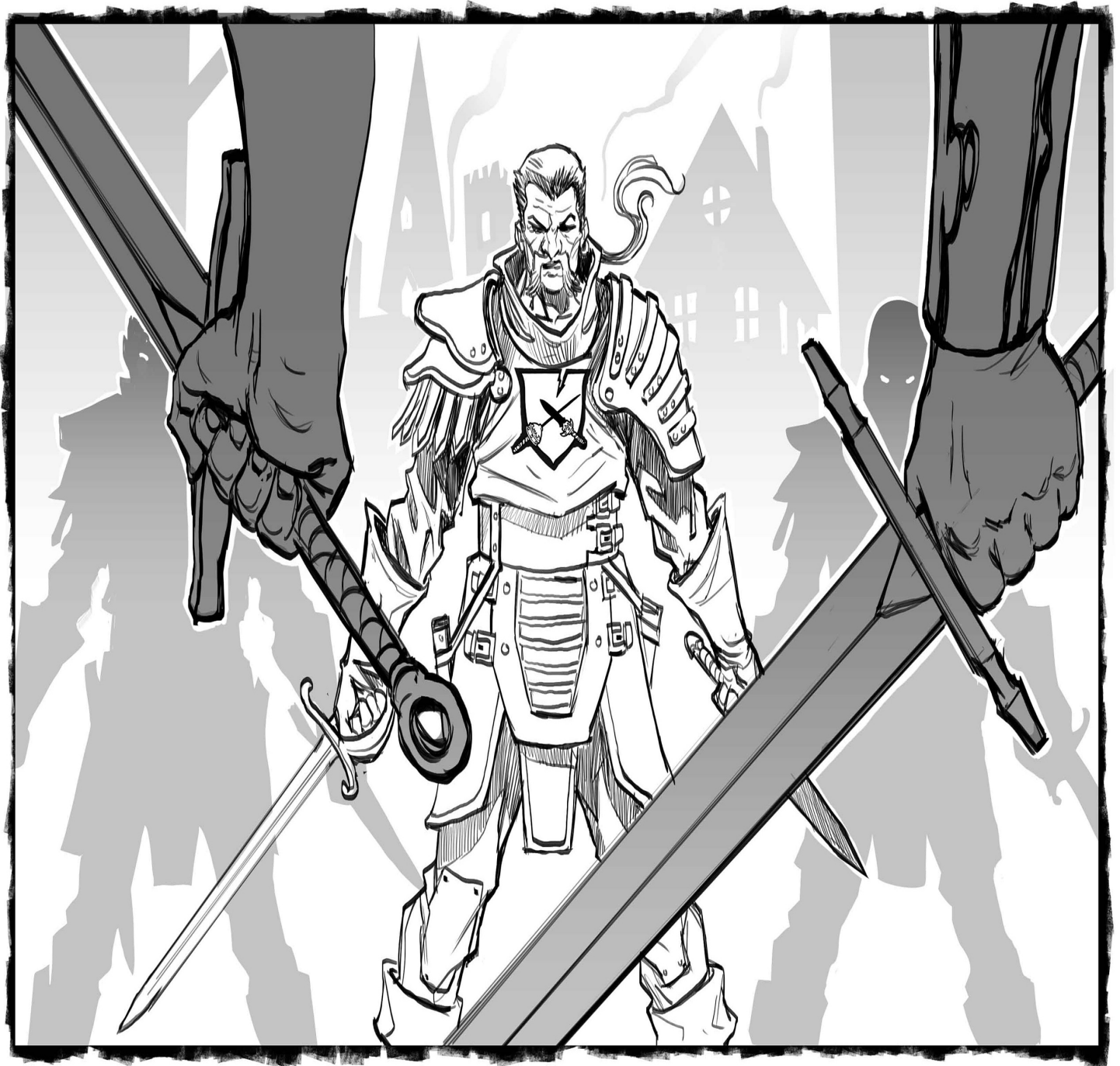
## Duels in the Streets

### Dealing with Duels in a Campaign

I've always had a great fondness for the art of duels. Perhaps it's my love of the Three Musketeers and samurai anime, or maybe it is just the thought of testing my fighter's abilities versus others of his or her ilk. Whatever the case, building in a one-on-one combat is always an easy way to get a player's blood pumping and to keep the attention of all the players at the table as they witness the spectacle.

For Duchess and Candella, they've run afoul of a group of Findalynn Bravos, and as such they know that a fight is in order. However, as this is a city and open dueling is not without repercussions from the law, they have decided to set the grudge match on a local bridge with lookouts to make sure their activities are kept under wraps.

Such a scenario can be something as civilized as an open city duel to even calling out a boss in hopes of mitigating the overall damage to the party from a mass combat. I encourage DMs to offer such opportunities while moving through your campaign, and one might even extend the duel to a test of magical abilities, or even thieving skills (the first to get the gem in the locked room).



monsters. However, I'd simply stop looking at the '+' as an inherently magical property and simply see it as a quality value. In this fashion, you can preclude many weapons and armor, let's say +1 and +2 from truly being magic, and instead, say they are incredibly forged. Then, if the player with the +1 Shortsword finds a +3 Shortsword, it would be much more likely they would retire their well-forged blade for a truly glowing, magically runed relic. This works the same with armor, and in the case of Detect Magic, it also makes it much more difficult for a party to walk into an armory or treasure trove and identify the choice weapons and armor.

Forging techniques vary around the Nameless Realms, and many great smiths throughout the world are able to create weapons that act as 'magic' because they hold a '+' value. For the purposes of gaming, swords can be forged up to a hit and damage class of +2/+2, with varying weapons beginning at +1/- and going up to that total. There have been rumors of greater weapons forged by famed smiths through the ages that surpass those bonuses, but they would be legendary artifacts.

Typically, weapons forged in such a way utilize various odd metals and even stone, including jade, most having some property of adamantite or mithril. Some even speak of weapons created using ether from the Elemental Plane of Shadow, cold-forged glass, and other odd elements, but these are unconfirmed.

This same practice can be used in the creation of armor which can also be up to +2 in value without having been imbued with magical properties.

Also, another great way to have characters get more connected to their arms and armor is to provide magic-user enchanters in various larger towns. These specialized magical practitioners have the ability to 'up the +' of weapons and armor. As a standard rule, I always had the enchantment take a week per '+' that the item gains to create, and the DM needs to charge a price equal to the '+' added to the weapon minus the cost of the weapon before the enchantment.

## **Time Passages**

### **Building with Your Players to Create a Lasting Game**

Time can be abstract in RPG terms, and I'm not sure how many DMs actually put it into practical use within their campaigns. For my own part, I've always tried to make campaigns that had people coming back for more, year after year, but that is extremely hard to do when working exclusively on dungeon crawls and one-shots.

For my part, I came to the conclusion very early in my gaming days, just around the transition from 8th to 9th grade, that I wanted to create a gaming 'family'. My definition of that wish was to have my very first character have a child, and then have the child grow up and be played as a character himself. It seemed a relatively easy



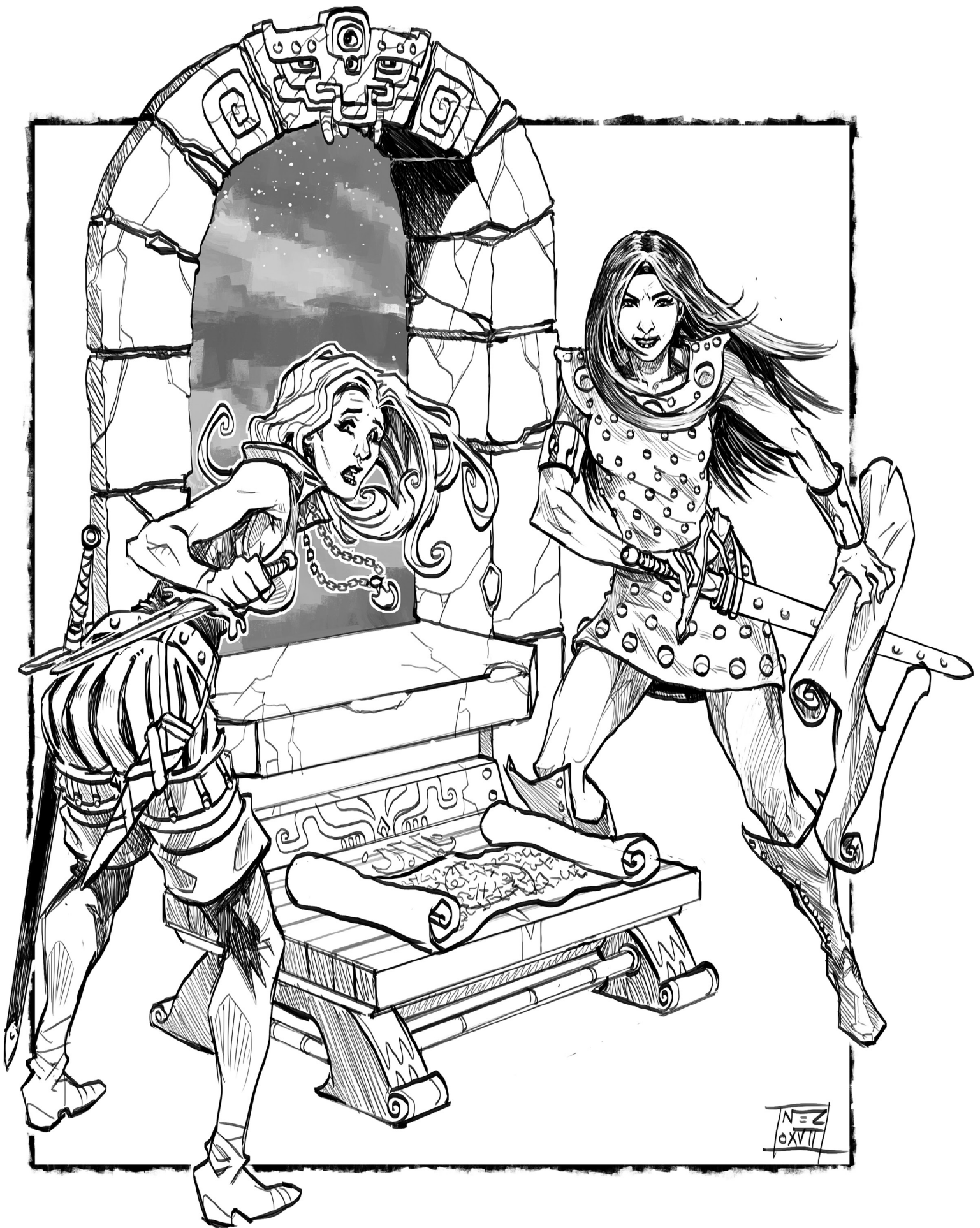
thing to do, and it was likely motivated by wanting to give some of my awesome equipment from my first character to a 1st level character and kick the crap out of 1 HD monsters to gain levels faster.

Still, when I decided to do this, some of my other friends liked the idea of their characters having families that carried on their traditions as adventurers as well. I mean, I always played a fighter, and as such, became a knight, and then got a castle, and finally rose to a lord or king or whatever, so it seemed the logical choice to have the young prince or princess of the hard-won kingdom I'd achieved go on to keep my family name intact. This worked in the same fashion for our wizards, often having their children become apprentices, and thieves learning the trade early on from their parents. Sometimes we would throw a wrench into the parents' best-laid plans and have the thief's kid become a paladin, or the paladin's kid rebel and become a drunken mercenary.

Whatever the case, it became great fun, and more importantly, it became a series of stories and history that we could revisit many times over around the table. It also brought about a need to create a timeline, and move it forward with each generation, and as we marked dates and events on the timeline, our history grew, as did our world, and our desire to keep getting together even after we all moved away because there was this magical story that we just couldn't let go. We wanted to know what would happen to the next

## Gaming Example

Kent has adventured far and wide with the armor and sword he discovered on the fallen knight, and they have served him well. Now, however, he is facing more difficult foes, and his bank accounts have swollen to a point that even donating much of his wealth to his church isn't enough. Thus, he travels to Tristra, and there seeks out one of the well-known enchanters on the Street of Golden Dreams. As the DM, you can check the prices of Plate Mail +2 and a Sword +3 in the DMG. Those are as follows: Plate +2 = 10,500 GP and a Sword +3 = 7,000 GP. Taking into account that Kent's armor is already considered +1, as is his sword (you'd round the +2 damage down to +1 in all cases where a weapon of quality has a split bonus between hit and damage), Kent is basically looking to add one '+' to his armor and two '+'s to his sword. Dividing the armor's value in half (because it is +2) you get 5,250 GP per '+', and then dividing the sword's value by three (because it will be +3), you get 2,333 GP per '+', but he wants to add two '+'s, so to take the sword to +3 would be 4,666 GP. Also, the overall '+'s added are 3, meaning it would take an enchanter 3 weeks to do the job at a total of 9,916 GP. Kent decides it is well worth it, and plops down 10,000 GP (including a tip), and in three weeks, has his old armor and weapon back looking shiny and awesome as +2 and +3 magical items. He also has the enchanter place a name into the runes of his blade, christening it 'Havenhold, the Night Justice'.





generation, and so for forty years, that's what we've been doing, adding to a timeline that is now over 200 gaming years detailed with more than a dozen human generations in play from more than twenty prominent and infamous families.

And I didn't just do this in D&D, but in other games, and each time it added a level of commitment and depth that just kept people coming back (especially my Robotech campaigns which are now many years advanced from the Sentinels War). So I wanted to make sure that I put this bit of advice out there to you, that if you do decide you want to run a campaign, be a DM, and keep a core group of friends together far longer than they really have a right to be, then make a story and create your own gaming family tree. It is well worth your effort.

## Fate & the Fated

Joseph Goodman brought about the use of something he calls 'the funnel' where starting characters are concerned. For the funnel, you make several roughly zero-level characters and run them through an adventure. Those that survive get to become characters, those that don't go into the trash.

It's a neat way to do things, but I'm more of the school that says 'if I take the time to make a character, I'd prefer they didn't die at 1st level'. Having said that and having played for as many decades as I have, I've incorporated a couple of

ways to get those 1st levels 'over the hump' to the more survivable levels of 4th and above.

The primary way I do this is by letting fate take a hand in the character's lives. I figure, if you are a hero, you're probably destined to be so, and therefore, you get more breaks than the average Joe.

To equate this hero nature, I let each player roll a d4 for their character. Whatever they roll is listed on their character sheet as 'Divinity Points'. Divinity Points represent divine interference in the common laws of the universe. For game purposes, it is a do-over or an avoidance card. Did the orc just roll a natural 20 and split your character's head open? Better use a Divinity Point! If your fighter goes down right now, the battle is certainly lost, so you need to avoid the last damage taken, use a Divinity Point! Need to get the spell off first, use a Divinity Point. Have to make the hit, use a Divinity Point!

The drawback to your Divinity Points, they NEVER replenish, so once they are gone, the character is 'normal' and best of luck to them. Also, I like to skew them a bit, saying halflings have a greater and elves have a lesser chance at starting with more Divinity; thus, halflings get 1d4+1 and elves get 1D4-1 (minimum 1) Divinity Points.

# Scenario Seed #5

## How Do You Find Your Sting

I'm not sure how many of you have watched the Rankin/Bass animated version of *The Hobbit*, but I never missed it when it came on TV as a kid. Although I love the entire thing, perhaps my favorite part is the party dividing up the troll treasure when they find Glamdring, Orcrist, and Sting. I mean, by the gods, can there be anything as wonderful as finding your first magical sword? It still gives me chills thinking about discovering a +1 sword back in Basic, and it just never gets old, even today.

In this scenario, Duchess and Candella are dealing with a big sword, I mean a really big sword that has been enchanted to deal deadly blows to feathered serpents. Such a weapon is something that can be written into any campaign, especially if the endgame

is a particular type of boss monster that the party could use a bit of 'slaying' magic on. Swords, for their part, need to be taken seriously, and although I've detailed a bit about magic and sword properties in Part II, I think it's important that (as the DM) you take a moment to put your own creative magic into weapons. Finding a +1 sword is great, but finding an old sheathed blade with opals set into the crossguard and a twine of mithril wire in the grip is something else entirely. When a player pulls the sheath free, the still-keen edge of the blade catches the light, as do four archaic runes along the length. The bard marks the language as Old Nublar, and the weapon's name is *Whynreaver*, 'The Deep Blade', forged in the War of the Dark Opals.

I just used three lines of text, and now instead of the player looking to swap out for a +2 sword on her next encounter, she will likely keep that sword like an old friend for the rest of her career, maybe even finding new ways to up the enchantment along the way.





In this fashion, I've been able to keep characters alive at a higher rate than most tables, or so I'd assume.

Also, at my table, I allow what I refer to as a 'God Call'. This means when characters die, they can actively seek the interference of their patron deity on their behalf. To do this, the god must be 'called' at the moment of death, and three d6 are rolled.

Success! On a roll of 1, 1, 1 or 1, 1, 2, the character is resurrected at full hit points by the god, and must then do some service (up to the DM's discretion) for the intervening on the part of the god.

Failure! On a roll of 6, 6, 6, or 6, 6, 5, the character is lightning bolted out of existence, destroying all items on their person and also deleting them from the universe in that they cannot be resurrected and are gone forever.

One of the three dice must (unless a full success or failure is rolled initially) be rerolled (thus on a 1, 1, 5, roll, you could reroll the 5 in hopes of scoring a 1 or a 2. Or, on a 6, 5, 3 roll, the 3 must be rerolled and you must hope you don't get a 6). This can be repeated up to three times. If there is never a success (or a failure), then the god takes no action and the character is still dead.

I also allow this process to be enacted by living characters, such as priests or friends of the

## Gaming Example

In the middle of a fight, Forin takes a blow that kills him, and unfortunately he's out of Divinity Points, having spent them all before he hit 4th level. Still, he has a chance to bend fate by making a call to his god, Horus. Picking up three d6, Forin's player rolls as the table watches. His first roll comes up 2, 5, and 6. Not good, since a 5, 6, 6 can draw his god's ire and cause a soul-destroying lightning bolt to incinerate his corpse. Still, the player is forced to reroll the 2 (the odd die in this equation) to see the final result. He rolls, holding his breath, and it comes up a 1. He's safe, but still dead! Picking up all three dice again, he rolls and gets a 2, 4, and 5. This result can be neither good or bad, so there is nothing to reroll, the god is simply not listening. Picking the dice up again, Forin's player has a final roll to try to sway fate and contact his god. Rolling, the dice come up 1, 1, and 5. Forin's god hasn't answered yet, but he's still got a chance. Picking up the 5 (the odd die in this equation), he rerolls it and it comes up a 2! Horus, from somewhere in the cosmos, hears his worshiper's plea and sways the balance of events, healing Forin to full hit points before he can even hit the ground. Rejuvenated (much to the chagrin of his enemies), Forin rejoins the combat in earnest the next round.

character, who wish to contact their own god in hopes of saving a slain character. However, the risk is losing two characters, so keep that in mind.

## Gaming Example

Our party is moving through an old ruin and have been attacked on two occasions by a pesky band of kobolds who like tumbling walls down on the party. The little buggers are notoriously hard to spot amid the crumbling stones, and the ranger has gone ahead to scout while the party hangs back. Rolling percentile dice [or a Perception test] the ranger gets a 27%, thus missing the signs that another gang is ready to pitch a wall down on him as he passes. This gang will be at +1 to hit for their trap, so hopefully the ranger survives to test his observations later in the adventure.

Utilizing these methods, you can ensure your players have a much higher survivability rate, and to me that means a lot because I'm story driven, and to drive a story you need your main characters to build on their stories!

## The Concept of Enemy Territory

This has been an ongoing struggle for me over the years, that being how to determine what impact being in enemy territory means for a party. Now, it is certainly a concept that can be considered 'fat' on a streamlined product like AD&D, bogging down gameplay with unnecessary rules, but I've always kept at it.

First and foremost, I had to correctly define what I considered 'enemy territory', meaning should a dungeon be considered enemy territory, or would

that only apply to a plot of land within the range of a particular orc band? Would it apply to a city in which your party is fighting a thieves guild?

The reason I kept at this was there are terrain bonuses built into some of the mechanics of the ranger class, and as such, it would make sense that people (or humanoids) who had great knowledge of their home turf would receive a bonus when fighting in their territory. Utilizing a bonus in this fashion would also put all calculations in the hands of the DM, so the players wouldn't be saddled with more 'buff' bonuses that might be forgotten.

Also, this bonus does not have to be discussed with the players. It defaults to the DM to use, and for example, you could provide a goblin troop with a +1 to hit while in their home caves that the players might never realize is working against them but in turn would give the low hit dice monsters a stronger chance to defend.

If you do use this type of mechanic, be sure to inform the players they will be moving into enemy territory, and therefore, the risks are much higher for them. To compensate for this, I'd approve a 25% bonus to experience points gained from combat inside these zones.

Thus, I'd adhere to the following rules concerning bonuses monsters get in their territory, and I'd keep this to tribes or groups, not individual monster types and certainly not wandering monsters.





Home Territory: +1 Hit, Hide in Shadows (or natural surroundings) 40% **[DC 15 Stealth]**

## Career Success and Fame

The ability for a character to gather riches on adventures certainly will lead to some notoriety, especially in the lands where they live and work. I've often considered this fact when dealing with characters, and it can be addicting to have 'fans', so it is another great motivator when trying to keep higher level characters from retiring before they've completed the arc you've laid out for them.

To use fame as a mechanic, I suggest adding a fame bonus to a character's Charisma score while they are in their home territory. This bonus is equal to 1 point of increased Charisma per every

3 levels of experience, thus a 12th level warrior with a 10 Charisma would be considered to have an effective 14 Charisma in his native land. This helps with followers and even Comeliness, as well as many skills in 5th Edition.

It can be useful to include this in your campaigns, and characters typically have great fun getting noticed and having their name recognized.

Also, this bonus will lessen by one point for each kingdom they are separated away from their homeland, so if there are two kingdoms between that same warrior and his homeland during a protracted journey, his fame would still hold at +2, but he would not be as well known in the foreign land.

## Gaming Example

Forin, the 11th level fighter, is drinking in a tavern when two lowlife NPCs come in and start making trouble. Finally tired of their shenanigans, but not really wanting a fight, Forin stands up, lays his hand on the hilt of Coldbreaker, his famed frost blade, and tells the two guys to scram. With a Charisma of 12, and 3 bonus Charisma points for his 11 levels, plus being in his home territory (no modifier), his effective Charisma is 15 for a reaction adjustment. Also, as he has a pretty nasty and well-known magical blade, I'd give him an additional +1 for his Charisma to back the toughs down. A Charisma 16 is a +25 reaction adjustment, and to get a 'success' (higher than a neutral result) Forin needs to roll an unadjusted 56% or above. He rolls a 39%, but adding his +25% bonus, his total is 64%, thus the toughs back off and leave with a few grumbles. The bar patrons cheer, and Forin gets a free drink from the barkeep.

## Religion

When you first start playing a fantasy RPG, the need for a healer becomes painfully obvious once you enter your first battle. So, to fill that void, someone (maybe even the DM using an NPC) is going to have to play a cleric.

Now, I well remember my first time utilizing a cleric, a female of course, who was a second-line character meant to keep my tanks in the fight. I

didn't care about gods, religion, rites, or anything like that, I just cared about how many d8s I could roll to help out my other characters, and for the most part, I think that has continued at gaming tables for the past thirty years.

Certainly I'm not saying there is anything wrong with such a practice, far from it, as lord knows it's better to keep both religion and politics out of your tabletop in a real-world setting, but I do think there are so many great roleplaying opportunities that are lost by relegating your cleric to just the role of healer.

To help inspire something other than a dice bag character, I'm going to put some suggestions for clerical play below, and then define how I incorporate what I call 'Saints' into my world—the Nameless Realms.

### Clerical Mindset

First things first, who exactly are you? In most respects, a cleric is going to be a minor conduit to their deity, and we see this all the time in clerical boss battles with bad guys (and gals) who are the worldly avatars of their chosen dark god, but this rarely manifests in player characters, and I have to ask why? Why is it evil seems to embody their deity so much better than good or neutral?

When players choose to play a cleric, ask three or four questions (preferably during character creation) about their chosen deity's pantheon



# Scenario Seed #6

## The Tricks of the Trade

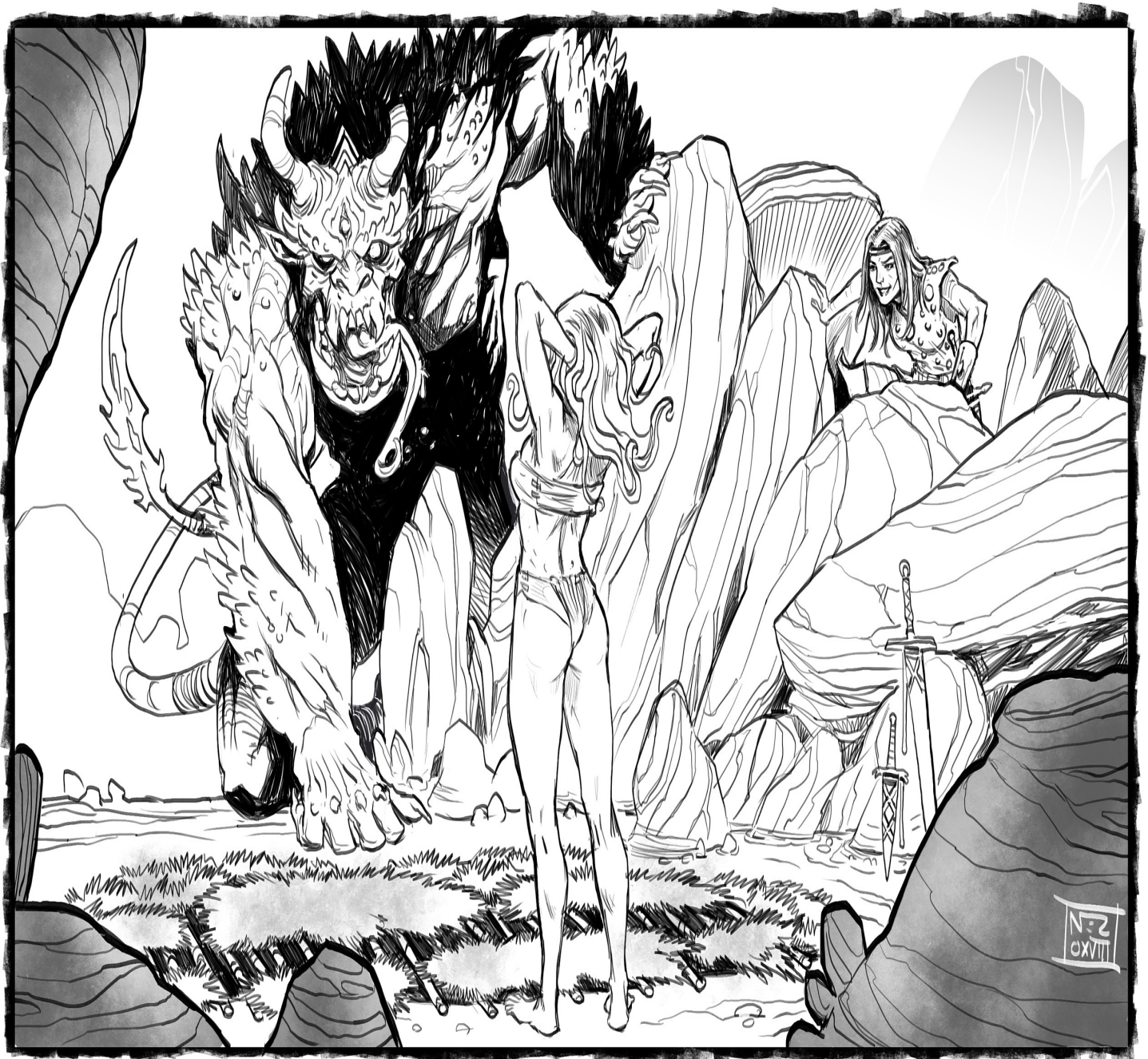
### Finding Ways to Hurt a Monster

#### That Is Overpowered

One of my all-time favorite images in D&D is from the module T1 Lost Caverns of Tsojcanth. Jim Holloway created a picture of an adventuring party tripping a stone giant into a chasm. It's a great image and reminds me readily of table talk, players coming up with a plan 'so crazy it just might work' and how we sometimes use metagaming for the win. In this scenario, Duchess and Candella are being pursued by a demon, one their weapons can't affect.

Using player knowledge, a bit of skill with traps, and some sex appeal, they devise a plan to at least keep the beast off their tails long enough to escape.

Pushing players into such a situation will surely get you some nasty looks and complaints, but assuming the players can rebound from the initial shock of their inability to actively hurt an enemy, they will be forced to find other more interesting ways of dealing with the problem. It is also in such situations that you might have laid out other clues and options along the trail to the encounter, hoping the players might have picked up on the hints and are somewhat prepared.



# Scenario Seed #7

## Do You Accept a Surrender?

What Do You Do with an Orc  
That Gives Up?

Certainly a session of 'murder hobos' always turns out in a similar fashion, the players taking damage, killing foes, and collecting treasure, but what happens when your enemy surrenders? This is always a great situation to put lawful good characters into, but it works for pretty much anyone. Having to deal with enemy combatants who have surrendered is extremely problematic, but can also be a windfall if the situation is worked correctly.

My son once played a halfling who spared three kobolds after a fight, as they respected power above all else, they ended up following the halfling on his adventures (much to the party's chagrin). They eventually gained fighter levels, and by the end of the campaign, were three very useful NPCs.

In this scenario, Duchess and Candella have defeated a group of goblins, but instead of a bloodbath, the gang gives up, pleads for mercy, and hands over weapons. Now what? Only time will tell.

Pushing players into alternate subplots, especially where they are charged with caring for captives, is a great way to add roleplaying sections to an adventure that has turned into nothing more than a standard dungeon crawl.





(and what it stands for), sphere of influence, alignment (and how it is manifested), and then how they intend to see their god's will expanded during the campaign.

This final question then flows into character play because I promise you gods don't go to all the trouble to give their clerics all these ridiculous powers just so they can be support fodder for other gods' fighters, mages, and thieves. Their intention is to make converts and grow their religion.

Ideally, a cleric should target specific player characters as 'possible converts' at the start of a campaign, and then proceed to work (through any means, including preaching and even making sure those characters are the first healed after battle) to make them converts to their religion. I'd even suggest speaking an alignment 'tone' and preaching to the characters in question about how the god sees the alignment of the world and how much better their lives would be if they, too, adhered to those principles (thus trying to change their alignment to match that of the deity).

If you apply these principles, it will add another roleplaying layer to any campaign, and although at times it might get annoying, it can also be a lot of fun, and will certainly make your clerics much more of a centerpiece than a simple healer.

And as a final note, I'd suggest providing bonus experience or even bonus spell slots (per day)

for players who make their god prominent on a battlefield by creating one-line prayers for specific spells (that will quickly become ingrained in other players' minds) and 'calling down the fury' in godly curses for offensive spells. This, too, will make the clerical connection to their deity all the more palpable on the gaming table. Also, you could give a large 'conversion experience bonus' if a player character converts to the cleric's god.

## **Nameless Realms Sainthood**

In the Nameless Realms, I created a major campaign event that took five years of gaming time, and I called it 'The Five Year War'. After that event, I sealed off the Nameless Realms from the rest of the multiverse and broke the godly connection to the Outer Planes.

This had a devastating effect on the world as all clerics lost their powers, diseases spread, and many people died in the aftershocks. At first, this gave rise to medicine and physicians, but all races still had a void in faith until great adventurers and heroes began to be looked to by the common populace as almost demigods themselves. And the more that people believed that some divinity had touched these heroes, the more that the heroes began to manifest godly powers.

After several years of this, some adventurers ‘ascended’ into sainthood, withdrawing from everyday life and learning to channel the faith power of their believers into lesser magical effects.

Decades of these practices led to more power, and more manifestations of magical abilities to those who worshiped the new saints, called prophets. Incidentally, the more powers the saints granted, the more faith their followers had in them, and so the more their own power grew. After a century, full saints were in place as kind of demigods in the world, fully replacing the old gods and lording over their respective domains inside the closed sphere. In this fashion, I developed my own pantheon, and below are six ‘High Saints’ that are currently worshiped in the Nameless Realms.

## 1.

### **Saints Siegfried the Brave, Patron of Knights, Warriors, and the Just**

Siegfried was a fabled Knight of Gariny who renounced his claim to the Ducal Throne of the nation so that he could pursue a life of unencumbered justice against all evil that still walked the world after the Five Year War ended. His deeds quickly became legend, and soon people were praying to him for guidance, elevating him to the role of saint.

Other Names

Freelance of Justice, Noble Wanderer,

The Lone Rider

Sphere: Noble Warriors, Knights, Nobles

Element: Earth

Domain: Earth, Nobility, Good, Glory

Sub Domain: Honor and Martyr

Weapon: Longsword

Influence: New Kingdoms, West Fold,

Free Coast

Prophets: Yes [Nobility, Good]

Date of Ascendance: 0108

## 2.

### **Saint Erik of the Thousand Faces, Patron of Rogues, Charlatans, and Gamblers**

Erik was the leader of the rebel armies that allied against the tyranny of his brother Gorwin, King of Thalonía, as he tried to take over the globe under a single unified banner. He was a known thief and womanizer, many saying he stole his first crown in the Old Kingdoms by committing regicide. Still, when the world needed a hero, he answered the call before he was finally killed during the Battle of the Realms Gate that helped seal the world off from the Old Gods. However, some whispered that he hadn’t died, but once again taken on a new form, and so the rumors of his rise from the ashes helped him gain sainthood.

Other Names

The Faceless King, The Charmer,

The Rebel Blade

Sphere: Rebels, Thieves, Shadow Priests,

Tricksters, Gnomes

Element: Shadow/Negative



Domain: Darkness, Trickery, Luck

Sub Domain: Deception, Fate

Weapon: Longsword

Influence: The World

Prophets: Yes [Trickery, Luck]

Date of Ascendance: 0108

### 3.

#### **Saint Shera of the Happy Hall, Patron of Hearth and Home, Travelers, and Lovers**

Shera is the counterbalance to Erik, and many say the two were lovers before the Five Year War, and even more tell tales that Erik came back from the dead to find his love once more. One thing is clear, Shera was once the owner of the infamous Emerald Serpent Inn that lies at the heart of the Black Gate in Taux and was one of the first to enter the city after its fateful apocalypse. Her service was legendary, and it is said she was instrumental in the final victory of the Five Year War.

Other Names: Beautiful Housemaid,

Gracious Lady, Knowing Innkeeper

Sphere: Common Women, Noble Ladies,  
Drinkers, Travelers

Element: Air

Domain: Air, Community, Repose, Travel

Sub Domain: Ancestors, Family, Home

Weapon: Dagger

Influence: New Kingdoms, West Fold, Aflyr

Prophets: Yes [Community, Air]

Date of Ascendance: 0114

### 4.

#### **Saint Amanda of Virgins, Patron of Nobility, Good, Healers, and Radiant Light**

Sister to Erik and Gorwin Fleetwood, she was the only relation that could claim the throne of the new World Empire once the two brothers were lost in the Battle of the Realms Gate. She was the first World Empress and was beyond reproach as she never took a husband and was known as the Virgin Empress until the day of her ascent into the ranks of sainthood.

Other Names: Virgin Empress, Radiant Knight,  
Keeper of Faith

Sphere: Law, Good, Radiance,  
Justice, Knighthood

Element: Radiance/Positive

Domain: Radiance, Healing, Good, Law

Sub Domain: Inevitable, Resurrection

Weapon: Longsword

Influence: The World

Prophets: Yes [Healing, Law]

Date of Ascendance: 0108

### 5.

#### **Saint Shay of the Dark Beauty, Patron of Lust, Deceit, and Suffering**

Birthered from the fabled Burning City, Saint Shay was once a human woman like any other, but after confinement in that cursed otherworld, she emerged something entirely different. Taking up the mantle of suffering that swept the world in the aftermath of the first great plagues once the

Old Gods were lost, Shay plied her dark talents to any who would listen until word of her power spread over the world and she took on the form of a saint of darkness.

Other Names: Mistress of Darkness,  
The Reaving Dancer, The Beautiful Death

Sphere: Vanity, Dark Beauty, Sex,

Agony, Bards

Element: Air

Domain: Air, Charm, Evil

Subdomain: Lust, Daemon

Weapon: Shortsword

Influence: The North, Arcania,

Wounded Land, Broken Land

Prophets: Yes [Charm, Evil]

Date of Ascendance: 0108

## 6.

### **Saint Colin of the Flaming Blade, Patron of Warriors, Doom, and Battle**

Many are the tales of Saint Colin, some say that he is the son of Saint Erik and he followed his love into the Burning City of his own volition only to return again as an avenging blade of destruction. He is also claimed by the jai-ruk's of both the Wounded and Broken Land as a patron of battle, and their legends tell that he is one of their race, a friend to the elemental earth, and that his power comes from the heart of their people. Whatever the truth, it is known he is a consort of Saint Shay, and the two are said to be seen in the aftermath of great wars or terrible disasters, either as collectors of souls or specters feeding off the flesh of the dead.

Other Names: The Fire Blade,  
The Dread Warrior, The Demon Hunter

Sphere: Power, War, Martial Combat

Element: Fire

Domain: Fire, Destruction, Strength

Sub Domain: Ferocity, Rage

Weapon: Greatsword

Influence: The North [Limited],

Wounded Land, Broken Land

Prophets: Yes [Fire, Strength]

Date of Ascendance: 0108

## **Classes, Proficiencies, Abilities, and 'Kits'**

Now first off, I'm not trying to go all 2nd Edition AD&D on you, but I do think there is room for growth within the realm of classic AD&D, so I'm going to go into some homebrew things I've developed here. Take them or leave them, but they've worked on my table and have allowed for a little bit of customization that makes playing certain types of characters a bit easier.

For those 5th Ed players, I've included some thoughts on swapping abilities and how you can put little variations in your characters as well without going full dual class.

## **Barbarians**

One of the classes I feel got most undercut in AD&D is the barbarian. Its incredibly daunting experience tables and inability to utilize weapons specialization (utter nonsense!) always made playing these hit point tanks problematic.



# Scenario Seed #8

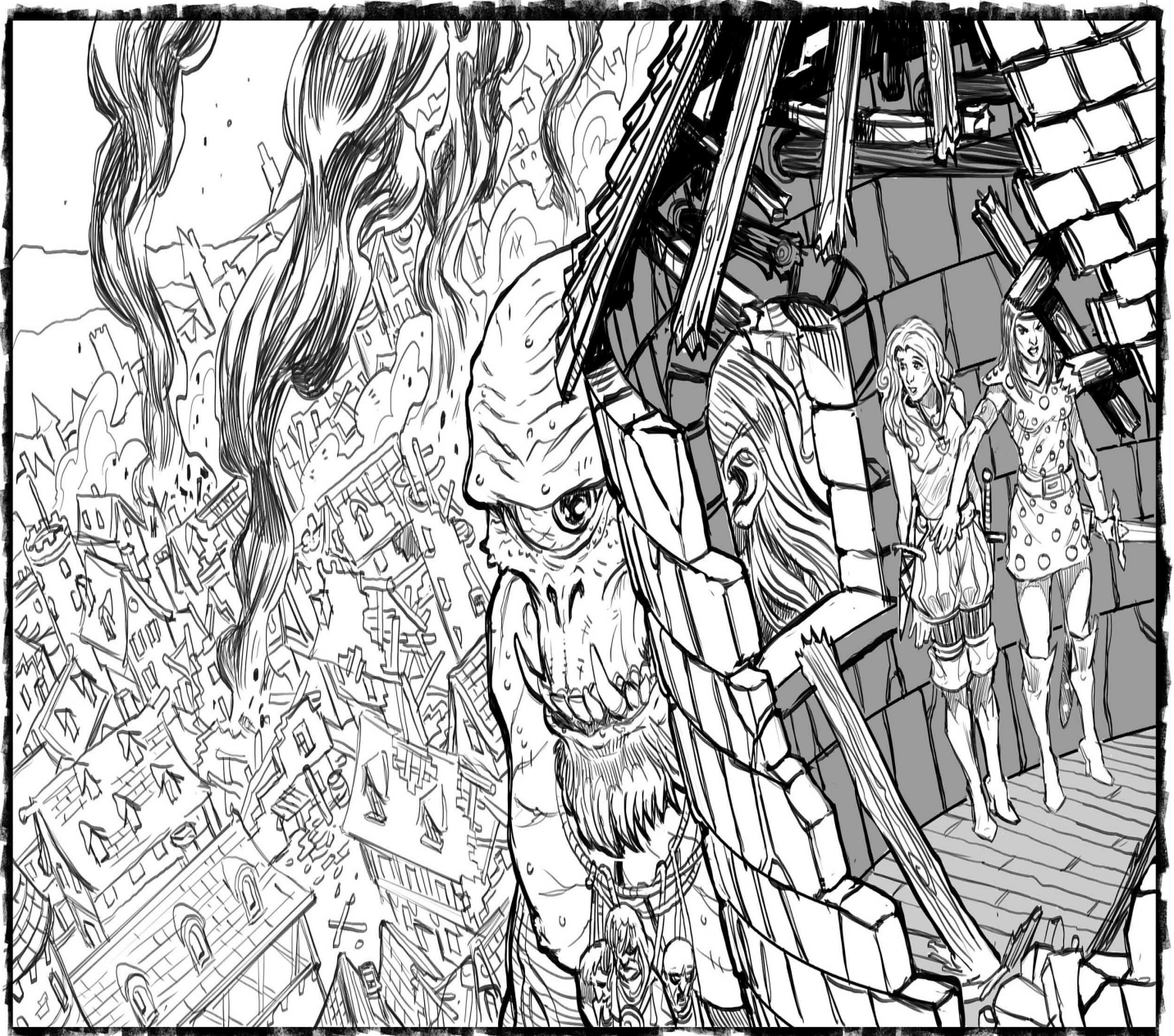
## The Bigger They Are...

### Dealing with Huge Creature Encounters

When I was writing *The Cursed Legion*, the protagonist's father once told him, 'When fighting giants, the secret is to never get hit because a hit means death.' The reality of that statement is certainly true. If a human being is struck with the force a giant can deal, they are going to be broken, but in gaming mechanics, we survive such things because of hit points. That said, I like to think of giant creatures as behemoths that should be feared much more than their hit dice indicate (especially 1E dragons!).

First and foremost, I always like to use the Exceptional Strength table in 1E and add damage and hit bonuses to large creatures on each attack. I then consider them to likely have 20+ Constitutions and add hit points accordingly. Those are simple changes, and if you want, you can add in stunning blows (hits over 15 points of damage make a save vs. petrification) or tossing blows (any hit requires a save vs. petrification or be thrown 2d10 feet (take damage) and then be prone). Those are just a few tweaks you might employ if you want to up your giant monster game.

In this scenario, Duchess and Candella are in a ruined city, a giant cyclops hunting them amid the destruction. They know if they engage it, they will suffer some serious damage, so they need to find a creative way to escape, but how will they manage it?



However, after some playtesting and using the *Unearthed Arcana*'s own 'Actions and Abilities' table, I implemented the rule that the barbarian can utilize his 'to hit' bonus for creatures requiring magical weapons as a kind of overall weapons specialization. Thus, when a barbarian reaches 4th level, all his attacks are overall +1 to hit and damage. At 6th level, all his attacks are overall +2 to hit and damage, and at 8th level, all his attacks are +3 to hit and damage. Now, you might think that is overpowering the class, but considering it takes 275,000 experience to get to 8th level (while a fighter only needs 125,000 for 8th and at double specialization gets +3 to hit and damage and 2/1 attacks per round to the barbarian's 3/2), I think it is a wash for a character that by their very nature should be masters of mundane weapons.

## **Weapon Proficiency Use Outside of Weapons Weapon Skills Kits**

*Oriental Adventures* is, I'd argue, one of the most revolutionary AD&D books because it introduced the martial arts system. It was the first time we'd broken away from the basic 'monk' trope and actually put some effort into building a martial arts system with movable parts that revolve around weapon proficiency expenditure.

Once I'd read it and digested what it meant, I started to wonder, 'Why the heck does the Orient get this kind of customization and other fantasy

settings don't?' Now, you could argue that weapon specialization from the *Unearthed Arcana* does compensate to some degree in a more blunt hit and damage principle, but at the end of the day, it didn't have the coolness factor that the martial arts allowed.

Thus, I developed a hybrid system that allows characters to become more than just fighters who all have the same skills and can only be distinguished by what weapon they carry. I've added a proficiency cost that requires a lot from first level characters, so they would likely have to save up and start them later after they pick up more proficiency slots (that way they can qualify at first level for single specialization and then still get the 'kit' later, making them formidable fighters to be sure).

## **The Three Dueling 'Kits' of the Nameless Realms**

For game purposes, I've broken down the subclass dueling powers of each type of guild duelist you will face in the Nameless Realms. To acquire these 'kits', a character must invest three proficiency slots, granting the special powers each school employs. Each is based around the duelist NPC class found in *Dragon Magazine* #73, but a standard fighter class (as well as others below) can be utilized to make a guild duelist of one of the three great schools. And remember, if you are using the duelist NPC class, they get that pesky save vs. killing blow ability which makes them especially problematic to dispatch. If such an



ability is put into play during a duel, you might use it to save NPCs by having them ‘tap out’ so to speak, knowing they are beaten.

### **Taux Razor Duelist**

**Required Class:** Duelist, Fighter

**Proficiency Slots:** 3

#### **Special Ability:**

Wounding (Each time a Razor scores a hit, the victim must make a saving throw versus petrification **[DC 14 Constitution]** or begin bleeding at 1 HP per round. These hits are cumulative.)

#### **Secondary Special Ability:**

At 5th level, a Razor can modify a critical hit roll to a specific location, thus tripling the damage instead of doubling it.

### **Ebontra Cross Duelist**

**Required Class:** Duelist, Fighter, Ranger

**Proficiency Slots:** 3

#### **Special Ability:**

The Cross suffers no negative penalties for fighting with an offhand weapon.

#### **Secondary Special Ability:**

At 5th level, a Cross may make an extra attack with an offhand weapon.

### **Findalynn Bravo Duelist**

**Required Class:** Duelist, Fighter,

Thief **[Rogue]**

**Proficiency Slots:** 3

**Special Ability**

The Bravo is adept at using his offhand weapon in defense, doubling the Dexterity modifier for AC.

#### **Secondary Special Ability:**

At 5th level, a Bravo may make a saving throw versus petrification **[DC 14 Constitution]** to half the damage inflicted from a blow once per combat round.

## **Using Weapon Proficiencies for Other Purposes**

One thing I’ve always struggled with is that AD&D locks a character into a certain path. Now for simplicity sake, that can be kind of nice, but a little customization shouldn’t break a system. The only way around this is to multi/dual class the character, but that is a big commitment and likely provides things you didn’t want when designing the character.

Thus, I’ve used some of what I’m going to speak about in the creation of Duchess, the iconic character in this book. Using her as an example, I had this NPC that I really needed to be a fighter, but I also wanted her to have thieving abilities. Still, Duchess was in no way going to be a full thief because I’d be wasting valuable hit points on a dual class as well as a lot of thieving abilities that she’s not going to use.

However, a fighter does get a lot of weapon proficiencies, and instead of ending up with a 10th level fighter that took hammer proficiency because, you know, I had one to spare, I decided I'd trade up her weapon proficiency slots for a couple of thief skills. Now, I didn't trade a single proficiency for ALL the thieving skills, I simply said that someone could have taken the same amount of time to teach her Open Locks as they could have to make her proficient in spear. It seems like a good trade, and although some might argue it cheapens both classes, it does work for a story within a campaign.

In my mind, you could use this proficiency swap for pretty much anything, assuming you weight the cost versus the reward. Like, let's say Duchess had wanted the backstab technique, which is more game weighted than an Open Locks ability. For those purposes, you might say it would require 3 weapon proficiency slots to get. You could also do this for magical skills, like having a particularly religious ranger gain the Turn Undead clerical ability for 2 proficiency slots, or a thief gaining a single first level illusionist spell slot for 3 proficiency slots (a difficult road to climb, but you could do it). You could also allow a war god cleric to specialize in a weapon, with single weapon specialization (already costing 2 proficiency slots) costing the cleric 4 proficiency slots.

Using these type of rules as a template, you can expand what characters might be able to do depending on their backstory, and I'm all about a good backstory. In my mind, it doesn't unbalance the system as long as you keep it in check and don't let every character do it.

**Concerning 5th Ed, in the Patina Court trilogy I wrote for the Folio, I had a fighter, Maximus, give up one of his class abilities (Fighting Style) in exchange for the monk class ability Martial Arts. It was a BIG trade on both counts, but it worked for the character and allowed him better hand-to-hand fighting, which was a key component of his character without making him into a hybrid fighter/monk. I see no reason why, assuming there is a great backstory, that such trades couldn't be made, and many of my trope NPCs revolve around this concept.**

## The Thieves Guild

There is a certain mystique about a thieves guild. I mean, if you've read fantasy novels, you've probably encountered at least a few such groups, but even so, they are often the antagonists, and therefore, don't have the depth one might be looking for.

I remember when the Forgotten Realms came out and I saw this image of a lone halfling flipping a coin on a lonely street. That picture



seemed to draw me in, and so I ended up creating said halfling and building a campaign for my friends around both him and the guild he would eventually be part of.

The city in question was Taux, back in 1988 when it was more like Lankhmar than it is now, but nonetheless, I've continued to think about, build upon, and expand what I thought a thieves guild should be since those days, an astounding 30 years from the publishing of this tome.

So, in these pages, I'd like to detail some of my thoughts on thieves guilds: how they work, how to build them, and how to incorporate them into your campaign. Shall we get started?

## **Step One**

### **What is the Primary Purpose and Motivation of the Guild?**

Now certainly, with a name like 'thieves guild', it goes without saying that pilfering would be a part of it, but in reality, I've tried to create a multi-tiered crime syndicate that has its hands into almost everything the city has to offer. If you create a thieves guild simply around breaking and entering, pickpocketing, and other larcenies, it's going to get stale very quickly.

For the purpose of a game, the characters interacting with a thieves guild will likely make first contact with only a single branch of the overall guild, but certainly, the tree as a whole has to be immense, and if it isn't, then you'll have to

contend with other smaller guilds profiting on a niche market, like let's say extortion or gambling.

A full-service thieves guild can be one of the ultimate power players in a city as it can control loansharking, assassination, begging, blackmailing, gambling, counterfeiting, fencing, kidnapping, prostitution, smuggling, drug trafficking, arms trafficking, magical trafficking, as well as all types of larceny.

With so many diverse interests, the thieves guild requires heavy bookkeeping and management, including a powerful hierarchy that can startle human and demi-human families, as well as magical ties from religion to wizardcraft.

Once you have determined how large your guild is going to be, by choosing what crime (or many crimes) it specializes in, you can begin to build off of that base, sometimes creating only a single branch and then tracing things back to larger crime circles as players get more invested.

## **Step Two**

### **What Alignment Drives the Guild?**

To the layman, a thieves guild is a terrible organization of bloodthirsty criminals out to sow the seeds of vice and destruction on a city, but in most cases, that is a misnomer. However, it doesn't mean that there isn't an overriding 'code' that has been implanted into the members of the guild that drives a certain *modus operandi*.

# Scenario Seed #9

## What's in the Box?

### Dealing with an Adventure Where You Transport Something

One storyline that I don't readily see used is the party as a 'transporter'. I was taken, in my youth, with the film *Smokey and the Bandit* and the song line 'East bound and down, loaded up and truckin', we're going to do what they say can't be done.' Providing your party the opportunity to take something somewhere is a great chance at chases, close calls, more questions than answers (like what's in the box, to begin with), and finally a cathartic delivery at the end.

You can also make that item mysterious as in *Pulp Fiction* (what was in the briefcase?), or magical, or even a person (see the *Stathom* vehicle, *Transporter*, while also utilizing the trope NPC 'The It Girl'). In whatever case, you've got a great number of options while also getting away from the standard dungeon crawl and letting the players stretch their legs on a great cross-country journey.

In the scenario with *Duchess* and *Candella*, I've placed them transporting loot through dangerous foreign lands without falling into the hands of a notorious ninja clan. And just like *Smokey* in the above reference, it's always great to have someone or something on the players' tails, always pushing them forward to the finish.





Typically, a guild by its very nature is going to be lawful, which seems odd for something bent on breaking the law, but the terms ‘honor among thieves’ and ‘thieves code’ are both true representations of the organization. To run effectively, there has to be rules, and following those rules makes for less problems; thus, the law is part of the organization (even if its members don’t always adhere to those overriding principles).

As a DM, you must also take into account the fact that the arms of a large organization can be run very differently when it comes to alignment, so just because one sub-boss never leaves anyone alive, doesn’t mean another couldn’t take pity on those he finds less fortunate.

**Step Three**  
**Establishing the Power Players**

All guilds have a boss, an underboss, sub-bosses, enforcers, and down the line from there. When dealing with a guild, you must first calculate overall membership. Once you’ve done this, you can then go about assigning a number of overall HD to the guild leadership circle as a whole. I’ve used the following table to make those HD assessments.

<b>Guild Population</b>	<b>Overall Leadership HD</b>
10–25	20 HD
26–50	40 HD
51–100	80 HD
100–250	120 HD
250+	200 HD

The bulk of these HD will be going to the top tier guild leaders, but some will trickle down into the lower ranks.

**Guild Ranks**

**Guild Master**

This is the ultimate don, the man, the overseer of the kingdom of crime. In the case of smaller guilds, there might not even be a guild master, just a master thief that assumes the role and runs the gang as he or she sees fit. Whatever the case, anyone with this title is not to be trifled with.

**Magsman Domo**

The king of the conmen, a master swindler, and confidence trickster, this sub-chief in the guild will be responsible for running one of the guild’s various ‘arms’ and ‘magnifying’ the profit for each. They report directly to the guild master and are often part of an inner circle cabal of leadership, especially if the guild master hasn’t fully consolidated power.

**Witcher**

In any fantasy setting, magic is the constant outbalance, and as such, guilds need to have a way to defend themselves against outside practitioners as well as keeping their own minor theurges in order. The guild witcher is responsible for all magic (both divine and arcane) in the guild and holds great sway, typically acting as a kind of vizier to the guild master.

## **Master Sharper**

Guild sharpeners are typically master blades who have worked their way up from the street to serve as the enforcement arm and runners for magsman domos. They relay information and policy to the block domos and make sure those policies are followed. Often, assassin sharpeners are also in this rank and run outside the leadership channel to serve the guild master only.

## **Block Domo**

Typically, a city will be divided into blocks that are controlled by a block domo: a thief on the street who runs a group of gangs as his own petty kingdom. They have access to higher information and channels and on occasion might be found at the guild hall, but for the most part, they are the management agent in the city proper.

## **Houseman**

The guild hall is obviously a place of great importance, security, and secrecy to the guild. Each guild hall has a houseman: a fighter type who is in charge of overall security, funds an elite squad of defenders, and reports directly to the guild master.

## **Street Bravo**

Just below the block domo can be found street bravos. These are the cream slowly rising to the surface off the street, and they typically run their own squad or gang, reporting earnings to the block domo.

Below this level, 1st level rogues, fighters, assassins, and the like make up the core base of any guild. They automatically get 1 HD and are not subject to HD dispersal from the above table.

Once you have the HD in place, you simply need to name the players, assign them a role (including what type of crime they are a part of), and then your guild will be forming up nicely (and don't forget to assign alignments to help give a feel for each NPC).

## **Step Four**

### **What Impact Does It Have on a City**

A guild, no matter its size, is going to have a footprint in any city or town. The populace will whisper of it, the city guard will both fear and hunt it, the merchants will kowtow to it, and the nobility will try to ignore it, but it will be there.

The shadows are a scary place, and as such the guild will work from within them, shielding itself and making use of its agencies when the eyes of the law aren't working. They can skew the economy, sway a government, both defend and help defeat a city, and most people understand that. However, to come out of the shadows threatens their safety, and thus they stay hidden, but be sure to show a footprint when you can, a burned-out shop, a gang on a street corner, a lone man with a heavy coat beneath a street lamp. These are the markings of guild activity, and it is important they are known without being truly seen.



# The Rangers Guild

How can you not like rangers? I mean, didn't the bulk of us grow up with Aragorn basically kicking ass so bad that we all wanted to be him in the LotR trilogy? Then, if that wasn't enough, R.A. Salvatore had to go and create Drizzt in the late 1980s and give us another decade of awesome ranger twin sword godhood until once again we got Aragorn in the LotR movies. I mean, rangers are awesome, even in the U.S. military it's badass to be a ranger. Heck, I might even give a park ranger some credit because they carry the title.

But then again, having a ranger in a game has kind of bogged down into a trope that just seems to play to folks wanting those two swords, or some spells, or maybe even an extra HD at first level. I mean, we even started to give them all animal companions, so were they beastmasters now?

For my take, I like to imagine my rangers as something special, more like what Strider was to Bree, part of a secret organization that kept common people alive far more than they ever realized. But to do this, there had to be some kind of guild in play, a way for rangers to be more than simple loner mountain men that could skin a wyvern and sell its eggs and skin to town merchants.

So as I started developing my Oakfield Province in the northern Free Coast, I began working on a way to distinguish the class as more than woodland

fighters, and instead, an arm of something much bigger and more important.

Below, I'll detail out how I set up such a guild, and hopefully, there are some things in there you can incorporate into your own campaigns.

## Step One

### What is the Primary Purpose and Motivation of the Guild?

Like the thieves guild, there has to be a primary goal that drives the rangers guild in question. Perhaps it was set up as a scouting force for a long-gone kingdom, in charge of protecting roads and outlying settlements. Maybe, it is the spy arm of a current king. It could also be a group in charge of communicating with xenophobic elves or dealing with nature magic beyond the standard pale.

Whatever the case, this purpose should drive the development of the guild creation. As rangers are typically gifted with natural bonuses against goblinkind, there is little doubt that at some level they will be involved in fighting such foes, from bothersome goblins, to raiding orcs, and even to well-armed and martial squads of hobgoblins.

When I developed my Oakfield Province, I decided on creating a bridge group that fostered a relationship between humanity and the natural world. In this case, I created a human division of a guild known as the Emerald Wayfarers who

worked with local woodsmen to help create a dialogue with wood elves of the Strangler's Deep and druids who policed the paths from Ketton Keep to Perlot of the Tall Ships. They were responsible for brokering deals between the three factions as well as working with agents of each to stop humanoid incursions from the necrotic lands to the south and the wildlands to the east. If you run a campaign in which elven societies are more remote (elves being an unlikely playable character class) and druids are a balancing force of nature, more Pictish and wild (than a standard character class), then this kind of guild works well. In the Nameless Realms, elves are incredibly xenophobic, so much so that any contact with humanity will be a cause of expulsion and social shunning. However, elves also realize that some contact with other races is necessary and thus utilize 'the fallen', elves who no longer can come home because of this alien contact, as go-betweens. Hypocrisy, but such is the way of life among elvenkind. Half-elves are also used in this manner when they are encountered. Druids, for their part, are a single organization, all bowing to the Hierophant of Cabal, Belmarilian the Watcher, and it is he who provides their order with all direction. Thus, they too are an odd faction that is not easily assailed or understood by common society.

With these practices in place, the need of the Emerald Wayfarers becomes something real and palpable in a campaign and seeing one will have common folk whispering of dark alliances with

no-good elven spies and crop-withering druids. However, most folk are not foolish enough to say this to one of their faces.

## **Step Two**

### **What Alignment Drives the Guild?**

Once you've established the framework of motivation for the rangers guild, you must then decide its alignment. Now, rangers as a class have to be good, and therefore, you know that the cause of helping others will always be in the forefront of the guild's purpose. However, how a guild goes about doing this is another matter entirely.

A lawful guild will likely run hand in hand with the kingdom, town, and nobility of the area in which they serve, always being forthright and open about its behaviors and missions. A neutral guild will be more subdued, dealing with the purveyors of law on a case by case basis, and a chaotic guild will find many of its agents working outside the framework of common law, 'doing what needs to be done' and damn the consequences. For such guilds, there will be a darkness about them, and most common folk won't trust them unless they have had firsthand experience with the help they can offer.

## **Step Three**

### **Establishing the Power Players**

All ranger guilds will have a ranger lord that is the final arbitrator of all activity. They might rule over the guild within the confines of a council of ranger knights, but at the end of the day, they hold the last veto. Since rangers are also magical



in nature, there are times that druids might play an integral role in the make-up of the guild (not so in the Nameless Realms, but that is only one case). Lesser players move down the line from there, taking up positions from base information runners to humanoid bounty hunters. Once you've decided how big the guild is and how far its influence stretches, you can then go about assigning a number of overall HD to the guild leadership circle as a whole. I've used the following table to make those HD allotments.

Also, it should be noted that like a thieves guild, a rangers guild does not have to mean all members are of the ranger class. Certainly, barbarians, clerics devoted to a nature god, traveling bards, and even hedge knight cavaliers could be members of a large rangers guild dedicated to the protection of a huge region.

#### **Guild Population    Overall Leadership HD**

10–25	20 HD
26–50	40 HD
51–100	80 HD
100–250	120 HD
250+	200 HD

The bulk of these HD will be going to the top-tier guild leaders, but some will trickle down into the lower ranks.

## **Guild Ranks**

### **Ranger Lord**

The ranger lord is typically an elder statesman of the old guard, a man who has seen too many winters to travel under the boughs but still has a keen sense of what makes the world tick. They also would have established many allies in other factions (elven tribes, druids, and even human nobility).

### **Ranger Knights**

These are the strongest of the still 'walkabout capable' rangers although they, too, are often getting on in years. They oversee entire regions, making their way from settlement to settlement, checking in on the master pathfinders beneath them and seeing to the overall health of the guild (and the nature it protects) as a whole. They don't necessarily run a region but are more sounding boards and extra firepower to be called upon by the master pathfinders. If there is a ranger council, it will likely be made up of ranger knights.

### **Druid**

Although rangers can be adept spellcasters in their own right, there are occasions when a stronger connection to the lea energy of the world needs to be tapped. In some guilds, a master druid will serve this purpose, guiding the ranger knights and lending wisdom to the decisions of the ranger lord.

## **Master Pathfinder**

Often the most feared members of the guild, master pathfinders are the fighting arm of the ranger lord. They oversee more wild regions, working directly with druid and elven factions to keep the horrors of the unnatural world at bay. They will have contact with local scouts but not as often as one would think, instead preferring to go it alone in the wild beyond the reach of men.

## **Local Scout**

These men and women are the local force of rangers that patrol more settled lands and directly protect communities. They run a guild hall and gather there to share intel and recoup from journeys into the deeper wild. There is no leader among them, save a master pathfinder that on occasion may appear, and thus, they work as a unit without a true head, using cooperation to keep the wilds in check.

## **Guildsman**

Each guild hall will have half a dozen guildsmen in service. Usually fighters, these hearty locals will serve the guild as defenders to direct threats but mostly are apprentices, cooks, and caretakers of the halls in which they serve.

## **Forest Strider**

Just above the guild runners, forest striders are blooded rangers who have yet to fully manifest their talents, and yet are on their way. Typically, these men and women follow the lead of a master

pathfinder, going abroad on long scouting missions and reporting back to local scouts. Adventurers are usually members of the forest strider level as they have more free reign to travel and explore, expanding their skill set.

Below this level, 1st level rangers, known collectively as runners, make up the core base of any guild. They automatically get 1 HD and are not subject to HD dispersal from the above table.

Once you have the HD in place, you simply need to name the leaders, assign them a role, and then your guild will be forming up nicely (and don't forget to assign alignments to help give a feel for each NPC).

## **Step Four**

### **What Impact Does it Have on the Area in which It Patrols?**

It is something to consider as to what exact impact a rangers guild has on a particular area. Often, the efforts of rangers guilds go unnoticed because they stop threats before they ever arise. However, if the area in question is more lethal, the common folk will certainly have a worldview of the rangers that might be different from most. In this case, they could be seen more as saviors, or scoundrels if their protections aren't good enough to stop deaths, disappearances, and the like. Whatever the case, a good guild will have a calming effect on most communities.

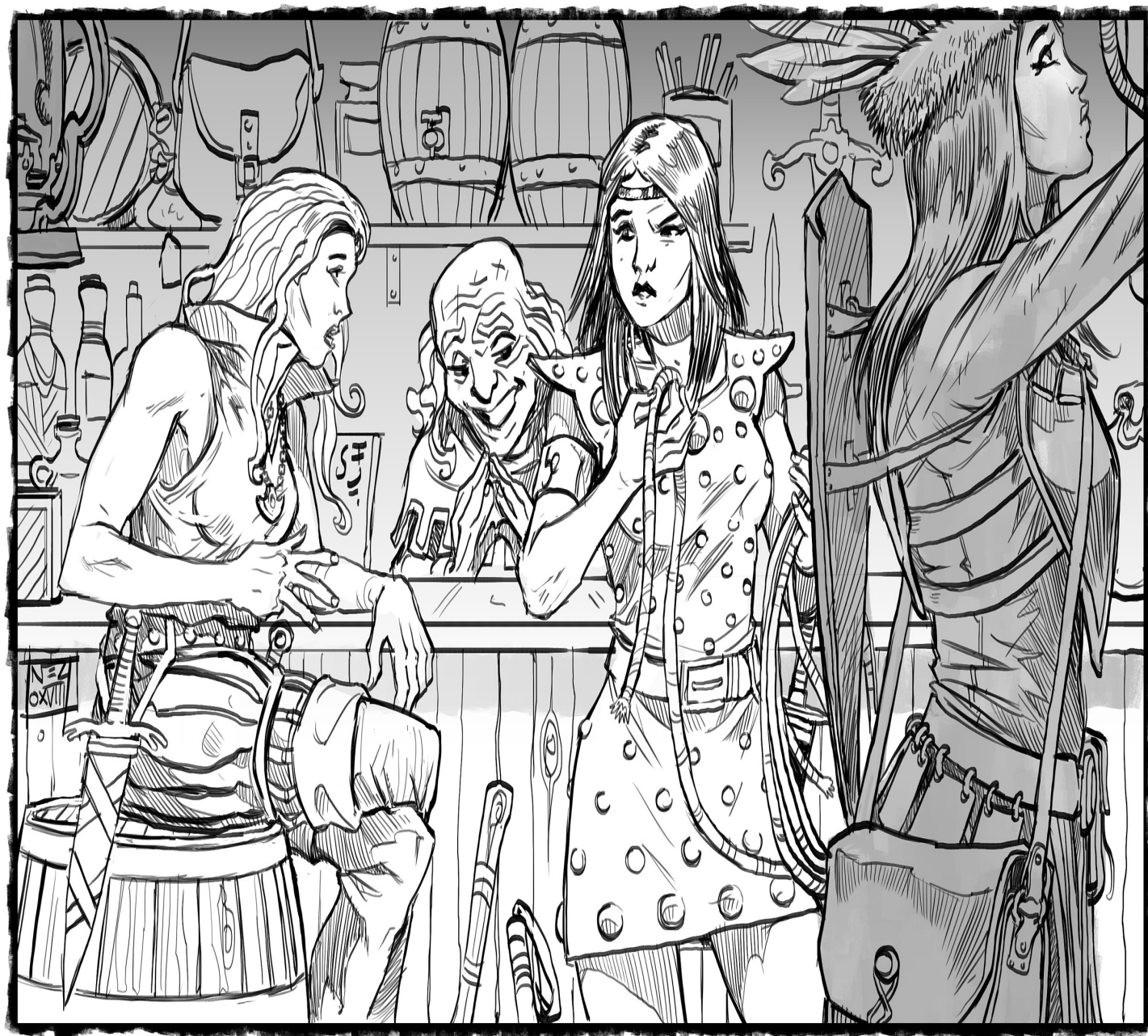
# Scenario Seed #10

## Shopping

When I first opened the Basic D&D Red Box, I was immediately taken by the illustration of the warrior purchasing equipment from the smiling shopkeeper. I was probably twelve and had no money of my own, so the thought of collecting gold pieces and being able to buy anything on the limited equipment list made me fundamentally happy. If I couldn't be wealthy in the real world, I at least could be in a fantasy one. This effect was repeated when I started running my son and his friends through the same Red Box years later, and I swear the kids had equal fun going shopping in the bazaar at Ketton Keep as they did plying the wilderness looking for ruins.

In a strong setting, the availability of a good weapons and equipment shop, as well as a shopkeeper with personality, can go a long way to making your players happy. In this scenario, I recreate the shop from that original illustration with Duchess and Candella looking to spend some of their hard-earned wealth (along with another iconic you may recognize).

To plant the seed for the start of an adventure, set up a specialty shop. The shopkeeper within may not have your players' desired equipment on hand, but he'll share that the trade caravan that routinely supplies him is leaving tomorrow, a bit short handed on guards after a run-in with gnoll raiders, and the party is sure to find what it wants in the next town on the route.





## Step Five

### What are the Guild Trappings?

Since rangers guilds are in the open, the trappings of their service might become somewhat known and also denote the level of rank in the guild. For the purposes of gameplay, I'll once again refer back to my Emerald Wayfarers as a sample set of how trappings can be used to great effect in a campaign.

If you create a ceremony around the bestowal of such items, then the appeal will also greatly increase.

#### 1st Level

Order membership and brooch of station, a small brass cloak clasp with an emerald 'eye' at the center.

#### 3rd Level

(Forest Strider) Wayfarer's Cloak. This subtle green hooded cloak is of a +1 protection enchantment and is a badge of honor to all who wear it.

#### 5th Level

(Local Scout) Wayfarer's Dagger. Likely the most obvious item for locals to whisper over, this ivory handled long knife has an emerald in the pommel and is made of elvish steel. It is +2 in enchantment.

#### 7th Level

(Master Pathfinder) Wayfarer's Garb. Upon reaching the level of master pathfinder, the guild takes back your Wayfarer's Cloak and provides you with both a Cloak and Boots of Elvenkind.

#### 9th Level

(Ranger Knight) Wayfarer's Blade. All ranger knights are created in the eyes of the guild under the full moon of the summer solstice, and upon an ancient druidic holy site, an elven steel longsword, enchanted to +3 (+5 verses goblinkind), is provided to the knight. Any knight who loses such a blade is considered outcast and dishonored the blade is retrieved.

## Designing an Adventure Site

Now I know this might seem like an easy task, but I always like to give DMs more to think about than the norm, which is really what this book is about. When I sit down to write something like a Folio, I have to answer a lot of questions before I ever start working on the hardware of the adventure, and I wanted to share some of my process in building an adventure site. As you sit down to begin an adventure site, keep three basic principles in mind.

### 1.

All sites have some type of map and design, be it of a cave, a ruined structure, a castle, a lost temple, etc., and these need to have some type of sketched plan in place.

2.

All sites are going to have obstacles such as monsters, traps, and other means to put the players in danger, so you've got to have a theme going with that type of threat.

3.

All sites are going to provide players with rewards, be they ample experience, gold, magic, or other treasure, and I always like to put a special item in there as well.

Once you've established these basics, you can move on to more active questions that fill in the blanks.

1.

How close is this place to the place of origin for the characters?

2.

What is the place currently used for and what purpose does it serve those that dwell within it?

3.

Is there an active threat to the outside world or is it a lair that holds dormant ancient evils?

4.

If you are utilizing traps, is there a theme that can be employed with them that the players can come to recognize?

5.

Do you have a fallback that can lead to further adventures from this particular site? Laying the groundwork inside this adventure for another adventure will always help the players see that you are taking things seriously in building on a story.

## Defining a Group as a Party or Company

I think one of the things I've found most important while DMing a successful table was getting the players to act as a successful unit. Building a sense of family can greatly improve their chances of survival as well as keep players from getting nasty with one another and breaking up a successful gaming group.

To achieve this, I've always tried to instill a sense of unity from the get-go for newly formed groups. Sometimes I employ a common enemy early so the characters must stick up for one another, or I try to make sure there is good table talk, and then move them toward actively calling themselves something as a team, like the Company of the Jade Knot or whatever.

Think of any adventuring party as a team, and each team has positions that are important, and I'm not talking about party balance with classes, I'm talking about jobs outside the statistics on the sheet.

First, I'd hand someone a journal, likely the person playing the wizard or cleric, but certainly, it can be anyone with the ability to pen a few lines of text. Then give a date, and from there, it is the player's responsibility to list victories, treasures, and feats of strength and bravery in little paragraphs during camp sessions. In so doing, the table will become inherently interested in getting their characters into the 'book of exploits', and it also allows players to go back months in the past and remember cool things that took place. DM note: I'd keep the journal in your possession, that way it doesn't get lost or forgotten.

I'd also give someone the responsibility as a mapper, and then there has to be someone who is deemed worthy of the position of 'Caller', and also likely someone who carries the bulk of the healing potions, and even a standard bearer once you've decided on something like that.

Once people are assigned positions, then you can go about having someone create a symbol for the party, be it a simple numeric type letter, a design, or a piece of art, it will help galvanize them into a group, especially if you have them all put that symbol on their clothing or armor or shields.

In this fashion an adventuring group can truly become a hardened family and act more like a well-oiled mercenary machine no matter what setting they are dropped into.

## What is Driving Your Campaign?

I've thought a great deal about the 'murder hobo' mentality of some gamers over the years, and while I do see the great draw in one shot dungeons without a real backstory, I tend to like to play out my characters' careers for a much longer period than a single dungeon. However, this comes with a story cost, that being, 'why would my now-rich character continue to risk his life when he could retire on the several hundred gold he recovered in his first dungeon?'

Now sure, the easy answer to this question is, 'because it's more fun to play and not overcomplicate matters', but I like to have some kind of reason in my campaigns. Therefore, I often look for a strong external driving force that can continue to propel the characters through an entire career, not just a few simple adventures.

As I've campaigned, I've come up with several good external motivators that go above and beyond saving the kingdom or helping the princess, etc.

The first of these revolves around the merchant class. Now I'm sure many of you have had the tried and true 'you've been hired to guard the caravan' used on you over the years, and it is certainly a good adventure seed, but I've always tried to look deeper.



How exactly did you get that contract? If you do well in it, will you get another? If you are a good guard, what stops you from simply being a guard instead of living the harrowing life of an adventurer? Lord knows the merchant class is one that has large sums of money, and more importantly, they should be born with an entrepreneurial spirit that makes them risk big for an even bigger reward.

When I think about what could be motivating for the characters in a particular party or adventuring company, I see the possibility of a powerful merchant backing their endeavors. I mean, who wouldn't risk a few hundred gold to outfit a 1st level party that might have an investment return of several thousand gold? If you think of this type of merchant as an angle investor, then suddenly an adventuring party becomes a kind of medieval Silicon Valley startup.

If you look at it from this perspective, it can be a very entertaining way to begin a campaign, especially if you start the character with zero initial money as in 'down on their luck' or 'recently downsized' from whatever guild, farm, or organization trained them. When the investor comes, he can have any background, but it will be clear someone has to sell him/her on the idea that the dungeon just outside town (or beneath the sewers or wherever) is a risk they are willing to take to outfit the party.

This type of relationship is something that can certainly grow over time as well, like the merchant could introduce the characters to wealthy friends looking to 'buy in' as well on what the party is doing. You might throw in a family connection, like a player might fall for a son or daughter of the merchant. It can also be assumed that a merchant would have some great contacts that could be used to fence gems and objects of art for the characters that they recover, while also having the inside track on elusive magical items that might help the party down the road.

## **How Much Reality Do You Want in Your Fantasy?**

When you are playing, are you Joe Abercrombie or are you just a set of Cliff's Notes? It is always a great question to ask yourself before you sit down to write an adventure. It is your responsibility to set the stage and how you bring that world to life will have a lasting impact on how the players perceive your table (and their places in it).

I'm sure you've all heard the moniker of pulp fiction, and I know that when I read the likes of Robert E. Howard's Conan or even Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, I find there can be an oversaturation of prose (although I read that stuff because I dig it). Being descriptive is one thing, and it is a necessity, but not something that has to be over the top.

When I first started playing D&D, I remember getting modules that had descriptions the DM could read inside little line boxes. It was a great way to introduce DMs to the task set before them, but like Goldie Locks, it wasn't too big and wasn't too small, but instead just right.

I've been at tables before where DMs would pull out a sheet of paper and legit read almost a full page of text to describe something or set up a situation. After the first paragraph, players begin to drift, eyes glaze, and the intent and purpose of all those golden words are squandered. That isn't to say you don't have to set things in motion, but be vital, not overly verbose.

The second real note here is something I like to call 'the pigs of war'. This is when reality enters your campaign in the sense of putting real-world consequence and violence behind your setting. I well remember reading a real-life war story about a modern-day battlefield in which bodies were being eaten by pigs after night fell. In fact, wild pigs seemed to be drawn to battle as they knew that food would be abundant thereafter.

A simple reality that wild pigs eat the dead after a battle is something most gamers aren't going to consider when sitting down and deleting hit point totals on goblins to get at their treasure. Topics like rape, incest, genocide, or even simple outright murder don't come into the equation of most dungeon crawls, but as the DM you have the

ability to begin to sprinkle in 'the pigs of war' if you so choose, but again, that is up to you.

I guess most gamers are sitting at the table to escape the reality of school shootings and opiate addiction, and yet George R.R. Martin and HBO have made a fortune on being a yang to the yin of someone like J.K. Rowling (although she certainly grew darker with each volume). In that sense, you have to take a look in the mirror and decide what your gaming world will allow to exist and what it won't, but this is one of the few times I hold that such decisions should not be left up to the players. You are the determinate here, and you are the irreplaceable cog in this machine. If a player decides to leave, he can be replaced, but if an overly dark campaign not of your choosing begins to wear you down, there is no replacing all the work that went into creating your campaign.

## **Determining the Type of City You Enter**

Sure, sometimes there are pre-generated cities that have great details about them set up in advance, but for all the other bits of civilization, from hamlets to metropolises, it is important to have a rough understanding of the type of place a party enters after spending some time in the wilderness.

I considered assigning random percentile chances to these, but come on, you're the DM and can make these decisions, so just use this info as a good guideline to help you work out a quick feeling for any population center.

### **City Size** **Village, Burg, Hamlet,** **population 50–3,000**

Certainly one of my favorite settings, the local small town that pops up on the road going anywhere. Sometimes these can have a full keep and significant population, but in most cases, I'd provide it with only a small chapel, inn/tavern, and a roadside blacksmith.

### **Common Town,** **population 3,000–15,000**

Such centers act as the seat of some type of military, religious, or noble power. You can expect a wall, and likely, a castle or heavy keep. This is a place with multiple inns and taverns, livery, a small market or two, magical guild, and police force.

### **Large trade center,** **population 15,000–50,000**

These are places that will be marked on most maps, and people will have heard of them over great distances. They are always walled (and sometimes have grown outside the walls), often have ports, and will have all services needed for the characters.

### **Huge Provincial Capital or Free City,** **population 50,000+**

The epic metropolis centers of the ancient world, like Rome and the like, these are places where emperors rule, and characters can walk among the high towers and wonder at what it took to create such a place.

## **Type of Inhabitants**

### **Human**

For the most part you are going to find humans, and they will be of the ethnic descent of the region in question.

### **Human with 10% demi-human mix**

It is not unheard of that small communities of demi-humans live within the city and can be seen upon occasion in the streets.

### **Human and demi-human 50% mix**

A mixed populace center where human and demi-human share an equal part of the make-up of the city.

### **Demi-human**

You've entered a fully demi-human community, like a dwarven hold or an elven conclave.

### **Humanoid**

There are certainly humanoids that congregate in centers, be they deep in caverns or far from civilization, but it does happen.



## **Rulership**

### **Monarchy**

A noble of strong blood sits at the top of the political hierarchy of this city, be he or she a king, duke, count, viscount, baron, etc.

### **Military Dictatorship**

The population center is run by the military, usually a warchief or general, and in some cases along the coast, an admiral or pirate lord.

### **Merchant Council**

The city is watched over by a merchant council that dictates the workings of the town by way of a voting block.

### **Tyrant Overlord**

A mad and dangerous tyrant lords over this congregation of lives, and he doesn't make it easy on those around him.

### **Papal Religious Oligarchy**

Religion is of the highest order in the city, and a high priest runs all the political angles from the military to trade.

## **Goods & Services**

### **Low**

The base items listed in a Player's Handbook can be found here although you might limit larger blades and heavy armors. There will also be a single tavern with a small collection of local fare and a stable.

### **Medium**

You can find items of +1 value and potions, but random magic items aren't going to be found. Two to three taverns and inns will provide a choice for characters as to where they stay, and you'll likely find a larger stable and also a house of a minor magician or witch.

### **High**

You can find items up to +3 as well as most minor magical items. A wizard's tower will be here for enchantments as well as many inns and taverns and even a library for research.

### **Magical or Technological Bastion**

Pretty much anything in the DMG can be found here for the right price, but that price might be 3 to 4 times what is listed. You name it, there will be services to be had in all manner.

## **Temples and Places of Healing**

### **Small, nothing over 3rd level spells**

A small shrine or temple is in the center with a single priest or priestess.

### **Medium, nothing over 5th level spells**

At least two temples with a full priest and some acolytes are in residence.

### **High, up to 7th level spells**

A large temple can be found here as well as small temples, with a full staff of priests and acolytes.

## **Epic, up to 9th level spells**

A central religious center to a god is in the city, with at least two high priests and a bevy of under-priests and acolytes.

## **Who Works within the Shadows**

### **Beggars Guild**

The crime in the town is run by a beggars guild. Not as powerful as a true thieves guild, this collection of beggars, street urchins, and some local pimps makes the law on the street after dark.

### **Thieves Guild**

An organized thieves guild runs the shadow trade of the city and has its hands in most illicit endeavors. Working in a thieving trade without membership is dangerous.

### **Large Crime Syndicate**

A powerful collection of families and agents runs both the thieves and beggars in the city, as well as gambling halls, houses of ill repute, and smuggling. They will have ties beyond the city to other cities in the surrounding country.

### **Monster-Run Organization**

Whispers on the streets talk of a great monster, undead, beholder, lich, or dragon that runs all the shadow work inside the city. Running afoul of the creature will not be good for one's health.

## **Lords of Chaos**

A collection of powerful lords of darkness, liches, mummies, pirate captains, etc. has its hands in all the dark deeds that take place in the city.

## **Basic City Alignment**

### **Friendly and Open**

This is the kind of town that will greet a party with open arms. The people are there to lend a hand, listen with concern, and will offer aid in places to stay, provisions, and the like.

### **Moderate**

You will find some help here, but not all people trust outsiders. One must earn some trust, but the town itself is good-hearted, even if you have to dig a bit deep for it.

### **Suspicious and Closed**

Shadowed eyes, closed shutters, and women who whisk their children off the street before the characters give the feel of this place. There is something hard about these folk as if they have seen too much and are done with outsiders.

### **Terrified and Hidden**

Terror stalks the eyes and tongues of the people of this town, and they will avoid contact with characters, going so far as to lie and run if necessary to stay clear of them.

## **Evil and Well Known for It**

Evil stalks the streets, and lawlessness is everywhere. Strength is the only governing event, and even humanoids are accepted.

## **Current State of Affairs**

### **Peace**

The center has been at peace for many years and has not felt the impact of evil outside forces.

### **Certain Border Skirmishes, but out of Most Folks Minds**

These people have heard tales of war or humanoids, but they've not seen them in their lifetimes. Whatever is out there, its best left alone, and it will leave you alone.

### **Closed Frontier**

Some folk have been lost on the frontier, and people are suspicious and fearful that a full-on conflict will sweep them up and destroy their lives.

### **War**

War is at hand, and sons are scarce as they have been taken away from the city. Restriction in goods is common, and children and mothers have a bit of the look of the lost.

### **Martial Law**

The town is run by armed men who impose a curfew and make sure law is enforced with swift and brutal justice.

# **Types of Campaigns**

## **Like the Cylons, have a plan...**

This is always one of my favorite parts of the process of DMing, getting to decide what type of campaign I'd like my players to go on. I remember when I first started working at Privateer Press, I was told, 'Enjoy the now—the learning process—because that is the fun part. The work starts quickly after.'

Never have words been so true, and thus I try to savor the process of establishing what I want to do when I'm setting up a sandbox adventure. Below, I'm going to give you some examples of what I consider the foundations of a campaign and how you should go about making the best of each.

But before I do, I want you to think first about your goal, your endgame in all of this. What is it you are seeking as the DM? What do you like to run? How can you build easily on what you've created, and how can your choice be enjoyed by the players? These are extremely important questions to ask yourself, especially as a storyteller, but even as just a base search and destroy, the setting is always going to be the key to how things play out.



# Missions

## Working from a Home Base

I love the ‘home base’, always have and always will. I designed Roslof Keep around it, and of course, Roslof Keep was inspired by Keep on the Borderlands, which is certainly one of my all-time favorite adventures. Both keeps in question work perfectly as a fallback point for a ‘mission’ campaign setting, that is a place that the party can go to, reequip, and feel safe between excursions.

Missions into a dungeon (Mithelvarn’s Labyrinth and the Caves of Chaos respectively) are the foundation of the great bulk of adventures in D&D, and you can utilize this type of campaign without going into any great detail beforehand. The simple ‘there is a dungeon out there, and it has gold in it’ is a perfect way to motivate low level and newer parties into an adventure.

When I’m creating adventures in this arc, I utilize a key in which I list the missions, i.e., clearing the first hall or taking out the Black Hat Goblins, then have a fall back, and then on to the next mission, clearing the second hall or defeating the Orcs of the Yellow Teeth. DMs can very easily continue to up the ante with each mission into the dungeon, and mapping becomes easier and more fun as the dungeon begins to seem like an old friend each time they go in.

# Scouting

## Into the Wilderness

I well remember going to Main Street Hobbies in Lafayette, Indiana and getting my hardcover copy of The Wilderness Survival Guide. It was such a thrill to have another orange spine in my collection, but when it came to actually utilizing what was in the book, I’m sure I didn’t pay it much attention at all.

Like most players and DMs, I adhered to the ‘D&D, where a 500-mile journey takes 5 minutes and a 5-minute battle takes 5 hours’ principle. The wilderness was such an obscure thing and something to ‘get past’, not actively make a part of the adventure itself.

For this reason, I started trying to make the wilderness a more functional part of my world (and you can see more of this later in Part II of this book), and a great way to do this is to create a scouting campaign.

Utilizing the world as a small map without the bulk of it defined, you can introduce the players to the concept of mapping out the wilderness for the local nobility or some military power. In doing so you can create specific adventures that can encompass so many different monsters and encounter zones (desert, thick woods, water, etc.) that will normally never be found in a dungeon.

## **Raiding**

### **Working against the Horde**

If combat and tactics, not room busting or random encounters, are your thing, then a raiding campaign is exactly what you need to produce. I've done this a couple of times over the years and it's always been a pretty fun time.

First, you need to create a threat, preferably a horde led by some powerful figure, and then have it come against the population center the characters revolve around. From there, you can begin with small raids on outposts and enemy platoons, and then work your way up to armed towers, small keeps, and finally the fortress center of the horde itself.

This type of campaign will provide the party with ample opportunity for combat, but it will also limit experience and treasure (especially usable magical items), so leveling will be more difficult and the campaign will last longer, so keep that in mind.

Utilizing this type of campaign works very well with the military motivation section talked about elsewhere in this section.

## **Looting/Attack**

### **Murder Hobos!**

Ah, is there anything better than the old tried and true dungeon crawl? You know, searching doors, entering rooms, killing things, collecting treasure, moving on until you camp, then keep it going until the entire dungeon is cleared?

This is what 'makes' D&D, and there are players who have gone their entire careers as a gamer without knowing any different, and you know what, I'm good with that. When you sit down at a table, the end result should always be about having fun, and this is the most tried and true way to ensure that.

If you don't want to complicate things and don't like a story, then just sit back, make a dungeon, and watch the characters level up.

## **Tournament**

### **The Knight**

I've managed to do this type of campaign twice in thirty years, and each time was pretty fun. The basis of this type of campaign revolves around the knightly pursuit of jousting tournaments, ala A Knight's Tale. Now you might be saying, but not everyone wants to play a fighter! True, but the campaign isn't really about the jousting, that is just a backdrop.





I've done this type of thing in two ways. One being, yes, there are a couple of fighters who joust, but along the way to each tournament across the land, they can enter dungeons or have other adventures, which helps even out the roleplaying and dice rolling. It is also helpful to design the setting for each tournament so that city adventures (or carnival/fair type atmosphere adventures) can be had by players not participating in the actual events.

The second way, which is also very fun, is to utilize the jousting as a backdrop for a covert spy/secret service type campaign in which one player is the jousting knight and the others are his/her retainers, but in reality, they are a specialized group that goes to each tournament with an agenda to help thwart the enemies of the kingdom in which the tournament is happening, like a benevolent secret society. I kid you not, this was one of the best campaigns I ever ran.

## **Duel**

### **The Gladiator**

Dueling, especially in the Nameless Realms, is something that can set up a city campaign very easily. I had a party get dropped off at the port of Findalynn once, and of course, they go to a bar where a fight ensues with several Bravos, the dueling specialists of the city. The next thing you know I went

on a yearlong campaign doing nothing but setting up intrigues in the city that inevitably revolved around duels. As a matter of fact, the cover of Folio #1 is actually the part in question, and as you can see by the image, they were varied in the extreme.

Again, like the tournament setting above, not everyone has to be able to duel, they can have varied abilities that can come into play around the dueling, and that will put some pressure on you as the DM to make sure that players don't sit around waiting for their 'turn' to act. That makes this kind of setting a labor-intensive one, so keep that in mind. Also, duels are inherently lethal, so that, too, can put a damper on a campaign.

This is a great campaign to base inside or around a thieves guild, and that can make for a very fun way for other players to spend their time in the city. This will also be a campaign where magic tends to revolve around dueling, so the more duelists you defeat, the more dueling specific items can be found, and thus the power of the characters will grow readily with magic, but not necessarily in overall experience, so keep that in mind.

# Camping and Storytelling

One thing that has always been a paramount point in my own gaming is the ability to break down encounters and dice with sessions of discussion and character development. Most of the time this kind of stuff happens at the beginning of an adventure (likely at an inn) or the end of the adventure (when awards are announced and people go their separate ways).

In my experience, this is not enough as a game master who is trying to weave something coherent and important to the players. If you want people to talk about your campaigns and keep coming back for more, it can't just be about the Nat 20 that came at just the right time. Every gaming table has dice and perfect timing (or horrible timing in some cases) which players will remember, but it is the story that keeps folks coming back.

Caring about your characters, and especially, caring about where they have come from and where they are going is something that will drive any campaign to new heights. To accommodate this type of connection, I break my adventures down into the following bullet points before I set out adding in the details.

# Combat Section

This will simply indicate how you see the encounter playing out, and what purpose it serves. It also keeps the details straight for you in a prolonged campaign.

## Feel

What the characters should be feeling, and setting the mood for the events.

## Interlude

Between the combats, what are the players doing?

## Enemy

The base enemies you'll be using (I have a master stat list at the end of each campaign sheet).

## Experience & Treasure

Have things ready and custom to the campaign to keep the ball rolling.

The following is a single day section of a dueling campaign I ran for the Nameless Realms city of Findalynn a couple of years back, but you can see how I use the above to keep things moving and always plumb for depth.

## Day Two

After uncovering the contact information from Narsico Gage, the new Troop will have to request a duel from the Kilroy Bravos. This will take place, and afterward they will confess they were paid to contract with Jade and the Jack Cloaks although the Jack Cloaks were given the instructions as to what to do with the girl.

## FEEL

### 1.

First battle is out of the way, and now people will be anxious for the second.

## INTERLUDE

### 2.

Doctor is requested at the Pelanj Estate: He will treat the lovely young Fiona Pelanj, who has come down with a strong case of Trimon's Disease.

### 3.

Perious will talk to the barbarian over dinner about the Razors of Faux.

### 4.

Arvendorf will receive letter from Lady Narice Mourn thanking him for his services at her tower keep. She will recommend him highly to her friends. This will just underscore how important this mission is to further his career in the city.

# INITIAL ENEMY

## Kilroy Bravos

[9 Initiates, 2 Bravos, 1 Leader]

Duel at the Circle Canal

XP: 2,674

## TREASURE

934 PP, (4) RINGS OF PROTECTION +1,

6K JEWELRY, GLOVES OF DEXTERITY [GREEN] +2

# SECONDARY ENEMY

## Jack Cloaks

[6 Thieves, 2 Blade Thieves, 1 Leader] Evening Battle [Gather Information 25].

The party can catch the Jack Cloaks as they attempt to enter the Parium Museum from the roof.

Battle on the Thieves Highway

[Utilize Dexterity checks to see no one falls off during the chase]

XP: 2,132

## TREASURE:

(5) +2 DAGGERS, (3) +2 SHORTSWORDS,

(4) RINGS OF PROTECTION +1

In these 'interludes' as I've dubbed them, I like to take the opportunity to make a single character development point for each character involved in the campaign (or at



least half of the party each interlude during an adventure). It is typically something that is special to the character, like a meeting with a significant other, or contact with a god in a dream, or going hunting for food and communing with nature. Whatever it is, a perfect time to do this kind of thing is during a camping session, even if that camp is in a secured room of a dungeon.

There should always be time for players to talk, but make sure it is as their characters because that is what roleplaying really is, actually pretending to be someone else, and therefore acting out how they sound among the other members of the party.

Camps are the perfect opportunity to do this type of thing because as a mechanical system, resting is required to get back spells and hit points, which is a must among players. So, while folks are handing out potions and spells, have them chat. Insist that if a healer is doing the work, he is praying and talking about his deity. If a warrior is healing up naturally, have her stitch a wound for a friend, and then have it done back to her, or even sharpen a blade or hammer out a dent in a piece of armor. Spellcasters should discuss the day's events with the mappers, or even table talk their spells for the day.

As long as you encourage this type of talk at your table, it should take on a life of its own, but you have to be vigilant where that is concerned. Keep at the players, take notes, and act on things you've set in motion or seen along the way.

It is your job as the storyteller to make camping more than a statistic session.

## **Nameless Realms Spells**

In my own world, I've been dealing with magic-users since the Red Box, and as such there have been some very high-level players and NPCs over the past four decades, some of which needed specific spells all their own. I've collected and cataloged pages of such spells, and I will provide some to you within these pages that may or may not break your system, but I was never one for believing there had to be balance in fantasy.

If you are playing in the Nameless Realms, remember that these spells would be cloistered within the walls of the Order of Towers and they wouldn't be readily available to those outside the order.

# Order of the Towers

## Unique Spells

### Zeferminer's Metallic Symbiosis

Transmutation  
Level: M-U 1  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: Personal  
Area of Effect: Self  
Duration: 1 hour/level [D]  
Saving Throw: None

Zeferminer was a known practitioner of magic while wearing armor, for this reason he developed a spell that would temper the metal of armor for arcane passage. Arcane casters are subject to 100% spell failure for wearing armor, but utilizing this spell, a caster can subtract 5% per level for non-metallic armor and 5% per two levels for metallic armor from the failure percentage. This spell has a maximum subtraction percentage of -100% at 20th level for non-metallic and -50% at 20th level for metallic armors.

**1st level transmutation**  
(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)  
Casting Time: 1 action  
Range: Touch  
Components: V, S  
Duration: 1 hour per level

This spell grants proficiency in a type of armor of the caster's choice. Obviously, the caster would have to cast the spell on himself, and then put on the armor in question.

### Zeferminer's Missile Mastery

Transmutation  
Level: M-U 3  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: 10' per level of caster  
Area of Effect: 1 small projectile  
Duration: 1 round/level  
Saving Throw: None

Created to stop archers from dealing damage at range, the spell allows the caster to turn a single small projectile per round back at the aggressor. This missile is thrown at the caster's base attack modifier + Dexterity bonus + 4. The caster can throw back a 2nd missile at 5th level and a 3rd missile at 10th.

**3rd level transmutation**  
(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)  
Casting Time: 1 action  
Range: 30 ft. radius around the caster  
Components: V, S  
Duration: Instant

As above.

#### At Higher Levels

When cast at a higher level (4th or above), the spell increases the number of projectiles turned back at the attacker. 1 projectile per spell slot above 3rd, with a maximum of 4 projectiles for a 7th level spell.

### Zeferminer's Tunnel Vision

Transmutation  
Level: M-U 4  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: Personal  
Area of Effect: Self  
Duration: 1 round/level  
Saving Throw: None

This spell builds a wall against pain and other outside influences in a caster's mind. With this spell active, the caster gains +5% chance per level (up to 10th) to ignore interrupting effects on casting a spell from damage taken in a single round.

#### 4th level transmutation

(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)

**Casting Time: 1 action**  
**Range: Touch**  
**Components: V, S**  
**Duration: 1 round per level of spell slot**

This spell focuses the full energies of another offensive spell on a target, adding +1 to damage per die cast against the target. This spell can only be cast on 3rd level or lower spells.

#### At Higher Levels

When cast at a higher level (5th or above), the spell increases the level of spell it can affect by 1, thus if cast in a 6th level slot, it can affect a 5th level spell.

### Zeferminer's Firebrand

Evocation  
Level: M-U 4  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: Touch  
Area of Effect: 1 weapon,  
no larger than a greatsword  
Duration: 1 round/level  
Saving Throw: None

By means of this spell, the caster creates a 'flametongue' effect on a single weapon. The fire on the weapon adds 1d6 of fire damage per 5 levels of caster [max 3d6].

#### 4th level evocation

(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)

**Casting Time: 1 action**  
**Range: Touch**  
**Components: V, S**  
**Duration: 1 round per level of spell slot**

As above.

### At Higher Levels

When cast at a higher level (5th or above), the spell increases the number of flame damage dice by 1. Thus, a 7th level casting of this spell will create a flametongue that does an extra 18 (6d6) damage.

### Githas's Elven Senses

Enchantment  
Level: M-U/Illusion 2  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: Touch  
Area of Effect: One creature  
Duration: 1 round/level  
Saving Throw: None

By use of this spell, the enchanted party gains the benefits of the elven bloodline. The target receives lowlight vision, as well as being entitled to a free Search roll when within 5 feet of a secret door.

**2nd level enchantment**  
(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)  
**Casting Time:** 1 action  
**Range:** Touch  
**Components:** V, S  
**Duration:** 1 round per level

Provides the elven racial trait 'Keen Senses' and thus a proficiency with the Perception skill, as well as darkvision.

### Githas's Dragon Eyes

Enchantment  
Level: M-U 4  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: Touch  
Area of Effect: One creature  
Duration: 1 round/level  
Saving Throw: None

By use of this spell, the target sees the world like a dragon. The target receives darkvision, see invisible, and aura detection [the ability to discern character class, level, and alignment].

**4th level enchantment**  
(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)  
**Casting Time:** 1 action  
**Range:** Touch  
**Components:** V, S  
**Duration:** 1 round per level

As above.

### Merlyna's Life of the Party

Enchantment  
Level: M-U/Illusion 3  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: Touch  
Area of Effect: One creature  
Duration: 1 hour/level [D]  
Saving Throw: None

Basing this spell off of the formula for Heroism, Merlyna created a way to increase the social skills of those she enchanted. Adds +2 to CHA and +1 to COM.

**3rd level enchantment**  
(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)  
**Casting Time:** 1 action  
**Range:** Touch  
**Components:** V, S  
**Duration:** 1 round per level

This spell grants an additional +2 to any skill check requiring the use of the CHA attribute.

### Merlyna's Enchanting Gourmet

Conjuration  
Level: M-U/Illusion 3  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: 40 ft. area  
Duration: 1 min/level  
Saving Throw: None

By means of this conjuration, the wizard summons an unseen servant with cooking skill. The invisible chef has great skill and improvisation, and will use whatever is available to prepare meals for up to 1 guest per level of the caster.

**3rd level conjuration**  
(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)  
**Casting Time:** 1 action  
**Range:** Touch  
**Components:** V, S  
**Duration:** 1 minute per level

As above.

### Merlyna's Comely Glamour

Enchantment  
Level: M-U/Illusion 4  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: Touch  
Area of Effect: One creature  
Duration: 1 hour/level  
Saving Throw: None

Focusing her enchantments on the actual beauty instead of a viable attribute of the recipient, Merlyna molds transmutation and illusion in a wonderful physical manifestation of beauty, adding +4 bonus to the target's Comeliness score.

**4th level enchantment**  
(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)  
**Casting Time:** 1 action  
**Range:** Touch  
**Components:** V, S  
**Duration:** 1 round per level of spell slot



By means of this spell,  
the recipient gains +3 CHA.

### Merlyna's Belle of the Ball

Enchantment  
Level: M-U/Illusion 6  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: Touch  
Area of Effect: One creature  
Duration: 1 hour/level  
Saving Throw: None

Improving on the Life of the Party Spell, this enchantment adds +4 to CHA and +2 COM. This, in effect, is a fairy godmother type charm.

**6th level enchantment**  
(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)  
Casting Time: 1 action  
Range: Touch  
Components: V, S  
Duration: 1 round per level

This spell grants an additional +4 to any skill check requiring the use of the CHA attribute while also granting the target the skills Performance & Persuasion.

### Merlyna's Youthful Body

Enchantment  
Level: M-U/Illusion 9  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: Touch  
Area of Effect: One creature  
Duration: Permanent  
Saving Throw: None

The most powerful of the Ebon Archon Merlyna's spells, this enchantment permanently grants the target with a youthful body, somewhere between the ages of 20 and 25 human years. Although the target does not ever look older, the body's internal constitution still comes into play with age. Human lifespan is still 5 years multiplied by the human's CON score. Once that span is reached, the human will still die of natural causes, even if appearing as if in the prime of youth.

The spell is so powerful that casting it will cost the magic-user's life essence.  
XP Cost: 50,000.

**9th level enchantment**  
(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)  
Casting Time: 1 action  
Range: Touch  
Components: V, S  
Duration: 1 round per level  
As above.

### Tintree's Healing Touch

Necromancy  
Level: M-U 3  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: Touch  
Area of Effect: One creature  
Duration: Permanent  
Saving Throw: None

Using the reverse effect of the Vampiric Touch spell, the caster may imbue a target with his own hit points instead of taking them away. The target receives 1d6 healing/two levels of the caster. Thus, if an 8th level magic-user cast this spell, he would do 4d6 points of transferred 'healing', on average giving 12 hit points to the target and taking 12 hit points from himself.

This is a desperate spell, and one typically only known by the most lawful good of casters.

**3rd level necromancy**  
(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)  
Casting Time: 1 action  
Range: Touch  
Components: V, S  
Duration: Permanent  
As above.

#### At Higher Levels

When cast at a higher level (4th or above), the spell increases the dice from a base 3d6 at 5th level, to 1 additional d6 per spell slot above.

### Gilthar's Prismatic Shield

Abjuration  
Level: M-U/Illusion 4  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: Personal  
Target: You  
Duration: 1 round/level

A shimmering improved Shield spell, this oval of force fades from color to color, protects the caster with +7 AC deflection bonus, stops all Magic Missile attacks, and provides 5 points of fire, electric, acid, and cold resistance per round.

**4th level abjuration**  
(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)  
Casting Time: 1 action  
Range: Touch  
Components: V, S  
Duration: 1 round per level  
As above, save the AC bonus is +8.

### Gilthar's Prismatic Maelstrom

Evocation  
Level: M-U/Illusion 9  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: 60 ft.  
Area of Effect: 60 ft. radius

Duration: 1 min/level

Saving Throw: See text

This spell produces a swirling storm of shimmering, intertwined, multi-colored beams of light that wile throughout the area of effect. All creatures within the area are struck by 1d4 magical colors per round they are within the area. Saving throws for each color are made against spells for ½ damage.

1: Red, 20 points of fire damage

**[DC 18 Dexterity]**

2. Orange, 40 points of acid damage

**[DC 18 Dexterity]**

3. Yellow, 80 points of electrical damage

**[DC 20 Dexterity]**

4. Green, Poison (Death)

**[DC 18 Constitution]**

5. Blue, Turned to Stone

**[DC 18 Constitution]**

6. Indigo, Insane, as Insanity Spell

**[DC 18 Wisdom]**

7. Violet, Sent to another plane

**[DC 18 Wisdom]**

8. Struck by two rays, roll again.

#### 9th level evocation

(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 round per level

As above.

### Karof's Spell Concealment

Illusion

Level: M-U/Illusion 1

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Area of Effect: Caster

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: None

Spell conceals the actual verbal and somatic components of any spell to confuse those wishing to use spell turning (including a Ring of Spell Turning). Subtract 5% per level of the caster from the percentage roll indicating how much of the spell is turned.

#### 1st level illusion

(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Self

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 round per level of spell slot

The spell adds 2 to the DC needed by an opposing caster to use a counterspell, assuming a roll is needed.

#### At Higher Levels

When cast at a higher level, the spell increases the DC by 1 per level, up to 6th.

### Karof's Furious Strength

Transmutation

Level: M-U 4

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Area of Effect: Creature touched

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: None

An upgrade to the standard Strength spell, this incantation grants a bonus of +2 to the roll per class when determining the STR add.

#### 4th level enchantment

(wizard/wu-jen)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 round per level

This spell acts as an upgraded Heroism spell in that it grants immunity to fear effects and also adds 3 hit points per level of the caster to the target.

#### At Higher Levels

When cast at a higher level, the spell increases the number of people affected by the spell by one per spell slot.

### Karof's Deflection Disjunction

Evocation

Level: M-U 5

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: 60 ft.

Area of Effect: One creature

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: None

Working along the lines of a force push, this spell scrambles the effectiveness of deflective magical protection such as Rings of Protection, Bracers of Armor, Shield spell, Mage Armor, etc. If struck by this spell, the target's magical protective bonuses will be rendered inert for a number of rounds equal to 2 rounds plus 1 round per four levels above 9th, i.e., 3 rounds at 13th, 4 rounds at 17th, 5 rounds at 21st, etc.

#### 5th level evocation

(wizard/wu-jen)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60 ft.

Components: V, S

Duration: Instant

As above.

#### At Higher Levels

When cast at a higher level, the spell increases the number of targets affected by the spell per spell slot (2 at 6th, 3 at 7th, etc.).

## Karof's Titan's Strength

Transmutation  
Level: Sor/Wiz 6  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: Touch  
Target: Creature touched  
Duration: 1 hour/level [D]  
Saving Throw: None  
Spell Resistance: No

An even greater upgrade to the standard Strength spell, this incantation grants a bonus of +4 to the roll per class when determining the STR add.

**6th level enchantment**  
**(wizard/wu-jen)**  
**Casting Time: 1 action**  
**Range: Touch**  
**Components: V, S**  
**Duration: 1 round per level**

This spell acts as an upgraded Heroism spell in that it grants immunity to fear effects and also adds 3 hit points per level of the caster to the target, and adds +2 to the target's STR attribute.

### At Higher Levels

When cast at a higher level, the spell increases the number of people affected by the spell by one per spell slot.

## Nakion's Forced Cosmetics

Transmutation  
Level: M-U 1  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 round  
Range: Touch  
Area of Effect: One object  
Duration: 1 hour/level  
Saving Throw: None

This spell was designed by Ash Archon Nakion in the early Age of Stars. During this period there was a great war between free-casters and the Order, and magic items often changed hands after a battle. To save the Order from having to destroy oddly forged or colored magic items, Nakion designed a spell to change the appearance of items. By means of this spell, any mundane item can be custom changed in color or minor appearance [like changing a crest or the shape of a symbol] after only a moment's concentration. However, if the item is magical, it becomes more difficult to change its appearance. Appearance changes require 3 wizard levels per 'plus' of power of the item, i.e., an evil symbol on the hilt of a +3 sword could be changed to a holy cross by a 9th level wizard. The spell's effect can be made permanent with a Permanency spell at the cost of 500 XP.

**1st level transmutation**  
**(wizard/wu-jen)**  
**Casting Time: 1 round**  
**Range: Touch**  
**Components: V, S**  
**Duration: 1 hour per level**

As above.

## Nakion's Forceful Truce

Enchantment  
Level: M-U 6  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: 60 ft.  
Target: Two living creatures  
Duration: Instantaneous  
Saving Throw: Yes

By means of this spell, the Ash Archon Nakion wished to establish a means by which he could stop combat between two parties. This spell imposes a symbiotic connection between two targets, making them share a common hit point pool (the sum total of each of their hit points), and any damage done to either target is taken from the pool until it is depleted. If this occurs, both parties will die.

**6th level enchantment**  
**(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)**  
**Casting Time: 1 action**  
**Range: 60'**  
**Components: V, S**  
**Duration: Instant**

As above.

### At Higher Levels

When cast at a higher level, the spell increases the number of targets by 2 per spell slot.

## Whisper's Lycanthrope Bane

Evocation  
Level: M-U 4  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: 60 ft.  
Target: One living creature  
Duration: Instantaneous  
Saving Throw: Yes

This spell attacks the very DNA of any lycanthrope, destroying the threads and killing the creature instantly, up to 40 HP.

**4th level evocation**  
**(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)**  
**Casting Time: 1 action**  
**Range: 60'**  
**Components: V, S**  
**Duration: Instant**

As above, but up to 60 HP.



### At Higher Levels

When cast at a higher level, the spell increases the number of targets by 1 per spell slot.

## Whisper's Paladinic Virtue

Abjuration

Level: M-U 5

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Area of Effect: Creature touched

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: None

This spell mimics certain abilities of any paladin, gaining the target Immunity to Disease, Detect Evil 60' Radius, and +2 to all saving throws (but not Lay on Hands or Cure Disease).

### 5th level abjuration

(wizard/wu-jen)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 round per level

Grants the target the paladin class features Divine Sense and Divine Health.

## Whisper's Lycanthrope Purge

Evocation

Level: M-U 7

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: 60 ft.

Area of Effect: 60 ft. radius

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Yes

This area of effect version of the spell attacks the very DNA of any lycanthrope, destroying the threads and killing the creature instantly (up to 40 HP).

### 7th level evocation

(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 60'

Components: V, S

Duration: Instant

As above, but up to 60 HP.

### At Higher Levels

When cast at a higher level, the spell increases the range by 10' per spell slot.

## Mithelvarn's Insanity of the Genius

Transmutation

Level: M-U 5

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Personal

Area of Effect: Self

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: None

The strange and often unpredictable Mithelvarn created this spell to suit his own rather questionable genius. The spell can add up to 10 temporary points to the caster's INT attribute, but any points gained must also be subtracted from the caster's WIS attribute.

### 5th level transmutation

(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Personal

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 round per level

As above.

## Mithelvarn's Vampiric Weapon

Necromancy

Level: M-U 8

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Touch

Target: Single weapon

Duration: 1 round/level

Saving Throw: None

This is basically adding the components of a Vampiric Touch spell to a standard weapon. The wielder of a weapon so enchanted will gain 5d6 temporary hit points per successful strike, as well as taking away an additional 5d6 hit points from the target.

### 8th level necromancy

(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: Touch

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 round per level

As above.

## Paligor's Dragon's Breath

Evocation

Level: M-U 9

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 1 standard action

Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)

Area of Effect: 60 ft. radius

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Yes

This powerful evocation was the reason Paligor got the title of the 'Red Storm'. Although destructive at the highest degree, the spell takes a great deal out of the caster when used. Damage to all those in the area of effect is 1d10 per level of the caster.

XP Cost: 500

### 9th level evocation

(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 25' +5' per 2 levels

Components: V, S

Duration: Instant

As above.

## Paligor's Storm of Unfettered Might

Evocation  
Level: M-U 9  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: Personal  
Area of Effect: You  
Duration: Instantaneous  
Saving Throw: None

Although many believe that Paligor actually stole this spell formula from the free-casting Corsair lords of the Halo, the spell is now known under his name. When casting this spell, the wizard channels his own essence into a last-ditch effort to overcharge an evocation spell (you must have an evocation spell left in your memory that is empowered by this spell). The violent energy of this spell multiplies any evocation spell damage by either 3 times or 4 times by using the mage's life force.

However, the channeling of essence is expensive, taking away the experience needed for either 1 level [x3 damage] or 2 levels [x4 damage] from the caster. Also, if a saving throw versus spell [DC 17 CON] is not made, the caster dies after the spell is cast. Even if the save is successful, the caster will be put into a coma a number of rounds equal to 1d10 + the level of the spell empowered.

**9th level evocation**  
(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)  
Casting Time: 1 action  
Range: Personal  
Components: V, S  
Duration: Instant

As above.

## Rishalla's Shadowbolt

Necromancy  
Level: M-U 2  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: Long (400 ft. + 40 ft. per level)  
Area of Effect: One creature  
Duration: Instantaneous  
Saving Throw: None

Creates a solid ray of shadow that strikes an opponent (ranged attack by castor), and causes 1d8/level damage (max 5d8), plus stuns the target for 1 round unless a save vs. paralyzation is made [standard DC save vs. CON].

**2nd level necromancy**  
(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)  
Casting Time: 1 action  
Range: 400' + 40' per level  
Components: V, S  
Duration: Instant

As above.

### At Higher Levels

When cast at a higher level, the spell increases by a d8 per spell slot above 2nd to a maximum of 8d8.

## Rishalla's Finger of Life

Necromancy  
Level: M-U 7  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft. per 2/levels)  
Area of Effect: One undead creature  
Duration: Instantaneous  
Saving Throw: Yes [negates]  
Spell Resistance: Yes

You destroy one undead creature within range. The target receives a saving throw, and if the saving throw is successful, the targeted undead still takes 3d6 + 1 point per caster level.

**7th level necromancy**  
(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)  
Casting Time: 1 action  
Range: 25' + 5' per 2 levels  
Components: V, S  
Duration: Instant

As above.

### At Higher Levels

When cast at a higher level, the spell can affect 1 more undead creature per spell slot.

## Beckbold's Improved Haste

Transmutation  
Level: M-U 6  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: 60 ft.  
Area of Effect: 40 ft. x 40 ft.  
Duration: 1 round/level  
Saving Throw: None

Beckbold was a master of the staff, and he found combat with the monks of the T'ung a fun diversion; however, he understood that speed was often a key to victory. To this end, he upgraded the standard Haste spell with this improved version.

Targets affected by this spell will receive 2 extra attacks per round and have their movement rate tripled.

The drawback to this spell is that anyone affected by it will age a full year during the duration.

**6th level transmutation**  
(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)  
Casting Time: 1 action  
Range: 60'  
Components: V, S  
Duration: 1 round per level

This spell affects only a single target, and the recipient is at advantage for Dexterity saving throws, has a tripled movement rate, and can take 2 extra actions per turn.

## Beckbold's Spellstrike

Transmutation  
Level: M-U 9  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: 400 ft. + 10 ft. per level  
Area of Effect: One spell  
Duration: Instant  
Saving Throw: None

This represents the mastery of the transmuter's craft. With this spell, the caster can completely eliminate the effects of a spell cast the previous or current round. Example: An enemy fireball detonates, causing 47 points of damage. The next round the Spellstrike is cast against the fireball, removing it from existence in the time/space continuum. Anyone having taken the 47 points of damage removes the damage as if the spell had never happened. If a character death was involved, this too can be reset by the casting of this spell.

**9th level transmutation**  
(wizard/sorcerer/wu-jen)  
Casting Time: 1 action  
Range: 400' + 10' per level  
Components: V, S  
Duration: Instant

As above.

## Carnon's Radiant Firebird

Conjuration  
Level: M-U 7  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 round  
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft. per 2/levels)  
Area of Effect: One summoned creature  
Duration: One round/level  
Saving Throw: None

Summons forth from the Elemental Plane of Fire a roughly 'falcon' shaped elemental touched with the aspect of radiance. The summoned creature attacks as a huge fire elemental (with flight), also doing +2d6 radiant damage per attack.

**7th level conjuration**  
(wizard/wu-jen)  
Casting Time: 1 action  
Range: 25' + 5' per 2 levels  
Components: V, S  
Duration: 1 round per level

As above.

**At Higher Levels**

When cast at a higher level, the spell increases radiant damage by 1d6 per spell slot.

## Carnon's Radiant Fire Lions

Conjuration  
Level: M-U 8  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 round  
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft. per 2/levels)  
Area of Effect: Two summoned creatures  
Duration: One round/level  
Saving Throw: None

Summons forth from the Elemental Plane of Fire two roughly 'lion' shaped elementals touched with the aspect of radiance. The summoned creatures attack as huge fire elementals (with flight), also doing +2d6 radiant damage per attack.

**8th level conjuration**  
(wizard/wu-jen)  
Casting Time: 1 action  
Range: 25' + 5' per 2 levels  
Components: V, S  
Duration: 1 round per level

As above.

**At Higher Levels**

When cast at a higher level, the spell increases radiant damage by 1d6 per spell slot.

## Carnon's Fiery Finger

Evocation  
Level: M-U 9  
Components: V, S  
Casting Time: 1 standard action  
Range: Long (400 ft. + 40 ft. per level)  
Effect: Ray  
Duration: Instantaneous  
Saving Throw: None\*

Perhaps the greatest wizard the Realm with No Name has ever seen, Carnon was a master of both fire and radiant energy, and this devastating combination is most apparent in his Fiery Finger spell. The drawback, the caster must successfully hit the target to cause full damage. By means of this spell, the caster throws a radiant blast of elemental fire in an arc at the target. If struck, the target takes full damage. \*If missed, the target gets a saving throw versus spells [DC determined by the caster versus DEX]. If successful, the target takes ¼ damage; if failed, he takes ½ damage. Damage is 1d6 per level [maximum 15d6] of fire damage, and 1d6 per level [maximum 15d6] of radiant damage.

**9th level evocation**  
(wizard/wu-jen)  
Casting Time: 1 action  
Range: 400' + 40' per level  
Components: V, S  
Duration: Instant

As above.



# Part III

## Special Monster Encounters





**When putting together spot encounters, I invest heavily in the story behind the main 'boss' of the encounter. In this fashion I like to use this boss as my base and build outward from there. In the following encounters, you'll find twelve unique monster encounters that range from low to high level. Each could have numerous threads of their own, or they can simply be plugged into a standard dungeon or adventure as an encounter point for your overall campaign. They are designed to provide DMs with easy access to a possible encounter when you just don't have the time to sit and build things out yourself.**

**The final mini-adventure in this section was designed by Stefan Pokorny, and contains the makings of a lower level dungeon that can be used in the Dwarven Forge world of Mythras, and with Dwarven Forge terrain, if you so choose.**

**However you use the following, always remember to enjoy the creative process, breathe life into everything that you provide to your players, and if what I've designed seems too tough, it probably is because I firmly believe that if you sit down at a table to play a hero, then you have to do heroic things, with dice, with smarts, and numbers, and with luck.**



# Gnoll

## Shanzar the Howling Death

Abandoned by his pack when he was a child, Shanzar ran wild in the highlands for near a decade, hunting and eating whatever he could to survive. Eventually, the lithe, half-starved creature managed to throttle a goblin scout and won his first metal weapon. He put it to good use, hunting stray goblins around the dozen goblin holes in the mountains he roamed. Eventually, however, he ran afoul of a dwarven survey party. They subdued him with hammer strikes and then took the broken creature to their new mines to sniff out goblin activity. They maimed and chained him to keep him subdued, but during the next five years, he watched his captors closely, learning their combat techniques and discovering their stores of healing droughts and treasures.

When the time came for his escape, he overcame his handler, healed his crushed ankles with a bone-mending salve the dwarves held in secret, and then fled to the surface armed with healing potions and a deadly dwarven hammer.

Now full-grown and filled with deep hate, he roamed the highlands, slaying anything that opposed him, including ogres and even a lone hill giant, relying on his dwarven training that prepared him to fight such creatures.

His name and his horrible cackling howl became the stuff of legend among the humanoids of the highlands, and eventually, other nasty sorts were drawn to him, filling out a motley pack which he controls with an iron fist.

### Stats

Shanzar the Howling Death [AC 3, HD 5+5, HP 35, #AT 2, D (1-6)+10 (Hammer), Shanzar is considered to have an 18/00 strength, and saves as an 8th level fighter. He is considered to be +2 to hit against giant-type creatures. He is also considered to be single specialized in hammer, this gets him an additional +1 to his attack rolls for a total of +4 to hit.]

### TREASURE

+2 Dwarven Warhammer, Tower Shield +1

**Shanzar the Howling Death** [AC 17, HD 9d8+9, HP 48, Initiative +2, #AT 2, Hit +9, Dam Hammer 10 (1d6+7), Rampage (When he reduces an enemy to 0 HP, he gets a bonus action to make a Bite attack against another opponent, causing 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.), Incite Rampage (Recharge 5-6), Multiattack. Shanzar is incredibly strong and is considered to have a 20 (+5) Strength stat (All other stats are as per Gnoll Pack Lord.)]

### Setting

Shanzar operates out of an old dwarven tomb. It has a single 'block ceiling' trap that will cause 6d6 damage to anyone in the 10' x 10' area when it triggers [DC 18 Perception, DC 18 to disarm the trap]. The tomb is filled with the bones of all manner of creatures, and torches gutter out a dim light that makes gnoll eyes glow green in the gloom.

### Other Monsters

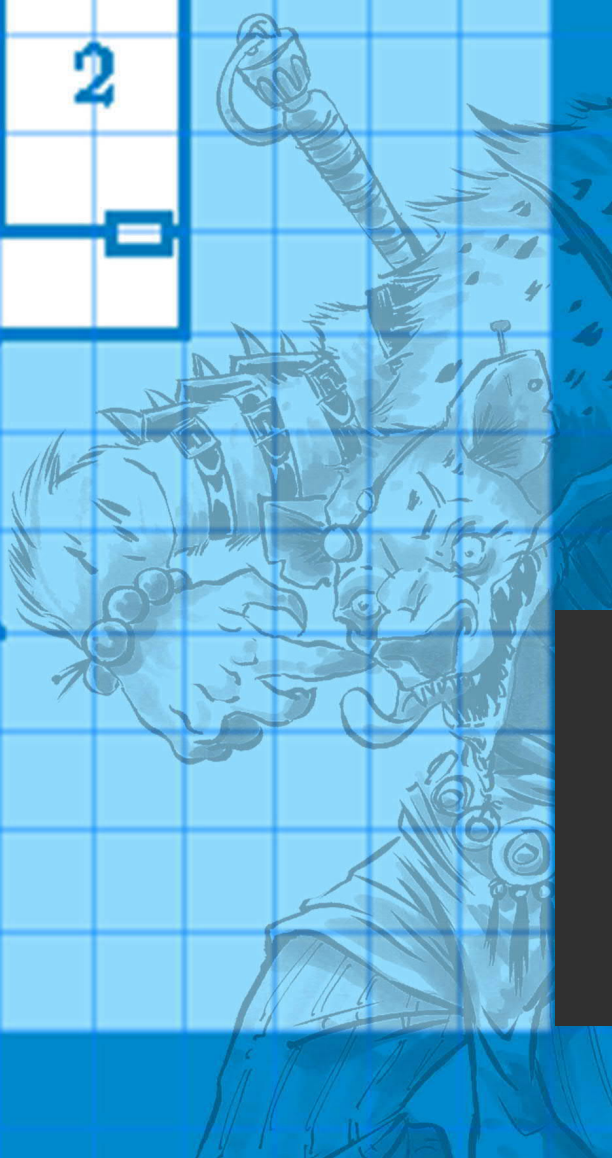
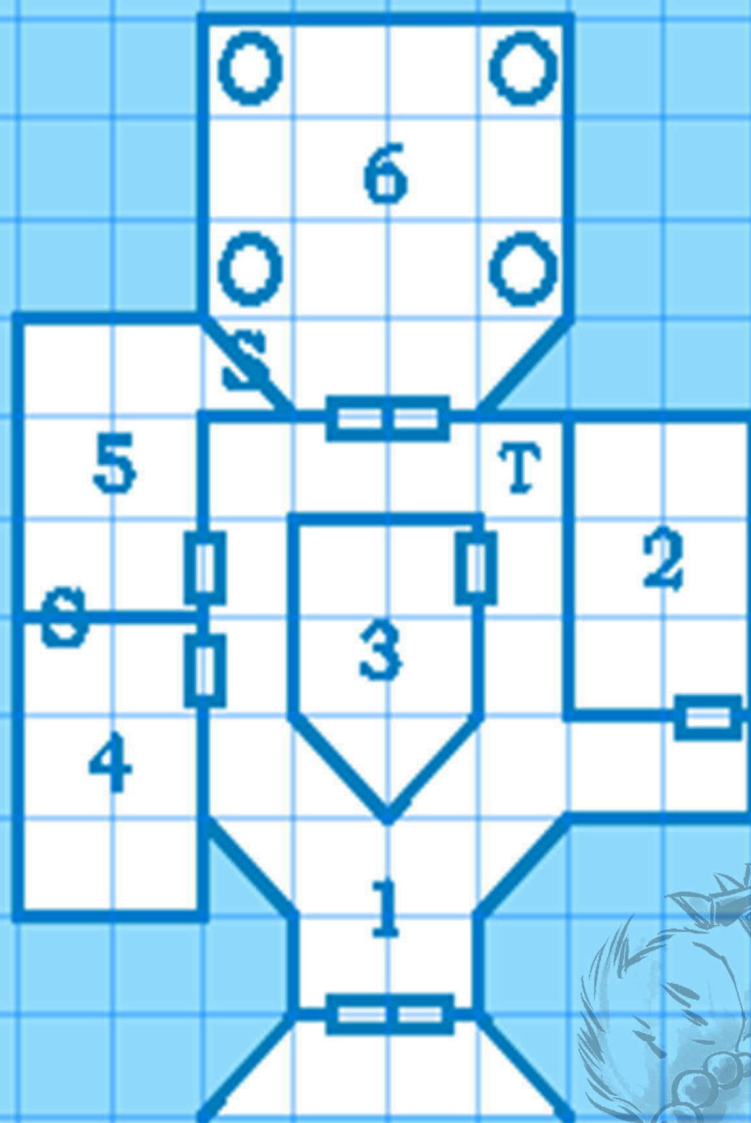
There are 6 standard gnolls in the pack within the tomb, as well as a 5 HD orc that acts as a scout and infiltrator for Shanzar when he hunts humanoids.

### TREASURE

Within the lair, there are over 3,000 gold pieces, and half that in silver and copper, as well as a half dozen 200 GP value gems. There are several +1 weapons (DM's choice) and two victory prizes taken from a dwarf bounty hunter: a suit of +1 Dwarven Plate and a +3 Dwarven Shield.







# Ogre

## Loam the Painted

Loam was a mamma's boy, meaning his ogre mother drug him with her throughout her life instead of abandoning him in his early childhood. This wasn't necessarily a good thing, as ogre mothers aren't known for their kind hearts, and certainly, all manner of abuse was cast down on Loam through his first twenty winters.

However, Loam's mother had a touch of magi blood in her, and to her kind she was known as shaman. Able to smell ley lines, she often sought these out. Once, at a nexus (a conjoining of two magical ley lines), she and Loam fought and killed a mage, and within his pack she discovered a set of Nolzur's Marvelous Pigments.



Not knowing exactly what these were, but certainly understanding they were magical, she decided to use Loam as her test subject, actually tattooing the pigment into his flesh, all the while working directly in the nexus of the ley line.

The result was the (mostly) animal images that Loam's mother put into his flesh took on a phantom life of their own and could 'leap' from his flesh to do his bidding before returning at his call. Finally seeing his chance, Loam slew his mother with her own creations and fled into the wilds, seeking solitude as he abhors the presence of any living thing other than his tattoo creatures.

### Stats

Loam the Painted [AC 5, HD 6+6, HP 48, #AT 1, D (1-8)+6 (Spiked Maul), Tattoo Host (Loam can 'expel' one type of tattoo per round, and it acts as a Figurine of Wondrous Power. His tattoos include a Tiger (8HD), Murder of Crows (4 HD, (1-4)+1 Damage), Cave Bear (10 HD), Alligator (8 HD), Twin Wolves (4 HD each), and Python (8 HD). Once slain, the tattoo reforms on Loam's body and cannot be used again for 24 hours, but he will know of the returned tattoo animal and have visions about who slew it.]

### TREASURE

None

Loam the Painted [AC 11, HD 7d10+21, HP 59, Initiative +1, #AT 1, Hit +6, Dam Maul 13 (2d8+4), Tattoo Host (Loam can 'expel' one type of tattoo per round, and its act as a Figurine of Wondrous Power. His tattoos include a Tiger (8HD), Murder of Crows (4 HD, (1-4)+1 Damage), Cave Bear (10 HD), Alligator (8 HD), Twin Wolves (4 HD each), and Python (8 HD). Once slain, there is a 5-6 Recharge on any tattoo he wishes to reactivate.]

### Setting

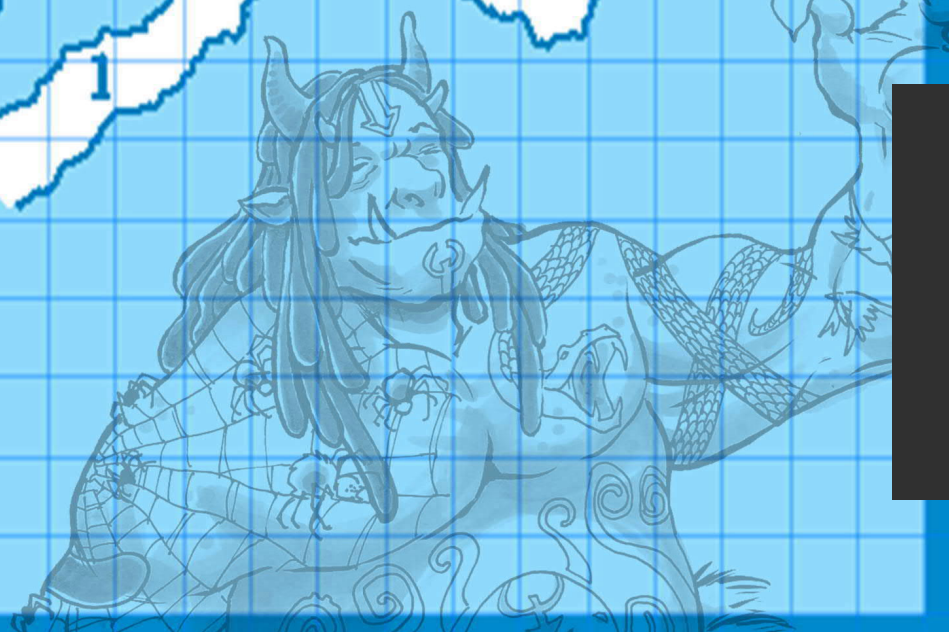
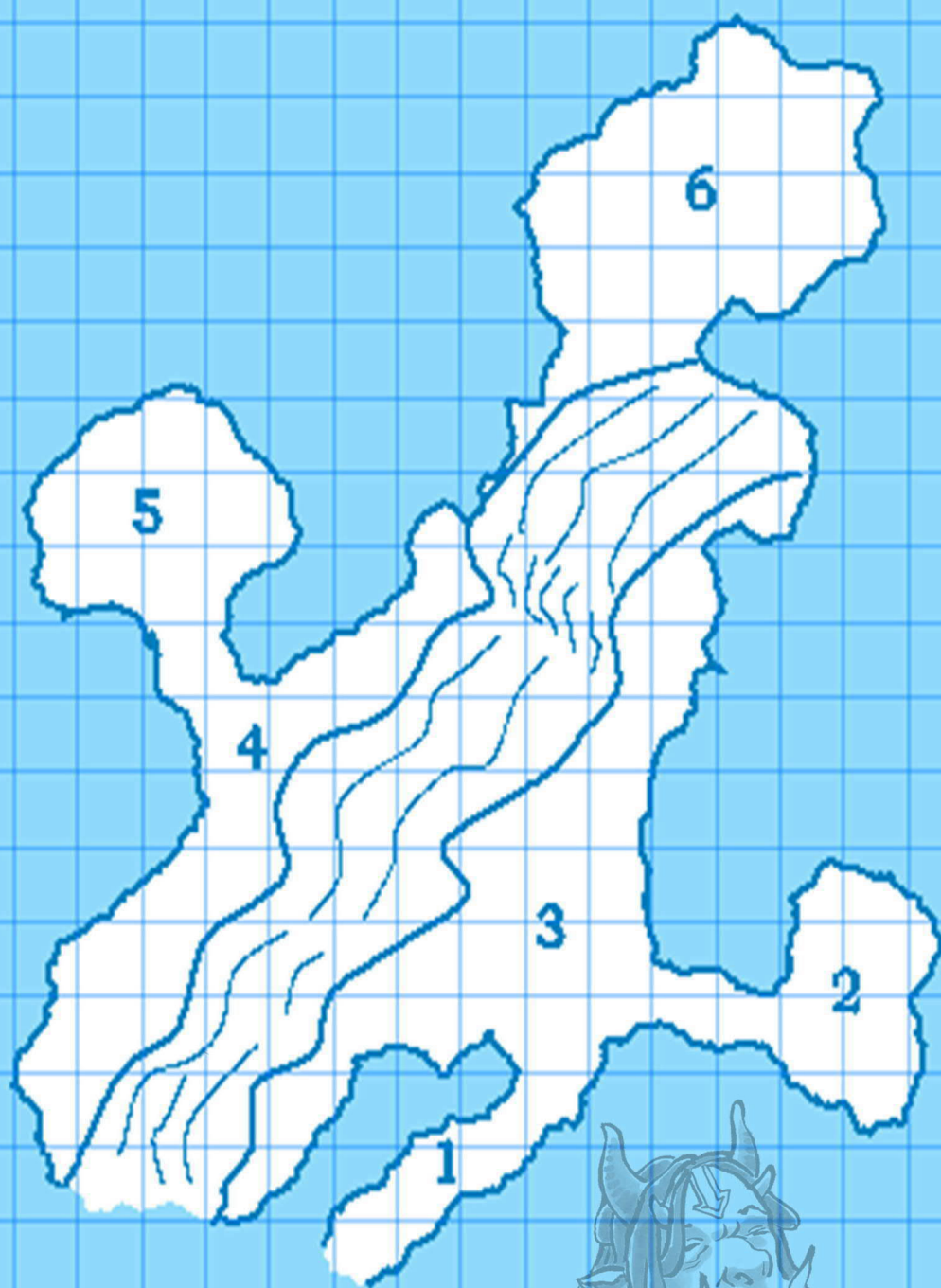
Loam dwells in a wet cave in Room 6 above the waterfall. He typically has 1d4 of his tattoos active at any given time (and typically will have his alligator prowling the waters below the waterfall). Visibility is murky at best, and the water is waist high in the stream.

### Other Monsters

The only other monsters here are in the form of his tattoos.

### TREASURE

5,740 GP, twice that in silver and copper.  
Several (1d8) 100 GP gems, two +1 swords (DM's choice of type), +2 Round Shield, 6 Potions of Extra Healing [Greater Healing] (He has these on his belt and will use them as needed.), Wand of Magic Missiles (24 charges).





# Kobold

## Shash-Va the Black Arm

Shash-Va was a scout for his local tribe of kobolds and unwittingly found himself trapped in a black dragon's lair during an encounter with an adventuring party. The dragon spewed its acid all over the chamber in an attempt to kill the adventurers, and the party's wizard simultaneously cast elemental protections against the blast. Somehow, the protections adhered to Shash-Va as though he was an ally, just as he was struck across his right arm and shoulder with the deadly breath.

The result was that the scales on his arm and shoulder turned dull black but were otherwise kept healthy and intact, and he did what any good kobold would do, he hid until the battle was over. Once the party had killed the dragon and collected the most valuable parts of the treasure, Shash-Va moved from his hiding place, collected several bags of silver coins left by the party as well as an overlooked magical dagger, and then fled into the smaller tunnels of his folk.

When he returned, he was branded a hero by his people, and they quickly raised him to the rank of 'Trapper King', a title that he held for more than two years until he decided to overthrow the kobold sorcerer in charge of the tribe. His plan backfired, and he barely escaped with his hide, only to spend months roaming the outlying tunnels, collecting scraps and killing petty goblins, rats, and larger insects.

Eventually, other members of his tribe heard that he still lived and left to find him, hoping to join him and form a tribe of their own. He accepted these deserters and raided several other tribes with them, stealing food and females to bring back to his ever-growing lair.

### Stats

Shash-Va [AC 7, HD 3, HP 18, #AT 1, D (1-4)+2\* (Dagger), Shash-Va is very adept with his dagger and considered to be +4 overall to hit with it. \*Sharpness enchantment needs to be taken into account for to hit score.]

### TREASURE

Dagger (see below)

**Shash-Va [AC 13, HD 5d6+5, HP 20, Initiative +4, #AT 1, Hit +5, Dam Dagger 4 (1d4+2)\*, \*Sharpness enchantment needs to be taken into account for to hit score.]**

### Setting

Shash-Va currently calls a small two-level shrine his home and has recruited more than two dozen kobolds to his banner. Half of them will be located on floor one; the other half will be on floor two,

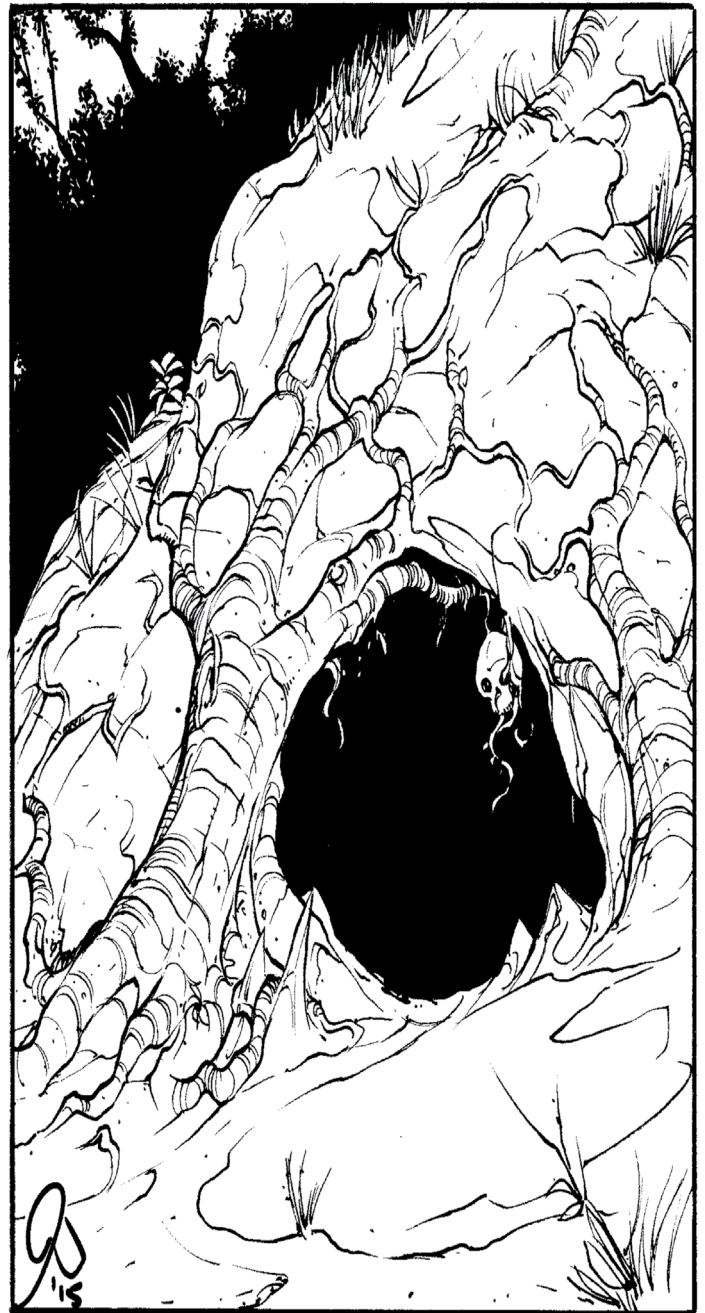
defending Shash-Va in Room 4. The kobolds have created partial cover from the crumbling stone doors of the burial vaults, and their AC increases by 5 when behind them. Only weapons with reach will be able to attack them unless the remnants of the doors are climbed. The lower level kobolds utilize slings to attack the party from various doors.

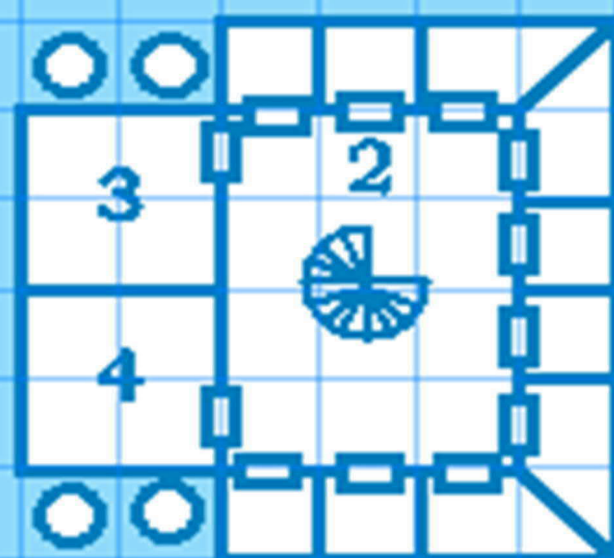
## Other Monsters

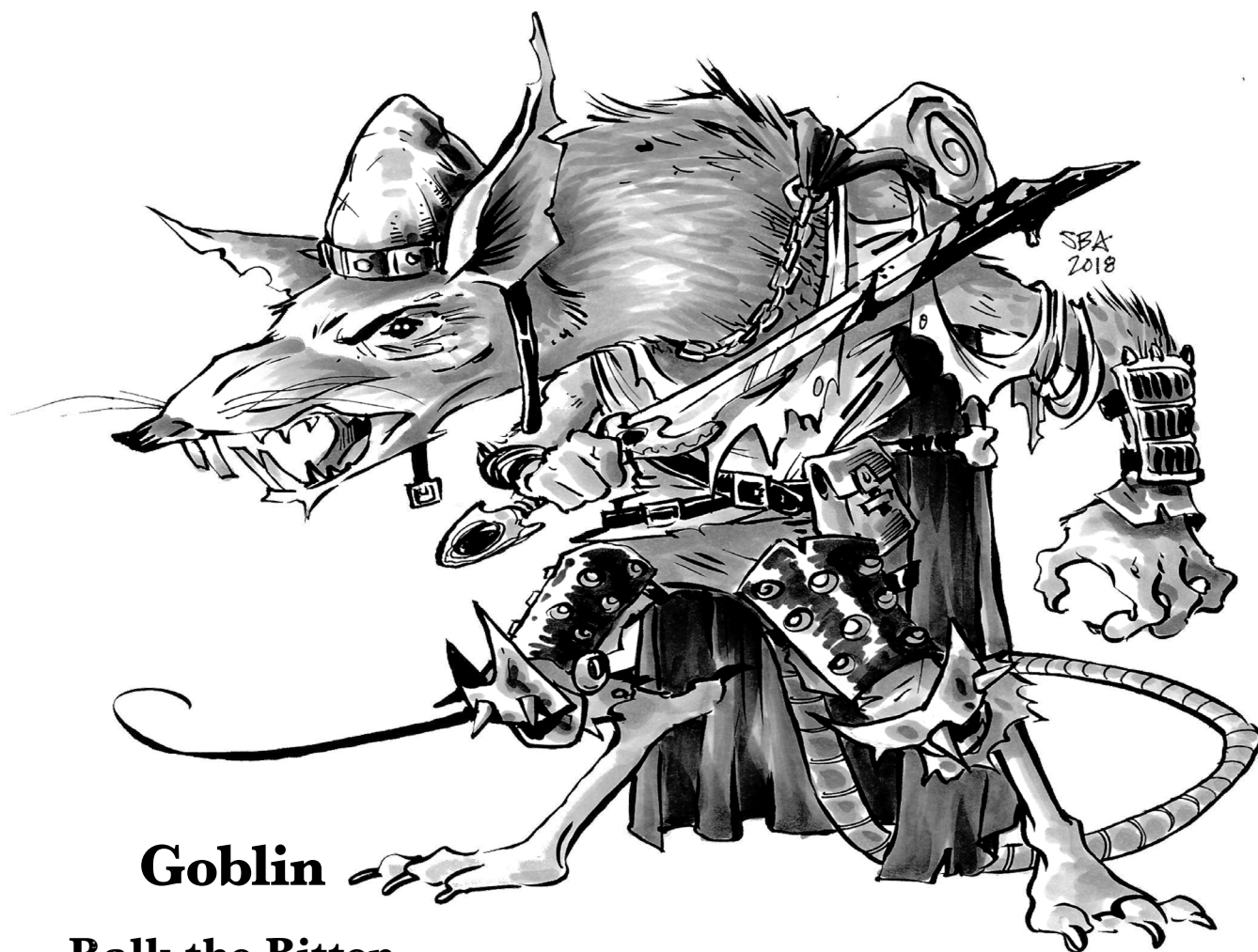
There are 24 kobolds in the lair. The 12 lower kobolds are experts with slings and receive a +1 to hit with them; their bullets do 1d6 damage.

### TREASURE

**Narath the Claimer, an ancient Corsair assassin blade that has dark-forged steel and carries a +2 sharpness enchantment. Otherwise, there are close to 1,000 silver and a small Bag of Holding in the lair.**







## Goblin

### Ralk the Bitten

Ralk was the runt of his pack, mocked and always the first sent into battle. One night when the harvest moon was high, he slipped off angrily into the sewers to plot his revenge, never knowing how it would change him. Only a scarce thirty yards away, he stopped when a bit of fear shivered up his spine as the scuttling sounds of rats hit his ears. Then pain shot out in his ankle as a large rat bit him, and feeling dizzy, he fell to the ground with a cry, thrashing in agony for almost a month. When he finally got up, he felt powerful, almost invincible, then a grim smile spread across the newfound wererat's face as realization set in. After a cry that pierced the night, he strode back towards the encampment. The jeering goblins at the campfire saw Ralk return and laughed obnoxiously, but when the leader saw his confidence, he got up holding the golden sword he possessed and swung, but Ralk simply caught it and stabbed the goblin through the gut. From then on, he preyed on any who dared cross him, for he was RALK THE BITTEN!

### Stats

Ralk the Bitten [AC 6, HD 3+1, HP 19, #AT 1, D (1-6) +2 (shortsword). As a wererat/goblin, Ralk cannot be hurt by nonmagical weapons (unless silver). He is also considered to be +2 to hit because of his enchanted short sword.]

### TREASURE +2 Shortsword

**Ralk the Bitten** [AC 12, HD 6d8+6, HP 33, Initiative +3, #AT 2, Hit +6 (sword) +4 (bite), Dam Shortsword 7 (1d6+4) and Bite 4 (1d8+2), Immunity to nonmagical weapons, Darkvision, Keen Smell]

### Setting

Located within a 4 'block' zone of a local sewer, Ralk is typically found in Room 3 where a large pile of refuse blocks the secret door on the eastern wall. If pressed, he will turn into a rat and hide within the secret door, hoping the players will search the pile and simply think he escaped.

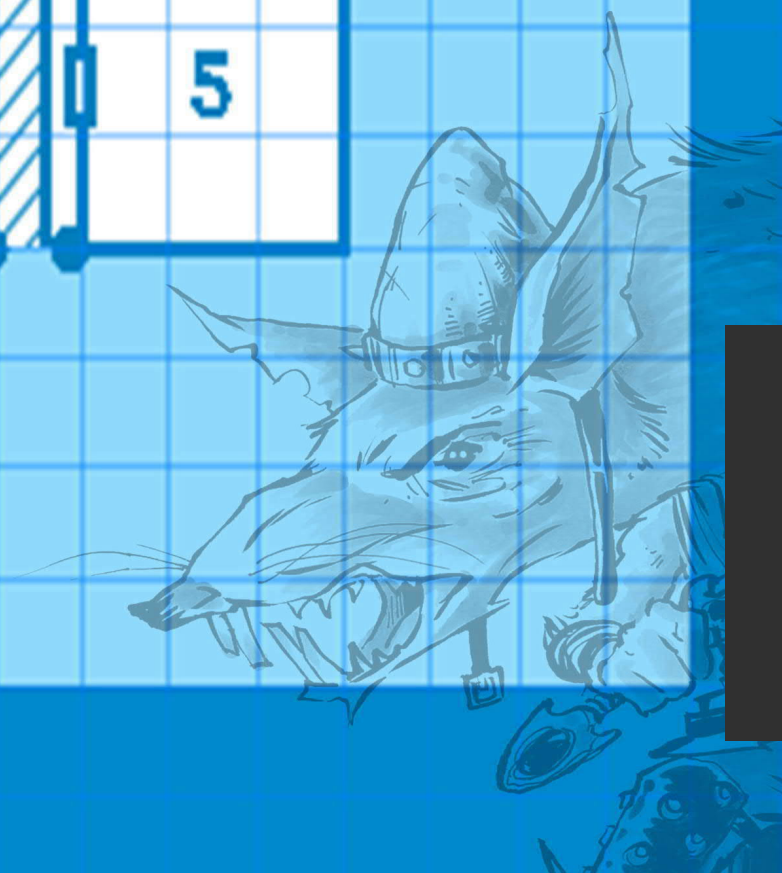
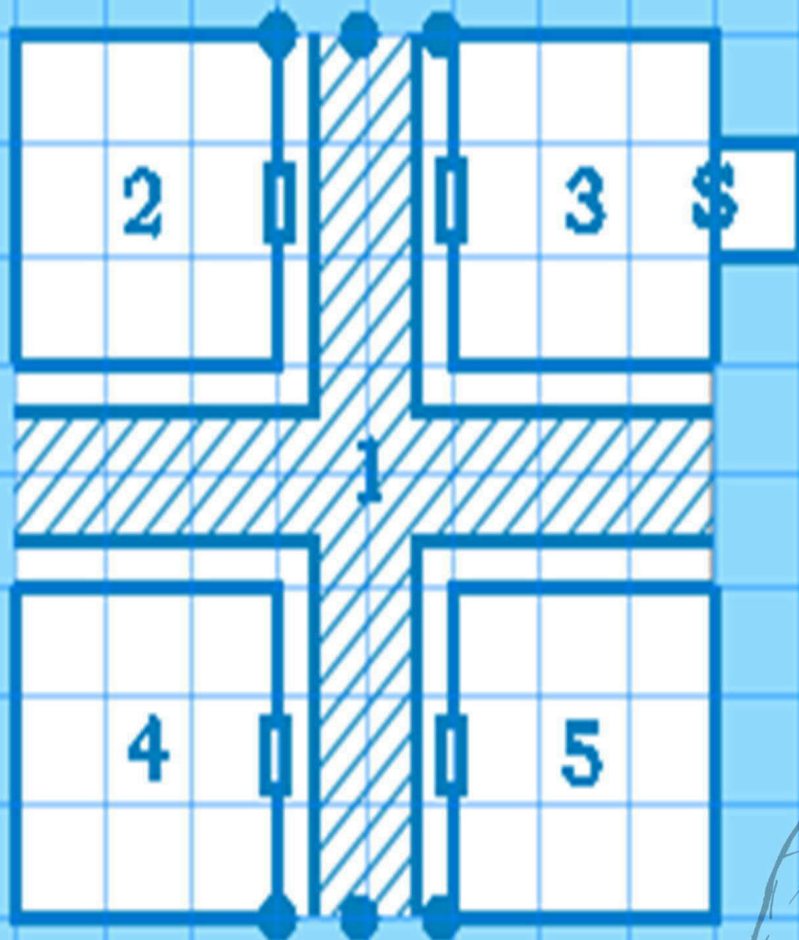
### Other Monsters

There are 9 standard goblins within the 'blocks', moving between the sewer and Rooms 2 through 5.

### TREASURE

A chest beneath the refuse pile in Room 2 contains 230 GP, as well as a scroll case with 5 (1st level) cleric spells (DM's choice, but likely some healing).







## Hill Giant

### Bowbold the Pikeman

When adventurers think about hill giants, they typically imagine the small end of giants, the less noble, the less intelligent, and likely the less hygienic. Now, in most cases, they would be correct, but in all such populations, there is bound to be an outlier.

Bowbold is just such a case. Certainly not the grandest of his kind, Bowbold is perhaps one of the most intelligent, and as such he learned at an early age to fear civilization and magic, both of which often plagued his people with deadly incursions. However, that fear turned to a rather morbid curiosity, and Bowbold began to find himself drawn to settlements, not to rampage, but to observe. It was there he learned firsthand about armor and metal weapons, and from that he set upon a plan to conform to such rights.

However, humanity certainly wasn't going to help him, and so when his chieftain asked for a volunteer to take a message into the northern climes to the frost giants, he was the first to step forward. During his great quest, he encountered many challenges and enemies, but his keen mind found a way to overcome them, and within the year

he was delivering his chief's message to a frost giant yarl. Upon completion of his mission, he asked the yarl if he could stay with the larger giants, and they agreed, assuming he would work for them as an indentured servant. Another year passed, and although his life was hard, he made friends among the frosty folk, and eventually found his way into the good graces of the yarl himself.

The yarl had two sons, both were less than fully grown and roughly Bowbold's size, and so he trained them all in combat with weapons forged by fire giants in their deep forges. Although the yarl's two sons took to the axe, Bowbold became a master of the poleaxe, combining the power of the battleaxe with the size needed to compensate for fighting among long-limbed frost giants.

Eventually, Bowbold grew weary of the frigid north, and after the yarl's sons were fully grown, he took his leave, accepting a gift of scale armor and a dragon-horned helm from the yarl. With these in his possession, he once again traveled south, seeking the companionship of his own kind, but when he found his people, they were scared of him (most likely because he threatened their leadership with his skills and armor), and he eventually found a lonely mountain forest in which he built a solid home. There, he stays, sometimes finding adventurers to slay and other times hunting humanoids, his legend growing by the day.

### Stats

Bowbold the Pikeman [AC 4, HD 11, HP 77, #AT 2, D (4–24)+2 (Pike). Because of his extra skill with a pike, he is considered single specialized and is +5 to hit overall.]

### TREASURE +2 Great Pike

**Bowbold the Pikeman [AC 15, HD 12d12+60, HP 138, Initiative +4, #AT 2, Hit +11 (pike), Dam Pike 27 (3d12+8), Multiattack. For purposes of gameplay, Bowbold is considered to have the abilities and stats of a frost giant.]**

### Setting

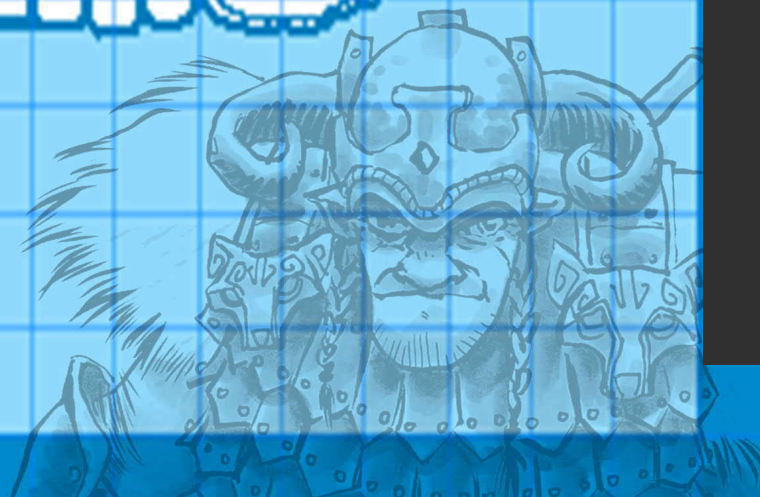
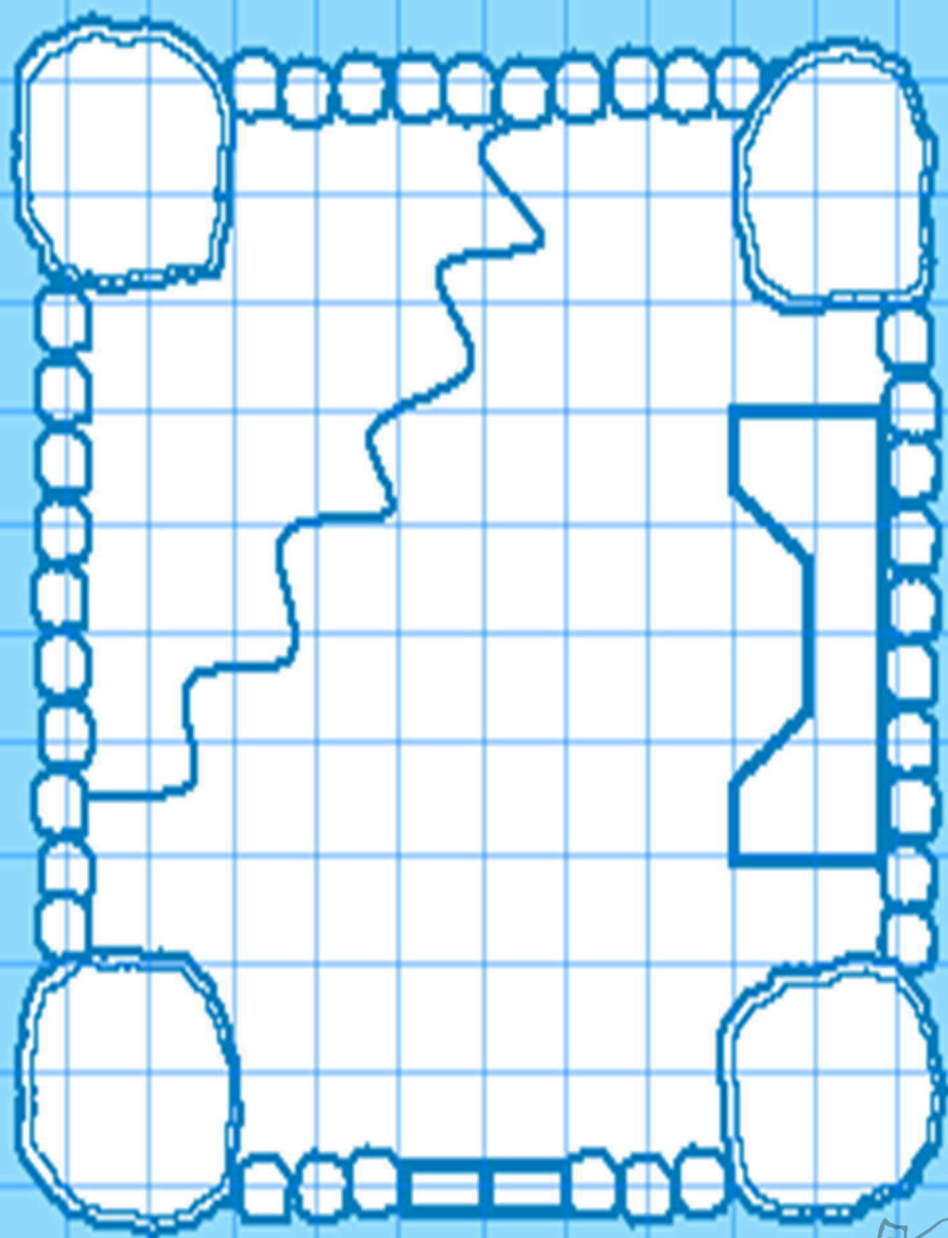
Bowbold lives in a large log home that has been built around a frame of four huge elder trees. He can sometimes be found inside, but most of his days are spent hunting in the deep woods, looking for victims to claim with his pike.

### Other Monsters

Only Bowbold is in this encounter.

### TREASURE

Within his home, he has two suits of +2 armor (DM's choice), four +1 blades (DM's choice), one +2 blade (DM's choice), 8,500 GP, 700 PP, and a Staff of Power.





# Half-Troll

## Lorgum the Stone Thrower

Lorgum isn't a normal troll, and many who have heard of him speculate that he is a hybrid, a half-stone giant/half-troll because his size is daunting and his mossy fur seems to stretch over rock-like hide beneath. Whatever the case, Lorgum has lurked among the Karas Range of mountains for decades, destroying dwarven outposts and even foraging into human lands on occasion.

The great troll is known for his adept ability to throw huge stones with great precision. He uses this skill along with a sniper's mentality, being able to keep still for hours or days at a time, just waiting for the right moment to strike.

Legend also has it that his mixed-blood parentage has given him a resistance to fire, which is highly problematic for those seeking to kill him and likely a reason he has lasted so long when many dwarven teams have hunted him.

### Stats

Lorgum the Stone Thrower [AC 0, HD 10, HP 70, #AT 1, D 3–30 (Boulders), +4 to hit because of expertise in stone throwing. Regeneration 5 HP/round. Fire does not stop his regeneration; only acid can kill him, or disintegrate items or spells.]

### TREASURE

None

**Lorgum the Stone Thrower** [AC 17, HD 11d12+55, HP 126, Initiative +4, #AT 2, Hit +11 (boulders), Dam Boulder 28 (4d10+6) [DC 17 Strength or be knocked prone], Multiattack. Regeneration [gains 10 hp at the start of his round, only acid damage can negate this.]

### Setting

Lorgum lairs within a cave complex of four rooms, residing in Room 4. If encountered within his lair, he will bull rush his opponents, attempting to knock them prone and then flee the lair, but once outside, he will take up his boulder collection and pin the party at the opening, either killing or starving them out.

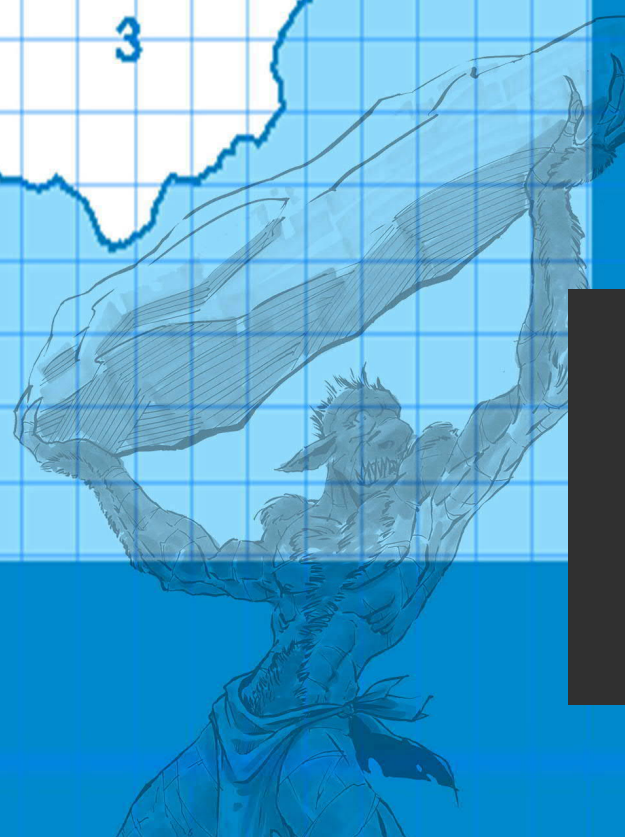
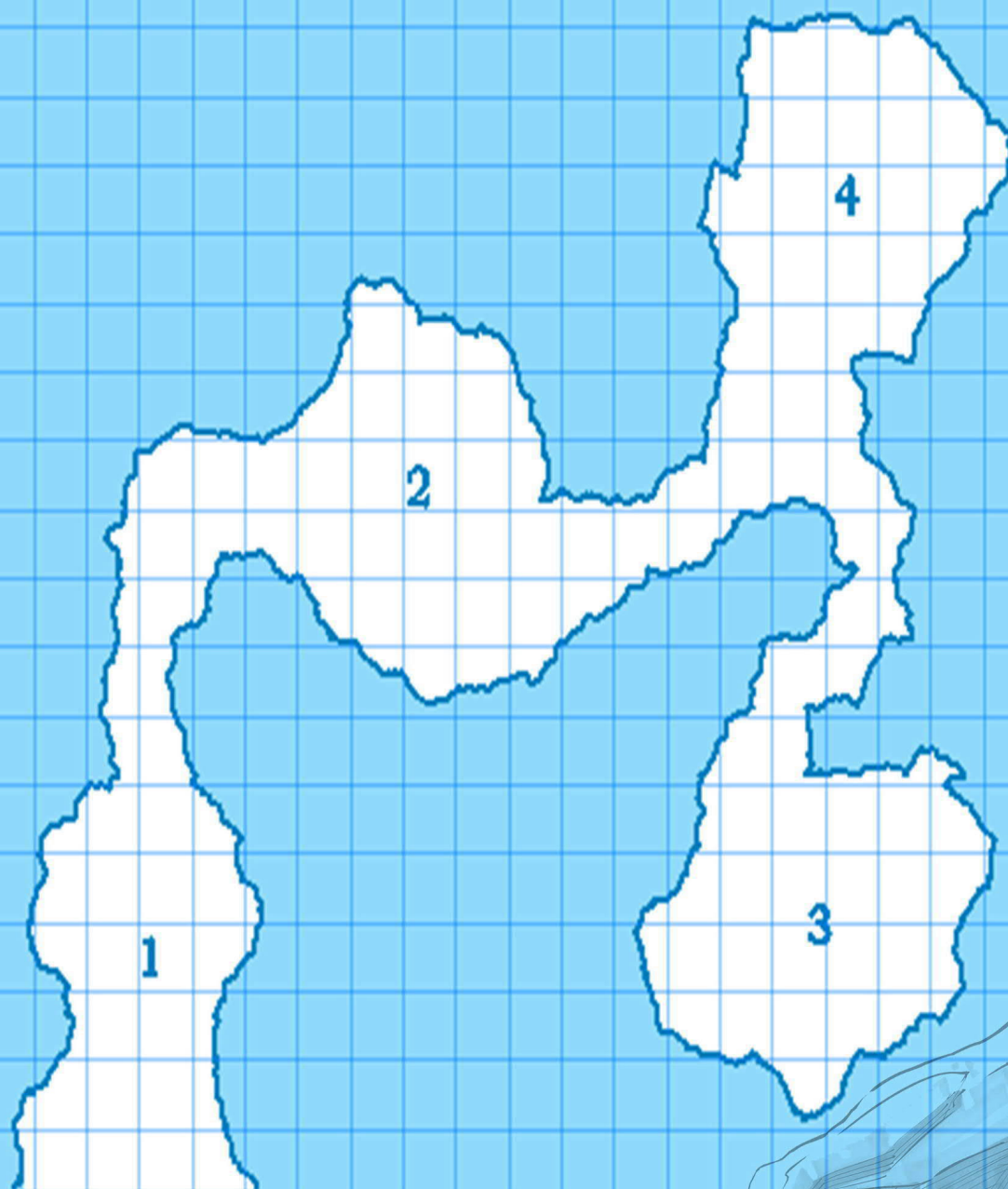
### Other Monsters

Only Lorgum resides in this encounter, and he should be enough.

### TREASURE

Over the years he has collected a handsome amount of treasure, including 8 chests with a total of 14,500 GP, 1,200 PP, and nearly 50,000 assorted silver and copper. He has a nice gem collection valued at 20,000 GP, and also has a +3 Suit of Elven Chain, Boots of Elvenkind, a +2 Luckblade, and other mundane suits of armor and weapons.





# Flesh Golem

## Shandra the Flaxen Bride

Many are the tales of Shandra, some romantic, some necrophilic, but all agree on a common core, that this flesh golem is blessed with a twisted beauty of a hundred stunning women. Based in dark magical origins, Shandra was said to have been created by a powerful lich who sought to regale himself with an un-aging beauty as he remembered from his long ago youth.

Over the course of a century, the lich traveled the lands of men, seeking only the most lovely and youthful women, stealing them from harems, country fairs, royal bedchambers, and city gardens. Once dispatched with a soul-consuming spell, he would place their bodies under gentle repose enchantments, and then move on until he was finally satisfied he had collected enough perfect parts for his ultimate creation.



It is often whispered that when Shandra was first ‘birthed’ on the Nameless Realms that her form was stitched and grotesque, but her lich master bled the souls of each of his victims back into her flesh, and her patchwork bled away, leaving behind a ‘shine’. Those who claim to have witnessed her say she is a mirage, a thing that looks like a dark-haired Tungese beauty one moment, and then will turn into a blonde Tundarian queen in the next. Whatever the case, her beauty can charm a man in a single moment, and yet her heart is as dark as the magic that created her.

Some say she killed the lich that created her; others say he grew tired of her and released her into the world as a curse. Whatever the case, she now travels the same roads her old master once did, finding young women and killing them as a reprisal for all the tortured souls within her.

### Stats

Shandra the Flaxen Bride [AC 1, HD 12, HP 89, #AT 2, D 2–16 (Fists). Fire & cold slow her down to a 50% move and attack rate, but she can regenerate 50% of the damage she delivers with each fist attack (effectively ripping flesh from her target and absorbing it into herself).]

### TREASURE

Gown of Watery Death (+4 Armor), Wedding Ring of Ten Demons (+4 Protection), Mithril Hair Pin of Shimmering Beauty (+4 Charisma).

Shandra the Flaxen Bride [AC 17, HD 11d8+44, HP 93, Initiative +3, #AT 2, Hit +7, Dam Slam 13 (2d8+4), Multiattack, Flesh Absorption (Gains ½ hit points from each successful slam attack), Berserk, Aversion to Fire, Immutable Form, Lightning Absorption, Magic Resistance, Magic Weapons]  
\*As flesh golem (with an 18 Charisma)

### Setting

The sanctuary complex of Shandra has the aspects of a harem suite, each room dedicated to comfort, art, and places to expound on the pleasures of the flesh. She usually resides in a grand bedchamber in Room 5, the area decorated with frescos, a massive silk dressing screen, and a bed that could host ten humans.

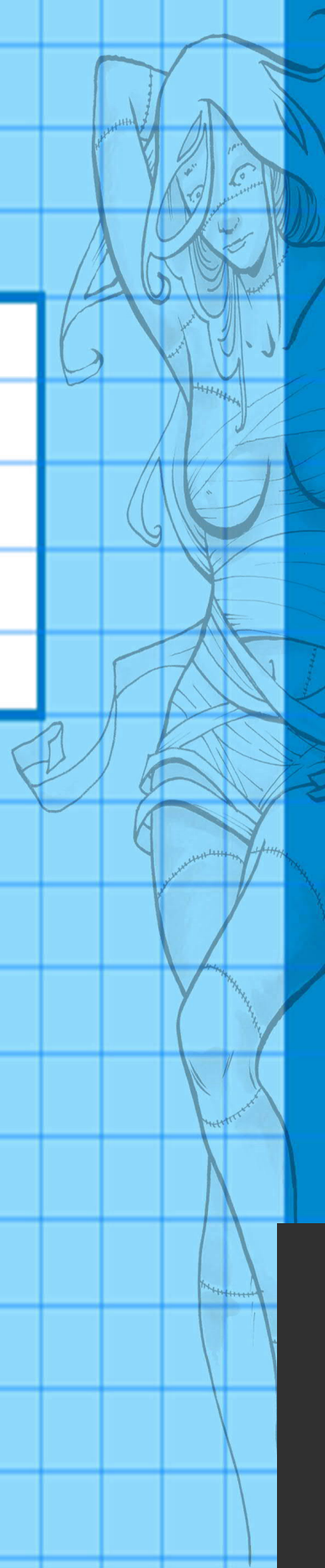
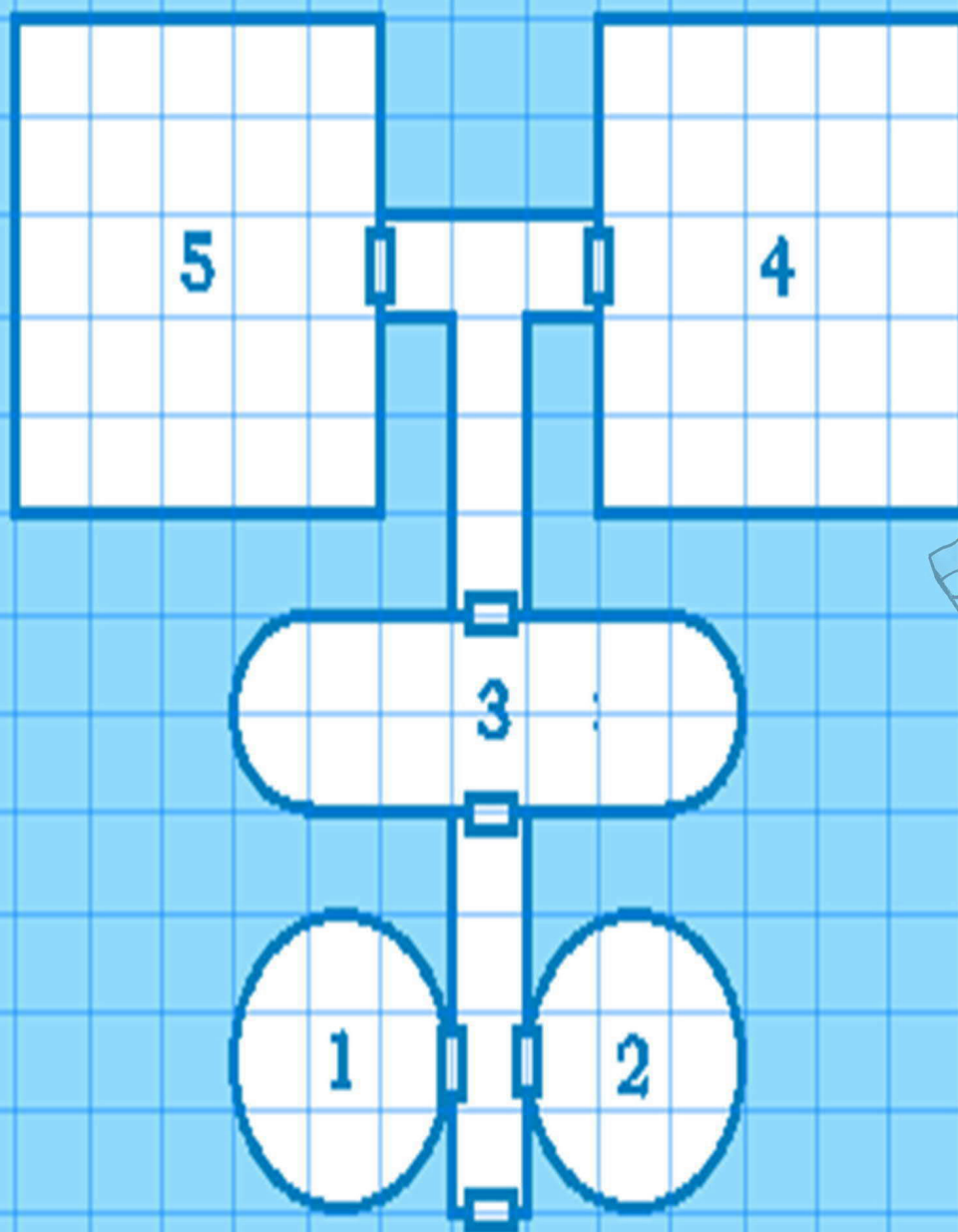
### Other Monsters

Ten (5 HD) zombie attendants (all male, and all once beautiful) stalk the areas of the suite, each doing whatever service Shandra wants.

### TREASURE

The suite is filled with objects of art (15,000 GP in value) as well as several coffers with 3,000 GP and twice that number of silver and copper. There are also jewels, necklaces, rings, and assorted gems totaling 25,000 GP.





# Naga

## E vess of the Seven Eyes

Great serpents are never a thing to be trifled with, and certainly, the legacy of death surrounding E vess of the Seven Eyes is no exception. This terrible creature has been whispered to exist within the jungles of the Aligo by explorers for millennia.

Stories insist this creature is a giant red-scaled naga with a diamond head that has three eyes on either side and a central eye in the middle. Some say each eye works like those of an eye tyrant; others contend they can see into all spectrums of space and time.

Whatever the case, E vess is known to inhabit the old 'god ruins' of the Aligo, and her venom is as deadly as her magic. She can charm with a hissing song, and the power of her eyes can turn a man to stone, charm him beyond recovery, and steal his soul. Her length is thought to be more than fifty feet, and many are those who speak to her coils crushing several stout fighters in a single action even without the use of her terrible barbed 'head' or her scorpion-like tail.

### Stats

E vess of the Seven Eyes [AC 3, HD 12, HP 92, #AT 5, D 1–6 (Bite) + Poison, Poison (save vs. Poison or die), Constriction (can coil and constrict up to 3 targets, and once a successful hit is scored, the targets take 1–12 damage each turn), Tail Barb (2–16 points of damage), typically to a particularly troublesome coiled individual who will be +4 to hit for E vess, Eyes (E vess can employ a vision attack (like a beholder) that acts as the following: Turn to Stone (petrification save), Charm Person (-2 on saving throw), Harm (reverse Heal spell), and Terrible Song (save vs. petrification or be -3 to attack due to fear effects of the song).]

### TREASURE

None

**E vess of the Seven Eyes** [AC 18, HD 15d10+45, HP 127, Initiative +4, #AT 5, Hit +8 (all), Dam Bite 8 (1d8+4) + Poison 45 (10d8) [DC 15 Constitution for ½ damage), Multiattack, Constriction (can coil and constrict up to 3 targets, and once a successful hit is scored, the targets take 10 (1d12+4) damage each turn), Tail Barb 12 (2–8)+4 points of damage, typically to a particularly troublesome coiled individual who will be +4 to hit for E vess, Eyes (E vess can employ a vision attack (like a Beholder) that acts as the following: Turn to Stone (DC 15 Constitution), Charm Person (DC 17 Wisdom), Withering Soul 45 (10d8) [DC 15 Constitution for ½ damage), and Terrible Song (DC 15 Wisdom or be under the effects of Fear).]

\*Use Guardian Naga for base stats

## Setting

E vess lives within either a sunken market or a jungle-covered market (DM's choice), the buildings made of stone and wood and in decaying shape. Each building once housed a type of shop, and a search of each building will reveal 1d4 hundred GP worth of treasure (random). E vess slithers between most buildings once awakened, by the combat of her lizard folk underlings, for example.

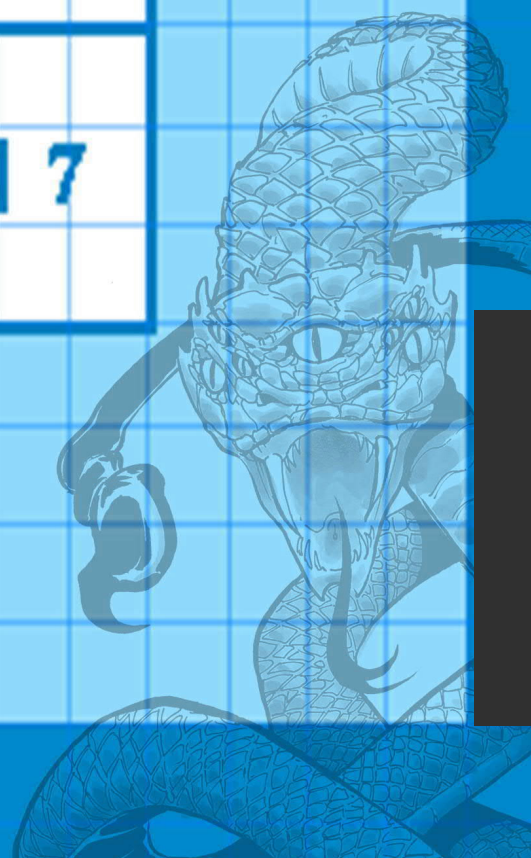
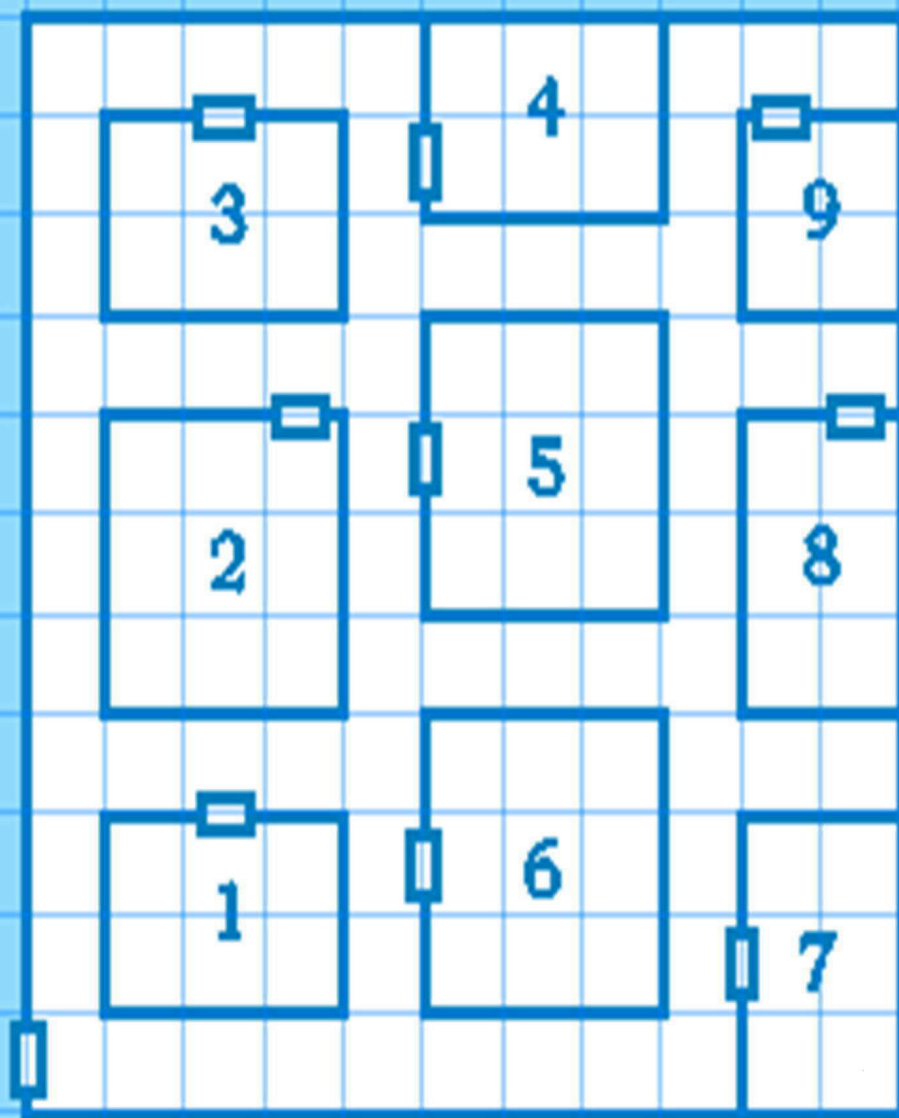
## Other Monsters

There are 7 large lizard men [lizard folk] under the charm effects of E vess within the market, and they will attack any invader on sight, hissing a warning to the others in the market as they do so.

### TREASURE

**Other than random treasure within the market, E vess has collected three greater magical items she keeps in her sleeping lair in Building 5: +3 Platemail, Ring of Protection +4, and Robes of the Arch-Magi (DM's choice on color).**







# Young Dragon

## Laramy of the Hinterlands

Laramy is a charmer, a young, brassy-haired man with a penchant for good wine, young women, and song. Many consider him a simple traveling minstrel, but others fear there is a more sinister side to the young human, especially when young ladies go missing after nights in which he has entertained at the local inn.

In truth, Laramy is a dragon, a young one for sure, who in the past five decades has learned to polymorph himself into a human and walk among the folk he so loves to steal from (both in sacrificial females and also gold and treasure). Within his lair, far from the eyes of men but close enough to the crisscrossing trade routes of central Gariny, Laramy plies a trade of bard among the far-flung communities and traveling caravans, always keeping his appearance intact.

In his lair, he has been growing a small cache of loyal humanoid subjects, and his treasure vault its getting full, so the time is getting nigh when he will finally reveal himself.

### Stats

Laramy of the Hinterlands [AC 3, HD 6, HP 48, #AT 2, D (1-6)+7 (Fists), Breath Weapon (Flame), Spells (Charm Person & Charm Monster). Laramy attacks with two fists, but when he does, his fingers elongate and have black talons on them (he is considered to be +3 to hit with these attacks). Also, if at range, he will use his lyre against the party.]

### TREASURE

Lyre of Cli (Stone Shape, Wall of Fire, and Wind Wall 3/day) [Cli Lyre].

Laramy of the Hinterlands [AC 17, HD 10d8+30, HP 75, Initiative +4, #AT 2, Hit +6, Dam Slam 9 (1d10+4), Multiattack, Spells (Charm Person & Charm Monster), Fire Breath (Recharge 5–6) 24 (7d6) [DC 15 Dexterity for half damage]

\*Use Red Dragon Wyrmling for base stats.

### Setting

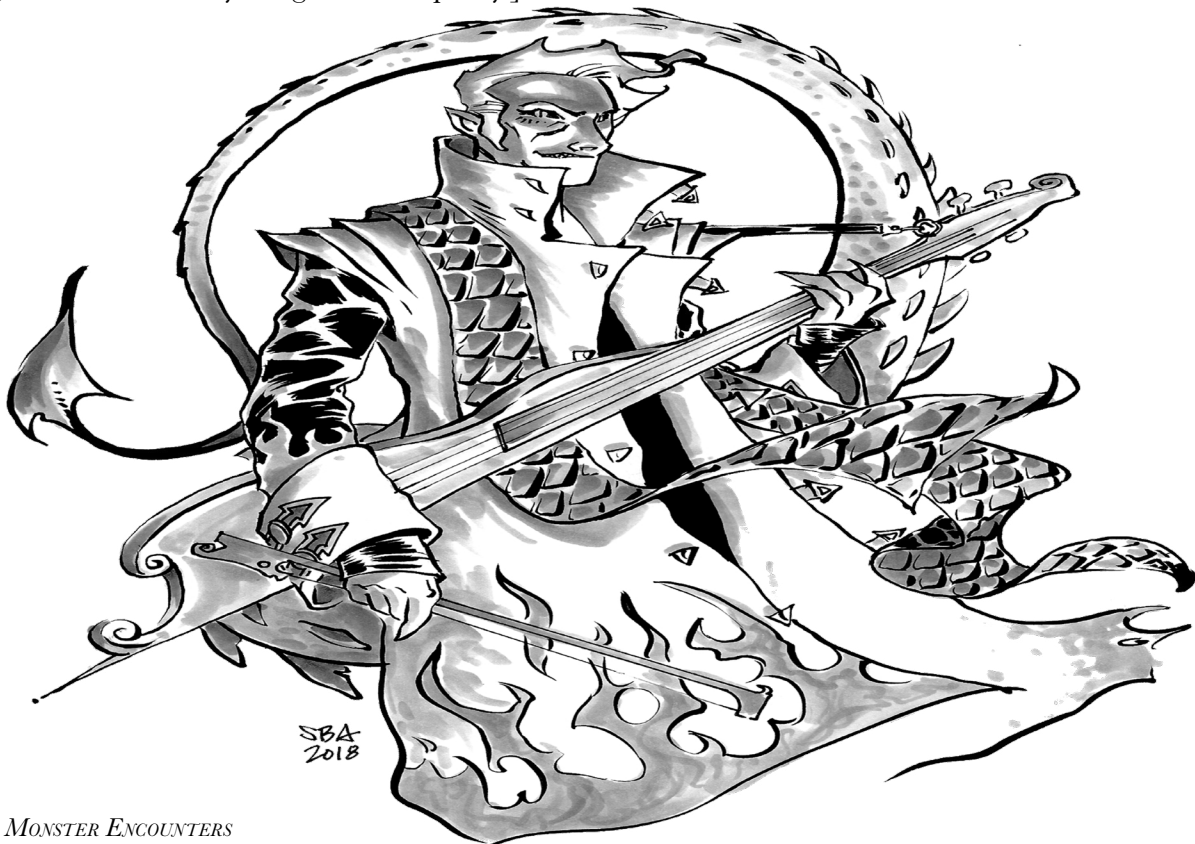
Within an ancient Corsair tomb, Laramy has made a fine pile of gold on which to rest although instead of resting in full dragon form, he prefers to sit on a cushioned and gilded throne atop the pile. Various human and humanoid (charmed) agents lurk about the complex ready to defend Laramy as needed.

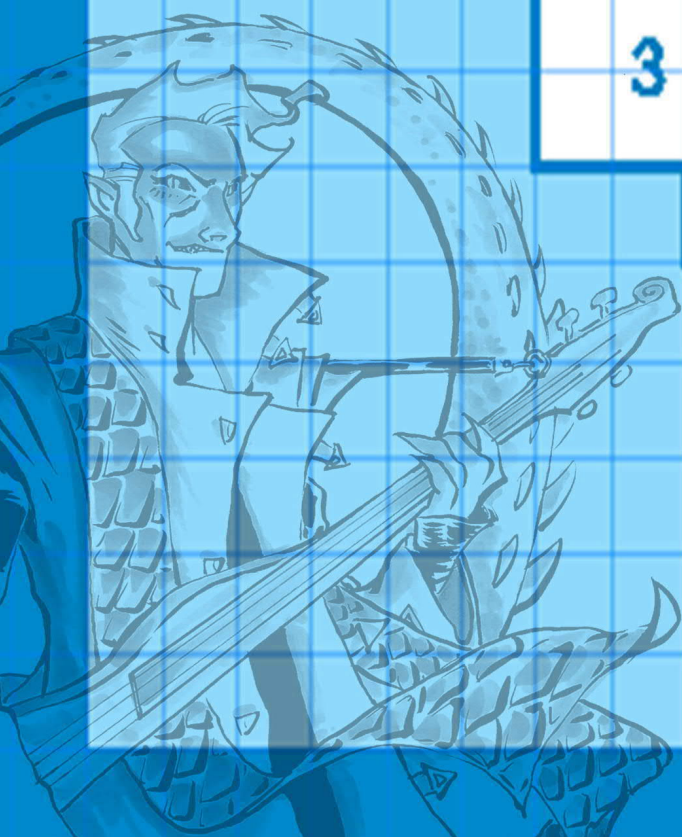
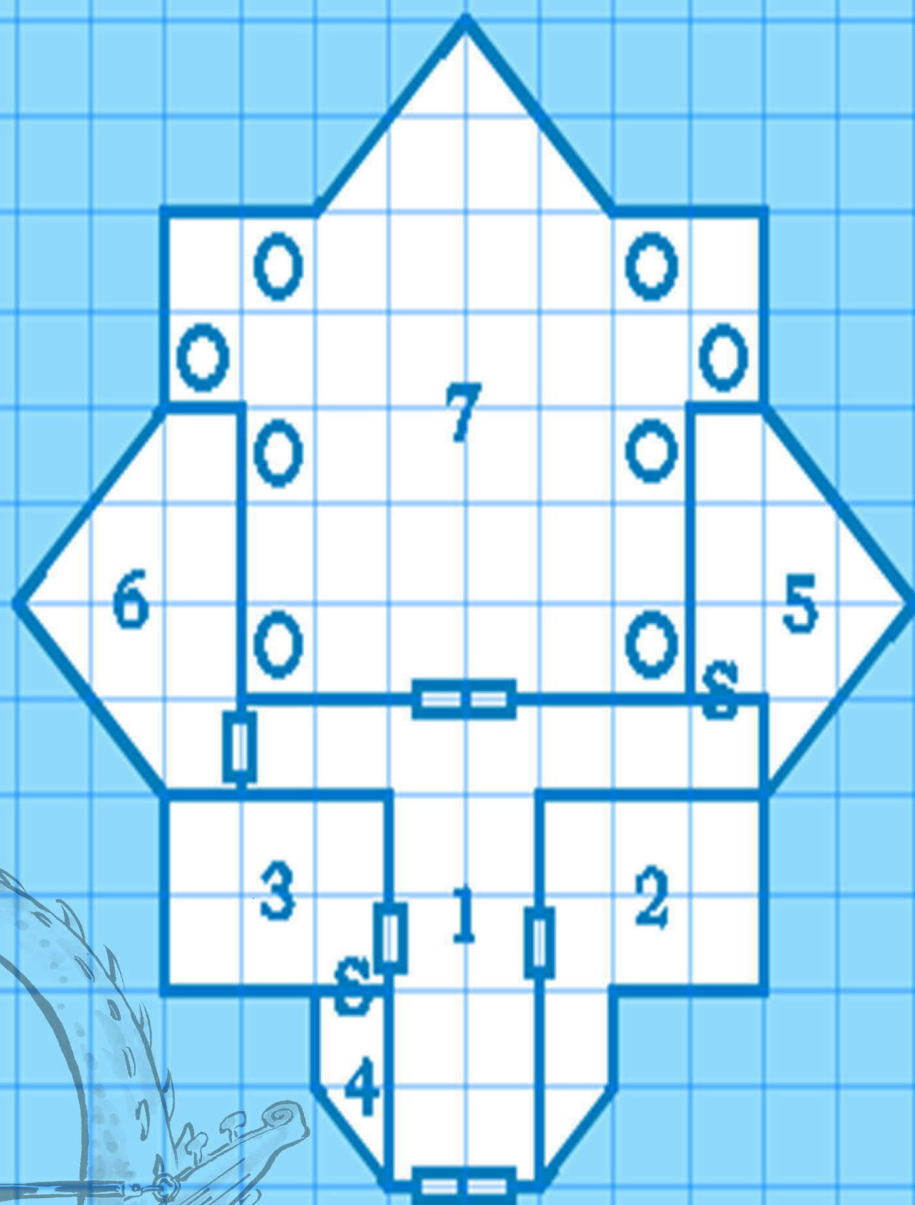
### Other Monsters

There are 12 (5 HD) fighters or monsters (typically orcs or hobgoblins) within the lair.

### TREASURE

The Maiden of Savaro Village (Recently, Laramy has taken a new plaything, Ibiria, the Daughter of Geld, Mayor of Savaro Village. She is typically located at Laramy's feet (charmed) and will protect him with her life, jumping in front of missile weapons or spells.). Additional treasure includes: 14,000 GP, double that in silver and copper, 50 gems worth 100 GP each, +3 Longsword, +2 Shield, 12 Potions of Extra-Healing [Greater Healing], Cloak of Elvenkind, and a Longbow +2.









## Storm Giant

### Gar the Rain Threader

Gar once was a powerful, arrogant storm giant when he angered a powerful sorcerer that, through tricks, managed to imprison him with only dripping water constantly giving him company. Eventually, biding his time, Gar learned to manipulate the artificial rainfall to his own purposes, and after 100 years of imprisonment, he finally overthrew the warding spells keeping him trapped and returned to his homeland, raving and insane. There, all his

past comrades shunned him, arguably breaking the last of his mind, and he attacked them, failing, but in the process, they banished him forever. Now, he lurks within a dark water cave, charming the water itself, and making music with it. Those who enter his cave are quickly trapped by a wall of water at the opening, and once inside, become bones that fill one of his deep pools within, their treasure cast about the cave and guarded by his watery pets.

### Stats

Gar the Rain Threader [AC 1, HD 16, HP 96, #AT 1, D 7–42 (Waterblade), Lightning Bolt (8–48) [once per day], Watery Song (Cause Fear effect for anyone entering the cave)]

### TREASURE

None

Gar the Rain Threader [AC 16, HD 20d12+100, HP 230, Initiative +5, #AT 2, Hit +14, Dam Greatsword 30 (6d6+9), Multiattack, Lightning Bolt 54 (12d8) [DC 17 Dexterity] (Recharge 5–6), Watery Song (DC 15 Wisdom or cause fear effect for anyone entering the cave)]

\*Use Storm Giant for base stats.

### Setting

The sea cave complex is one filled with the sounds of water: dripping water, sloshing water, splashing and falling water... The sounds can be disquieting, and it makes all the senses dull when trying to discern danger. Once the characters are inside, a massive Wall of Water will form at the cave opening, stopping them from leaving (use stats per Wall of Iron). Gar is located across the deepwater pool in Chamber 5, and his watery minions lurk throughout the complex.

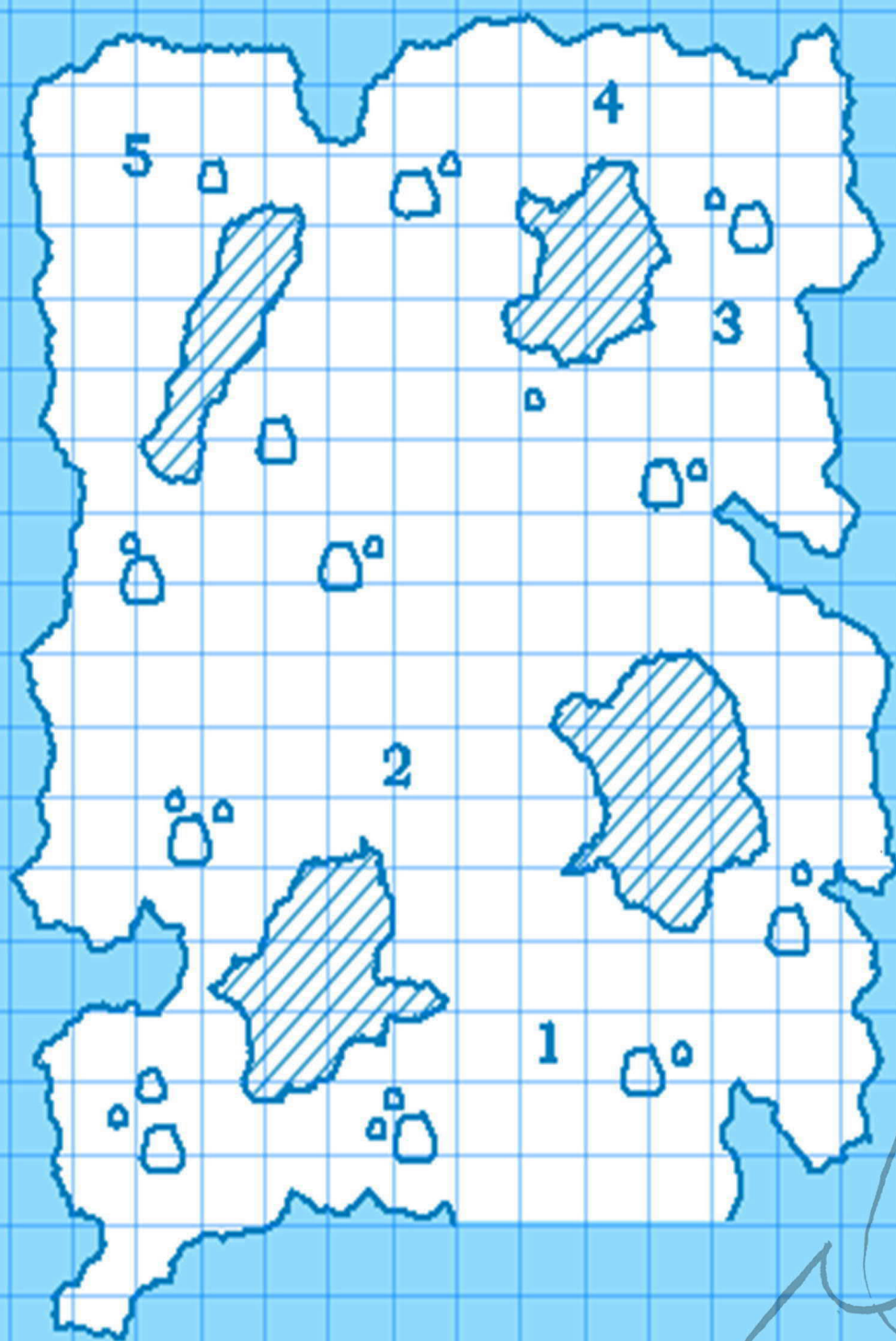
### Other Monsters

I suggest at least 3 (12 HD) water elementals, a water weird, and several piercers in the ceiling overhead, plus you could put more creatures in the deep pools (giant gar, giant crabs, etc.).

### TREASURE

Treasure can be found throughout the rooms of the cave complex, and there is a 25% chance of finding one of the four most powerful items (the percentage going up by 15% with each chamber until Chamber 5, when the remaining 'missed' items will be at Gar's feet). Hammer of Thunderbolts, 17 Javelins of Lightning, +2 Shortsword of Lightning (can cast a 6d6 lightning bolt 1/day), +3 Tower Shield. There will also be 10,000 GP of gold and twice that in silver and copper in the cavern.





# Lich

## Sximix of Dark Nublar

If there is a plague in the Opal Gates, the cause is always blamed on Sximix, if there is a storm on the sea, it is blamed on Sximix, and if there is a humanoid uprising in Gariny, it is often attributed to Sximix. Even the fabled Shandra the Flaxen Bride was said to be created by Sximix, the Lich Lord of old Nublar.

It is certainly doubtful that all such stories can be true, but there is little doubt that somewhere out in the Black Sands, amid the pyramids of a forgotten empire, Sximix still holds court among a powerful cadre of the dead.

This ancient sorcerer king was one of the last of his breed, a grey elf of mixed human bloodline and skin like honeyed chocolate. He was beautiful and terrible, and his undeath only helped increase the cruelty and alienist mentality that drove him in life. For any who seek him, perhaps for dark council, or perhaps to try for one of his legendary treasure caches, you must know that the danger is far more powerful than even the stories tell.

### Stats

Sximix of Dark Nublar [AC 0, HD 17, HP 102, #AT 1, D 1–10 (Witchblade), +1 or better weapons to hit, Defensive Matrix (Globe of Invulnerability, Protection from Normal Missiles), Spells: (2) 9th, (3) 8th, (4) 7th, (6) 6th–1st]

### TREASURE

Arch-Nublar Staff (Staff of the Magi), Witchblade (+3 Longsword), Ring of Fire Resistance

**Sximix of Dark Nublar** [AC 17, HD 18d8+54, HP 135, Initiative +5, #AT 1, Hit +12, Dam Melee Spell 10 (3d6) [DC 18 Constitution or paralyzed for 1 minute], Legendary Resistance (succeed in any save 3/day), Spells, Turn Resistance, Legendary Action]  
\*Use Lich for base spells and stats.

### Setting

Within the sandy tomb complex of dark stone, Sximix rests within the sarcophagus in Room 4. Sometimes, when roused, he can also be found sitting on his throne in Room 5. (He can instantly teleport between the two 3/day.) There is a dark shrine (Room 3) dedicated to some elder demon of the Dark Sands, and the grand vault is built around a water feature fountain.

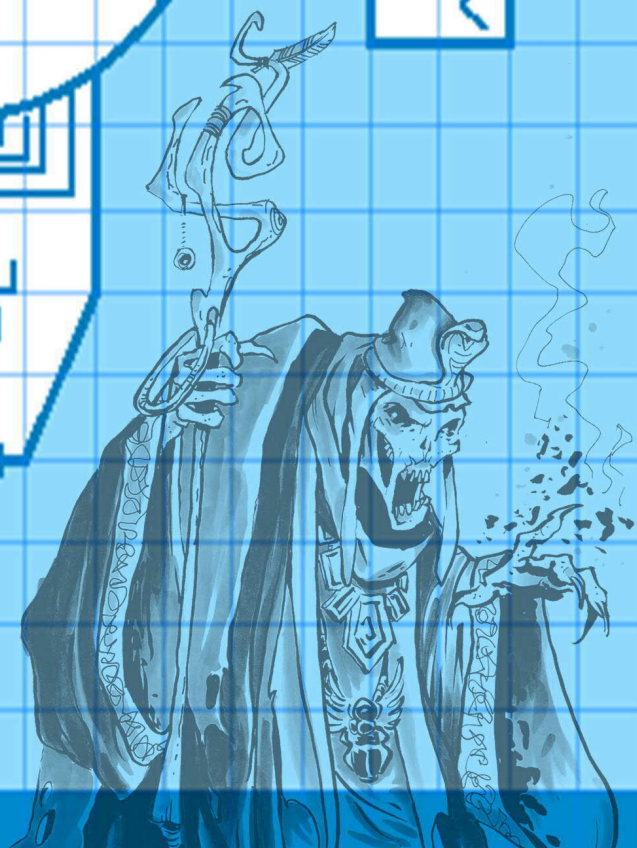
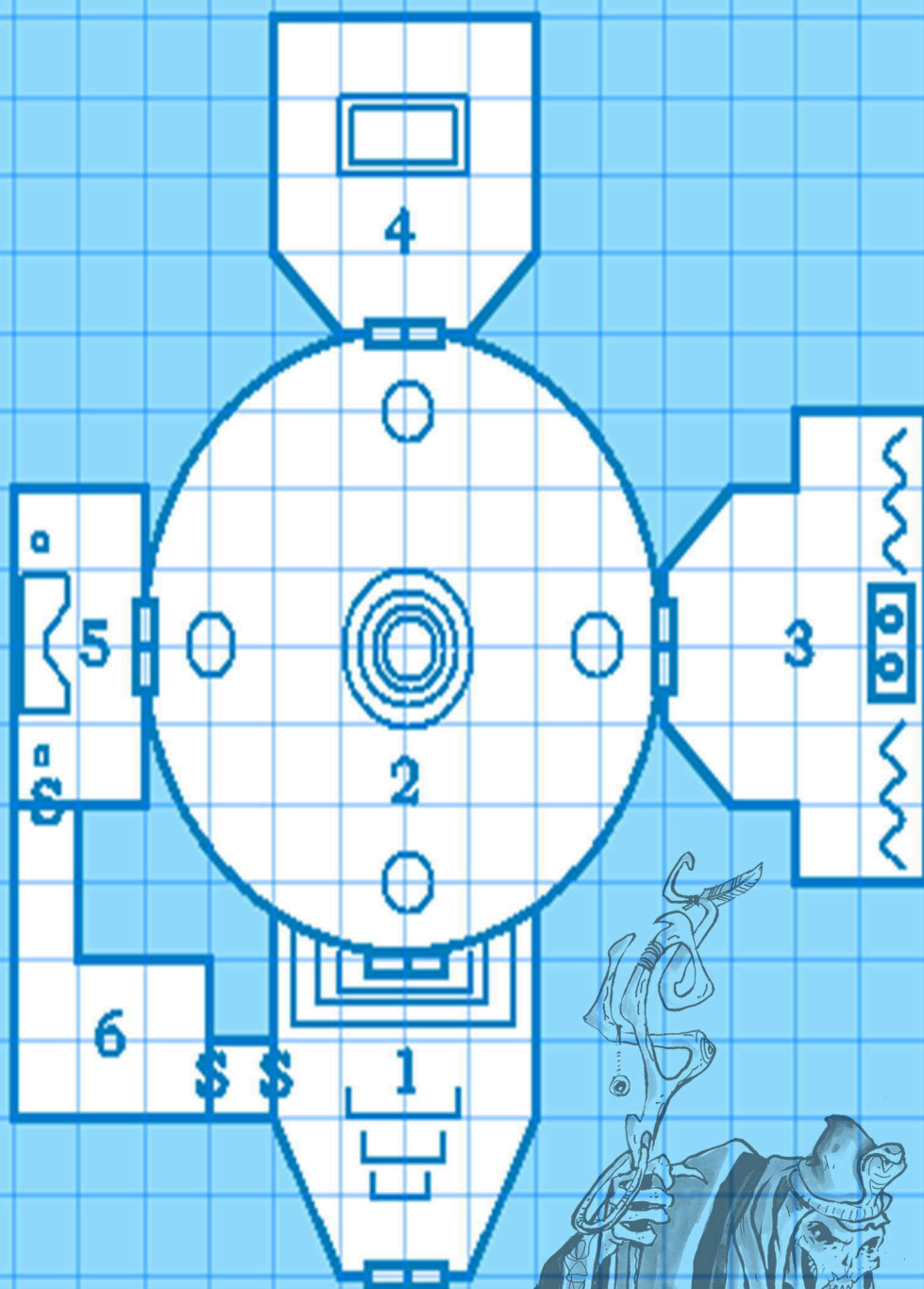
## Other Monsters

There are 6 mummies within the complex that do Sximix's bidding, and can be found in any chamber.

### TREASURE

Other than his personal items, Sximix has a chest beneath his sarcophagus that contains 5,000 PP and the Ruby of the Nublar Kings (worth 75,000 GP).







# Bender-Surrogate

## The Scratching Finger

Many are the legends of benders, the creatures that lurk beyond the fabric of the Elemental Plane of Shadow. In that reality, where up is left and right is cold, only absolute chaos reigns, and the beings there are far too alien to be understood by human minds. When the greatest wizards breached the veil of the Shadow Plane in search of another afterglow reservoir of magic, they put a pinhole in the darkness beyond, and that light drew the benders from their dark slithering nothingness.

Some with enough power, having devoured others of their kind in their oblivion world, managed to slip through the pinhole into our reality, and there they lurk close to the gate, a single tether of dark matter keeping them tangible in our existence. They are insane, cruel devourers with an unquenchable thirst for elemental power and magic. They feed on it, sucking down the essence and sending it back to their true form beyond the veil. What we see here is only a minor construct that the benders used in giving form to their chaotic nature, turning ether to flesh, and making up bodies that haunt the dreams of even the maddest of men.

The Scratching Finger is one of these bender-surrogates, a partial construct of a much larger entity that lairs within the dark caves where an old cult tried to breach the shadow veil and only achieved its own doom. Now, the Scratching Finger, a bone and flesh wormlike whip of an entity with red eyes along its segmented length drives lesser creatures mad amid the tunnels, killing most and infusing others with its pestilence to act as agents bent on bringing magic and souls to its lair, for it cannot leave its tether to the breach.

### Stats

1 Bender Surrogate 'The Scratching Finger' [AC 0, HD 15+7, HP 127, #AT 3, D (1-10)+10 (Nail), (2-20)+5 (Pestilence) [save vs. poison for ½ damage], +2 or better weapon to hit, 35% magic resistance]

### TREASURE

Strewn around the mouth of Area 6 are various bones and coins (2,000 GP and twice that in silver and gold), 190 gems worth 25 GP each, and a +2

Dueling Knife (is +3 when fighting one on one sword combat), +2 Chainmail, Staff of Striking, 16 Arrows +2, and a Holy Avenger.

1 Bender Surrogate 'The Scratching Finger' [AC 20, HD 15d12+45, HP 135, Initiative +4, #AT 3, Hit +9, Dam Nail 16 (3d8+4), Pestilence 20 (3d10+5) [DC 20 Constitution], Damage Immunity (nonmagical weapons), Magic Resistance]

\*Use Gibbering Moulder for base stats

## Setting

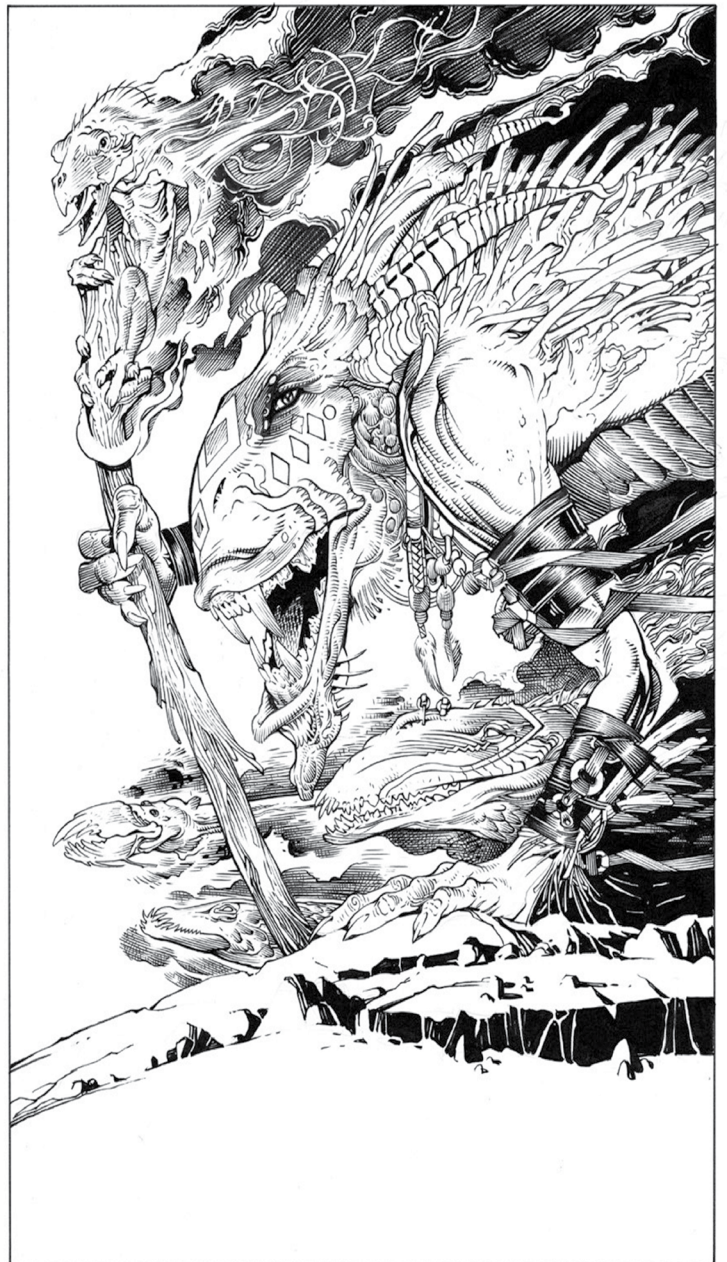
This former sacred wizard's crypt is now the home of the bender, the entry rooms dedicated to the astrological symbols, pentagrams, and arcane symbols. A crypt in Room 3 has been looted, and a gibbering moulder is inside, and Room 4 was once a grand bedroom, now rotting, with another gibbering moulder beneath the large bed.

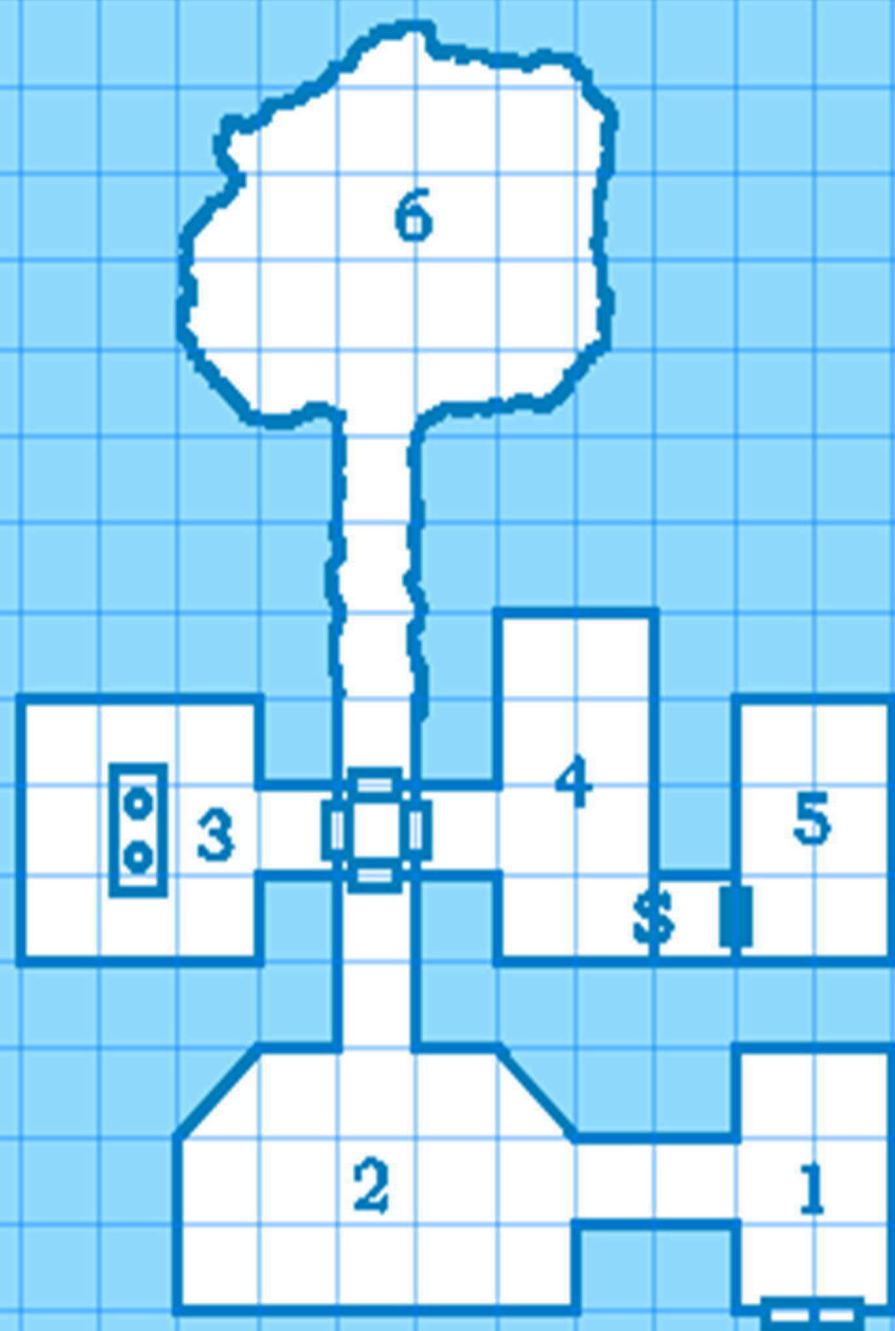
## Other Monsters

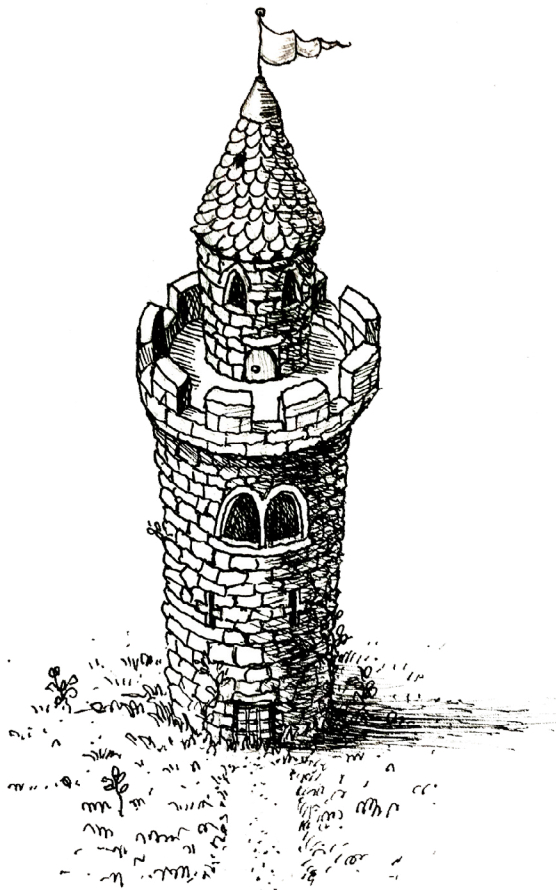
The pestilence attack of the bender has created abominations that ooze about the interior of the lair. These are considered to be gibbering moulthers, and there are 5 of them.

### TREASURE

Other than the treasure at the entrance to Chamber 6, there is a large chest within the locked metal door [DC 17] to Chamber 5. Inside, a chest contains 4,000 PP and a Ring of Regeneration.







## Stefan Pokorny Mini-Adventure

### Glenda the Witch

#### Location

Forest of Thorns, somewhat hidden

#### Trigger

##### Pick

- A)** Rumors of a witch tower.
- B)** Disgruntled lizard men turn on witch “landlord”.
- C)** Strange eerie light seen at night?

Glenda the witch (5th–7th level mage) has found an ancient tower from the days before Queen Anuktata’s reign. With the help of an ogre named Grom, she has patched up the missing stones and refortified it. She lives in the uppermost tower, accessible only by window or ladder which she keeps pulled up. The hatch and door to the slim upper tower floors are Wizard Locked and trapped. She allows the lizard men to live beneath the tower and charges them rent of 20 GP/month. They do not work for her. She employs Grom for 5 GP/

month and has a small tribe of kobolds as minions who follow her wishes in return for living below the tower in a protected position. She demands a share of any spoils from her kobold “tenants” and sends them out to plunder. The ogre “superintendent” collects the monthly pay and loot, keeps everybody from infighting, and patches leaks in the tower. Recently, giant ants have invaded the lizard man caves and the lizard men are threatening to stop paying “rent”.

Upon approach to the tower, any wandering monsters will be patrols of either kobolds, giant ants, or lizard men. Kobolds will be protecting the tower and will retreat below if things look bad for them. They will alert the ogre and fall back to ambush at the 4-way narrow passage area. The lizard men might be open to negotiation if talked to properly. Giant ants will attack randomly. They have an exit to the surface in the ceiling of their upper-level burrow.

Lizard men originate from the Mosquito Marsh to the north of the forest. The ogre will have magic items. The witch has potions and magical scrolls, plus a flying broom, and she will try to fly away if things look bad, only to attack the party later.

#### Stats

Grom the Ogre [AC 3, HD 6+6, HP 48, #AT 1, D (1–6)+6 (Maul)]

#### TREASURE

+2 Hammer, +2 Shield

Grom Ogre [AC 17, HD 7d10+21, HP 59, Initiative +1, #AT 1, Hit +6, Dam Maul 13 (2d8+4)]

Glenda the Witch [AC 5, HD 8, HP 21, #AT 1, D (1–4)+2 (Dagger), Spells: (3) 1st, (3) 2nd, (2) 3rd, (1) 4th]

#### TREASURE

Dagger +2, Scrolls (7 scrolls with 1st–4th level spells), Broom of Flying

Glenda the Witch [AC 15 (with mage armor), HD 9d8, HP 40, Initiative +2, #AT 1, Hit +5, Dam Dagger 4 (1d4+2), Spellcasting: (4) 1st, (3) 2nd, (3) 3rd, (3) 4th, (1) 5th]  
\*Use Mage stats in back of MM.

#### Setting

\*As above.

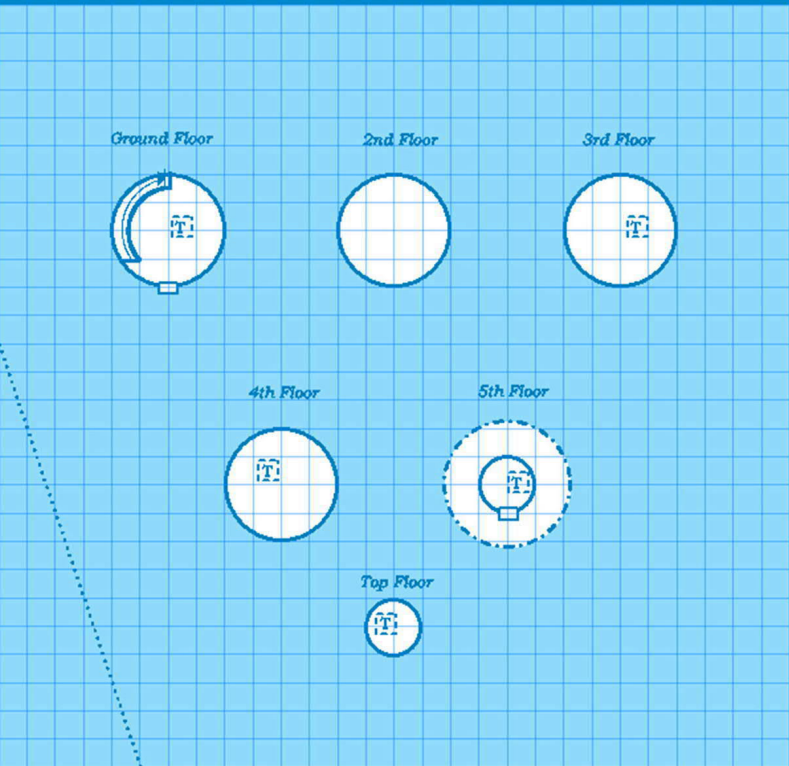
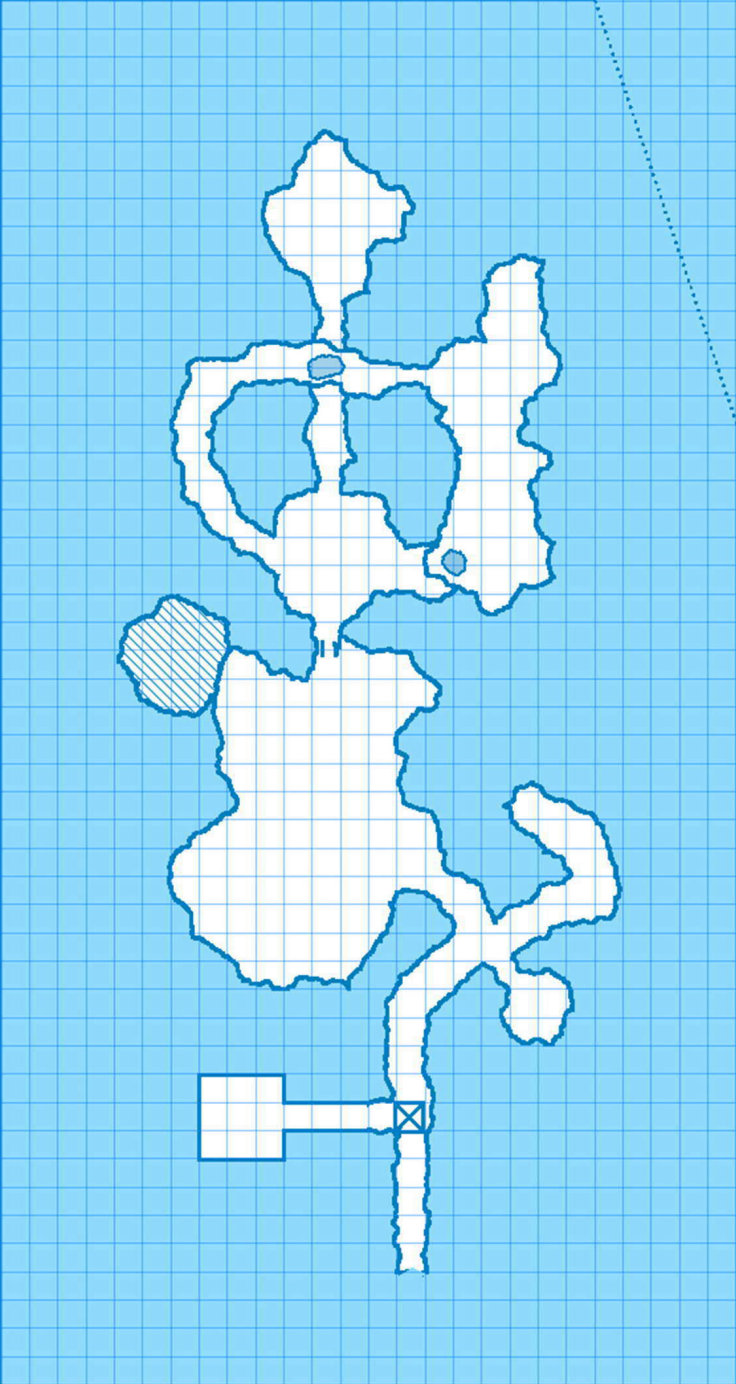
#### Other Monsters

Standard lizard men [**lizard folk**], kobolds, and giant ants.

#### TREASURE

Glenda has a stash of 350 GP in her tower room, and Grom has 100 GP and twice that in silver.













## **The Storyteller's Arcana**

**Scott Taylor**

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*Over the course of decades, gaming knowledge has been passed down, refined, and shared within the confines of tabletop RPGs. Dungeon Masters have spent countless hours creating new challenges for players, sometimes off the cuff, sometimes stolen from fantasy or science fiction media, but no matter the initial inspiration point, adventures abound.*

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Within these pages you will find all the secrets from the gaming tables at Art of the Genre, including my take on fantastic versions of modern media trope NPCs, new spells, boss monster one shot encounters, as well as the rules I live by for running a campaign with depth beyond experience points. So prepare yourself for the unraveled mysteries of The Storyteller's Arcana.



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